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**PARADOXICAL PERFORMANCES OF
SUBJECTIVITIES, SPACES AND
ART GALLERY POSTCARDS**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the relationship between art gallery postcards, subjectivities and domestic spaces. Feminist post-structuralist debates on memory, subjectivity and domestic spaces provide the theoretical framework for this research into taken-for-granted objects of the everyday. Empirical data came from interviewing nine women who buy, use and keep postcards and two New Zealand Art Gallery store managers. Some of the participants were interviewed more than once, while others extended their views by e-mail. Auto-ethnographic narrative is used to explore further the symbolic significance of an individual's postcard consumption.

This research focuses attention on the production of gendered subjectivities and domestic spaces through an aesthetic artefact. There are three points to my analysis. Firstly, I argue paradoxically the under-noticed seemingly trivial gallery postcard becomes a memory holder and therefore a significant artefact of symbolic value. Memories are potent, elusive fragments that become attached to a sound, smell, touch or sight. Catching sight of a postcard can trigger a chain of memory associations, which in turn constructs a sense of self through the remembering. Secondly, I contend that subjectivity is understood as fluid and multiple, evolving out of experience and interpretation. Memories formed from experience and connections made with people, place and things become associated with gallery postcards and serve as a catalyst for personal narratives which in turn can operate as tools for constructing subjectivities. Finally I suggest that domestic spaces are a product of relations that can be understood as existing within and beyond the home. Stretched domestic space can be produced by the display of gallery postcards in office spaces. The exploration of the art gallery postcard adds to the knowledges of everyday objects and their role and significance in constructing gendered subjectivities and spaces.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Past memories, present experiences, and future dreams of each person are inextricably linked to the objects that comprise his or her environment (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981, p. ix).

The art gallery postcard¹ is a paradox. On one level it is an inexpensive reproduction of an original work of art that exists on the neglected edges of everyday life. It may be placed on the fridge door, pin board or stuffed in a top draw. However, once purchased or received, the postcard may become valued for its associations with memory, emotion, person or place. Memories and postcards are co-constitutive. A focus on memory provides a window through which to consider multiple constructions of people, places, and postcards. They are also potent and elusive fragments that attach to sound, smell, touch or sight. The viewing of the postcard can trigger the recall of memories, which in turn forms a sense of self. The creation of gendered subjectivities through personal memory does not imply that individuals are immune from the influences of discourse. Rather I explore the specificity of postcard displays in domestic spaces to understand how they may constitute the performance of gendered subjectivities. The empirical data used to map this territory is based on semi-structured interviews I conducted with nine women postcard consumers, two postcard producers, as well as auto-ethnographic reflections.

The idea of a constitutive relationship between people, place and postcards developed from my own 30 year use and interest in postcards. Numerous other everyday objects operate in a similar way to the postcard, so I am not suggesting they are unique in this respect. What interests me is that such objects, found especially in domestic spaces, may have more meanings for our everyday lives

¹ From this point on in the text I use the term 'postcard' but I am actually referring specifically to 'art gallery postcards'.

than is immediately obvious. I do not consider myself a serious postcard collector, as the purchase and storage of them is a casual activity. However, postcards are always displayed in my home and concerns of losing the attached memories surface when I contemplate giving any away. Within the domestic spaces and routines of my daily life, the displayed postcards serve as a site of reflection as well as a partial expression of my subjectivity. As discussed below, my research focuses on women, as I contend that the displays are performative spaces which allow women to muse, recall experience and make connections. Therefore, the postcard may also be an important artefact that constitutes gendered subjectivities.

This thesis explores the relationship between subjectivities, postcards and domestic spaces. The research is structured around two questions. Firstly, *why are postcards of art collected, displayed and stored?* Secondly, *how and in what ways do material objects have a relationship with subjectivities and domestic spaces (where domestic space describes both the home space and the ‘domesticated’ office space)?* This study draws on cultural studies research to critically examine where the gallery postcard fits within the context of everyday life. Cultural studies theorist Ben Highmore, says “the ‘thing itself’ cannot be separated from its context in the everyday ... [as] the thing itself *is* the context of everyday in which objects and their practices exist” (Highmore, 2002, p. 296). As an artefact of the everyday the postcard is often labelled as kitsch and trivial. While acknowledging this status, the research, discussed in the chapters below, also highlights the pleasures found in postcard practices.

Kitsch is a term frequently attached to the postcard due largely to its size, cost and mass produced accessibility. Mass culture theorists (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1973; Greenberg, 1961), categorize kitsch objects as high art style derivatives. In contrast, popular cultural studies theorists (Fiske, 1989; Hall, 1996) would not judge where it was positioned on the aesthetic hierarchy, but rather consider the kitsch artefact as a site for critical and creative interpretation. This cultural studies interpretation of kitsch artefacts is a strong component of how the postcard is used, but this approach tends to gloss over any pleasures gained from the characteristics of sentiment, banality, repetition, continuity and routine (Binkley, 2000). These

characteristics can be incorporated by redefining 'kitsch'. I have drawn here on the work of Sam Binkley (2000), a sociologist who reconceptualizes kitsch and values it as a "unique aesthetic of repetition, [with] its affirmation of rhythm and meter, far from representing a failure of the creative will, must be understood on its own terms for the aesthetic world that it unfolds" (p. 134). The postcard is a record of an art work, but may function more specifically as a catalyst for memory retrieval as well as an artefact that prompts pleasure through purchase, collection, circulation and display.

This research is concerned with postcard reproductions of original works of art purchased from art gallery or museum shops in New Zealand and around the world. All participants take part in this circulation and contemplation of postcards. Apart from these postcards fitting within the high-art genre, and therefore a subjectivity marker of the purchasers, the specifics of the art works depicted is not of concern to the research. The focus of the research rests on what women do with postcards in domestic spaces and the meanings they attach them. However, participants spoke about all types of postcards interchangeably and included photographs and other memorabilia in that mnemonic assemblage.² I describe this assemblage as a 'performative space' as it foregrounds the active involvement of the producer in its construction.

This research is also limited to studying women who consume and use gallery postcards in their domestic spaces. Focusing solely on women and constructions of femininity is crucial to this case study which examines the relationship between domestic spaces, postcards and subjectivities (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; McDowell, 1992, 1999; Rose, 2003, 2004). Although there is scant research into how gallery postcards are used in domestic spaces, feminist geography research into the arrangement of family photographs in domestic spaces show this to be a strongly feminized activity (Chambers, 2003; Rose, 2003, 2004).

² Mnemonic assemblage describes a grouping of postcards, photographs and souvenirs which are placed informally/formally throughout the home or office space (on a fridge door, pin board, mantle or bookshelf) that are used as a memory prompt of people, place, experience or art work.

The picture postcard, like so many objects in everyday life, appears as Ben Highmore says “hidden in plain view” (2005, p. 1), a statement confirmed by the limited academic attention given to the postcard, despite its 100 year existence.³ How people use postcards and the meanings they attach to them is under-explored. As Highmore says, it is the everyday that receives our “daily inattention” (2002, p. 21). The whole visual representation on postcards tends to be the central concern for history, geography, anthropology and tourism studies, yet many of these disciplines neglect to focus on what is ‘done’ with postcards or how they are valued.

The research emerging from contemporary material culture appears absorbed in the complexities of capitalism where the “exchange-value” perspective can overshadow the “use-value” perspective (Highmore, 2002, p. 296). This study does not wish to ignore the role of commodity systems, even though the postcard is a small player in the exchange value hierarchy, nor does it place a utopian gloss on the reading of the postcard in use. Rather, attention rests on how the gallery post card is used within domestic spaces as a complex memory holder and definer of subjectivity.

As a memory holder postcards can be associated with multiple meanings and this characteristic of multiplicity can also be applied to subjectivities. Both the postcard and an individual exist in a relatively stable material form, but can be understood and interpreted in fluid and multiple ways. Subjectivities are understood in this way from a post-structuralist position of flux (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Hence the individual:

is a play of multiple, fractured aspects of the self; it is relational, in that it requires a bond to the ‘other’; it is retrospective, in that it is fixed through

³ The first postcard appeared in Hungary in 1869. It was proposed by Dr Emanuel Herrmann, a professor of political economics in Vienna, who suggested the open postcard for short commercial notices, love and family letters. Three million cards sold across Europe and England within three months and a little later the practice took off in America. Advertising and picture postcards soon followed and a souvenir postcard of the Eiffel Tower, sold at the Paris Exhibition in 1889 was the catalyst for the postcard boom that followed (Staff, 1966).

memories and recollections, in a genealogical process. Last, but not least, identity is made of successive identifications, that is to say unconscious internalized images that escape rational control (Braidotti, 1994, p. 166).

The dynamic process of subjectivity formation evolves out of interpreting the transitory connections made with people, things and places that are themselves also evolving out of similar complex connections. Apart from being a souvenir reproduction of art, the postcard may also become a valued mnemonic.

In addition to being a memory trigger, the postcard may also operate as an expression of subjectivities in a variety of performative spatial contexts: the art gallery, domestic spaces, stretched domestic space.⁴ Pierre Bourdieu (1984) argues that an individual who consumes the cultural goods of art galleries has that ‘taste’ determined and reinforced in daily life by education and social class (p. 1). Drawing upon this framework suggests that the purchase and domestic display of postcards act as expressive markers of a particular aesthetic sensibility and social milieu. The postcard displays are performative expressions of the producer which, self-consciously or sub-consciously, suggests that ‘this is what I do’ and ‘this is who I am’. The gallery and domestic spaces of postcard displays can all be viewed as spaces of liminality, where “you look through reality to focus elsewhere” (Braidotti, 2006, p. 172). Using the postcard in this way may form a threshold, between living in the present and drawing personalized connections about people, places and things that happened in the past.

If an individual is defined in part by experience, then “memory is the data bank of one’s identity” (Braidotti, 2006: 167). Those memories can become associated with a particular material object and may act as a personalized storage system for recall and contemplation. Milestones, celebrations or trauma appear to forge strong memories, but everyday detail arising out of routine, social connection and

⁴ The “stretched domestic space” (Rose, 2003, p. 5) can be understood as reaching out through the materiality of the postcard and family photographs to connect with people geographically distanced. Or the stretched domestic space can be understood as domesticating a public work space. In either situation the postcards are saturated with meaning and memory which can trigger narratives and associations for either the producer of the performative space (postcard display) or other viewers.

sense stimuli can be subsumed by the repetitive commonplace. To help examine the relationship between postcards and memory formation/retrieval, I draw on contemporary research, across a range of disciplines, which foregrounds the use of material objects in the remembering process (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Marcoux, 2001a; Morgan & Pritchard, 2005; Rose, 2003; Stewart, 1993). I also draw on research that discusses memory as being a fragmented, partial, fluid and subjective process (Braidotti, 2006).

1.1 Content outline

In this introductory chapter I have established my motivations and reasons for doing this research and have drawn attention to the limited academic inquiry into the postcard in use, both within and beyond the discipline of cultural studies. I have also outlined how research into the way women use gallery postcards in their domestic spaces will be guided theoretically and explored through the themes of memory, subjectivities and spaces.

Chapter Two reviews the relevant strands of literature relating to how women use gallery postcards in their domestic spaces, but more specifically how the postcards acts as a memory holder and subjectivity marker. I discuss more fully the theoretical framework used for this research, which draws together post-structuralist work on memory, subjectivity, everyday material culture, as well as the feminist work on spaces: in particular performative, domestic, and stretched domestic spaces.

Chapter Three discusses the methods and methodology utilized for this research. Research was carried out with both the producers and consumers of gallery postcards and I employed semi-structured interviews with the producers; and semi-structured in-depth interviews and visual ethnography with postcard consumers. I also use auto-ethnographic narrative as a way to critically reflect on my own gallery postcard use to explore the fine grain relationship between materiality, memory and self-identity. I reflect on my role as a researcher and discuss some of the challenges faced when exploring the meanings attached to everyday material culture and ephemera.

Chapter Four uses empirical material obtained from interviews and draws on auto-ethnographic reflections to demonstrate the significance of postcards in daily life as a memory holder and visual trigger. This material fleshes out the implications of the theoretical and methodological sections. It empirically charts the postcard as a paradoxical object that is simultaneously understood as both a trivial and valued object (Binkley, 2000). Also, the interviews revealed how the postcard maintains and recreates memory detail about art, experience, people and place.

Continuing with a discussion of the empirical material, Chapter Five illustrates how the postcard constructs subjectivities and domestic spaces. Three dominant subjectivities emerged from the participant interviews: firstly the *gallery visitor*, secondly the *postcard purchaser* and finally *cultural capital*. This Chapter also illustrates the performativity of spaces: the domestic space (home) and stretched domestic space (office space).⁵

The conclusion in Chapter Six reconsiders the two research questions of: *why postcards are collected, displayed and stored?* and *how and in what ways do material objects have a relationship with subjectivities and domestic spaces?* I reflect on the importance of research into this neglected area of academic study and note further research avenues that have been made apparent while working on this case study.

⁵ From this point on in the text I use the term ‘office space’ when referring to an office that exists outside the home.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL ISSUES

The relationship between gallery postcards, memories, subjectivities and domestic spaces appear not to have been previously explored as a research topic. Therefore, I draw here on a number of theorists to build a framework with which to shape the entire research and interpret the interviews. Literature under the subject areas of everyday material objects, memories, subjectivities and spaces are critically explored. The bodies of literature that I draw upon are too large to discuss in detail, but key concepts from this literature are identified. Predominantly, I utilize post-structuralist⁶ perspectives, which emphasize the fluidity of all meaning, knowledge, power and subjectivity.

I begin by first identifying key reference points in the literature to explain my own interpretive framework. This literature includes explanation of the distinct subject areas of material objects of the everyday, souvenirs and ideas about kitsch. This section relates most closely to my first research question: *why are postcards of art collected, displayed and stored?* The second section focuses on memories, personal narratives and materiality linking to my next theme of subjectivities and domestic spaces. This relates to my second question: *how and in what ways do material objects have a relationship with subjectivities and domestic spaces?* I draw here on the work of feminist geographers and philosophers to provide a theoretical alignment across those themes. Finally, I position this project in

⁶ Post-structuralism, which originated in France, grew out of and alongside radical social movements fighting for equality during the 1960s and 1970s. The challenges intersected feminist, gay rights and racial equality movements. Post-structuralists critiqued and produced alternative concepts and knowledges as a way of understanding social changes. They contested the idea of a static structure of knowing which privileges the ‘classical’ Enlightenment paradigm of knowledge and society. “The autonomous, rational self is replaced by discursive or linguistic structures ...[as] language is the place where meanings are lodged [and which]...play a major role in organizing the self, social institutions, and the political landscape” (Seidman, 1998, p. 221).

relation to the mutually constitutive relationship between gendered bodies and spaces.

2.1 Everyday material object

The phrases ‘everyday life’ and ‘everyday material objects’ are each problematic, as they can evoke assumptions of what is ‘normal’ or ‘universal’. There is a vast body of literature that charts and questions these assumptions across multiple areas of life. While some authors assess the practice of everyday life at the micro (de Certeau, 1984; Goffman, 1974) or the macro level (Lefebvre, 1971; Williams, 1989a), others provide a critique of the everyday life of things (Attfield, 2000; Attfield & Kirkham, 1989; Baudrillard, 2004; Miller, 1987, 2002, 2001). Study into the gallery postcard traverses both the micro and the macro levels, as postcards are produced in and purchased from galleries around the world and also typically associated with domestic spaces according to Highmore (2005; 2002) who provides a clear overview of everyday life research. I followed two studies that he cited into postcard practices that articulate the binaries of the public/private /masculine/feminine perspectives as well as being an artefact to question the affects of a research focus. Firstly, Naomi Schor (1992) wrote about postcard representations of Paris, to explore how everyday life has been theorized down traditional patriarchal lines. She illustrates how the postcards can breakdown the valued divisions of the masculine/public sphere versus the feminine/domestic sphere, to restore women’s position to the Parisian streets and make apparent the domestic everyday through the written messages. Secondly Tom Phillips (2000) combined both sides of the postcard in his study (image and message), to highlight the desire of people to articulate details of their daily lives. This study also points to how the location of a research itself affects whose lives are spoken about and how they are spoken about. These two studies informed the consideration of gender to this postcard research.

Research that focuses specifically on the relationship between postcards, memory and subjectivities within domestic spaces appears non-existent, and I question why this is the case? When considering the politics of knowledge, is this absence a result of postcards, domestic spaces and gendered subjectivities being

understood as too insignificant, devalued, feminized and forgotten?⁷ Counter to its absence, and central to my study is the examination of why postcards are significant objects in the everyday lives of women. With no direct research material available on the relationship between gallery postcards, memory and subjectivities I draw on an assortment of studies for theoretical guidance. Categorizing the gallery postcard as a souvenir, and realizing it is used in ways similar to family photographs, opens the research material up to include studies from Susan Stewart (1993) in English literature; Nigel Morgan and Annette Pritchard (1998; 2005) and Jon Goss (2004) in tourism studies; Gillian Rose (2003) in geography; Deborah Chambers (2003) in communication studies; Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton (1981) in sociology and Colin Painter (2002) who is an artist/curator and writer. These papers shape my own research as I consider how the souvenir, for example, is used in post-travel narratives of self (Morgan & Pritchard, 2005; Stewart, 1993); and how art/photographs and objects in the home hold significant meaning for individuals (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Painter, 2002; Rose, 2003). Although the theorists mentioned above are drawn from a diverse range of disciplines, their theoretical frameworks have both feminism and post-structuralism as their common base.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton (1981) analyse the way objects are important in subjectivity construction. Their study explored the relationships between people, home and things in urban America (Chicago) in 1977, to ascertain the role of objects in defining who people are, who they have been and who they wish to become. The study did not deal specifically with gallery postcards as all visual art was combined into one research category. Each member of 82 families was interviewed (parents, children and grandparents) to understand what objects were important and why. The research was framed, and the findings considered, from a social-psychological approach. The gender

⁷ Questions around what subject areas are worthy of academic research was raised by Nicky Gregson and Gillian Rose (2000) when they noted how geographers tended to dismiss, as insignificant, research into the social practices of community arts workers and projects in Edinburgh and car-boot sales as alternative spaces of consumption. Their research challenged “the tendency on the part of the new cultural geography and cultural studies ... to focus on the cultural work of social elites or of capital, and thus to refuse to acknowledge the cultural creativity of marginalized groups” (p. 448).

differences that emerged from the data confirmed stereotypical positions of “instrumental male roles and expressive female roles” (p. 106). Men were linked with objects of action, exertion and goal achievement. Women were linked with objects that they used for contemplation, memories, associations and family. An important aspect of this study is the comparative, quantitative and gender data relating to the production of domestic space and subjectivities. The study provides useful data suggesting that women use objects to construct domestic space and how they connect memories to particular visual works of art and photographs.

This finding was confirmed by Rose’s (2003) case study which showed that women used family photographs as a memory connection with immediate and extended family members. Her research focused on how women (of white, middle-class, nuclear families) engaged with family photographs.⁸ Rose’s feminist post-structuralist perspective on family photograph use presents a way of understanding the significance of things (such as postcards) in cultivating a world of meaning within domestic spaces for women. This feminist perspective draws attention to the power inequalities that exist between men and women and how these inequalities are reinforced and influenced by institutional structures and social conventions in both public and private spaces (Rose, 1993, 2004).

Rose’s (2003) research explores the gendered use of photographs and domestic space. She argues that more attention should be placed on what is done with family photographs rather than focusing on the photograph’s content. As a consequence her research placed more emphasis on the photograph as an object and less on the photograph as a text. Rose draws on social anthropologist, Mary Douglas (1994) to articulate her ponderings.

[W]e may often be on the wrong track trying to decide what [objects] signify, since that question does not necessarily lead directly to the part the objects play in human transactions (p. 20).

⁸ How men engaged with family photographs was not explored.

As a way of shedding light on construction of individual subjectivity, these comments affirm my thinking. It would appear to be more important to explore what women do with, and feel about, their postcards rather than exploring the image content. This is an insight useful for my own research. She also argues that domestic space can be re-conceptualized as being a product of relations that extend beyond the home.⁹

Other research confirms the use of certain objects to transform a house into a 'home' (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Hunt, 1989). Feminist geographers, Suzanne Mackenzie and Damaris Rose (1983) and the Women and Geography Study Group (1984) extend this thinking, suggesting that the production of domestic/home space emanates from the structures of capitalism and patriarchal reproduction. Rose's (2003) research describes the significance of family photographs for women's everyday experiencing of their home and how the photograph establishes the presence of the person depicted. She also argues that:

[t]he referentiality of the photo means that it is treated as a trace of the person it pictures, and can thus bring their presence into the home. But that presence is most valued when the actual person is in fact absent or changed (p. 15).

The referential aspect of the photograph, on the one hand, provides a direct link and memory potency to a person, place or thing being depicted. This feature of a photograph is discussed in this chapter under the sub-heading 'Performative spaces' 2.4, and references the work of Roland Bathes (1981). The postcard, on the other hand, serves as a general memory catalyst for discursive ponderings (Stewart, 1993). Stewart's work on souvenirs, dealt with below, suggests that these artefacts hold a trace of a past, a distanced [absent] experience which the "object can only evoke and resonate to, and can never entirely recoup" (Stewart, 1993, p. 136). The gallery postcard, like other tourist and promotional postcards, is a souvenir and can therefore be theorized as such.

⁹ Understanding domestic space as extending beyond the home is discussed further in this chapter under the theme 'domestic space' and 'stretched domestic space'.

2.1.1 Souvenirs

A number of researchers have examined the symbolic significance of souvenirs, at a broad conceptual level, to understand how identities are constructed through the use of material objects (Goss, 2004; Kwint, 1999; MacCannell, 1976; Stewart, 1993). Working within tourism studies, Nigel Morgan and Annette Pritchard (2005) examine the symbolic significance of souvenirs at a micro level. They explore how people display fridge magnet souvenirs, in the domestic space, as “touchstones of memory” (p. 29) in post-travel narratives. The in-depth study includes a reflexive account of the researchers’ own souvenir practices. This study is important for my own research on two counts. Firstly, the notion that the tourist souvenir, used in domestic space for memory narratives and subjectivity construction, can be applied to my work on how women use postcards in their domestic spaces. Secondly, I replicate the reflexive voice of the researchers’ souvenir experiences written into the study. Morgan and Pritchard (2005) note that despite the extensive literature available on material culture there is a scarcity of empirical studies on the meanings people attach to objects, why they value them and the level of importance they attach to their purchase choices.

