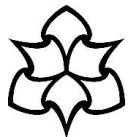




Arts & Humanities
Research Council



Manchester
Metropolitan
University

Manchester
Art Gallery

Sure Start
Children's Centres

Babies as Space Makers, Exhibition Makers and Policy Makers


Ruth Boycott-Garnett



Babies as Space Makers

Things of the Least

Welcome Little Stranger

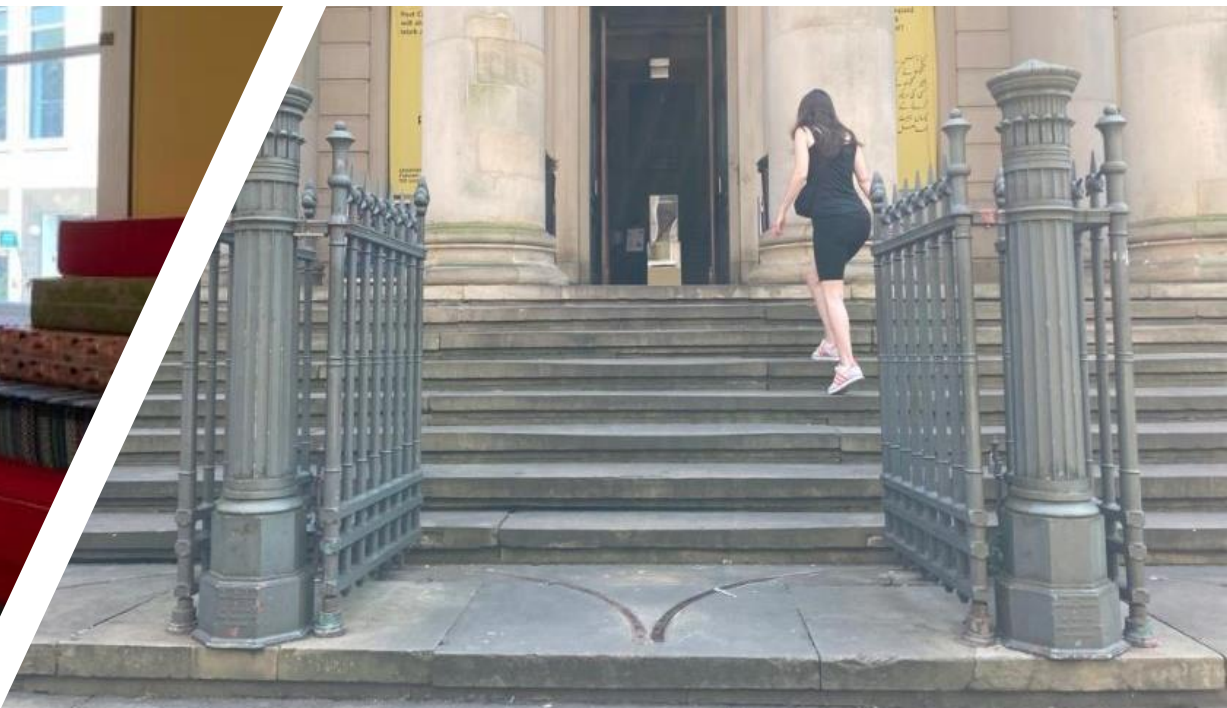
A high-angle photograph of a baby crawling on a wooden floor. The baby is wearing a dark green long-sleeved shirt and a light blue undershirt. The floor is made of wide wooden planks. To the right of the baby, there is a large, crumpled green fabric. In the foreground, there are two decorative, egg-shaped objects with floral patterns and a small basket. The background shows a white wall and a yellow fabric.