Stewart (1993) discusses the significance of souvenirs from a literature and aesthetic philosophy perspective. She views the souvenir as an object of desire that holds the past in the form of traces which can be re-established through reverie and personal narrative. It is a metonymic device; a sample, trace or fragment of what was. The remembered fragments recreated in narrative are triggered by, and overlaid upon, the souvenir. It is able to “reduce the public, the monumental, and the three-dimensional into the miniature ... which can be appropriated within the privatized view of the individual subject” (p. 137). Stewart distinguishes between souvenirs¹⁰ of actual sights (purchased visual representation – such as a miniature Eiffel Tower) and the souvenir of a personal experience (memento – such as a found shell) and suggests that the later is more than a novelty item. She argues that in fact it can be understood as a material

¹⁰ Each postcard souvenir is a reproduction of an artwork, frequently purchased from the gallery exhibiting the work. However, as discussed in this study and argued by Morgan and Pritchard (2005) the postcard souvenir can also act as a holder of individual memory and experience.

mnemonic that provides a useful way of understanding how personal histories are maintained through narrative.

Morgan and Pritchard (2005) draw on Valentine (2001) to argue that personal subjectivities are socially constructed multiple and “hyphenated performances” rather than understanding subjectivity as ‘naturally’ formed (p. 32). Taking a lead from these arguments the postcard display could be understood as a performance space where a multiplicity of subjectivities are rehearsed and evidenced. However, focusing attention on the souvenir simply as a trigger for reliving past experiences may limit its potential. The souvenir could also be understood as a site of renewal, where new associations and links are made from a triggered past that suggests new understandings of the self.

The key insight in Stewart’s (1993) writings on souvenirs is the use of personal narratives to construct a biography that constitutes the “notion of the individual life, ... the worth of that life and of the self’s capacity to generate worthiness” (p. 139). Stewart’s research into souvenirs as a memory trace links with Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Hall when they suggest women use objects within the home as a memory tool that will hold, stir, or form a connection with person and place (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Stewart, 1993). Souvenirs may be understood as valued articles of remembrance, but they also have strong associations of being kitsch and trivial. The following discussion acknowledges this status and suggests understanding souvenirs partly through a re-definition of the word kitsch.

2.1.2 Re-defining kitsch

As introduced in the previous chapter the postcard souvenir is frequently considered to be a kitsch artefact. Often understood as a pejorative term, mass culture theorists Clement Greenberg (1961) and Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (1973) define kitsch as “a style derivative of higher art styles, imitative, given to formulae and stock motifs, and thus radically inferior to the creativity and innovation found in high culture” (Binkley, 2000, p.133). Binkley (2000) argues for a redefinition of the term that by-passes the high art versus

popular culture debate and focuses instead on the repetitive pleasures gained from those artefacts considered kitsch.¹¹ This is a definition which values the everyday lives of individuals by recognizing the pleasures gained from repetition, continuity, conformity, routine and sentiment. It “glories in its embeddedness in routines, its faithfulness to conventions, and its rootedness in the modest cadence of daily life” (p. 135).¹² Understanding kitsch on these terms allows for a re-theorizing of the way social meaning is derived from the postcard. Hence pleasure for the consumer may come from the routines of purchase, the continuity of experience expressed, and the sentiment of recall. Foregrounding these pleasures offers a way of appreciating the significance of ritualized habits in the everyday life and suggests some of the motivating factors behind postcard purchase and collection. So I turn now to memory production and reflect on the role objects play in triggering and maintaining memories.

2.2 Memories

When considering the form in which our memories are recalled, this research draws from a post-structuralist perspective of memory, where retrieval is fragmented, nomadic, fluid and interpretive. Every aspect of life is affected by remembering. It pervades the way individuals think, speak, perceive and imagine. As Terdiman (2006) argues “[m]emory is so constitutive, so indispensable to our intellectual and practical activity to begin with that every cognitive or discursive

¹¹ Binkley’s work on ‘kitsch’ was drawn from Hermann Broch’s 1953 essay “Notes on the problem of kitsch”. He considered the repetitive qualities of kitsch to be a positive attribute. For Broch, European bourgeoisie men of the nineteenth century struggled with new positions of cultural dominance. Formerly, art of the Church and feudal aristocracy established the system of symbols and meanings, but the new middle classes turned away from traditional conventions and used secular art to express an indulgence in sensuality and a decorative affirmation of daily life (Broch, 1970).

¹² As noted above, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) assert that women use objects in the home for contemplation, memories and associations with family rather than using objects for action as men do. This gender difference expressed through artefacts of the everyday is reinforced by Rose’s (2003; 2004) work on family photographs. She remarks on the trivial and banal paradox that is exhibited when some ‘mums’ view family photographs. On the one hand, they are cherished objects which evoke intense emotion and yet on the other hand, they are dismissed as inconsequential (Rose, 2004, p. 244). Such insights into object use and gender differences suggest a site for further inquiry when applied to the postcard.

act or fact is already tangled up in the mnemonic realm” (p. 186). I discuss memory in two ways. First, I foreground how material objects form an integral part of the remembering process. Second, I discuss the fluid and dynamic process by which memory is experienced. As I have noted in the material above, everyday objects such as family photographs (Rose, 2003), souvenirs (Stewart, 1993) and household objects (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981) can seem to become encoded with memories and therefore cherished because of “their implications for self-definition” (Morgan & Pritchard, 2005, p. 32).

Contemporary academic inquiry in the West indicates a strong interest in memory research within the social sciences. Scanning this inquiry across anthropology, cultural studies, tourism studies, history and philosophy, I have become aware of the repeated use of material objects used in their discussions. Rather than proposing that objects possess their own memories, I prefer to view objects as expressing a genealogy from the markings of use.¹³ They become associated with individual, collective¹⁴ and social¹⁵ memories which serve as prompts for the contemplation of a past.

In addition to objects being used to elucidate the writings on memory, much of this collection of work focuses on historical, social, cultural and collective memories, which is explored through individual private memories as well as collective memories (Radstone & Hodgkin, 2006). However, attention frequently rests on the masculinised subjects of terrorism, war, genocide, human rights violations and the legacy of those events in the contemporary world, rather than

¹³ Ivan Illich discusses the tracings that remain from living be that a person (perspiration stains on clothes), an object (worn knife blade) or a dwelling (finger marks left around a light switch). He says “[t]o dwell means to live the traces that past living has left. The traces of dwellings survive, as do the bones of people” (1982, p.119).

¹⁴ Collective memory is a Durkeimian concept developed by Halbwach (1992) and Middleton and Edwards (1990). They argue memory is a discursive social process of collective remembering, which operates outside the minds of individuals. (Perrott, 2007).

¹⁵ Anthropologist James Fentress and historian Chris Wickham use the term “social memory” rather than “collective memory” so that individuals are recognized as having agency with their memory constructions (Fentress & Wickham, 1992). Cited in (Perrott, 2007).

placing attention on the feminised subjects of things within the domestic space.¹⁶ As an example Andreas Huysen (2003) looks at the symbolic value of monuments and counter monuments, memorials and museums, public art and landscapes, which are deliberately inscribed with sanctioned meanings. He suggests that such sites support a breadth of memory narratives, rather than fixing a particular version of a past; for example “[H]uman rights activism in the world today depends very much on the depth and breadth of memory discourses” (p. 94-95). Whether or not the focus of study is at a macro or micro level, objects mediate the memories under discussion. The implication is that without some physical object to stimulate a collective or individual memory focus, amnesia will occur. And without an object of focus for public memory discourse, it will not “allow individuals to break out of traumatic repetitions” (p. 9). I need to reiterate that this study is working within a post-structuralist framework and as such any memory is not fixed or stable, but rather fragmented, partial, fluid and interpretive.

The significance of symbolic objects in memory recall is reinforced by Stephan Feuchtwang (2006). He compares the disposal of belongings when someone dies in ordinary circumstances to the destruction of all prompts when the loss has occurred on an extraordinary and shared scale. The case studies focus on the Holocaust and catastrophic loss and explore what happens when the ‘props of memory’ are lost. Props are artefacts “which stir a chain of recalling attached to an original memory trace” (p. 76). He argues that “[t]he recognition of a loss that is the destruction or removal of most of the persons and extensions of memory for survivors must pose special problems for mourning and authority” (p. 77). He notes that apart from objects as props of memory they become more important

[a]t the other end of life, when attachments to maternal and paternal figures and domestic things have their greatest scope and significance –

¹⁶ Feminist geography research (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; McDowell & Sharp, 1999; Rose, 1993) suggests that issues of gender are critical when considering the dualistic thinking around what constitutes public and private spaces. ‘Private spaces’ are associated with words such as home, feminine, domestic, emotions reproduction, tradition, local and stasis, whereas ‘public spaces’ are associated with words like: work, masculine, civic, rationality, production, modernity, global and change. These opposing divisions are not equal in status. Blunt and Dowling (2006) maintain that public spaces (associated with monuments) are valorized whereas private spaces (associated with domestic objects) are devalued.

the immensity of corners and the potency of repeated, familiar things. What if that is lost, not just beyond recall as a mysterious hint, but denied by some destructive force? What does the survivor do to fill in that absence? (p. 76).

My work is informed by these memory studies into historical trauma aftermath. They are not directly applicable, as the focus rests on the global, the public and the political. However, what is apparent is the significance of materiality to act as a prop, metonym,¹⁷ mnemonic¹⁸ or focus for memory recall. This project indicates how individuals use material objects to hold the everyday details of a past. Rochberg-Halton (1979a; 1979b) suggests that objects become meaningful only as part of a sign system cultivated by individuals, rather than the object carrying inherent meaning. To ‘cultivate’ means to actively attend to the object in some form, be that physically or mentally (“she displays postcards on the fridge”, “she reminisces”).¹⁹ These concepts help to illuminate how women attach meaning to particular postcards and postcards attach meaning to women. Meaning develops from the process of interaction and in the purpose and direction of the interaction. For instance, if the interaction is reminiscing over a family photograph then it is an activity in which signs of loved ones or past experiences are communicated, certain moods associated with those people are induced, and a stream of thought about “how it was” is brought about from a person’s current perspective on how things are now (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981, p. 174).

¹⁷ Invoking an idea or object through the use of an associated detail (‘the crown’ invokes the notion of monarchy (Hayward, 1996, p. 217).

¹⁸ A formula, code or object that is designed to aid memory recall (Brown, 2002, p. 1802).

¹⁹ Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton state that to reminisce means to “actively intend a memory to come into consciousness” (1981, p. 174). Drawing on the work of John Dewey (1957), Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton (1981) describe the transaction between people and things, with an emphasis on understanding the aesthetic experience and ideas about perception and recognition.

Objects carry memory traces, not just as a way to remember details from the past in the present, but also used as a way to ancestralize oneself. The work of anthropologist Jean-Sebastien Marcoux (2001a) examines a divestment ritual of personal objects by the elderly who move into managed care. He argues that placing possessions among kin and friends is a process of identity construction in which “the capacity to place one’s possessions is taken to guarantee the survival of the subject and of his or her memory” (p. 213). The concept of particular memories remaining in people’s consciousness because of the associations made between object and memory is further reinforced in Marcoux’s study.

From a post-structuralist perspective, memory formation and recall, is fragmented, nomadic, fluid, interpretive, subjective and partial, rather than fixed and faithfully reproducible. Therefore the links between materiality, memory and subjectivity formation are inextricably bound. Rosi Braidotti (2006), informed by Deleuzian nomadic memory²⁰ and a Bergsonian continuous present,²¹ uses a quote from the play *Mnemonic* to describe her understanding of memory recall.

We can think of memory as a pattern, a map. But not a stable neatly printed ordnance-survey map, but one that is constantly changing and developing ... Remembering is essentially not only an act of retrieval but

²⁰ Deleuze uses the term ‘nomad’ to break away from understanding the world from a fixed or grounded position. The concept of a nomadic memory includes the individual, humanity generally and things beyond the human. “[L]ife works through fixed perceptions to produce a perceiver and perceived, an inside and an outside, [so the nomadic concept] allows thought to wander, to move beyond any recognised ground or home, to create new territories” (Colebrook, 2002, p. xxvii). For this study ‘nomadism’ is used as a way of expressing the workings of memory and how it travels through time and space. It is a temporal nomadism and its use is not intended to romanticize the lived realities of displacement and actual ‘nomads’. Braidotti’s (1994) use of ‘nomad’, as a metaphor that provides an alternative way of understanding a women’s subjectivity in relation to place, has been criticized as an intellectual (Hughes, 2002b) “class- and race-inflected privilege” (Gedalof, 2000, p. 342).

²¹ For Bergson (1911) the present is not privileged over the past, where time is measured in a successive line from past to present to future. Time can be understood in a way that seamlessly holds not only the present, but also the “present-becoming-past, on the one hand, and the present-becoming-future on the other” (Rodowick, 1997, p. 81). They are simultaneously entangled so the collective body of knowledge informs our understanding of the present. Comprehending time as a continuous present produces an assemblage from the actual physical present and virtual images of the past. Both are ‘real’, but only the actual is in the physical present which is enveloped by a myriad of virtual images (Pisters, 2003). The physical present is informed by, and inextricably entangled with, the virtual images of the past.

a creative thing, it happens in the moment, it's an act ... of the imagination (p. 165).

Memory recall closely resembles a chain of random mental associations rather than an exact replay of past events. The nomadic imaginings illuminate paradoxes and the complexity of repetition which when combined, form a rich “identity and coherence of the self” (Braidotti, 2006, p.165). Memories or a chain of associations are often triggered by a smell, taste, touch or sight. Objects are *aide-mémoires* and by keeping an object (postcard) makes “a conscious choice of remembering” (Marcoux, 2001b, p. 73). However, all objects are not equal. Domestic objects are often feminized objects and perceived to hold less value than their masculinized public counterparts. This devaluing is reinforced by the postcards diminished cultural status. When an object triggers a memory, the recall is a subjective, fragmented, partial process rather than faithfully replicating the past. As memory is fragile and elusive, objects are often used as the symbolic form of the experience. Having discussed how memory is often associated with material objects, or more specifically postcards, I now focus attention on their role in producing subjectivities.

2.3 Subjectivities

To recollect a sensation, smell, emotion, or to recall fragments of an experience is to suggest that memory is integral to constructing the self. Braidotti ²² (2006) argues that memories form a data bank of the self which can be recalled to make sense of the life being lived. By drawing upon these memories the subject is able to register the similarities and differences in a diverse number of experiences, as

²² Rosi Braidotti (1954) a feminist philosopher, considers herself an intellectual nomad. She is Italian born, but received degrees from the Australian National University in Canberra, (1976, 1977) and completed her doctoral dissertation, in French, at the Sorbonne in Paris (1981). Her work was strongly influenced by the French philosopher, Gilles Deleuze, who was giving classes there at the time. She now occupies a tenured chair in the department of Women's Studies at the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands (1981). Many concepts within Third Wave Feminism are aligned with her theoretical concept of sexual difference.

well as sensations associated with those experiences. She calls this the nomadic practice of ‘as if’.

It is *as if* some experiences were reminiscent or evocative of others; [creating] a quality of interconnectedness [that enables us] to rescue what we need of the past in order to trace paths of transformation of our lives here and now (Braidotti, 1994, p. 5-6).

If memory is integral to forming the self; and the process of memory recall is fluid (partial and fragmented), then by extrapolation subjectivities can also be understood as dynamic and multiple. Considering memories and subjectivities in this way provides a coherent platform for the research which intersects relations with women’s subjectivities, domestic spaces and postcards. I draw on the work of Braidotti (1994; 2002; 2006), who defines the subject as nomadic. She metaphorically uses the term ‘nomad’ to describe a multi-differentiated subject characterized by the situated, the specific and the embodied. I include her three part scheme (see below) of feminist nomadism, which rejects the universality of the subject and affirms women’s desire to “enact different forms of subjectivity” (1994, p. 158). The nomadic female interconnects on three different levels of sexual difference that simultaneously occur and co-exist in daily life.

These three levels focus on the differences firstly *between men and women* which critique universalism as being associated with masculinity; secondly *among women* which highlights the multiplicity of various forms of feminist subjectivity; and finally *within each woman* illustrating how a woman is not one conscious subject, but also the subject of her unconscious and is in imaginary relation to variables such as class, race, age, sexual choices.

Braidotti notes that:

Identity for me is a play of multiple, fractured aspects of the self; it is relational, in that it requires a bond to the “other”; it is retrospective, in that it is fixed through memories and recollections, in a genealogical

process. Last but not least, identity is made of successive identifications, that is to say unconscious internalized images that escape rational control (Braidotti, 1994, p. 166)

SUBJECTIVITY AS	VERSUS	WOMAN AS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • phallogocentric • universal notion of the subject • coinciding with consciousness • self-regulating • rational agency • entitled to rationality • capable of transcendence • denying corporal origins or objectifying the body 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the lack/excess/“other-than”/ subject • devalorized difference • non consciousness • uncontrolled • irrational • in excess of rationality • confined to immanence • Identified with the body – corporeality that is both exploited and reduced to silence

Table 1. Sexual Difference Level 1: Difference between men and women

Braidotti, draws on the work of French philosopher, Gilles Deleuze (1977; 1987), and is influenced by French feminist theoreticians Helene Cixous (1991) and Luce Irigaray (1985a; 1985b; 1989; 1993) to consider the multiplicities of the female subject in terms of networks of simultaneous power formations.

Emphasizing the situated, the specific and the embodied differences of a subject is a way of affirming those differences as positive counter-values, rather than providing a reactive criticism against masculine hierarchies.²³

²³ Braidotti moves away from simply critiquing patriarchy towards a model that positively embraces women’s cultural traditions and experience. This aspect of her work was influenced by Adrienne Rich (1976; 1979; 1985).

[M]y work at this time focuses on the intersection of identity, subjectivity, and epistemology from a post-structuralist angle of sexual difference. The central issue is the interconnectedness between identity, subjectivity, and power. The self being a sort of network of interrelated points...that rests not on fixity but on contingency. The nomadic consciousness combines coherence with mobility (Braidotti, 1994, p. 31).

WOMEN AS THE OTHER	VERSUS	REAL-LIFE WOMEN
<p>— as institution and representation</p> <p>(see level 1)</p>	<p>critical hiatus between them—</p> <p>feminist subjectivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● positivity of sexual difference as political project ● female feminist genealogies, or countermemory ● politics of location and resistance ● dissymmetry between the sexes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● experience ● embodiment ● situated knowledges ● women-based knowledges ● empowerment ● multiplicity of differences (race, age, class, etc.) or diversity

Table 2. Sexual Difference Level 2: Differences among women

**EACH REAL-LIFE WOMAN (N.B. NOT “WOMAN”) OR
FEMALE FEMINIST SUBJECT IS**

- a multiplicity in herself: slit, fractured
- a network of Levels of experience (as outlined on levels 1 and 2)
- a living memory and embodied geneology [sic]
- not one conscious subject, but also the subject of her unconscious:
identity as identifications
- in an imaginary relationship to variables like class, race, age,
sexual choices

Table 3. Sexual Difference Level 3: Differences within each woman

To position the work of Braidotti requires a brief overview of Western feminist history. Theorisation into the structure of the self within the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has produced a plethora of different models and approaches within the contemporary humanities. How the subject is perceived is understood from the particular perspective in which it was considered. For example, Freud (1976) understands the subject as being shaped by the unconscious mind and Lacan (1977) argues the subject is defined by the structures of language, whereas Foucault understands the subject as being a product of culture and power (Gordon, 1980b). However, these approaches do not adequately deal with the issue of gender. In the 1970s feminist writers such as Chodrow, (1978) Greer (1970) and Oakley (1972) challenged the sex/gender distinctions by separating out the biological reality from cultural identity. They argued that female gender distinctions are products of socially and culturally sanctioned systems of hierarchy rather than a natural outcome of biological differences between males and females (Mansfield, 2000). Contemporary feminist writers continue the dialogue but question the sex/gender distinction as a useful analysis framework

(Butler, 1990; 1993; Grosz, 1994; Johnston, 1994, 2005; Longhurst, 2001; Longhurst & Banks, 2004). Even if such a framework was useful, separating out the social influences from the biological effects would be difficult as “[g]ender is constructed through, and inscribed on, sexed bodies” (Longhurst, 1999, p. 154). Braidotti’s (1994) model acknowledges the debate and critique of universal subjectivity, but suggests a model of feminist theory that positively acknowledges difference; the differences between men and women, amongst women and within each woman. Describing the nomadic subject in this way provides a model for understanding the complexity of the relationship between subjectivity and gender. In sum, the work of feminist theorists is useful to discuss the social and the biological influences on women’s subjectivities. I now draw on studies that focus on the influences of class, education and ‘taste’ to help understand the complex relationships between postcards, women and space.

2.3.1 The embodiment of culture: Habitus

The work of social theorist Pierre Bourdieu (1984; 1988; 1990) suggests that a subject embodies a particular culture, which he calls ‘habitus’.²⁴ Even within each culture a subject inhabits several habitus and that these may correspond to different social positions or socio-economic classes. His model explores the impact class structure has on subject construction and how the layered influences co-exist simultaneously. Class rather than feminist concerns drive his research but the work does move beyond abstraction. In France he conducted empirical research into the influences of ‘taste’, suggesting our social class and background are so deeply embedded that they lead us unwittingly to certain tastes, orientation and disposition. I therefore draw on Bourdieu’s conclusion that class and education shape taste to provide a base of understanding into who was likely to use postcards and why.

²⁴ ‘Habitus’, a term coined by Pierre Bourdieu (1977), is the learned and embodied framework of ways of doing things and thinking things which provides us with a blueprint for living life in the day to day. They form our habits which are partly unconscious, partly conscious, partly mental, partly written and partly embodied. Habitus/habits are also about the way we use them or are structured by them.

Across the eleven participants interviewed for my research, education was the strongest linking factor. They share similar backgrounds but exhibit differing economic positions; partly as a result of the wide age range (26 – 59 years) which reflects the differing life stages of the participants. Bourdieu argues in *Distinction* (1984) that our preferences, our judgements and our enjoyment of art are directly tied back to socio-economic influences. This appears to reinforce Bourdieu's contention that "[a] work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded" (p. 2). His research explains some of the forces operating, but implies through the deeply embedded and unconscious nature of the influences that individuals are powerless to develop and move in new directions.

Countering this restrictive view of embedded habitus, a number of contemporary theorists would concur with the concept of individuals inhabiting a habitus or a number of habitus simultaneously. However, they would view it as a knowledge platform from which to understand and experience the world differently (Braidotti, 1994; 2002; Deleuze & Guattari, 1977). Another problematic aspect of Bourdieu's (1984) study is his implication that the only way to gain from looking at art is through "a function of the knowledge (savoir)," which recognizes style, characteristics of a period, school or author called "stratum of secondary meaning" (p. 2). Such a hierarchical commentary on art reception ignores the numerous and alternative ways art viewing can give pleasure at differing times and circumstances. The gallery visit may include pleasures associated with companionship and cultural outings (Debenedetti, 2003), resemblance to "religious rituals in form and content" (Duncan & Wallach, 2004, p. 53), or be one of many tourist destinations (Goss, 1999; Stylianou-Lambert, 2007).

Subjectivity can be imagined from a Bourdieuan perspective that emerges out of habitus, formed from the influences of class, culture and education, which have been instilled, embedded or embodied. Or alternatively subjectivity could be imagined from a feminist perspective, which draws attention to the layers of difference between men and women, between women and within each woman.

These theoretical perspectives can be linked together and understood as a nomadic consciousness which combines coherence and interconnectedness with mobility and transformation, where the subject has creative agency and is always in an ongoing state of becoming.

In addition, because this research examines what women 'do' with postcards, the construction of subjectivities can also be conceptualized through performativity. A number of theorists have used this theme to discuss the interaction between individual(s) and audience(s) (Goffman, 1974), the embodied expressions of gender and sexuality (Butler, 1999; McDowell, 1999; Rose, 1999) and spaces (Gregson & Rose, 2000; Turner & Manderson, 2007). To define performativity I draw on Gregson and Rose (2000) who argue that:

performance – what individual subjects do, say, 'act-out' – and performativity – the citational practices which reproduce and/or subvert discourse and which enable and discipline subjects and their performances – are intrinsically connected, through the saturation of performers with power. (p. 434).

My research is informed by these studies as I seek to theorize how subjectivities are performed and expressed through visual objects (postcard) in a number of spaces. The multiple subject positions expressed amongst the participants, such as the gallery visitor, postcard consumer, artist, art teacher, arts administrator, cultural tourist and expressing cultural capital through postcards are all constituted through performances and each performance may differ between and within each woman depending on where and when the postcards are used and understood. Social performances may be repeated countless times, but each performance is not faithfully replicated. However their repetition does reconstitute subjectivities. Postcard performativity involves the saturation of performances and performers with power (gender, discourse and institutional), spaces and particular subject positions. Subjectivity may be constructed by performativity through what an individual does, or expresses, but performativity can also be thought of as a conceptual tool for understanding spaces. A tool that

provides a way of understanding “the complexity and instability of performances and performed spaces” (Gregson & Rose, 2000, p. 33). Moving from the performativity of discourse which produces subjectivities I now examine the performativity of postcards to produce spaces.

2.4 Performative spaces

To understand the construction of spaces I use the concept of performativity to frame my discussion. Spaces or more accurately for this research the related concepts of performative domestic and stretched domestic spaces operates in this research in relationship with the conceptions of postcard, memories and subjectivities discussed above. To discuss performativity and how it operates with space I refer, in the first instance, to Rose’s (2004) study as she uses the term in relation to what is ‘done’ with family photographs, in particular where the practices of taking, posing, developing, display, redisplay, dusting and looking at family photographs in the domestic space are considered. I refer in the second instance to Rose’s (1999; 2004) work where she suggests that the ‘doing’ practices can be framed within the ‘performative turn’ in the social sciences.²⁵ She considers the way space is practiced and can be understood as something that “does not pre-exist its doing”, and as something that is

a matrix of play, dynamic and interactive, its forms and shapes produced through the citational performance of self-other relations. Which is not to say that space is infinitely plastic. Certain forms of space tend to recur, their repetition a sign of ... power (Rose, 1999, p. 248).

Using the language of performativity presents a way to rethink ideas of subjectivity and space by giving emphasis to the habitual practices of *doing* rather than a focus on text, images and discourse. What is done with the family photographs is not too dissimilar to the postcard practices of purchase, display, redisplay, looking and storing. Although, I talk about performativity as practices of doing, I also

²⁵ Rose (2004) draws on Catherine Nash’s (2000) review of how performativity is used in cultural geography.

understand it as a practice that performs subjectivity through consumable artefacts. The postcard display areas, within domestic spaces, can be understood as a performative extension of self. This use of performativity looks to straddle the performative practice of doing (Gregson & Rose, 2000; McDowell, 1999; Rose, 1999; Turner & Manderson, 2007) with the embodied performance of gender and sexuality (Butler, 1999). The postcard displays can be expressive and or reflective spaces.

The various postcards, photographs, memorabilia display areas (performative spaces) are not exclusively about projecting subjectivities. They may also be used as a reflective or liminal²⁶ space within domestic or stretched domestic spaces. The performative display may be an entry point or transition from the actual physical present into the virtual realm of imaginings or memories. Turner's (1967) work applies to cultural and religious rituals and processes of transition, but the concept could also be perceived as a temporal transition. The postcard display is a complex space of binaries simultaneously expressing the trivial/treasured, temporary/permanent, referent/metonym, public/private, collective/individual memories matrix. Objects on display areas such as the fridge or office pin board may register subliminally during the comings and goings of daily life. Yet at other times, the display objects may resonate and trigger an intense memory chain across time and space that may bear little relationship to the representation. It may be able to prompt the viewer to move from the actual to the virtual space of memory connections, rather than the space operating solely as a functional display. I would suggest that postcards are able to trigger a unique memory that resonates with intensity (positively or negatively) and could be aligned with Barthes' theoretical

²⁶ *Liminality* (from the Latin word *limen*, meaning 'a threshold') describes the transition space between two states: ambiguity and openness. Used in the anthropological work of Victor Turner (1967) to describe the second state of ritual theory. A transition stage within a ceremony – a time of “betwixt and between”, “neither here nor there” (1967, p. 97). One's sense of identity and equilibrium is suspended, during this time, so that normal thoughts, self-understanding, and behaviour relaxes and so opens the way to something new. Turner suggests that “Liminality may be partly described as a stage of reflection” (105) and that the liminal process can be accompanied by processes of growth (97).

concept of “punctum” and “stadium”.²⁷ This is counter to Rose’s (2003) use and understanding of the term. During her interviews, when women were responding to their family photographs, she “rarely glimpsed a punctal moment” (p. 15). The difference in understanding rests on what constitutes *punctum*. Rose interprets it to mean “a disturbance, a tear in the cultural fabric, intensely felt and personal” (p. 15), whereas I interpret it more as a detail that holds the attention of the participants and myself, which encourages imaginings. Barthes (1981) elaborates on his definition of *punctum* being an accident which pricks, by saying it is a ‘detail’ that attracts a partial object, which has “potentially, a power of expansion” (p. 42-45) that the imagination transports elsewhere.

Returning now to the postcard and its ability to move the viewer from the actual to the virtual space, I argue that these artefacts can serve as an entry point that opens up to a space elsewhere. Those memories, visually triggered, always change

in the materiality of their recall. Art images lie amongst, alongside, interwoven with, images of rooms we have lived in, faces we have seen, the visual shapes taken on in memory of experiences we have lived through (Stupples, 2003, p. 132).

Turner’s notion of liminality (1967) centres on a period of transition, where the individual is “betwixt and between”, or “neither here nor there”. This understanding of liminality can be applied to the performative spaces of postcard display to act as a point of entry into the assemblage²⁸ of multiple, fragmented and reinterpreted

²⁷ “A photograph’s *punctum* is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)” (Barthes, 1981, p. 27). It is a term Barthes uses to describe the jolt of recognition when a viewer resonates with a detail in a photograph. This resonance is unique to the viewer. *Stadium*, is a term used to describe a photograph that is culturally legible to all. Although these photographs are understood, they provoke only a general inconsequential interest. I liken this prick called punctum with Deleuze’s term “intensity” which creates affects of “sensation and significance” (Williams, 2003, p. 8).

²⁸ ‘Assemblage’, is a Deleuzian concept that describes all of life as the cumulative outcome of a series of processes, connections and interactions. Every thing or animal is the result of a series of connections. For instance the “human body is an assemblage of genetic material, ideas, powers of acting and a relation to others bodies. ...[T]he human is the effect of a series of assemblages: genetic, social and historical” (Colebrook, 2002, p. xx).

memories. It is a useful way of understanding a transition space of reflection. However, it does not highlight the assemblage that is formed from the postcards/photographs and memorabilia combination or the affects produced from the assemblage itself. The combination and juxtaposition of postcards next to photographs and mementos form an assemblage that encourages a variety of disparate connections, thoughts and sensations. Deleuze would describe these connections as a moment of intensity that forms ‘lines of flight’ (Rajchman, 2000).²⁹ These mental associations or thought ‘flights’ are unique to an individual viewer rather than being a commonly understood narrative. The performative displays produce and express multiple subject positions (such as ‘the traveller’, ‘gallery visitor’, ‘postcard purchaser’, ‘high art’ interests and ‘taste’ indicator) which in turn are interpreted in multiple ways by the producer and its audience. Beyond these projections the performative space provides a reflective focus that can trigger thoughts from the present, to the virtual space. Applying this theoretical framework of performativity to the postcard display makes apparent the layers of influence operating. I now move from describing the temporal influences of the postcard display to suggesting how these postcards also construct physical spaces.

The domestic space is predominantly a private site of relations between people and objects, which simultaneously has links with the socio-economic public space. Feminine subjectivity can be defined through objects which mark out or express a space signifying “status, style or taste, and other times ... serving as a focus for managing self-identity, family relations or self-esteem” (Woodward, 2001, p. 121).

²⁹ ‘Lines of flight’ is a Deleuzian concept which refers to the threshold between assemblages that triggers a vector of escape, bifurcation or imbrication between milieus. In this instance the juxtaposed postcards trigger new connections or lines of flight (Rajchman, 2000). Any form of life from a body, social group, organism or even a concept is made up of connections which are able to open up to transform it into something else. Lines of flight are always fragmented rather than complete because of the boundaries and borders that are crossed. ... “[C]onnections are not social interactions between already constituted subjects; they are at once “smaller” and “larger” than individuals and suppose a kind of sociality not based on the mechanisms of collective recognition or identification. Deleuze’s basic principle is that society is always *en fuite* (leaking, fleeing) and may be understood in terms of the manner in which it deals with its *fuites* (leaks, lines of flight)”.

Research which explores the ‘making’ of home suggests that it is a gendered practice where women, in nuclear families, are predominantly responsible for maintaining both its ideals, materialities and decoration (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Rose, 2003, 2004). Gregson and Rose (2000) argue that the performative spaces within the home are like ‘stages’ (and for this research the ‘stages’ would describe common places for postcards, such as on the fridge door, book shelf, pin board and office wall) which

do not pre-exist their performances, waiting in some sense to be mapped out by performances; rather, specific performances bring these spaces into being. And since these performances are themselves articulations of power, of particular subject positions, then we maintain that we need to think of spaces too as performative of power relations (p. 441).

I now move from a general discussion of performative space to focus specifically on how postcards displays perform and produce domestic spaces.

2.4.1 ‘Domestic space’ and ‘stretched domestic space’

Rose (2003) notes that research into ‘domestic space’ has gained traction across a range of academic disciplines, especially from post-structuralist feminist geography writers Blunt and Dowling (2006), Longhurst (1995), Mackenzie and Rose (1983), McDowell (1999) and Massey (1994). These writers do not assume the home to be an idealized haven, but suggest it could instead be read as a restrictive, oppressive space where women cook, clean and care for others without wages. Although the domestic space is considered a distinct space, a space separate from political and economic institutions, such spaces are inevitably connected to and influenced by aspects of this wider context (Rose, 1993). Dominant discourses about domestic space produce a relatively identifiable structure created from the rhythms and habits of its members. However, it is not a static or fixed space, endlessly repeating the status quo.

Contributing to this notion that domestic space is dynamic, Rose (2003) argues that family photographs make viewers aware of geographical distance as they can

“produce a space that is differential. It is integrative but is haunted by fractures and absences” (p. 9). She names this “stretched domestic space” (p. 12) because the family photographs are seen as a trace of a person’s presence while being aware of their physical absence and geographical distance. This reiterates Roland Barthes’ (2003) famous phrase ‘here-now/there-then’ or presence/absence. The sending and display of family photographs produces a “spatiality and temporality that encompasses distant spaces by articulating absence, emptiness and loss as well as togetherness” (p. 7). Rose’s (2000) work refers specifically to how family photographs produce a spatial connection with family members. This builds on the work of Wise (2000), but he does not restrict the focus to family photographs alone. Books, music, clothing and perfume are included as “markings” of space (p. 296). This insight of any object being able to “articulate with a then (memory-space)” (p. 298) provides a way to follow how postcards may produce the same affect. Displayed postcards can bring to mind the art but also its connection with place, people, experience and emotion.

Beyond the objects articulating geographic distance, Rose’s (2003) study also focuses on what women do with their family photographs and the meanings they attach to them. The findings demonstrate that women store, display and send copies of the photographs to friends and family, even though it was their men who usually controlled the camera, indicating that the specific practices of display are part of wider gendered practices. For these women the photograph triggered a recall of and connection with people, rather than with place.

These findings were confirmed by Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) and elaborated upon by Deborah Chambers (2003), who argues that family values and meanings are narrated through family photograph albums, and represent ideas about spatial identity and belonging. She positions the recall and meaning around oral interaction rather than the unspoken personal narratives that Stewart (1993) discusses in relation to souvenirs.

I draw on the work of Rose (2003) and Chambers (2003) because they focus on what women do, and the meanings they associate with, family photographs in domestic spaces. My research looks solely at what *women* do with postcards in the *domestic space* and the meanings they associate with them. I recognize the two objects do not morph seamlessly. The family photograph is generally snapped by a family member of a family member while the postcard is a reproduction of a work of art. The postcard is not a referent of family members but the desire to keep, display or send to friends and family (as discussed in the following chapters), along with the associations of social connections, personal memories and identity, bear similar qualities to the photograph. However, with scant material available on postcard use in the domestic space, the family photograph research provides a strong framework from which to draw.

The work of Rose (2003) and Wise (2000) refers to domestic space as conceptually and actually fluid. Rose (2003) understands domestic space as centring on the home but extending outwards as the photograph is

displayed and circulated in awareness of the pervasiveness of absence and distance. Hence the spatial stretching of domestic space beyond the home. Photos bring near those far away (2003, p. 12).

Wise (2000) study discusses how individuals territorialize a space, which he loosely names 'home', through personal or familiar markings or objects. For example he territorialized his car, which he labelled a 'home', by travelling the familiar landscape of a commute "marked by mile markers, exits, radio stations whose signals strengthen or collapse" (p. 295). Home in this instance, is understood as more than the "place we 'come from'; it is a place we are. Home and territory: territory and identity" (p. 297). He further illustrates this territorialization by discussing his university office in terms of being a "secondary home". A place "with the requisite teetering piles of books and papers, and a small apartment room" (p. 296). The work office becomes territorialized into a "secondary home" by personalizing or domesticating it. I chose this study as it articulated how domestic space could be

extended to a place outside the home and therefore provide a way to theorize performative postcard spaces in the work place.

Stretched domestic space can be realized as reaching out through the materiality of the postcard and family photographs to connect with people geographically distanced. Or stretched domestic space can be realized as domesticating a public work space with memorabilia that acts as a public and private marker. I incorporate both of these concepts to help theorize postcard performativity. Performative spaces of postcards, photographs and memorabilia simultaneously denotes a multiplicity of things. It is a materialized expression and reflective space of the producer, which in turn stimulates associations for an audience. In addition to postcard performativity producing subjectivities they also produce spaces. These are concepts which serve as the basis of a framework to explore how women themselves understand and narrate their own relationships to art postcards and their everyday use. The feminist post-structuralist underpinnings of this theoretical framework also inform the development of my chosen means of inquiry that is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The post-structuralist approach which underpins my theoretical framework also informs my methodology. An interpretative framework, drawing from feminist post-structuralist methodologies, is used to understand how meanings are generated. It recognizes the unstable and fluid nature of knowledge production; a knowledge that is partial, incomplete and context bound. This research does not seek to present a definitive positivist outcome through large data sets, but rather it seeks to understand how a small number of women (nine) use postcards in their domestic spaces and the meanings they attach to postcards spaces and themselves. I have chosen methods that enabled me to draw out and encourage women to reflect and talk at length about a social practice that not only deals with the ephemera, but is also bound up in the subconscious routines of daily life. I recognize that post-structuralist methods, like all other research methods, will be inadequate in some way. Trying to access something that is nebulous in nature will always resist a clear understanding because of its associations with multiple use and meanings.

In-depth semi-structured interviews, visual methodology and auto-ethnography are used in this research and are in line with feminist geographers who chart and review qualitative methods appropriate for researching domestic spaces, gendered subjectivities and materiality. Qualitative methods and their applications have been critiqued in-depth by Aitken and Valentine (2006) and Rose (1993; 1997; 2001). Feminist researchers try to understand and negotiate the distance between the researched and the researchers by working collaboratively in an empathetic environment of knowledge sharing (Aitken & Valentine, 2006). The semi-structured interviews, visual methodology and auto-ethnography used in this research are not methods unique to feminist geographers. However, their theoretical orientation is what has guided the overall framework of my research and drawing on their work maintains a feminist post-structuralist alignment.

In this chapter I have three objectives. Firstly, to introduce the participants of my study: nine women who use postcards in their domestic spaces and two art gallery informants responsible for postcard reproduction and sales. Secondly, to describe the methods used in this thesis and to provide a critique of each method, and thirdly, to reflect on my multiple roles as a social science researcher and postcard consumer. Throughout the discussion below I relate my research methods to my theoretical framework and suggest that my epistemological platform provides a link between my research questions and the ability of the methods to access those areas of interest.

The research applies a triangulated research methodology to encourage a more substantive understanding of reality that charts the nuanced and multifaceted meanings associated with postcard use. The research design also needed to be flexible enough to adapt to the availability and wishes of the participants. In-depth semi-structured interviews provide the main methodological data source for the research. To focus the minds of the participants on their postcard use, I asked them to photograph their postcard displays before the interview was conducted. This visual methodology (de Leon & Cohen, 2005; Knowles & Sweetman, 2004; Pink, 2001) encouraged participants to reflect on what the postcards and displays have come to mean. Follow-up interviews³⁰ were conducted with two of the participants: one in person and one by e-mail. One interview was conducted solely by e-mail. The pros and cons of the follow-up interview and e-mail interview responses will be elaborated upon further on in this chapter.

Auto-ethnography was the final method used in the study. This emerging post-structuralist methodology encourages the researcher to talk about her own experience and offers unique insights into social practice (Alsup, 2004; Morgan & Pritchard, 2005; Rose, 1997; Wall, 2006). Most research emerges from a researcher's intense interest in a particular field, supported by a background of knowledge or experience. Utilizing that interest along with the situated knowledge "lets you use yourself to get to culture" (Pelias, 2003, p. 372).

³⁰ I had originally intended to conduct follow-up interviews with all participants but this proved to be impractical.

3.1 Recruitment of participants

Before discussing the three data collection methodologies, I need to outline the process by which I recruited the research participants. Because the research explores a material object that is seldom given much thought or attention by the users, I chose participants whom I know are postcard consumers with a strong interest in the arts. This choice provides an illustrative rather than a representative sample. Four of the participants have fine arts degrees, ranging from a PhD through to BA level. A further three are tertiary educated in the social sciences and the fourth is currently working through a fine arts degree. I made the assumption that a tertiary education in the arts and social sciences would readily enable the participants to articulate a practice that frequently operates at a routine and under-considered level. The participants did have the language and ability to elegantly express themselves, but being aware of the research process and its expectations the participants may have self consciously provided material that fitted within that academic discourse. Drawing on participants who are products of overlapping factors such as education, social class and profession fit with Bourdieu's (1984) argument that these groups of people carry a certain 'taste' aesthetic. Six of the participants are known to me. The final two participants were selected using the snowballing technique. Sharing a similar background, interest or friendship with the majority of the participants however had the positive effect of facilitating rapport which went towards producing a rich, detailed conversation based on empathy and understanding.

The main selection criterion was based around each postcard consumer being a woman with a strong interest in the arts. I was not seeking participants across a diversity of ethnicity/race, postcard experience or educational backgrounds. All nine participants are Pakeha/New Zealanders, although two are living in London. Ages range from 26 to 59 years. Four of the participants are artists and use the postcards as a working resource. For a more detailed profile of each participant refer to (Appendix 1).

Data was also gathered from two New Zealand arts galleries: a city gallery and a provincial gallery. These galleries were chosen as they both carry postcard stock of previous and current exhibitions. To protect the identity of the participants the

galleries are not named. My first contact with the provincial art gallery participant was by chance. I was buying a complete set of their postcard stock and a conversation began with the gallery receptionist about this research. She expressed interest in being part of the study, so I followed up with a consent form (Appendix 2) and information sheet (Appendix 3) and an interview time was organized. With the city gallery I sent an e-mail requesting research support from the director (Appendix 4) and this was forwarded to the gallery shop manager. An interview time was subsequently arranged through e-mail. Before the interview took place I made myself known to her during a personal visit to the gallery.

All interviews were audio recorded and the resulting tapes transcribed verbatim. To respect the views of the participants, pseudonyms have been used for all of the participants with the exception of Sarah, who was happy to be named. Each participant was encouraged to choose their own pseudonym. One of the postcard consumers, who lives in London, conducted her interview by e-mail, responding to broad topic questions (Appendix 5). The e-mail response was supported by a series of photographs depicting how the postcards were displayed in her studio. Another postcard consumer, whose initial interview was conducted face to face, provided a follow-up interview by e-mail.

3.2 Visual methodology

Over the last three decades qualitative researchers have given serious thought to using images with words to enhance understanding of the human condition. Taken cumulatively images are signifiers of a culture; taken individually they are artefacts that provide us with very particular information about our existence (Prosser, 1998, p. 1).

The 'visual' as research subject or research method, has received much critical attention from contemporary social science scholars who recognize the impact visual culture has on shaping our understanding of the world. (see Knowles & Sweetman, 2004; Pink, 2001; Rose, 2001). Because this research is based around a visual artefact (postcards), it seemed logical to use visual methodology in the

data collection process. How participants use the postcard in their domestic space becomes replicated in the research methodology.

Just as images inspire conversations, conversation may invoke images; conversation visualizes and draws absent printed or electronic images into its narratives through verbal descriptions and references to them (Pink, 2001, p. 17).

At the initial stages of the research planning process, asking participants to photograph their postcard displays was to be used in two ways. Firstly, the postcards would stimulate the telling of what each postcard was associated with and therefore highly likely to be a personal indicator of their individual subjectivities. Postcards, like all other images that surround us on a daily basis, “are an important part of the ways in which we develop ideas of who we are, our relationships with others and the world around us” (Painter, 2002, p. 196). Secondly, the display photographs provided visual records for content analysis. The image content and themes expressed would be a resource that illustrated a particular aesthetic sensibility and subjectivity. It became apparent though, while conducting my first interview with Bella that the postcards and the meanings she attached to those postcards, were of more importance to her than the particular image itself. The display photographs were reassessed as a methodological tool. The emphasis moved from the postcard content being of central interest, to the photograph providing a way of learning about the participant’s postcard practice.

Because the research explores an area of everyday life that is conducted, in some instances, subliminally, the very act of participants photographing their displays stimulated reflection on their postcard practice. The process of photographing the displays ‘primed’ the participants for the interview. Because the interview began by the participants sharing the photographs it provided an informal and conversational way of proceeding. The photographs helped establish rapport, provided focus for the topic itself and mediated the interview process.

Despite the fact that six of the participants were known to me, the interviewer/interviewee discourses relating to expectations, obligations and power relations were operating, albeit at a subtle level. (See Women & Geography Study

Group, 1984; Katz, 1992). The photographs provided an intermediary agency which helped break down these discourses.

Asking the informant to provide the artifacts lets him or her choose what items are important or pertinent to the discussion and to share control of the interview with the researcher [which in turn] creates an environment of trust and equality (de Leon & Cohen, 2005, p. 202).



Figure 3.1 Photograph of Sarah's studio fridge which she sent by e-mail before the interview took place.

Having the participants' photograph their own displays provided them with control over what images were shown, how they were arranged or re-arranged and what display spaces were photographed.



Figure 3.2 A selection of postcards that Red arranged/photographed on her kitchen table in London. They were not on display in her flat as she was about to travel back to New Zealand for an extended holiday. Photographs of postcards plus a selection of actual postcards purchased from European galleries were brought to the interview.

The photographs also helped to facilitate the flow of the interview and provided a site to return to when the interaction and pace lapsed momentarily. In essence the postcard operated in the interview process, as it does on the ‘fridge door’, stimulating memory and therefore a line of flight to elsewhere.

Using objects can also bring order to a semistructured interview by keeping the informant focused on a topic and providing a trigger for memories that might otherwise remain buried or actively exclude (de Leon & Cohen, 2005, p. 202).

Using visual methodology as an interview probe/prompt produces a number of positive outcomes. By asking the participants to photograph their postcard displays I prompted a self-conscious awareness of their postcard practice. That awareness changed the very nature of that practice and how it was originally perceived. However, this self-conscious awareness was an expected part of the

encounter between researcher and participants, within a post-structuralist paradigm.

As outlined above, this research is not using a positivist approach that seeks a single truth, but rather an approach to understand how a small sample of women think and feel about their postcard collection. Working within a subject area that is inherently unstable and intangible, post-structuralist visual methodologies accommodates this flux and fluidity well.

3.3 In-depth semi-structured interviews

At the research design stage I imagined interviewing most participants within their homes, the context of their postcard practice. In total nine interviews were conducted face-to-face. Four interviews were conducted in the participants' homes, but only Bella had postcards on display. (This interview was a follow-up to the first one conducted in my home.) Of the remaining three, of the four interviews conducted in the participants' homes, one was living in temporary accommodation, another had recently moved house and had not yet decorated, and another participant only displayed postcards in her office space. The remaining five interviews were conducted in my home, separating the participants from their display contexts. Therefore, the photographs emerged as a vital tool which encouraged and maximized narratives of postcard practices. However, responding to the postcards themselves rather than a photograph of the postcards may encourage a stronger response. Jeanne, a participant who only displays postcards in her work place, brought her postcards to the interview. Each question asked was responded to through a particular postcard that she shuffled through and found. Reading the message on the back and handling the postcard stimulated an intense personal narrative about what it stood for and who it was connected to. I illustrate this interplay by describing what happened early on in the interview process. I picked up one of the postcards and asked:

Chris: Is that a Rachel Whiteread installation? [pointing to the '*Embankment*' 2005 postcard]

Jeanne: That was at the Tate.

Chris: Oh, I was there when it was on ...

Jeanne: Were You? ... Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh. This one is from my favourite art history student ever. That is what he sent me. This is what he wrote on the back ... [Jeanne reads the message aloud]

Environment is of no importance

One is conditioned by an idea

All men with similar ideas are alike

Regards, Marcel Proust.

He was a great kid ...

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 5th March 2007)

What was reinforced by the postcard was the value of a material probe, significant to the individual participants, to draw out fugacious memories.

In-depth semi-structured interviews were chosen because of their suitability in uncovering what cannot be observed: memories, feelings, imaginings and intentions. This proved to be a method well suited to understanding the complexities of a social practice (Patton, 2002). It is a method that also aims to preserve the heterogeneous nature of the individual's lived postcard experiences. The in-depth semi-structured interview is designed to generate narratives to make apparent the nuanced detail of each participant's experience and understanding of an individual's social practice. From the interviewer's perspective, this interview method is a paradoxical tool for it requires on the one hand, warmth and intimacy to seek interpersonal understanding, and yet on the other hand, expects the research relationship to maintain a critical distance (Miller & Crabtree, 2004).

The interview is a dance of intimacy and distancing that creates a dramatic space where the interview partners disclose their inner thoughts and feelings and the interviewer knowingly hears and facilitates the story and recognizes, repairs, and clarifies any apparent communication missteps (p. 196).

These semi-structured interviews were loosely structured around an interview schedule. At the beginning of each interview I reiterated the ethics covered in the consent form and outlined the topic areas to be discussed, so that participants knew the overall framework and where the interview was leading. Care was taken

to work through each topic in the schedule, so that consistency was maintained across all interviews. However, because of the individual interests of the participants and the dynamic nature of semi-structured interviews some topic areas were developed more than others. The semi-structured interview is much like a guided conversation involving active asking and listening which allows for additional ideas to be expressed by the participants. It is an interpretative rather than a static process. Each interview is shaped by previous interviews which in turn “informs each subsequent interview” (Miller & Crabtree, 2004, p. 200).

One interview, conducted at my home over lunch, didn't unfold as anticipated. Frida, who is a friend, arrived for lunch and said she was happy to talk about the research topic, but did not wish to be taped as she had nothing of interest to say because postcards were a small part of her life. I explained the research was exploring how mundane artefacts are often dismissed as inconsequential and yet they never-the-less become woven into daily life. She changed her mind about being taped and a surprisingly rich interview pursued. She offered significant insights and new ways of understanding how postcards are used. We both found the session rewarding. However, technical problems had occurred and no recording was made. Notes were taken immediately, so that significant points were retained and a copy of this report was e-mailed to Frida for confirmation or alteration.

The richness of the material gathered was directly related to the interview relationship and interaction. If a mutual ease developed, then the participants were more comfortable about sharing the complex and often intimate associations of the postcard. The discussions produced two levels of response. At a surface level, the responses were tied closely to the postcard souvenir itself, where memories of the gallery visit, art response and associated social exchanges emerged. At a deeper level participants spoke about how the postcards triggered associations of intense connectedness with lovers, friends and family, or they spoke about how postcards were deliberately used as a performative style marker or dream maker. A rich interview was not one-sided, but based on mutual meaning making that involved disclosure by both parties. Participant Sarah, a working artist and art school lecturer, said she was able to isolate and develop her ideas by bouncing off

the interview dialogue. The following extract illustrates conversational discourse with the interplay and development that can occur. I was conversationally involved yet the transcript showed reflexive interview practice. The balance between distance and intimacy was constantly being negotiated. We had been discussing her experience at the MOMA in New York and the ‘must do’ destinations involved with travel. She was responding to my question about the significance of MOMA and then I interrupted her by talking about travel as a leisure concept and Alain de Botton’s book *The Art of Travel* (2003).

Chris: Why is the MOMA so important?

Sarah: Because I grew up in New Zealand and for a great chunk of that time New York seemed like a big important centre for contemporary art, and like I said it is like one of those not so sophisticated feelings that is slightly provincial. It’s one of those oh so important places. I must do ... One of those ones...

Chris: Well, I wonder about the whole travel industry. We seem to have this thing that we must go away, and when we do I wonder if it is about ticking the boxes, as we’ve built up this idea about what we must do. Alain de Botton wrote a great book about just that.

Sarah: Did he write one on love?

Chris: Yes, he did.

Sarah: It sparked an idea, but it has gone now.

Chris: See, I will be so cross with myself when I transcribe, because my voice is in there – I should be shutting up and letting you go.

Sarah: [laughs] but conversation doesn’t work like that, because I’m bouncing off of what you are saying, because you are sparking my way of looking at it.

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 18 April 2007)

At the research planning stage follow-up interviews were intended to form a nuanced and multifaceted understanding of postcard practice. However, only one follow-up face-to-face interview actually occurred. I re-interviewed Bella at her home, at a time convenient for her, but the session was slotted between two other meetings she had scheduled. The rushed atmosphere was not conducive to a contemplative development of her postcard practice. Another participant, Red, provided a follow-up e-mail. She had thought a great deal about what was talked about in the interview and expanded those thoughts in a considered way. The

research topic had captured her imagination, to the extent that she designed and produced a photographic art project based around identity and the postcard. Two other participants offered to develop their ideas, via e-mail, but neither of these offers occurred. Their intentions were genuine, but the effort of producing a written account that records details of everyday life requires considerable effort and I presume the intent became swallowed up with everyday life. The two participants who did write about their postcard practice are long standing friends; therefore, that relationship may have encouraged the interest and extra effort.

As mentioned earlier, one participant, Dora, responded to the topic schedule (see Appendix 5) by e-mail. Living in London necessitated this method, which allowed her to contemplate the questions and respond at times convenient to her. A critique of this method is that people write more slowly than they speak and the responses therefore are more considered and condensed (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). The interviewer/interviewee loses the ability to read multiple visual cues normally available when speaking face-to-face. These cues involved body language and response to the everyday filters of gender, age, dress style and physical environment. The dominant disadvantage with this method relates to the interviewer being unable to probe, question and develop ideas (Berg, 2007).

Interviews with the gallery informants had a different feel to the postcard consumers. With the regional gallery and city gallery, although arrangements had been made in advance, the interviews took place in the public foyers, and in one case the interview was interrupted several times to serve customers. The interview environment did not encourage a quiet, relaxed exchange. I felt inhibited and I sensed the informants were distracted. Both stores were operated by female arts graduates, between the ages of 25-35 years. I asked both informants several times about being introduced to other key staff members involved in postcard production. They were not forthcoming. I did not pursue this inquiry as the main focus of this research was on the users of postcards rather than producers. However, I did note them as informal gatekeepers who inhibited access to other staff members (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). How these young women perceived their client base and assumptions made about consumer postcard taste provides a site for further inquiry. I had established contact with another, distanced, city

gallery, where a male was responsible for postcard production and marketing. He was happy to be interviewed in person but didn't respond to e-mails when I requested conducting an e-mail interview. This was disappointing as I was interested in hearing an alternative perspective. Would he have made the same judgements about 'taste choices' of his gallery consumers?

3.4 Auto-ethnography

Even though scholars have explored the symbolic role of souvenirs, of which postcards would be included (Morgan & Pritchard, 2005; Stewart, 1993), work on the relationship between gallery postcards, domestic spaces and subjectivities has not been scrutinized. Therefore, I have deliberately written myself into the text to provide further insights through my own postcard practice. Auto-ethnography is a valid aspect of qualitative research methodology. It involves a description of the researcher's experience and a reflexive account of the researcher's position/presence and what influence that has on the research process. Auto-ethnography is favoured by feminist researchers who value the personal experience (Alsup, 2004; Rose, 1997; Wall, 2006) and question "the façade of value neutrality" (Berg, 2007, p.180).

[T]he notion that in order to fully reflect the human element (which is so important in qualitative research), the self-awareness, the perspective and the cultural consciousness of the researcher must not only be acknowledged but must become an integral part of the process (Morgan & Pritchard, 2005, p. 36).

As noted earlier the whole research project has been an interpretative process that has evolved from and been informed by the literature and participant perspectives. As such, my own postcard practice is no longer 'innocent'. Whenever I look at the 'fridge door' or office wall displays, thoughts about the research project become entangled now with other triggered memories and imaginings.

Feminist geographers suggest that all knowledge, including the researcher's knowledge, is partial, situated and shaped by specific circumstances. Therefore, it

is argued that to avoid false neutrality and universality the situated knowledges of the participants, and the researchers should be written into the thesis (Katz, 1992; McDowell, 1992). Rose's (1997) critiques this concept and reveals the difficulty of achieving 'transparent' positionality. Instead, she suggests a modest stand, that "inscribe[s] into our research practices some absences and fallibilities while recognizing that the significance of this does not rest entirely in our own hands" (p. 319). This small research project into how nine New Zealand women perceive of and use their postcards can be viewed as exploratory research. It was an interpretative glimpse produced at a particular time and place in response to a particular researcher's questions/dialogue.

3.5 Transcript analysis

Interpretation sits at the heart of this research. Every aspect of the process has been interpreted by me; from what literature is selected, how it is understood, who the participants are, through to the interview design, process and analysis. Therefore, a feminist post-structuralist interpretive analysis is informed by the overall theoretical framework and methodology of the research. The post-structuralist interpretive or meaning centred analysis draws attention to the context and positionality of the participants and the researcher. It finds insightful the contradictions, complexities and multiplicities of the subjectivities studied. Post-structuralist analysis works with and attempts to accommodate the flux and uncertainty that is inevitable when understanding multifaceted subjectivities and multiple perspectives. This analysis style is sensitive to the problems involved with (re)presenting the social practices and points-of-view of others. Positivists criticise the feminist post-structuralist interpretive framework for that interpretative criteria, suggesting that it inhibits the evaluation of texts by traditional, rational, and impartial standards which leave no room to judge a 'good' and 'bad' post-structuralist feminist text. This critique also suggests that the interpretive framework doesn't allow the subjects to speak (Denzin, 2004). Feminist post-structuralist knowledges counter this criticism by arguing "[n]o single method provides privileged access to the 'truth'" (Aitken & Valentine, 2006, p. 287) as each method offers only a partial rendering of the social practice being researched. Ideally, the post-structuralist framework of analysis and

interpretation will place the reader in the centre of the postcard practice through engagement with the narrative text. This text inserts the personal voice and reflects the researcher's subjective account informed by the influences of class, gender, age, race, ethnicity and culture. Participant interviews, like social interaction, are inherently a fluid process that suggests that any such interpretation needs to be understood only as a partial reading.

To aid analysis the transcribed interviews were categorized into broad subject areas or code names: postcards, memories, subjectivities and spaces, and then into sub-codes as a way of capturing the essence of the various accounts. (See Chapters Four and Five.) These subject themes were initially identified through my own practice and assumptions, and confirmed or modified from insights gained during the interviews. These themes assist in the comparative analysis of interview responses to locate similarities and differences. This comparative analysis provides insight into specific contexts. It is a creative process that relies on the researcher making sense of the material in conjunction with the knowledge gained from the literature and the research process itself (Crang, 2005). The small number of participants covering a wide age range provides insight into a variety of ways in which postcards are perceived and used. Wider generalisations cannot be made as I assume there will be great variation across specific social contexts and across different genders.

3.6 My role/location and concluding thoughts

As stated previously I have been a gallery visitor and a postcard purchaser for thirty years. The postcards are important as a record of the work seen but they also serve as a memento of the whole gallery/tourist/social experience. Beyond this, postcards provide a creative space for reflective pleasure. Reflection on their quiet significance in my life stimulated the questions why and how. The initial design structure was guided by my own postcard practice. As the research progressed this structure was confirmed and altered as explanations and alternative viewpoints surfaced. My concern in conducting research on a practice that has formed an aspect of my daily life is that I consider it 'natural' and a common place activity. This has been further reinforced by the majority of the participants being known

to me. At the point of participant selection I had made the assumption that these people use postcards in a similar way to me. During interviews I realized it was easy to make these assumptions or have those assumptions confirmed by the way questions were phrased or how the answers were responded to. Interviewing in a semi-structured form, provides a way of accessing people's ideas, thoughts and memories through their own words (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). However, how much does who I am, what I look like, what I do and the environment in which interviews are conducted affect the data gathered? Such questions inevitably arise, but remain unanswered as Rose says when she draws on Erica Schoenberger's argument, "feminists have not yet learnt how the mutual constitution of their gender, class, race, sexuality and so on, affects their production of knowledge" (Rose, 1997, p. 312).

Five of the interviews were conducted in my home. The surfaces of the home are covered by original contemporary art, in the form of paintings, photographs or cast glass. These works would be considered investment art: Laurence Aberhart, Gretchen Albrecht, Emma Camden, Jane Evans, Judy Miller, David Murray, Fiona Pardington, and Natalie Robertson. The art is not taken for granted, as it provides pleasure and a defined aesthetic, but it is just one of the elements in the home and therefore considered usual. Domestic use of original art and sculpture have associations with middle-class life, but research indicates that displaying contemporary art is unusual and therefore this work would "identify us with some and mark us off from others" (Painter, 2002, p. 213). The art collection displayed in domestic space, which provided the interview environment, does play an integral role in the construction of my knowledge and identity as a researcher. Conversations with the participants, stimulated by the art, indicated how they registered the art/postcard displays and framed themselves against these works.

A number of similarities (gender, education, class) exist between the researcher and the researched, which helps overcome the impact of difference. Ann Oakley (1981) argues that "'insider status' makes cooperation and rapport easier to establish and decreases power imbalances" (in Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 136). However, Rose (1997) suggests that sameness does not guarantee rapport, just as difference does not guarantee objectivity, and so puts forward the notion of

placing the researcher in an analytical position of ‘between’: between the field, between theory and practice and between researcher and researched.

The feminist task becomes less one of mapping difference – assuming a visible landscape of power with relations between positions ones of distance between distinctly separate agents – and more one of asking how difference is constituted, of tracing its destabilizing emergence during the research process itself (p. 313).

I am 55 years old and live in an established home. These two factors of difference will have produced an affect when interviewing the younger participants – postcard consumers and gallery informants (nine) who are flatting or in rented accommodation (Aitken & Valentine, 2006). Feminist post-structuralist knowledges posit that we are less likely to universalise on behalf of other people and places if we take care to reflect critically on how we impact the research at all stages of the process. Being theoretically guided by these knowledges foregrounds the need to acknowledge my position as partial and a product of my social location.

Having led you through this methodological explanation I now move on to the two empirical data Chapters: *Postcards and Memory: The Lived Experience*, and *Subjectivities and Domestic spaces: Entanglement with the Material*. Participant data and auto-ethnographic reflections are presented across Chapters Four and Five and each chapter deals with aspects of the two research questions. Chapter Four relates to how participants perceive their postcards, why they collect them and how they are used to preserve memory. Chapter Five relates to how postcards are displayed and stored as well as how they are used in the production of domestic spaces and subjectivities. These chapters demonstrate the participants’ roles and my roles (researcher and postcard consumer) as domestic space producers, roles that in turn help to produce gendered constructions of domestic space and bodies.

CHAPTER 4

POSTCARDS AND MEMORY: THE LIVED EXPERIENCE

This chapter furthers the notion, outlined in Chapter Two, of the neglected but complex significance of gallery postcards in daily life. It relates specifically to how postcards are perceived, and how they are used in relation to memory, a key feature of participants.

Interviews and auto-ethnography illustrate the value of postcards in everyday life as a memory holder and trigger for remembering place, person and experience. This empirical chapter relates directly to and partially addresses the first research question: *why are postcards of art collected, displayed and stored?* By examining the postcard as a memory holder also enables me to partially address the second research question: *how and in what ways do material objects have a relationship with subjectivities and domestic spaces?* The broad territory of this chapter is the relationship between postcards and memory, but initially I focus on the paradoxical nature of the postcard itself. This thinking fits with the popular postcard discourse that regards it as trivial, on the one hand, and precious, on the other. In addition to illustrating this paradoxical tension I describe how the physicality of the miniature provides ongoing pleasure for participants. From here I focus attention on the symbolic value of the postcard when used as a memory trigger that maintains and recreates memory detail. I argue that the postcards develop a value for individuals far exceeding their original souvenir/memento status. The postcard involves symbolic practices that encode a variety of functions simultaneously. Apart from being a record of the art, the postcard operates as a working resource for artists. It has associations with spaces, acts as a defining marker of subjectivities and develops value over time as the tangible connection with an event, place or person.

Drawing predominantly on feminist post-structuralist theories and methodologies offers me a way of articulating the partial, multiple and context bound ways

postcards construct femininities. Before moving on to these broader ideas, I first focus on the complexities of the postcard itself.

4.1 The postcard paradox

Throughout the research project I have been aware of the language used by the participants and myself when describing postcards. A tension exists. On the one hand, the postcard is often prefaced in apologetic terms as trivial, “dinky” or inconsequential. On the other hand, it is simultaneously spoken about as a precious keepsake that wouldn’t be parted with. Anthony Hughes (2002a) suggests that although the role of reproductions has been significant in the history of Western art since the Renaissance such representations have nevertheless been perceived as inferior copies that tend to fall short of the original. With this reproduction legacy and association with cheap souvenirs, notions of taste, knowledge, social class and impression management become entangled with postcard assessment (Bourdieu, 1984; Goffman, 1974). I chose to acknowledge these negative associations as being part of a postcard’s legacy, but also to look beyond them. By understanding the postcard as kitsch, according to Binkley’s (2000) redefinition, foregrounds the ritualized pleasures associated with postcard use. As discussed in Chapter Two this redefinition sidesteps the hierarchical categorisation of original versus reproduction and values the pleasures gained from repetition, continuity, conformity, routine and sentiment (Binkley, 2000).

Participant Jeanne, a woman in her thirties who was an art history teacher, illustrates the postcard paradox and its associations with ‘taste’. Postcards received from past art history students are proudly displayed in the office space and move with her from job to job. They not only remind her of teacher/student exchanges and the recognition of her art knowledge, but she quite consciously uses the postcard to define herself in the work place. Jeanne left teaching and now works as a contractor in the Child Youth and Family, dealing with at risk youth. She spoke about her limited exposure to gallery spaces outside New Zealand, saying most of her art knowledge comes from reproductions. Consequently, her postcard collection has accumulated from what other people have sent to her rather than what she has purchased.

Jeanne: Every class I've taught I've said "you don't need to talk to me again, but if you're in a gallery I want you to go to a shop and buy a postcard and tell me you have gone and looked at that work". ... They are all around me at work. I've always got these around me at work ... [they] totally personalize me and my space. Different messages from different people and they all mean something and they are all paintings we have studied or conversations that I have had ... [The other people in the office] they are a little intimidated and if I am honest, probably that's part of what I'm doing. ... It's important to set yourself up with some type of lineage of where you have come from.

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 5th March 2007)

Displaying the postcards in the workplace is an important constant for Jeanne as a way of providing her with evidence of a particular subjectivity (as an art teacher), connections with people and a way of establishing authority on art matters. In contrast, her home, which she shares with her partner, has no postcards displayed; only a few large original art works in minimalist surroundings. Postcards may disrupt this gallery like sensibility, as Hughes (2002a) argues in relation to reproductions.

It could be argued that a refusal to admit reproductions to the house or flat, whatever its origins, betrays an anxiety that seems social rather than rational or aesthetic, a defensive fear of being misunderstood as a person who can't appreciate the difference between an actual work of art and its copy (p. 95).

Jeanne illustrates this by commenting:

Jeanne: My partner is in an advertising agency and is very – he's got a very precise eye and so we've got large works in our house that are pretty bold, you know ... We have a Gordon Walters and they just take over rooms ... and it is fantastic and there isn't space ... We have a house that's got large surfaces like this and you don't hang ... [postcards]. Once you have got that on your wall there's just no space for it and we have both got very minimalist kind of attitudes and yet both of us have got significant walls in our offices that are covered with this type of stuff. His for source material and mine I think to define a space.

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 5th March 2007)

It is not absolutely clear from the interview transcript whether the choice to not display postcards in their home space is a decision jointly made or whether Jeanne defers to her partner's knowledge about art and 'very precise eye'. I sense the latter as further on in the interview she noted that Titian's *Bacchus & Ariadne*, a favourite image connected with a student, hangs in poster form in their toilet. I regret not pursuing this line of inquiry into who in the relationship makes the aesthetic display decisions, but became aware of this tension only after re-reading the transcript. It would appear postcards/reproductions are valued in the workplace to make particular statements about her subjectivity and art knowledge, whereas the home in contrast is a place to display original works of art.

I move now from talking about postcard consumption and its complex significance, to how some producers regard their postcard stock. Anthony Blanche,³¹ a woman in her early thirties and the city art gallery shop manager responsible (in discussion with the curator) for postcard production choices, spoke about the postcards in a condescending tone.

Chris: Do you use postcards?

Anthony: I used to, when I was a student and I would have them on the mantle piece, yeah, but ... yeah, but [now] I am more minimal. I have actual originals on the walls [laughs]. One moves on ... [laughs].

Chris: So you see postcards as a substitute?

Anthony: Yeah, I think, yeah I think so. If you can't have the real thing ... I suppose if I had an office it might be a little bit different, yeah, the ladies upstairs they all have little collections up of postcards.

Anthony argues that images held in the gallery's permanent collection or from travelling exhibitions are printed in postcard form if certain criteria are met, such as cost, consumer appeal, copyright issues, Māori art reproduction constraints and appropriateness of subject matter. Of particular interest to my project are the assumptions made by gallery postcard producers about their assumed audiences.

³¹ Anthony Blanche (pseudonym). The gallery manager, chose to gender-bend by taking this male pseudonym from a favorite character in *Brideshead Revisited*.

Anthony spoke of the postcard choice being based around the need to satisfy their major client base - middle aged women. She made specific assumptions about consumers and their demand for accessible images, such as children, animals, flowers or iconography that were often purchased as thank-you or sympathy cards. Anthony commented on Colin McCahon's (1968) *Visible Mysteries I* postcard.

Anthony: It has got a heart on it and even people that don't know anything about modern art and McCahon will look at it and go - Oh, that's a heart, - oh, that's really cute and it's a way in to tackle the art for people. And it is the same with an old fashioned couple sitting on a bench or something. That's always going to sell well – or children or an animal ... as long as it is 'pretty'.

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 23 February 2007)

As a frequent gallery goer and postcard purchaser I am interested to hear the selection criterion for postcard production. When I visit galleries I always look at the postcards available for sale. It is important for me to have a tangible record of the art, but also the postcard doubles as an elegant marker for associated memories. I do not expect every original image in the gallery to be reproduced as a postcard. However, usually I am disappointed in the selection offered for sale, as the images that I'm drawn to in exhibitions have often been unavailable in postcard form. In that instance I would buy an alternative postcard image, which ends up being privileged and representative of the exhibition as a whole. The favoured work then recedes in the memory. 'Cute' or 'pretty' postcards are accessible and understandably popular when chosen for instrumental use. However, I also seek out postcards of the 'tough, 'edgy', or 'challenging' as an accessible way to raise my awareness of different artists and genres. Anthony's assessment of the gallery's client base and preferred postcard imagery is reinforced by Sara,³² a woman in her late twenties, who holds a similar position in the provincial art gallery. She said the postcards that sell well are "not necessarily by well known artists, but just things that are nice to give as cards for birthday presents". The perception of what sells and why appears to differ from the majority of participants interviewed who were often surprised at the limited

³² Sara was interviewed in a public space within the gallery where she works. (In-depth semi-structured interview 1 December 2006).

selection and omissions of major works in postcard form. Are the gallery visitors underestimated? The participant sample in this research is too small to be definitive here, but does raise the issue and suggests an area for further examination.

Even though I consider the postcard to be a highly significant but neglected material object in daily life, I note my diffidence in wholeheartedly promoting art gallery postcards. Like the majority of the participants I also work within the popular postcard discourse that oscillates between trivial and precious judgements. Being aware of this tension I pre-empt any resistance to scholarly research into the humble postcard and its social worth. When explaining the project to friends and family, I use qualifying terms to rationalize such an exploration, before I launch into just how complex and interesting associations with the postcard can be. Although a number of participants oscillated between the trivial/precious descriptions, Tina was quite clear about their worth. She had recently moved to New Zealand from England where she left her scrapbooks with postcards/photographs³³ and mementos in storage. However, Tina instinctively understood the importance of the memorabilia as a remembering tool, as she photographed the display wall in her work place (see Figure 4.1) as a way of holding onto symbolic experiences.

Tina: [They] are not the things that come out with you, and yet why didn't I bring them, because they were probably one of the things that I actually missed the most. [I keep postcards] because if it was really trivial you would have put it in the bin, when it fell off the fridge because the magnet wouldn't hold it any more, but now it stays. It stays in a pile somewhere or gets put in a book, to be discovered at another point where the meaning has changed entirely.

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 16th February 2007)

In addition to this legacy from mass cultural theorists (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1973; Greenberg, 1961) they may also be devalued for their feminized links. A

³³ Tina made no distinction between postcards, photographs and mementos. She was aware the research was only looking at how postcards were used, but kept referring to the objects interchangeably. Most of the other participants also collapsed the boundaries between these objects, especially in relation to the postcard and photograph.

precious artefact belongs to the category of proper ‘Art’ and therefore valued, whereas the trivialized ‘cute’, ‘pretty’ or ‘craft’³⁴ artefact is by association feminized and devalued. Anthony argues that middle-aged women are the gallery’s main client base and makes the links between the feminine, the postcard and the trivial.



Figure 4.1 Photograph of Tina’s postcard/poster display in England. She took a photograph of the wall rather than removing the artefacts and “leaving a hole” for her work colleagues.

4.2 Pleasures of the miniature

Although the picture postcard has been around since 1889 it continues to be favoured as a cheap mass produced souvenir. The participants in my research enjoy being able to take something physical away from an experience, valuing qualities of size, uniformity and accessibility. The result of time passing, re-

³⁴ Feminist art historians Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock (2002) examine the exclusion of certain creative expressions from the ‘fine’ or ‘high’ art category and note their labelling as ‘minor’, ‘decorative craft’. Included in this category are activities such as quilting, weaving, needlework and still-life painting. All of these expressions are considered to be domestic and feminized rather than masculinized.

contextualisation and serving as a memory touchstone confers the postcard with an intangible significance. Participants repeatedly voiced the need to possess something *physical* from a gallery experience. For instance Tina said buying a postcard was

because [the viewing of art] is such a transitory experience ... you want to remember things, you want to have recall and you want to capture the mood that you had and you can't capture the feeling that you had but you can capture something that will remind you of the feelings that you had. Sometimes I buy them, just because I buy them, you know, you pick up and buy and have whatever. They are not expensive, they are not precious ... I suppose, as you tell yourself they are thrown away ... [yet] they never are, thrown away – they're just kept.

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 16th February 2007)

Frida,³⁵ who considered her postcard collecting to be slight and of little consequence, referred to postcards as 'dinky'. She nevertheless enjoyed the gallery shop as a way of extending the art experience in a physical way, instead of the intellectual experience of art viewing. Red spoke of a need to have a tangible reminder of the art work in postcard or photograph form, as a way to 'possess' the work. Satisfying this need aligns with Stewart's (1993) view that a souvenir can be understood as an object of desire which reduces the monumental to the miniature "which can be appropriated within the privatized view of the individual subject" (p. 137).

Red: [It is] both wanting to have something and wanting to be reminded. You want the moment to last longer which is partly the memory, partly the experience and to make it tactile. It's sort of that greed you get ... I guess it is greed, but when you look at a work sometimes you l-o-v-e it soooooooooooooo much you just ... "I WANT IT". There is no way I could afford something like that but just that desire of having it. And so, being able to buy a postcard is like ... [collapses into laughter and gesticulates with arms to show the gigantic to the miniature] ... a very small part.

[my emphasis to convey Red's exaggerated speech]

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 13th November 2006)

I understand Red's desire to 'have' a painting. When I'm struck by the deliciousness of a work I often become so excited I am unable to take it all in and

³⁵ Technical problems occurred while recording Frida's interview. What she had to say has been cited but no direct quotes are used. (In-depth semi-structured interview, 13th February 2007)

stay focused on just looking. I want to have it, tuck it under my arm and look at it quietly somewhere else. Due to the inadequacy of memory as a key to experience, the postcard in a sense provides a physical trace of the art experience that has more immediate accessibility in the re-looking. Paraphrasing Barthes (1981), the postcard as a photographic reproduction of an original art work serves as an indexical link to the referent.

Understanding an indexical link as a powerful way of extending an art experience is specifically used by one of the participants in her art practice. Sarah, a working artist intrigued with ephemera, makes mementos/postcards to support her shows. They are slipped into the show's catalogue and replicate the shapes of her large installation pieces.

Sarah: There is big in art investment and there is little in art investment – like postcards. I am aware that my little envoys will go out into the world and they need to be desirable so people would want to keep them around. I think that is a conscious engagement with that desire. ... I think they are attached to the desire to remember or the desire to keep that thing – that little moment, whatever it is.

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 18th April 2007)

I suggest the postcard is a simple yet powerful mnemonic. It recalls the art depicted as well as fragments of numerous associated memories linked with people, place and experience. Displaying a mnemonic “envoy” in domestic spaces foregrounds a slice of the past in the present.

4.3 Postcard as memory trigger

She could not remember what she could not see, and so she came to forget ... (Jones, 2006, p. 144).

This quote from the novel *Mr Pip* articulates the idea that memory maintains a fresh potency when connected to a material object. The anchoring of that memory seems to inhibit its disappearance amongst the plethora of new aural, visual and tactile experiences. Catching sight of the object can trigger detailed recall. Using the postcard as a touchstone of memory operates in a similar way to the family photograph album, where memories of childhood holidays or family events are

maintained and reinforced through the constant looking (Rose, 2003). There are also the public memories, entangled with private memories, which include the collective, historical and social. These are maintained and reinforced through the symbolic objects of monuments, counter monuments, museums and memorials which dominate the world's landscape (Feuchtwang, 2006; Huyssen, 2003; Radstone & Hodgkin, 2006). Maybe, like the character in *Mr Pip*, it helps to maintain significant memories by attaching them to specific material objects.

All of the participants in the research used the postcard as some form of memory device that worked on numerous levels simultaneously. At a direct referent level the five artists used the postcard art reproductions as a working resource. Like a photograph, the postcard provides a direct visual link to the art (Barthes, 1981; Sontag, 1978). Sarah described the postcards as a form of art note-taking which reminded her of how a work was made as well as a way to recall scale, texture, colour, mood and reactions.

Sarah: They are like little records of the work and I might be able to pick it up and go cool, that's right and I can look at it and remember how it's made and that could be like the note ...

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 18th April 2007)

During the interview I described to Sarah my shock when encountering her work in a gallery, because 'knowing' the work through photographs did not reveal their three dimensional qualities.

Chris: I didn't get the subtlety of it. So I had to be there and see the work rather than understanding it all through a photograph. But, having seen the actual work, I could recall all of the detail when looking again at a photograph of it. My brain could bring it back. Once you know - you can never, not know.

Sarah: Now that's really, really interesting because that is what I think happens as well. Those things there [pointing to her exhibition catalogue and art pieces]; if you haven't seen them the sense of scale is completely robbed of them. Some people can't even see that they are three dimensional objects – so therefore, something is lost [in reproductions].

(In-depth semi-structured interviews, 18th April 2007)

When working on particular aspects of her own art work Dora³⁶ (See Figure 4.2.) noted how she would pull out postcards from her collections and use them as a painting reference. The postcards provided evidence or inspiration of an artist's style, or they provided specific instruction when working on hands for example. Red uses the postcards as a similar working resource and adds how they provide something tangible from an artistic encounter.



Figure 4.2 Photograph of Dora's studio (detail). Postcard used as a painting resource.

Red: I am sure that I would forget some of the works ... probably not the ones I bought postcards of, but it is a nice way to remember, especially if it is not one that you knew to start with. And you grow into it.
(In-depth semi-structured interview, 13th November 2006)

For Athena the postcard was perceived only as a memory key for art and the art experience rather than a reminder of social relationships. In contrast Frida used the postcards as a way of maintaining memories of people or an experience rather than serving as a direct memory of the art. As noted earlier in this chapter Jeanne

³⁶ Dora, who lives in London, was not interviewed face-to-face. She responded to e-mail questions sent 21 February 2007 and replied by letter dated 9th March 2007.

used postcards as memories of students and friends, which reflected *their* experience of art rather than her own. The multiple, complex and contradictory ways that the participants use postcards highlights the experiential differences between women and within women that Braidotti (1994) discusses in her feminist nomadic scheme.

Whenever I visit an art gallery I always finish the viewing experience with a visit to their shop. It has a feeling of reward about it; much like the childhood memories of a promised ice cream after a museum visit. The postcard buying is a combination of looking for a specific work of art as a memory record or else a chance to buy the intriguing, tough or risqué. Because they are inexpensive I don't hesitate to buy work that I am unsure of; an attitude different to when I buy originals. However, displaying intriguing, tough and risqué postcards does raise my awareness of living with and responding to different forms of art and social situations. Frida, an art educator and photographer, stressed that constantly being stimulated by a lot of visual material heightened a person's awareness and openness to new ideas and possibilities. This thinking is in alignment with Rebecca Leach when she draws on the work of Colin Painter (2002).

'[F]amiliarity' and 'contagion' rather than education or knowledge should be the emphasis if contemporary art is to enter more lives. [Like] gardening or football, both require knowledge but it begins at home – with family and friends – not seeming like knowledge at all (p. 154).

Beyond the postcard being a direct memory link to an art work, it can also stimulate indirect and associated memories. The artefact serves as a trigger that elicits a number of associations and does not rely on a literal representation, size or quality for its recall power. To illustrate how the sight of a 'word' can evoke immense detail, I draw on the work of Paul Fussell (1975). He wrote about the realities of trench warfare during World War One in Belgium and France. He explained how each trench section, formally identified by a number, was informally identified by place or street names such as *Piccadilly*, *Regent Street*, *Strand* and trench junctions as *Hyde Park Corner* or *Marble Arch* for example. Glimpsing these words stimulated a memory journey, for the soldiers, to life back

in England rather than the realities of water sodden, rat infested trenches, heavy with the stench of rotten flesh. The visual, in this instance a word, carried sufficient symbolic meaning to surface details of another life which helped deflect thoughts from the reality of the moment. This example points to the complexity of ways in which the tactile and memory intersect.

Participant Tina makes no distinction between photographs and postcards, using them interchangeably as a way of securing memories. She has an understanding that these objects are not a simple trigger for a simple response, but is aware that memories and meanings are tenuous and fragile.

Tina: You need a stimulus; you need a thing to look at and a thing to jolt you. You have half memories and you want to see them – and you need that [photo, postcard] to yank you back – to remind you, to give you the place to move on. It is such a throw away thing, which is nothing but a piece of paper that only costs a couple of cents from the store, but it becomes fused with a great deal of meaning.

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 16th February 2007)

Participant Sarah describes this ‘thing’ as a mental index card which draws memories from a virtual archive.

Chris: And if we don’t have those things, does the detail, the little detail in life disappear?

Sarah: There is potentially something lost if you don’t have your index card.

Chris: The richness, the layering of life?

Sarah: Well, the memory is more potent when it’s actually attached to that object – my recall object kind of thing. I wonder if it acts as a mental focus point for the brain – it can kind of whoosh.

Sarah was able to describe the recall as an embodied experience. One catalogue image stimulated the recall of making the sculpture in a city auto shop.

Sarah: The one picture down the bottom that you can see is in the workshop where I painted it, which is an automotive workshop where I

worked with a guy who does custom cars and things like that. ... There is the whole smell of the paint and the suction of the mask on your face that you have to wear. There are the cups of tea with him and chatting about things and the big burly boys that came in to do work on their cars.

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 18th April 2007)

Leach (2002) argues “[t]he souvenir is an interesting class of object. It contains memories or associations but it doesn’t necessarily resemble them. It’s a reminder rather than a representation” (p. 170). Because the gallery postcard is a reproduction of a work of art rather than a direct referent to memories, (as a family photograph would be) a myriad of different thoughts and memories can be stimulated. As such I consider the postcard to be analogous to a palimpsest. For example each viewing of the postcard stimulates a memory narrative that is then wiped clean for the next narrative. However, like wiping a slate board, a trace always remains, indicating a complex history of musings. Time passing and new associations mixed with old musings can produce further associations and meaning. Tina illustrates this idea of a postcard building up narratives over time. She spoke about coming across a postcard that a friend had given to her but has since died.

Tina: [Things] have a resonance ... It was a photo of Marlene Dietrich and he saw it and thought of me and so – Wow. [Tina is emotionally upset when discussing the postcard’s associations.] And at the time you kind of think aaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhh, and stick it on the fridge and it stays there for ages, and then you take it off the fridge, ... and put it to one side, ... but like other things stuck around the house, they only become important in retrospect when they are either framed differently in some way or some event – like a death in this case, ... makes it all the more symbolic.

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 16th February 2007)

For Tina the postcard and its entanglement with memories seemed to develop significance over time. Sarah, who understands the object as an index card to recall, saw the buying or retention of a postcard as a conscious way to ensure remembering an experience, person or thing. I spoke earlier about how she makes ‘desirable’ miniatures of her art pieces as a way for people to remember. She described the postcard as a way to *edit in* memories.

Sarah: They need to be desirable so people would want to keep them around. ... I think they are attached to the desire to remember or the desire to keep that thing – that little moment ...

Chris: So, we edit out so much in our lives and you want to make your work something that is included?

Sarah: Yeah, yeah It's interesting, an editing device as well [as a memory device] Of all the things you could remember – an editing device is a nice way of describing the things that you keep from editing. ... A way of stabilizing memory perhaps ...

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 18th April 2007)

Describing the act of remembering as a conscious 'editing in' process resonates with Marcoux's (2001b) study into what objects people choose to take with them when they move house regularly or down-size in accommodation. Certain objects are valued as a connection of a personal history, or because they may be the sole link to a person now dead. The reasons may differ for moving an object to a new location, but to select it "is to make the choice of remembering" (p. 73).

Participant Athena, a painter and writer, provided a self-conscious and reflexive perspective on the multiplicity of meanings being encoded onto material objects.

Athena: They are almost like a memory journey for me.

Chris: What do you mean?

Athena: They are a trigger for revisiting that experience of seeing, of being in the place and seeing the work. I stop and remember. It's like a key into the map of the meaningThe images that are on a postcard have their own history, particularly with traditional, religious art – religious iconography, so you've got something that has a generic history as well ... [plus] ... your experience of it. So it's like layer upon layer upon layer.

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 13th March 2007)

4.4 Auto-ethnographic practice

In my own home, postcards secured on the fridge door, pin board or poked into picture frame corners, project public as well as private memories. The public or shared memories are those that relate directly to the artwork depicted

and stimulate narratives for myself and others about the artist, image content and the gallery in which it is hung. However, all visual texts are polysemic, as the interpretation depends not just on the author's intent and context, but also on what experiences, knowledge and emotional responses a viewer brings



Figure 4.3 Photograph of my kitchen fridge door.

to the image.³⁷ As well as this public and more literal reading, the gallery postcard is overlaid with a private narrative. My thoughts and imaginings are exhibited in public spaces but at the same time are invisible to interpretation. They form a narrative that connects the art works with valued people, place, experience and dreams. They provide me with visible evidence of my life outside the day to day present, by displaying past or upcoming events, relationships, desires and

³⁷ Stuart Hall, a cultural theorist within the Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham, describes three positions from which an image can be decoded - Dominant-hegemonic, negotiated and oppositional. The *dominant* position occurs when the reader decodes the text in the same way that the text has been encoded – a seamless, unquestioning alignment. The *negotiated* reading occurs when the viewer understands and even accepts the dominant reading but may modify or negotiate the reading when applied to his/her own situation. The *oppositional* reading occurs when the viewer recognises the preferred or dominant reading but rejects that reading and interprets it from another perspective entirely (Lacey, 1998).

pleasures. This photograph [see Figure 4.3] of my fridge door shows a collection of images that have been sent to the home. They are a combination of photographs, art invitations (Emma Camden – glass sculpture; Seraphine Pick – painting and *Lucia* – opera) and birthday, Mother’s Day, catch-up and thank you notes from friends and family. Beyond those connections, random thoughts and dreams are triggered. At the time of re-looking to write these sentences the Lucia image reignites the desire to see an opera in one of the great houses, such as “La Scala”, and three other postcards trigger thoughts about the multiple sides of a woman’s life – solitude and reflection, conformity and rebellion. On a more pragmatic level the art invitations raise the question of whether to buy more art glass or paintings? These postcards intersect with spaces, memories and relationships. They are contextualized within specific spaces, particularized by individual memories and embedded within various relationships.

Depending on what is happening around me in my home, the conversations I’m having or the mood I may be, are all factors that will determine the memory narrative, if any, that I pursue. A particular relationship/history is cultivated with the postcard through the memory narratives. As discussed in Chapter Two, Rochberg-Halton (1979a; 1979b) suggests meaning develops from the process of interaction between the individual and the object.

Postcard memory is not solely confined to generating personal narratives of experience, people or place. The postcards, and the symbolic practices of use, are also tied up with preserving family bonds. Generations are connected by using and passing on common family memory. These are practices which resonate with family photographs and their role in maintaining relationships (Rose, 2003). Apart from shared memories, symbolic connection is also maintained through shared recipes, home decoration, common jokes, stories, and ways of speaking and in the case of this research, practices of consuming and sharing postcards. These kinds of practices could be seen in a wider sense as a substitute for more direct connections to an earlier event, or simply a practice that is ‘inherited’ from other family members. Traditionally family ties were maintained through close living and economic arrangements, whereas modern family relationships are often maintained through the more obscure symbolic bonds (Kannike, 2002). During

the interview Red spoke about her postcard practices and how she follows the familial habits of her mother, aunts, siblings and cousin in relation to postcard purchase, communication and storage practices. “[A]ctually I keep mine in a draw as she [mother] used to keep hers”. Participant Dora commented on how her children put postcards on their bedroom boards as she does in her studio. My own postcards practices have developed from following my two sisters, who were using them before I was. Celebratory occasions such as birthday and Christmas are acknowledged with carefully chosen gallery postcards, where the visual makes a comment or reinforces the occasion. This practice has been a constant feature of my own life for at least thirty years. The practice is so refined that my eldest sister has a store of cards specifically targeted for each family member. I retain all of these cards and the re-reading and viewing of them form a chronology of our relationship and history. My daughter, I notice, has developed similar postcard practices of communication and display.

In this chapter I have focused on the postcard as an artefact. How it is perceived and how it is used as a memory trigger. I note the popular discourse that operates around any postcard discussions, focussing on a trivial versus precious tension. A way to understand this tension is to acknowledge their simultaneous existence. The historical legacy associated with reproductions and souvenirs can operate alongside the pleasures gained from repetition, routine and sentiment (Binkley, 2000). Postcard practice, within popular discourse, produces a space to toggle between the positions of trivial and precious artefact and provides a way of stabilizing and maintaining memory detail in everyday life. The issue then becomes how these practices associated with memory are performed and expressed in everyday spaces. I now examine, in more depth the role postcards and memory has in the production of gendered subjectivities and spaces (performative domestic and stretched domestic spaces).

CHAPTER 5

SUBJECTIVITIES AND DOMESTIC SPACES: ENTANGLEMENT WITH THE MATERIAL

This chapter examines the co-construction of gendered subjectivities and postcard displays. These displays in domestic and stretched domestic spaces (office space) act as performative expressions of self. At one level the material object (postcard) is performative in and of itself. Participants in this study were conscious of being expressive through materiality and spoke about the stretched domestic displays being more expressive, personal and considered. Such performative displays also allude to multiple subjectivities. As Pritchard and Morgan (2005) suggest:

[c]rucially, identity in contemporary society is constituted through image and style, a highly mutable, transitory and mobile mode of postmodern self ... which accepts and affirms the shifting identities which constitute a 'theatrical presentation of the self' (p. 3).

Subjectivities are entangled with memory, materiality and spaces, so these themes will be laced through the discussions.

This chapter further addresses the first research question: *why are postcards of art collected, displayed and stored?* It relates specifically to how the postcard displays are used by the participants and why. How the postcard is used in relation to subjectivity and domestic spaces address the second research question: *how and in what ways do material objects have a relationship with subjectivities and domestic spaces?* Drawing on material from the interview transcripts I suggest that displayed postcards participate in constructing the subjectivities that constitute 'individuality'. The post-structuralist theoretical paradigm used to inform and support this research recognizes social differences and the importance of individual subjectivities, simultaneously acknowledging the multiplicity and positionality of those subjectivities. Using Braidotti's (1994) nomadic scheme (see Chapter Two) provides a clear illustration of the various levels of influence

that co-exist on a daily basis, and how those differences among women, and within each woman, operate. She does not assume commonalities, but makes apparent gendered spatialities as well as situated and knowledge differences. Using the combination of post-structuralist and feminist geographers also enables an examination of the production of domestic spaces through the consumption of postcard displays.

This Chapter, which covers the themes of subjectivities and domestic spaces, focuses initially on subjectivities. Three dominant (feminized) subjectivities, partially formed from an interest in the arts and postcard purchase, emerged from the participant interviews: firstly the *gallery visitor* (which incorporates the ‘art appreciation’, ‘art educationalist’, ‘artist’ ‘cultural tourist’ and ‘social visitor’), secondly the *postcard purchaser* (who buys them as a souvenir, mnemonic aide, art resource or postcard to send), and finally *cultural capital* (garnered from visiting galleries and generally keeping abreast of what is going on in the ‘art world’). Subsequently, this Chapter examines postcard displays as performative spaces which help to generate and define forms of domestic spaces: domestic and stretched domestic space. This includes the home space and its extension including ‘domesticated’ work space outside the home. I draw this concept from Rose (2003) who suggests that viewing family snaps creates a temporal connection with distanced family, “[h]ence the spatial stretching of domestic space” (p. 12) and Wise (2000) who suggests that ‘domesticating’ a work space with personal objects creates a “secondary home” (p. 296).

Reviewing briefly the relationship between memory, material consumption (postcards) and subjectivity suggests that memory is a key component of constructing the self (Terdiman, 2006). In Chapters Two and Four I have presented the argument that individual memory is a constitutive base to understanding daily life and that material objects form an integral part of that remembering (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Morgan & Pritchard, 2005; Rose, 2003; Stewart, 1993). Any object can stimulate the fragmented recall of personal histories and important others or be used as an expression of an ideal self. Tony Whincup (2004) highlights the significance of encoded materiality when he says “an awareness of self is arrived at retrospectively, by witnessing

consistent patterns revealed and maintained in the concrete expressions of our experiences” (p. 81).

5.1 Profile of an art gallery visitor and postcard purchaser

All of the research participants were frequent gallery visitors and in the case of the two gallery participants, it was their place of work. In addition to Braidotti’s scheme to understand the participants’ subjectivities, I also draw on the theoretical framework of Bourdieu (1984). He focuses on class and the associated socio-economic factors influencing subjectivities. Participants were chosen as interview candidates for their interest in buying, displaying and keeping gallery postcards. According to Bourdieu’s theory this lifestyle choice points to similarities of ‘taste’ which suggests socio-economic and educational backgrounds in common. Each participant would fit somewhere along a common socio-economic continuum, but in respect to art knowledge, experience and motivation for consumption, the theory does not describe the fine-grain differences in their lives. The material that emerged from the interviews suggests differences, similarities, paradoxes and contradictions between women and within each woman (Braidotti, 1994). Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert (2007) argues that both socio-cultural *and* individual factors shape our engagement with and use of art galleries. The main visitation factors which arose from my research interviews can be categorized as: professional, art appreciation, self-exploration and cultural tourism. Analysing the transcripts collectively against these three categories indicated most participants were motivated by all categories at different times and in different circumstances but also expressed a preference for one area over another.

Artists Red, Dora, Athena, Frida and Sarah appear to use the gallery spaces differently to the non-artist participants. The artists tend to see the galleries as a working resource, and projected a sense of familiarity and confidence about being in these spaces. Athena makes a point of regularly visiting galleries in Auckland and Hamilton to see what other artists are producing and spoke fondly of the pleasures of being in the gallery spaces.

Athena: I know the white walls of the galleries have lots of critics, but actually they are a place for me of ... of sanctuary and contemplation. Like I love ... I think in the Auckland City Gallery there's ... down in one of the main galleries, right down the end, there is a little bay that's got really comfortable seating and they often show – sort of the artist's summary in there. But sometimes they don't, they just have a really beautiful work located there and you can sit and contemplate it or look at it and go away from it and come back.

(In-depth semi-structured interview 13th March 2007)

In contrast, Sarah was practical and matter-of-fact in her descriptions of the galleries and perceived them as working spaces for her and her colleagues. The descriptions were absent of any romantic connotations.

Chris: Tell me about going to galleries and the experience of that.

Sarah: I go to galleries because it's my field, because it's my, - you know – as an art practitioner, they are my colleagues and ... it's my work group, I don't know what you call them, but that is why I go – because it's my interest. ... I go in and I feel that the people are my colleagues as well, you know, I feel they are of the same profession as me and so I am looking at the work from a slightly different point-of-view and I don't go in with great sort of ummmmmm, romantic or inspired feelings about art. ... I go in as a practitioner and I look ... I cannot look at something without breaking down how it's made. ...I think it must be how a builder walks into a house and looks at how it's done and how and where everything is fitting and they can see the logic in the making and I would feel the same about it

Chris: So, you don't see it as a contemplative space?

Sarah: No never [laughs and laughs]. No not once ...No it is a practical space. It's all about how it's done from a practitioner's point. How have they done it? How could I do it?

This practical 'no-nonsense' response was made when she visualized herself in New Zealand galleries, but spoke about the Museum of Modern Art in New York in a different tone. It was a tone of reverential wonder.

Sarah: I have one [postcard] that I have collected from MOMA and it was so exciting for me to go to the Museum of Modern Art in New York. It was like ... OK it's the idea of it ... it's the space of it that kind of like ... it's like one of those places ... to see collections. Like - to walk into rooms to see all those collections of images and paintings and things – like they are THE ones that you see in the books when you live in New Zealand. And I still have the postcard of THIS. ... I keep it because "it's MOMA",

because I went to MOMA. To prove that I went there ... [laughs].
[Emphasis in text used to replicate her verbal emphasis].

(In-depth semi-structured interview 18th April 2007)

These participants tended to buy postcards as a resource for their art practice, but also for the sheer pleasure of art and securing a mnemonic aid of the works. Frequenting galleries was just one of the ways these participants understood themselves. Artists Dora and Red reflected, with a degree of regret, upon their irregular gallery visiting habits. Dora, a woman in her early 50s, said that

[s]ince becoming independent in the first year of leaving school, I started the ritual of visiting galleries ... A part of that pull is the desire to be the sort of person who dedicates herself to the arts and the other pull is genuine in that I love it. [However], I go for long periods, without attending – like not going to church. Tutors in art always bash on about how you must visit galleries all the time. You must see this and you must see that, but I go when it suits me and so always out of choice. [Dora's emphasis].

(E-mail response received 9th March 2007)

Red, a woman in her late 20s, was introduced to art galleries through family, and secondary and art schools. She is a painter and regular gallery visitor because she loves to keep abreast of what is happening 'out there' and partly because she is living in London with access to the abundant best. However, she still chides herself on the irregularity of her gallery visits.

The non-artist participants' were not as frequent in their gallery visitations, or spoke of the experience as part of a work practice, never-the-less visiting galleries still helped to constitute their subjectivities. The motivation for entering a gallery ranged from simply loving art through to cultural tourism (Goss, 1999; Stylianou-Lambert, 2007). Using postcards to extend a memory of the art works, gallery space, or overall gallery experience was a routine practice common to all participants. It materialized aspects of a gallery visitor's subjectivities. The desire to visit and purchase from the gallery shop always seemed present but the selection of postcards available did not always satisfy the desire. However, a material link to the gallery visit appeared important, so a substitute postcard was often purchased as the memory holder. With the participants expressing a diverse level of interest in the visual arts, various pleasures and satisfaction are gained

from the gallery visits, gallery architecture, art, and gallery shop purchases which in turn help build cultural capital. These cultural practices are some of the ways in which participants perform multiple, complex and at times contradictory subjectivities. I now examine these ideas of cultural capital and how they are expressed by women through the performative spaces of display.

5.2 Stocking up on cultural capital

Postcard displays can be understood as performative spaces that participants consciously use to help express particular subjectivities. To reiterate, performative space is where postcards/photographs/memorabilia are placed, open to view, in domestic space or stretched domestic space. Bella, a woman in her late 20's, but not an artist, nonetheless desires to be aligned with the art world. She is aware and self-conscious about playing a role that defines her, in some social circles by being in opposition to others. For example she commented on being perceived by her friends as the “person with the eye” or the “arty ‘farty’ one”. “I do play to it all the time” and commented on visiting the galleries alone saying:

I like that about me. I have friends who would never go to the movies by themselves or never go to a gallery on their [own] or never have a coffee and read the paper by themselves.

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 3rd December 2006)

This comment from Bella reinforces gendered practices associated with public spaces and the way women negotiate them. Research suggests that it is unusual for women to do things on their own and for themselves whereas men are not bound by the same societal constraints (Longhurst, 1995; Longhurst & Banks, 2004). However, it may be more acceptable for women who are middle to upper class to be in public on their own. Visiting galleries and informing herself about the arts, was read by Bella as a self-conscious, studied practice that she readily acknowledged doing. However, she is intrigued by art, art institutions and people that are involved with the broadly defined art world and wants to be part of it. Bella visited the *Art & The 60s from Tate Britain* exhibition at the Auckland Gallery in 2006. She visited it twice and spent over three hours at the gallery during the second visit, saying “I felt quite sort of ummmm, sad in a way that I

had missed all of that”. By ‘that’ Bella meant sad about missing out on living through the sixties social revolution and the mythologised ‘swinging sixties’. I was interpreting what was being said as if the art and writings of the sixties laid out a clear, singular path to follow. In essence, the art was read as a life guide.

Bella: ... part of going to that exhibition for me was looking at the [period in history] with a kind of longing. ... I feel the day of the great revolution has passed and I’ll never be part of that. ... [The 60s] was about throwing off boundaries and it was about forging your identities and it was about ... discarding the old. You were so able to be free, but you were within quite a defined kind of box ... - these gurusque figures [artists] ... laid out a set of principles for people.

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 3rd December 2006)

Re-reading the transcript suggests Bella feels very much an outsider to this ‘art world’. Despite her desire to be part of it and performing this subjectivity to her friends, it contrasts to the comfortable ease expressed from the art practitioner’s sense of subjectivity (above) within gallery spaces.

Using art as a definer of self or a way to establish personal values brought to mind a statement that John Berger (2000) made during a lecture he gave at the Tate Modern. He posed the question “Why do people go to galleries and look at paintings?” and responded:

It seems to me one looks at paintings hoping to find some secret. A secret not about art, but about life. And if one finds one, it remains a secret, because, finally, it is untranslatable into words. With words one can only, sometimes, make a clumsy map, hand-drawn, to show where the secret was found (p. 1).

To explain why I chose to use this quote against Bella’s response to the *Art & The 60s from Tate Britain* I should comment on my response to art. Works of art, especially contemporary art which I am drawn to on an emotional level often makes no sense to me. I go to galleries, buy a postcard or two and display them around the home. It is in this way that I become familiar with the art. Glimpsing an image, again and again, while going in and out of the fridge, or constantly

looking at them displayed above my computer raises my awareness and encourages me to see, feel and understand the works differently. (See Fig 5.1). Becoming familiar with an art work and reflecting on it against what is happening in my life is similar to how I read a novel. I may enjoy the narrative for its own sake, but also *use it* to question life, my values and actions. It is in this way that I understand how art postcards can serve as life guides.



Figure 5.1 Photograph of my university office wall showing a selection of the postcards above the computer.

Bella expressed different patterns of postcard consumption from her gallery excursions, but made clear the constant need to have some material objects from these experiences. Individual postcards, box sets or gallery flyers prompted different forms of display, but all of the artefacts, including the books, provided layers of expression of self that she used in the domestic space and stretched domestic space.

Chris: How do you use the gallery shop?

Bella: I buy essentially around that idea of the memento and being able to take ... I will be looking either for postcards, because I want to take something away from that experience, or I will look at the books, because I want to find out more about what I have just seen. I don't like to leave a

gallery, or a museum or something like that without taking something away. ... If they don't have postcards I tend to pick up flyers.

Chris: Tell me about buying postcards?

Bella: [The] 'pick up on a one-off-basis', tends to be because I love that work and being blown away by that work. Everything around it kind of fades away ... I don't recall which gallery I was in and all that kind of thing. With the collection stuff and buying the box sets ... becomes something on its own. ... It becomes less about the works of art and more about ... 'this is who I am, and this is about what I choose to display in my home', as opposed to this is about me wanting to recall a specific experience.

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 3rd December 2006)

A related position was taken by participant Jeanne, the ex-art history teacher, whose postcard collection is immensely important to her within the stretched domestic space as a defining marker of self. However, the collection comes from what students send to her and her art knowledge is built, almost exclusively, on viewing reproductions. It is a mediated knowledge. She did talk about the dedicated space of a gallery and the surprise she experiences when viewing the texture and scale and colour qualities of original works. The following reaction was in response to the homogeneous and contained quality of reproductions in books, postcards or computer screen.

Jeanne: Going to galleries ... is about being a really slow experience ... because of the reproductive nature of a lot of stuff. [I'm] often surprised by size – that's the difference with being in the gallery space – you can be IN those works and you can take so much time over soooooo much detail.

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 5th March 2007)

The main impression I gained from the interview with Jeanne was a recognition and use of her art expertise as a mark of distinction which built up more cultural capital with others. This differential was reinforced through the teacher/student exchanges where she encouraged postcards from students when they travelled. It was also apparent in the use of postcards in her work space to establish authority on art matters and a way of signifying rank. Linking this back to Bella's gallery experience and postcard consumption Jeanne has a more experienced sense of

performance, with postcards in her work space, even though it is based around second-hand encounters.

Chris: Could you articulate what identity you think you have produced with the postcards you have put around you?

Jeanne: I am a person who [believes] the most important thing is connecting, what is an elitist [art] world, or the temple, the priestess to the masses.

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 5th March 2007)

Pritchard and Morgan (2005) argue that some people construct subjectivities from community and shared bonds, while others seek definition through “individuality and difference” (p. 33). Whincup (2004) elaborates on these ideas when he suggests that subjectivity construction is a combination of reflecting on how individuals express themselves and how that expression fits and contrasts with others.

[U]nderstanding comes not from the straightforward route of gazing inwards upon ourselves but through the longer, more circuitous route of witnessing both our personal expressions and those of others. They provide a concrete manner in which our own edited experiences are represented to ourselves and by which we see the differences of others. In these contrasts and comparisons we further clarify the position of our ‘self’ (see Dilthey in Whincup, 2004, p. 81).

A significant number of participants spoke about their awareness of constructing a self through postcard displays. Different performances may be tied to specific spaces depending on what is considered appropriate for those spaces and the affect of that performance. For example Jeanne and Anthony deliberately chose not to display postcards in their homes, preferring instead to hang originals because of the reproduction connotations (Hughes, 2002a). Jeanne openly spoke about using the postcards in her office space as a way of establishing a persona that set her apart from work colleagues. As she said, “I stick out like a sore thumb”. Being aware of how others would judge a person by the cards purchased became apparent with buying ‘kitsch’ postcards. Red and Bella laughed at themselves over the care they took when buying these postcards, to ensure against

a ‘taste’ misreading. To feel comfortable, the kitsch postcards had to be in an exaggerated form. Bella said “it must be quite overt that I am doing – you know, taking the piss ...” and Red said “I do kitsch if it is really obviously ‘kitsch’ ... [laughs]”.

Bella was also frank about using postcards to make a clear statement about self in her home, saying she would buy individual postcards because she loved a particular work and wanted a record of it, but viewed the box sets of postcards differently.

Bella: [B]uying the box sets ... becomes less about the works of art and more about - ‘this is who I am, and this is about what I choose to display in my home’ as opposed to this is about me wanting to recall a specific experience.

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 3rd December 2006)

This statement about box set postcards (repeats from page 79) appears to contradict responses made at the beginning of the hour long interview, and shows the contradictory and complex nature of postcard use. (The apparent anomaly is also a reminder that interviews need to be treated as public discourse, which are fluid and spontaneous, rather than actual thoughts.)

The interview opened by Bella responding to the postcard photograph (Figure 5.2) of the *Art & The 60s* exhibition and recalling the experience. The looking stimulated an immediate trail of associations about art, the sixties and its possible impacts on her today.

Bella: That exhibition certainly made me think about things and I had a real response to it. ... I mean, that is why I LOVE art so much because I love being able to look at the different movements and see how that translates into all of the popular culture that I indulge in today. Look at realism and surrealism and look at how that had a flow on affect into film. I find it fascinating and I just feel like there is no [one] movement for us. ... There’s no kind of school of thought there is soooooo many.

(In-depth semi-structured interview 3rd December 2006)

This heart-felt response to a photograph of the postcards is an example of how the sighting of particular artefacts can stimulate post-experience narratives. When memories and ideas, attached to objects, are present in day-to-day spaces,



Figure 5.2 Photograph of Bella's performative space in the home, using a box set of postcards. from the *Art & The 60s from Tate Britain* exhibition.

the memories also remain in the present. If individual subjectivities are constituted by memories, then being surrounded by mnemonic objects reinforces those subjectivities. These two examples illustrate how Bella uses postcards as both a private and a self-conscious public expression of self. My earlier discussion around Bella using art and postcards as a self reflexive focus, or life guide illustrates this dual characteristic.

I became aware of this double-sided characteristic when analysing the discussions around the trivial/precious postcard references, reactions to 'kitsch' postcard imagery and the explicit references regarding hanging original art in the home rather than reproductions. Masculine and feminine forms of art performance in the home can only be surmised, as no research into how men use postcards was undertaken. However, the material that emerged from the interviews around this area indicates a site for future examination.

5.3 Constructions of self

I have discussed earlier (in Chapters Two and Four) how objects such as postcards, family photographs, souvenirs and household objects become encoded with memories and acquire significance because of “their implications for self-definition” (Morgan & Pritchard, 2005, p. 32). Each participant uses the postcards as a way of providing tangible evidence of a memory, but they all use this form of ‘expression of self’ slightly differently. What was a constant however, across all of the postcard consumers, was their hesitation in throwing postcards away. The postcards were so encoded with memories of important people or experiences that to throw these postcards away was regarded as throwing the memory and therefore a part of themselves away. The encoded postcards trigger fragments of memory that in turn stimulate narratives about people, place and experience. These memory narratives constitute subjectivities and help clarify an individual’s feeling about self (Stewart, 1993).

Frida’s postcard collection is an amalgam of her purchases and those sent from friends and family. The postcards evolve into a tangible link with individuals and therefore are never thrown away. Participant Sarah also commented on keeping postcards from people that were significant to her, but how she responded to the imagery impacted on the care she took with them. If she didn’t like the imagery she would use the card in a casual and disposable way. “[I]f it wasn’t quite right, and sometimes even if it is just completely not the right card I would use it as a bookmark, which eventually would get lost ...”. In contrast, Frida was quite clear about keeping hold of postcards from friends despite the imagery. They held great value, not only because of being thought of, but because there was follow through effort with the act of sending. To throw a postcard away would be considered an act of disloyalty. The postcards were a record of art, but more importantly they were ‘memory holders’ or ‘friend connectors’. Barbara views the postcards in a similar but even more exclusive manner in that the postcards are displayed in her home/office and work office *only* if they have been sent by a friend, colleague or family member. The art record is not the emphasis for display, but rather the postcard and its connection with a family member or friend is the important

factor.³⁸ Also, for Barbara “it’s the writing on the back of cards that I’ve received that are significant to me.” For these participants, the postcards appear to connect significant memories of people, place and experience, which maintains and clarifies a sense of self as a family member or friend.

When travelling abroad, Red uses gallery and specific tourist postcards (if they work on a similar aesthetic level as the gallery postcards) as a way of visually defining herself to friends and family. Red sends at least one postcard from everyplace and said it had become an established habit, or way of ‘ticking the box’.

Red: I want people to realise that I am still thinking about them and I’ll always pick up something that reminds me of them in some way or they’ll appreciate the image on it or have some association with the image or style.

Originally Red maintained contact through internet cafés, but found each internet café looked the same as any other and the exercise of writing absorbed a lot of energy and took her away from the experience of exploring.

Red: Whereas, a postcard is sooooo much more part of the place you are in. It’s so specific to where you are and you can find something you have seen or that you loved and share that with someone else and yeah, you don’t have to put your take on it...

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 13 November 2006)

Using the postcard instrumentally, as a way of reinforcing relationships, may prolong thoughts *of* and *about* the sender because postcards are generally retained. The sender is brought to mind as postcards tend to linger in the domestic or office spaces rather than being deleted as SMS texts or e-mail messages would be. The postcards have a different materiality as they retain an indexical, physical link reminiscent of photographs. Even if communication is made via a letter, and the letter kept, it is not something that is generally displayed. As Bella says “they should be a tiny little work of art in themselves” and as such the desire to display is strong. The postcard has overlaps with other personal forms of communication

³⁸ See Rose’s family photograph study (2003; 2004).

but may retain greater possibilities for performativity and hence the potential to retain an everyday resonance or memory trigger.

Sarah also uses postcards while travelling as a way to construct and project an artistic subjectivity, but does so in a unique way. While visiting galleries she noticed lots of tourists having photographs taken as they stood next to a painting, and realised she had a desire to be photographed in a similar way.

Sarah: I looked at them and thought that is exactly how I feel. I have looked at these things and they are the icons, they are the things that you go and visit because they are the important things. It is not very sophisticated, my response to this painting. It is not about the art or the da, di, da ... it's very unsophisticated kind of thing but 'here I am – look I've made it – I'm standing in front of my Chagall [laughs uproariously], I'm standing in front of Matisse – look at me ...

(In-depth semi-structured interview 18th April 2007)



Figure 5.3 Photograph of Sarah's postcard painting "here I am – look at me" [reproduced as actual size]. The painting, that Sarah is shown standing in front of, is by Henri Matisse *La Dance (I)* 1909. Oil on canvas 259.7cm x 390.1cm hung in The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Sarah noted that it was not the art or subject matter that was of importance, but more a tourist desire of securing a record or proof of her having 'been there'. The

photographs became markers of authenticity in terms of location. When she returned to New Zealand, Sarah reproduced these photographs as paintings on old New Zealand tourist postcards. Producing these works of art formed a complete circle. It moved from the original work of art, to a photograph of the work (with Sarah alongside), which became an original again in the form of the photograph being replicated, in acrylics, on a postcard. (See Figure 5.3.) These miniature paintings formed a body of work that was exhibited for sale at Lopdell House, (Auckland) 1997. The only postcard painting she kept was the 'Matisse' as it was while viewing this painting that the idea for the series emerged. Thus this was a series that mimicked, in paint, the postcard and 'cultural travel snap'. In reproducing this art/photograph/postcard painting journey Sarah materialized herself as the artist, the art pilgrim and the joker.

Displays of collected, sent/received or created postcards tend to become extensions of the producer. Multiple subjectivities are gained and expressed through the consumption of objects. Whincup says that "[i]n reflecting important selected experiences, objects remind us of who we are and of our differences from and associations with others" (2004, p. 81). I made an assumption at the beginning of this study that because all of the participants were similar, (in race, class and education – but not age and sexual preference), their postcard practices would be similar. This was a coarse categorization and assumption. By drawing on the work of Braidotti (1994), who acknowledges the differences of experience, embodiment, situated knowledges among 'real-life women', I focused instead on the complexity and nuance differences of how individual women make sense of and gain pleasure from material objects of the everyday. This study, (empirically illustrated in Chapters Four and Five) notes how all the participants use postcards as a memory device, but also emphasise the multiple and subtle differences of the use. Braidotti (1994) "stresses the importance of rejecting global statements about all women" (p. 163) and instead encourages the need to map nuance, complexity and difference. In the next section of this chapter I move to discussing how the participants use such complex motivations for displaying postcards to project and perform a sense of themselves in domestic spaces.

5.4 Performative space

To describe the postcard display as a performative space is to highlight the active involvement of the producer in its construction. To perform is to 'do'. It is the acting out, and expressing of a self through materiality. Rose (1999) argues for an understanding of space as "a doing ... that does not pre-exist its doing" (p. 248). For a myriad of reasons, each postcard in the performative space has been selected and arranged. This involves either a haphazard addition to the display or a considered rearrangement that takes into account colour, line, form and juxtaposition, so the result is a unified work of art. The term 'performativity' and its implication with 'doing' can be used here in order to rethink ideas of subjectivity and space (Gregson & Rose, 2000; Nash, 2000; Rose, 2004; Turner & Manderson, 2007). An unexpected finding that emerged from the interviews was the way performative spaces were understood as spaces belonging to the producer. They were respected as private spaces within the semi-public domains (kitchen and living rooms) of the home. It appeared to be an unspoken acknowledgement with household members not to touch or rearrange the display. Discussion around the relationship between the person and thing within domestic spaces has been discussed in various literature (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Morgan & Pritchard, 2005; Whincup, 2004) but the relationship between the person, performative spaces and how it is used and understood by other household members appears not to have been discussed. Rose (2003) suggests that family photographs in domestic spaces are organised, displayed and predominantly looked at by the person (the woman in this instance) who put it there. However, the case study did not discuss what other household members did with the family photographs. As an aside, the postcard displays are also likely to be looked at predominantly and differently by the person who produced it. This assumption is based on family photograph studies (Rose, 2003) and interview material that emerged from this postcard study. The studies on how family photographs are organized and arranged in the home and by whom intersect and replicates what is done with postcards. These display practices tend to conform to hetero-gendered subjectivities in the private and public spaces of the home as well as in the public and private spaces of the office space.

Bella, who performed aspects of her subjectivity through postcard displays in her home and office space, deliberately constructs herself through books, photographs or postcards and was self-consciously reflexive of how much she played the ‘art authority role’. Bella is a young single woman who lives in a flatting situation with one other woman.

Chris: Does anyone else in the flat change the cards?

Bella: No, no, she would never touch them, she would be in trouble [laughs] ... it’s funny, but I’m quite serious, she would NEVER ... like she would never touch the fridge either [chortle, chortle] ... I mean, she regards me as the person in the flat with an eye, you know. Like “could you please arrange the mantle piece”, kind of thing ... [my emphasis to convey Bella’s exaggerated speech]

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 3rd December 2006)

This understanding about what household objects are touched and rearranged and by whom, seems to have been negotiated non-verbally between the household members. I did not pursue this line of inquiry at the time as it was not an area I had reflected upon as being of interest, nor that it would be reinforced by other participants. Bella was one of the first participants to be interviewed and my awareness of this subject came later. Understanding the performative space as being the domain of the producer marks one way in which domestic spaces are constructed by the occupants.

Red and her partner live in a flatting situation with others and her postcards are only displayed in the private spaces of her bedroom and studio. In a flatting situation she understands the fridge as a shared space and therefore not appropriate for personal touches.

Chris: Are you the only one that arranges the cards in the flats?

Red: Yes, definitely.

Chris: Because you are the only one interested?

Red: I don't think ... I don't imagine anyone would feel it was their place to move it.

Chris: Even on the fridge?

Red: I don't put things on the fridge. I think if it was on the fridge, then ... you have moved it into a shared space. Usually, I am only putting them up in my private space and I think even with Todd in my room he wouldn't feel like it was his place to move my displays.

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 13th November 2006)

Postcards may be found in a range of places throughout domestic spaces, but all spaces are not perceived in the same way. There is a sense of different spaces – some exclusive and some open to negotiation.

As a researcher these participant responses encouraged me to reflect on my own postcard display practice. I realised that neither my husband nor daughter ever touched the performative spaces, other than reapplying the postcards if the magnet failed. It reinforced the notion that I am the family member who constructs the domestic environment through décor, art and object displays. Not only does it express *my* aesthetic sensibility rather than the sensibility of other family members, but hints at an unspoken but understood role I hold within the family. I discussed this with my daughter who left home eleven years earlier. She laughed at my query saying she has always seen the performative spaces as “mum’s space” rather than a free-for-all family space. The displays clearly define who I am in her mind and she reinforces this by regularly sending postcards to add to the collection. My husband reiterated her thoughts and was amused by my surprise at the unspoken demarcation of domestic roles. Such findings are suggested in the writings of feminist researchers (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; MacKenzie & Rose, 1983; McDowell, 1999; Rose, 2003) who understand the home to be critically gendered and have therefore focused attention on domestic spaces and household relations. Blunt and Dowling (2006) who draw on Bowlby *et al*, argue that “[g]endered expectations and experiences flow through all these social relations and their materialities, and gender is hence critical to understanding home” (p. 15).

I understand how the constantly changing performative spaces play an important role in the overall aesthetic of my home. Beyond being a vehicle to carry specific imagery, memories or communications, the uniformity of the 15.03cm x 10cm postcards express the ‘messy’ parts of my life/thoughts/experiences in a clean visual composition. In a general sense the performative spaces provide a reflective space where “you look through reality to focus elsewhere” (Braidotti, 2006, p. 172). These spaces provide visible evidence of life outside the day-to-day present. The postcards represent past and upcoming events, experiences, relationships and mood as well as being a dream space that stirs desires. The virtual aspects of daily life are made visible, and a sense of self is constructed for the producer, through the everyday performative postcard space.

Apart from the associated memory pleasures, performative spaces project an informality and individuality into a domestic space. They remove a generic or faceless designed look and instead feature specific detail of an individual’s daily



Figure 5.4 Mark Smith, “Home of the Year”, 2007 winner. Stevens Lawson Architects, in *New Zealand Home + Entertaining* Aug/Sep 2007: 69.

life. The New Zealand Home of the Year (ACP, 2007) winner showcases a home with a ‘performative space’ in the dining/kitchen area. (See Figure 5.4.)

The interior design book *Home is Where the Heart is* (Crawford, 2005) also presents a number of ‘performative spaces’ as a way of looking beyond pure ‘glassy box’ aesthetics to constructing a domestic space that is in pursuit of “a philosophy of reclaiming and reintegrating the human element into our homes” (Inside cover). (See Figure 5.5.)

Like the postcard itself, the performative space is also a paradox. On the one hand, it is a temporary arrangement of individual postcards, photographs, invitations that are magnetized, pinned or propped on the fridge, pin board or bookshelves. Yet on the other hand, the performative spaces tend to remain a permanent fixture in the overall domestic environment. The fridge door, because of its magnetizing



Figure 5.5 Martyn Thompson, Crawford, Ilse (2005). *Home is where the heart is* (bedroom detail).

ease, is often used as a display site. All or some of the content may change as new postcards, invitations or photographs arrive in the home, but the space, as a place for display, remains.

5.5 Domestic space

Domestic space is one site and subject of visual cultures and the use of postcards is one of the ways in which it is constructed. It involves the ongoing relationship between postcards, spaces and the people within the home resulting in ideas and ideals about self being projected (Miller, 2002). Painter (2002) argues that the constant presence of decorative images on postcards, objects, wallpapers or fabrics

are an integral part of the total environment in which feelings and identity take shape. We interact with them, project into them, daydream with them. They become part of the templates through which we are nurtured to view the world (p. 211).

As mentioned earlier, Bella is the person within the flatting situation who has taken on the role as design/art arbiter and therefore the displays reflect a strong sense of her interests and taste, rather than that of the flat mate. Bella's responses show an awareness and honesty in how much she is playing a role and constructing a gallery visitor, art appreciation/knowledge identity.

Chris: When you look at your display [see Figure 5.2], what comes back?

Bella: I always feel a sense of pride. I like that I have postcards like that in my house. I like that I have books in my house. This is me, this is me, yeah, it is a really clear statement about the fact that I understand art, that I enjoy art and if you wanted to ask me a question about it I would quite happily have a discussion with you about it. Yeah – definitely. I love galleries, I love art and I don't think that's put on, but I do think there are all the little behaviours and patterns that I think, some of which I indulge in because that's what I think a person like me does – [laughs], you know ...

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 3rd December 2006)

Bella's response was inward looking, surfacing statements around how she regarded herself and how the display might be understood by others, whereas Barbara used the postcards as a way of looking outwards to others. She placed great value on postcards, because of their association and familial relationships, rather than the imagery. For example, when she was given a postcard from her son's partner's mother, she had it framed and hung in the loo.³⁹

It was of a Scandinavian lake and because of the multiple layers of connection and associated values the framing reinforced its status.

Barbara: I have quite a number of postcards that have been framed. A Thai student gave me one of an umbrella and I have that framed too. But otherwise, the postcards – there are boxes of them...

Apart from the framed and boxed ones, Barbara's current postcards are on the fridge or propped against cookbooks. She uses them as reflection spaces. When I asked what looking at the displays made her think of she said:

Barbara: For me, [it's] very much that dream space, I guess, and it's even more than a dream, it's a meandering through and it's a wishing in some ways. ... You come into this [postcard] space and it massages your soul and you find your equilibrium.

(In-depth semi-structured interview, (2nd March 2007)

Another participant Sarah didn't refer to the postcards/displays as a dream space but instead described them as a "mental focus point for the brain" to reignite memories. I would suggest that a detail within the postcard produced a punctal moment which she likened the process to tea-leaf readings.

Sarah: Because, all the people I know that do tea-leaf readings ... say that it's not about the tea-leaves; it is about the focus that brings your brain in. ...[You use a tea-leaf] to sort of pull something as a focus point to anchor it. To anchor the attention of your mind toward it and then ... Pop, out of the [memory] index it comes.

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 18th April 2007)

³⁹ Subsequent to the interview I asked Barbara why she chose to hang a valued postcard in the toilet. Her SMS text reply was "A valued room in the house perhaps; subliminally, water with water - [or] pictures to distract the mind!"

Defining a self through the re-playing of events or reflecting upon people, place and things, reminds me of film director David Lynch and how he imagines his films⁴⁰ could be used. He endeavours to make films that provide viewers with a space to dream as he believes that narrative can expose a truth to individuals if it encourages that dreaming to happen. The space is created through the relationship of narrative (film and personal narrative) and image (Nochimson, 1997).

Reflecting on my own postcard practices I consciously use the postcards as one of the visual elements in the home. They are a private expression for enjoyment and understanding, as well as an expression of an aesthetic self for public reading. The home is a space that works on a variety of levels. On one level, I treat it like a gallery space⁴¹ where I curate and carefully manage the display of paintings, sculpture, cast glass and photographs. The performative postcard spaces are one of the visual units. On another level the postcards serve as personal educational space. A gallery exhibition may have shown works that struck a cord emotionally, or may have been disturbing, seductive, obtuse, violent or difficult to understand (see Figures 5.6 and 5.7).

Being able to 'live' with them, so to speak, through the postcard reproduction is a way of increasing confidence in the understanding of new or difficult works. Displaying such works in the everyday spaces of home and work raises my awareness and simultaneously produces a counter space that resists the dominant norms of display. This display/counter display space serves as a 'legitimate' site to challenge ideas about art and life.

⁴⁰ Such as *Blue Velvet* (Lynch, 1986); *Lost Highway* (1997); and *Mulholland Drive* (2001).

⁴¹ Leach (2002) discusses how the home is treated as a gallery space and curated accordingly.



Figure 5.6 Gregory Crewdson, *Untitled* (from the *Twilight* series) 2001-02 chromogenic print (laser exposure), AP 2/3, edition of 10. 121.9 x 152.4cm, Postcard reproduction 20cm x 15cm. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

For example Gregory Crewdson's postcard image (see Figure 5.6), which I have tucked into the corner of a free-standing picture frame in the living room, holds my attention and illustrates this challenge. The naked woman, presumed wife and mother of this nuclear family, is a "punctum"⁴² which keeps me fixed on trying to make sense of what I see. For instance, why is she naked with leaves at her feet and why is she 'framed' as being separate from the family? I read this scene as being rigid with routine and expressions of 'normal' everyday life that suggests an underbelly of hegemonic displays, power and repeating cycles.

⁴² "Punctum" is a term coined by Barthes (1981) to describe how a detail within a photograph can hold the attention of the viewer. (For further explanation see Chapter Two.)



Figure 5.7 Cindy Sherman (1994) *Untitled* (#299). Postcard reproduction 10.08cm x 15.03cm. Courtesy Metro Pictures, New York, Fotofolio

In addition to raising an awareness of art, pleasure also comes from the physical/mental exercise of postcard placement. For example, when renewing the whole display, I grab a handful from the postcard store and intuitively place, until the colour, line and form creates a cohesive whole. How I work with postcards reminds me of Leach's (2002) description of sculpture making being about practice; trying things out and working with the materials that are on hand.

Sculpture ... is mostly about practice, making-do, working the materials round an idea, failing and trying again. It is not that it is the same as interior design ... but it is similar in its modest humanism: getting pleasure in arranging things and finding small epiphanic thoughts in the middle of it – 'oh yes, that works!' (p. 176).

Constructing domestic spaces through postcards is not necessarily a space contained solely within the home. Domestic space can be recreated, or the same practice reframed within the constraints of a more public space.

5.6 Stretched domestic space

The work of Rose (2003) and Wise (2000) develops the notion of domestic spaces being fluid at a conceptual as well as an actual level. Rose (2003) discusses how family photographs are sent to and from family and friends. The displayed photographs connect outwards to significant others, foregrounding absence and geographical distance. “[S]patial stretching of domestic space” (p. 12) is achieved through the display and remembering. Wise (2000) articulates the idea of home being the place we ‘are’. So the office, for example, may be personalized into what he calls a “secondary home” (p. 296).

Participants Frida and Barbara use and value the postcards for the attached associations they have with family and friends. It is a way of mentally connecting outwards to others that is based on reciprocity. Jeanne (the former art teacher), in contrast, uses the postcards as an inward looking device that maintains memories about past students. It appeared the process was one-way, rather than an ongoing exchange between both parties that would keep the relationships active. This impression was gained from the fact that it was her students buying postcards rather than her own buying/sending habits.

Jeanne: They go to the [gallery] shops – it is not me going to the shops. ... Every class I’ve taught I’ve said “you don’t need to talk to me again, but if you’re in a gallery I want you to go to a shop and buy a postcard and tell me you have gone and looked at that work”. (Quote repeated from page 55)

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 5th March 2007)

Despite the postcards being a one-way communication device, they are nevertheless of vital importance to Jeanne as a definer of self. She describes the semi-public performative spaces as relatively static displays that move with her year after year and from job to job. Being surrounded by the display reflects positive memories and ideals (Morgan & Pritchard, 2005).

Earlier in this chapter I discussed how Red used the postcards as a defining artefact as well as a communication link while travelling. In addition to this, Red wrote in her follow-up e-mail the importance of postcard communication as a mental and physical connecting device with home. Its importance stemmed from

the care taken in choosing the appropriate imagery for the intended recipient and the connective thoughts of person and place that surfaced.

Red: [Postcards] really have a strong link to home and what or where it is. The act of sending a postcard, either bringing home to you in thought, or [a way of] sharing where you are with home.

(After the in-depth semi-structured interview on the 13th November 2006, Red sent a follow-up e-mail, 22 February 2007)

The stretched domestic space that personalizes an office space was a dominant feature across the majority of interviews. Invariably traces of the domestic were extended to the office as they ‘dressed’ it up with postcard and photograph displays. The domestic space and stretched domestic space was spoken about interchangeably. Two of the participants sent photographs of their office/studio displays instead of the domestic space displays and a number of participants made strong statements relating to their stretched domestic spaces. By its very nature the stretched domestic space is a more considered and reflective space as each element is consciously selected and taken to the workplace (except where items have been sent to the work address). Bella presented complex and contradictory reasons for her choices, but the strong motivation appeared to be about projecting particular aspects of her subjectivity outwards rather than displaying familiar objects for self.

Chris: Can you explain why you ‘dress’ the office as you do?

Bella: I like to make a statement about who I am within a workplace environment. I like people to know that I have interests outside of work and all the stuff that I associate with. Whatever I put up is about what’s in my head. There is not a lot of understanding about what peoples values are in the workplace and I think that’s part of why people do that kind of thing in the office. ... I very much see my office as my office, [but] I usually put books on my desk. I like people knowing that I read and this is what I’m reading. I feel a stronger kind of need and desire to do that in the workplace than I do at home because there are so many [indicators] at home, whereas in an office you only have a small space to work with and you only maybe want to project a certain proportion of your personality.

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 23 February 2007)

Jeanne, however, was clear about using the performative space as both a defining marker as well as a source of solace for self. She keeps the domestic space free of flotsam and jetsam that accumulate in daily life, but uses the physical traces of her past (postcards received, invitations of exhibitions she has curated and photographs) in the stretched domestic space. These traces act as building blocks of identity as well as providing comfort in a distressing job.⁴³

Jeanne: All these postcards have been with me in all the jobs that I have had. It's my environment that I take and set up around me. I struggle with the subject matter of this job, because it is so demoralizing. And there are all these moments [pointing to the postcards] I suppose where I have made a difference, or it has been a positive thing or you know that you got really good – cut through there. It [postcard display] gives me a sense of permanency or a sense of place that's about having continuity to what you are doing and you are being reminded of that. ... I have got to have the images around me, because if I don't – you are just left in bureaucratic hell.

(In-depth semi-structured interview, 5th March 2007)

Participant Frida spoke more about displays in her stretched domestic space than in her domestic space. She emphasised the fact that postcards were important because of the associated memories with people rather than art. Some of the cards have remained for years propped against objects or on a wall, while others circulate more rapidly, depending to a large extent on the memory connections which are evoked. In her stretched domestic space she places them in a circle around her desk, pinned on the wall, or resting on a ledge against computer cables. Postcards sit alongside photographs and other small items. She actually used the word “company” to describe what these postcards and object meant to her. Using the postcards as a link with family and friends echoes Marcoux (2001b) when he suggests that an object can be seen as a “surrogate for the person it stands for” (p.72) rather than being kept just as an object of reminiscence. Because the office was a separate, private space the postcard/photograph assemblage produced a “homely” space providing comfort and a sense of connectedness.

In this chapter I have focused on postcards as an artefact that projects multiple subjectivities. I note how they are simultaneously used as a private and public

⁴³ Jeanne is a contractor for Child, Youth and Family and works with ‘at risk youth’ dealing with the abused as well as the abusers.

expression of self. The displays are modest yet distinct. I name the displays 'performative spaces' to draw attention to the producer's active involvement in the process. These spaces are used in the production of domestic as well as the stretched domestic space. In this way domestic space can be understood at both a conceptual and an actual level which acknowledges the home space and the domestication of office spaces. I now move to conclude this case study by reiterating the major areas that have emerged and point to further research opportunities in postcard use that have become apparent.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

“Imaging the intangible” (Whincup, 2004, p. 79)

This case study, which examines the relationship between gallery postcards, domestic spaces and subjectivities, is elegantly encapsulated by this Whincup quote. Postcards can become the signifier for memories, emotion and dreams so their display in domestic spaces is a way of keeping traces of those memories ‘alive’ and in the present. As an uncharted area of study, I was guided by theorists who had considered the connection between everyday material objects such as souvenirs (Stewart, 1993), household objects (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981), and family photographs (Rose, 2003), and domestic space and subjectivities. This study attempts to further such analysis into the meaning of everyday objects in domestic space by examining how art postcards contribute to an imagined performance of a gendered self. A feminist post-structuralist framework and methodologies was used as it recognizes social difference and the importance of individual subjectivities while simultaneously acknowledging the multiplicity and positionality of those subjectivities. The framework did not seek to reduce the postcard findings to a dominant norm. The combination of post-structuralist and feminist theories enabled questions to be raised about the ways in which bodies, spaces and the consumption of everyday material objects (postcards) are gendered.

Postcards have a complex and changing status. Initially they may be regarded as trivial souvenirs, but once purchased or received they can become valued as the symbolic memory marker of an idealized self through art, experience, place and person. Memory narratives evoked by the postcard are intimately bound with subjectivity formation as it is through reflecting on past experiences that a sense of self and the life being lived is generated. Braidotti (1994) argues that

[i]t is as if some experiences were reminiscent or evocative of others; [creating] a quality of interconnectedness [that enables us] to rescue what we need of the past in order to trace paths of transformation of our lives here and now (p. 5-6).

In addition to postcards being a resource for memory narratives, their materiality constitutes spaces. The propped, pinned or magnetized postcards become creative sites of performance within the home that reflect the subjectivities of the producer. These performative spaces are also reproduced in the office (stretched domestic space) as a way of personalizing that space and connecting outwards to others.

This thesis is intended to encourage the examination of art and its role in constituting subjectivities and spaces. By specifically focusing on art postcards I have examined how women use them as personal memory holders to help maintain, reinforce, reflect and project an imagined and ideal self. A significant finding of the case study is that all participants' used and valued the postcard as memory devices and objects of reflection. Although initially chosen for the art depicted, they are not direct referents to the associated memories and therefore provide an ideal focus point to (re)formulate personal narratives. The postcards are virtual vessels of display that evoke the intangible. In addition, they provide an informal and accessible way to understand new, tough or provocative art that also circumvents notions of appropriateness.

A further finding is that the performative postcard displays have double sided readings. Firstly there is the public/literal meanings associated with the art work represented, and secondly there are the private/symbolic meanings associated with memories. This double sided reading provides a site to enjoy the aesthetics of postcard art as well as a site to display intangible memories in semi-public spaces that "remain inscrutable to the outsider" (Whincup, 2004, p. 81). Also, the postcards can actively be used as a performative self that promotes a public as well as a private reading. In addition, stretched domestic space was constructed from the postcard displays. This produced an important site for expressing an art sensibility to work colleagues and as a way of territorizing a space for personal pleasure.

All of the postcard consumers collapsed the boundaries between gallery postcards, tourist postcards, photographs and small mementos. They were displayed in combination as the distinctions between these artefacts no longer seemed relevant to enjoyment once the object became associated with memories.

Studying postcard art in domestic spaces raises important questions for research methodology. Understanding “domestic life are important sites for research, and places that might initially appear homelike are often unfamiliar” (Blunt & Dowling, 2006, p. 82). Apart from domestic life being an everyday space ‘close to home’ rather than out in the distant ‘field’, research is problematized when focus rests on aesthetics and imaginative spaces that are private, hidden or unconscious practices. Drawing on the qualitative resources of visual methodology and auto-ethnography and choosing participants who are articulate and educated in the social sciences/fine arts provided access into these difficult areas. The intention was to interview the majority of participants within their homes, the site of postcard displays. This seldom happened. Therefore, the photographs, which the participants’ took, and therefore controlled, developed a significance exceeding their initial intent. They encouraged the participants to focus back into the performative spaces of the home and into the realms of the imaginative without the distraction of its surroundings. Being interviewed about but physically distanced from the domestic space, the photographs, or in some cases the postcards themselves, focused attention on postcard practices and performative spaces. The use of auto-ethnography was also a valuable research method which allowed my own experiences to become a resource and not just as inspiration for this research. Reflecting on and responding to the participants’ postcard art practices allowed me to use my own subjectivities “to get to culture” (Pelias, 2003, p. 372) and articulate the fine-grain relationship between postcards, subjectivities and space.

The conclusions I have reached in this case study refer specifically to white, middle-class New Zealand women. The majority of these women were known to me and as such the close relationship was a strength that provided insights into this group. However its containment does suggest opportunities for future

research. Increasing the study size in conjunction with gender, race and ethnicities would extend knowledges about artefacts of the everyday are how they are used by different groups of people. However, examining these larger possibilities may not be as fruitful if the researcher and participants are not gender/class and network bound. This close relationship could be assessed as a limitation of this research, but on reflection it was precisely because these women were connected to my own social circles that the multi-differentiated nuances of postcard practices emerged. Corporeal analysis of other genders (especially male), classes and ethnicities would add to the knowledges of art objects in domestic spaces, an area already noted as a neglected study site (Blunt & Dowling, 2006). Further study into postcard production would answer issues, raised by participants, around gender assumptions and stock content. In addition, analysis of the postcard images would provide an interesting research topic as the participants performative spaces were strongly feminized.

This case study adds to the knowledges of everyday objects and notes the significance of these objects, in spaces such as the domestic and work environments. In addition it reinforces literature which suggests that identity is constituted through the performance of subjectivities within day to day living. The significance of postcards as visual, tangible expressions for self-definition and self recognition is also emphasized.

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APPENDIX 1: PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Postcard consumers – women

Athena (55 years) MA (fine arts). Artist/writer/psychotherapist, married with three children. Interviewed 13th March 2007.

Barbara (59 years) Phd (just completing). Married with three children. Interviewed 2 March 2007.

Bella (28 years) BA (hons) Administrator for a professional theatre company. Single and flatting. Interviewed 3 December 2006, follow-up interview 23rd February 2007.

Dora (52 years) Artist and studying for a fine arts degree. Married with two children. Lives in London. Responded by e-mail to question topics (appendix 5) 9 March 2007.

Jeanne (30's) BA. Contractor for Child, Youth and Family (previously an art history teacher). Lives with a partner. Interviewed 5th March 2007.

Frida (40's) MA (fine arts). Photographer and educational administrator of a media arts degree programme. Married with two children. Interviewed 13th February 2007.

Red (26 years) BA (fine arts). Artist. Married. Lives in London. Interviewed in New Zealand 13 November 2006 and sent a follow-up e-mail 22 February 2007.

Sarah (30's) PhD (fine arts). Artist and art lecturer in degree programme. Lives with a partner. Interviewed 18th April 2007.

Tina (30's) MA. Artist. Lives with a partner and has one child. Interviewed 16th February 2007.

Appendix 1 continued

Postcard producers – women

Anthony (20's/30's) BA. Gallery store manager - responsible for postcard production. Interviewed 23 February 2007.

Sara (20's) BA and currently doing a post-graduate diploma in curatorial studies. Gallery receptionist / runs the gallery store and jointly responsible for postcard selection and production. Interviewed 1 December 2007.

All the names of the participants are pseudonyms (apart from Sarah) and in some instances the names have been chosen by the participants.

APPENDIX 2: CONSENT FORMS

UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO
FACULTY OF ART AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF SCREEN & MEDIA STUDIES

The Gallery Postcard: An Expression of Identity

CONSENT FORM: Postcard consumers

I hereby consent to photograph my domestic postcard displays and be interviewed for the research study 'The Gallery Postcard: An Expression of Identity' conducted by Chris Robinson from the University of Waikato.

I understand that the interview may be recorded electronically and/or in writing and that the content will later be transcribed and used anonymously. I understand that I am able to access information provided by myself at any time and may request that all or part of this information be amended or deleted.

I consent to the interview information being used in future reports, publications, presentations, or for study purposes. I understand that as a key informant any anonymity will be protected at all times and that any taped, written, or photographic material will remain confidential and will be stored within locked filing cabinets. Access to these files will be restricted to the researcher and the supervisors.

If you take part in the study, you have the right to:

- Refuse to answer any particular question; to withdraw from the study at any time during the data collection period; to peruse the record of your interview; to withdraw from the whole project up to one month after the perusal of your record of the interview.
- Ask any further questions about the study that occurs to you during your participation. I will be happy to answer any enquiries prior to or during your interview.
- Be given access to a summary of the findings from the study when it is concluded.

Print name: _____

Signed: _____ **(participant)** **Date:**

_____ **(researcher)** **Date:**

UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO
FACULTY OF ART AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF SCREEN & MEDIA STUDIES

The Gallery Postcard: An Expression of Identity

CONSENT FORM: gallery informants

I hereby provide my consent to be interviewed for the research study ‘The Gallery Postcard: An Expression of Identity’ conducted by Chris Robinson from the University of Waikato.

I understand that the interview may be recorded electronically and/or in writing and that the content will later be transcribed and used anonymously. I understand that I am able to access information provided by myself at any time and may request that all or part of this information be amended or deleted.

I consent to the interview information being used in future reports, publications, presentations, or for study purposes. I understand that as a key informant any anonymity will be protected at all times and that any taped or written material will remain confidential and stored within locked filing cabinets. Access to these files will be restricted to the researcher and the supervisors.

If you take part in the study, you have the right to:

- Refuse to answer any particular question; to withdraw from the study at any time during the collection period; to peruse the record of your interview; to withdraw from the whole project up to one month after the perusal of your record of the interview.
- Ask any further questions about the study that occurs to you during your participation. I will be happy to answer any enquiries prior to or during your interview.
- Be given access to a summary of the findings from the study when it is concluded.

Print name: _____

Signed: _____ **(participant) Date:**

_____ **(researcher) Date:**

APPENDIX 3: INFORMATION SHEETS

THE UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO Information Sheet

Research on 'The Gallery Postcard: An Expression of Identity' *Consumers of Art Gallery Postcards: Key Participants*

Dear

I am a graduate student in the Department of Screen and Media Studies at the University of Waikato, and I am conducting research for a Masters. The research has been approved by the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee and is supervised by Dr Craig Hight and Dr Lynda Johnston.

This study wishes to explore your interest in art gallery postcards by looking at how you use, store and display them in your home and the meanings you attach to them.

A separate aspect of the study is to examine why galleries produce postcards, their criteria for reproduction selection and their postcard audience.

I have included contact information here:

All enquiries should be directed to **Chris Robinson**. I can be contacted as follows:

E-mail: robinsonlch@xtra.co.nz Home phone: (07) 8391 474

Or

C/- Department of Screen and Media Studies (student)

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

University of Waikato

Private Bag 3105

Hamilton 3240, NZ

Ph: (07) 856 4543 (Administration)

Contact the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee if you have any complaints about the manner in which this research has been conducted.

Charlotte Church,

Administrator

Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee

(07) 838 4636

charl@waikato.ac.nz

For three decades I have collected postcards from galleries around the world. Initially they have been purchased as an art record, but soon become *the* holder of memories. Because of my quiet attachment to the gallery postcard, I am curious about how other people experience the gallery visit, the postcards they purchase and how they use them in their homes.

It would greatly assist me if you would participate in this research. The first task required of you would involve photographing the postcard displays (postcard album, fridge doors, pin boards, bookshelves for example) within your home, using a digital camera or disposable camera that will be supplied. I will organise and pay for the developing costs. If you are willing to be interviewed, but do not wish to photograph your postcard displays, then there is no obligation to do so. The second task would be a follow up, semi-structured interview of no more than one or two hours in length, conducted in your home, or other venue chosen by you. Because of the reflective nature of the study, I would be interested in conducting multiple interviews with you, but this is completely discretionary. During the interview you would be asked to respond to the photographs you have taken, and there would be no obligation to show the actual postcards. I will work around your schedule.

I am looking to hear your views about visiting galleries, the choosing of postcards and what you do with them in the short and long term. Of particular interest to this study is how you store and display the postcards in your home, plus the meanings you attach to them.

I will produce a Masters thesis disseminating the results of the research and participants will be notified when a copy of the thesis, held in the University of Waikato library, can be accessed to view. Some of the research findings may be used for conference presentations, academic article or book chapters.

All the information collected from your interview will be treated as anonymous and confidential. The data (consent forms, tapes, transcripts and photographs) will be stored for five years in a secure place with access available only to the researcher and the supervisors involved.

If you take part in the study, you have the right to:

- Refuse to answer any particular question; to withdraw from the study at any time during the data collection period; to peruse the record of your interview; to withdraw from the whole project up to one month after the perusal of your record of the interview.
- Ask any further questions about the study that occurs to you during your participation. I will be happy to answer any enquiries prior to or during your interview.
- Be given access to a summary of the findings from the study when it is concluded.

I have enclosed a consent form to sign and return which outlines the participation I am asking for, and a summary of your rights.

Thank you very much for indicating your interest in this research, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

Chris Robinson

Appendix 3 continued:

THE UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO

Information Sheet

**Research on ‘The Gallery Postcard: An Expression of Identity’
*Art Gallery: Key Informants***

Dear

I am a graduate student in the Department of Screen and Media Studies at the University of Waikato, and I am conducting research for a Masters. The research has been approved by the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee and is supervised by Dr Craig Hight and Dr Lynda Johnston.

This study is interested in examining the postcards that are produced and stocked in your gallery store; the reasons for production; the selection criteria for reproduction and understanding the postcard consumer as an audience. A separate aspect of the study is to examine how consumers of the postcards use them in their domestic space and the meanings they attach to them.

I have included contact information here:

All enquiries should be directed to **Chris Robinson**. I can be contacted as follows:
E-mail: robinsonlch@xtra.co.nz Home phone: (07) 839 1474

Or

C/- Department of Screen and Media Studies (student)
Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences
University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton 3240, NZ

Ph: (07) 838 4543 (Administration)

Contact the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee if you have any complaints about the manner in which this research has been conducted.

Charlotte Church
Administrator
Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee
(07) 838 4636
charl@waikato.ac.nz

It would greatly assist me if you would participate in this research. Your participation would involve a semi-structured interview of no more than one to two hours in length, to be conducted in person at a time and place chosen by you. I will work around your schedule and the interview can be completed in two stages, if necessary, either face-to-face and/or through electronic means.

Your interview questions and discussions will explore why the gallery produces postcards of art works, what factors are taken into account when an artwork is reproduced as a postcard and of particular interest are a) the links you draw between the privileging of an artist/art work because of the postcard reproduction and b) the identity of the gallery as embodied in the postcards reproduced.

I will produce a Masters thesis disseminating the results of the research and participants will be notified when a copy of the thesis, held in the University of Waikato library, can be accessed to view. Some of the research findings may be used for conference presentations, academic article or book chapters.

All the information collected from your interview will be treated as anonymous and confidential. The data (consent forms, tapes and transcripts) will be stored for five years in a secure place with access available only to the researcher and the supervisors involved.

If you take part in the study, you have the right to:

- Refuse to answer any particular question; to withdraw from the study at any time during the data collection period; to peruse the record of your interview; to withdraw from the whole project up to one month after the perusal of your record of the interview.
- Ask any further questions about the study that occurs to you during your participation. I will be happy to answer any enquiries prior to or during your interview.
- Be given access to a summary of the findings from the study when it is concluded.

I have enclosed a consent form to sign and return which outlines the participation I am asking for, and a summary of the ethics above.

Thank you very much for indicating your interest in this research, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

Chris Robinson

APPENDIX 4: (E-MAIL) REQUEST FOR RESEARCH SUPPORT - SENT TO THREE NEW ZEALAND PUBLIC ART GALLERIES

Subject: REQUEST FOR RESEARCH SUPPORT- Waikato Uni-Masters
research

Hello

This email is a request to conduct research with key members of staff about your postcard stock.

I am a Masters student in the Department of Screen and Media Studies at the University of Waikato and conducting research on *The art gallery postcard: An expression of identity*. The study has a two pronged focus. Firstly, it examines why galleries produce postcards, the criteria for reproduction selection and understanding the profile of the postcard consumer. Secondly, the study examines how consumers of the postcards use them in their domestic space and the meanings they attach to them.

As a progressive art gallery, I believe you would provide valuable insights for the research. Therefore, if you are in a position to participate, I would appreciate being able to conduct face to face interviews with staff involved in postcard production and gallery shop.

This email is the initial inquiry with your gallery, and I ask if you could forward it to the staff member who is able to grant research approval, and/or responsible for reproducing your gallery postcards.

With the festive season almost upon us, I recognize you will be busy before Christmas. However, if you were interested in participating in the research, I would appreciate confirmation of your intent. I was thinking of the middle to the end of January 2007 as a suitable time to conduct the interviews.

If you have any questions about my research topic or the involvement required by your staff please don't hesitate to contact me.

Regards

Chris Robinson
154b Pembroke Street
Hamilton

07 849 1474
027 459 5610

robinsonlch@xtra.co.nz

APPENDIX 5: E-MAIL QUESTION TOPICS FOR DORA

Visiting Galleries

- Why do you visit art galleries and how important is that activity in your life?
- Can you describe how the architectural space of the gallery makes you feel?

Buying and using gallery postcards

- Can you write about *why* you often buy postcards after a gallery visit and how you value them subsequently?

You may wish to consider the following questions:

- How do you use / display the postcards? Why?
- Where do you display them in the home and are they used differently in different parts of the home?
- Do you throw them out?
- How do you feel about postcards that other people send you? Do you treat them in the same way as the ones you have purchased?
- Do you feel the same way about gallery postcards and tourist postcards? And, if not how do they differ?
- How do you store postcards?

Contemplating your postcards / displays

- What comes up for you when you look at your postcards? What are the postcards a trigger for?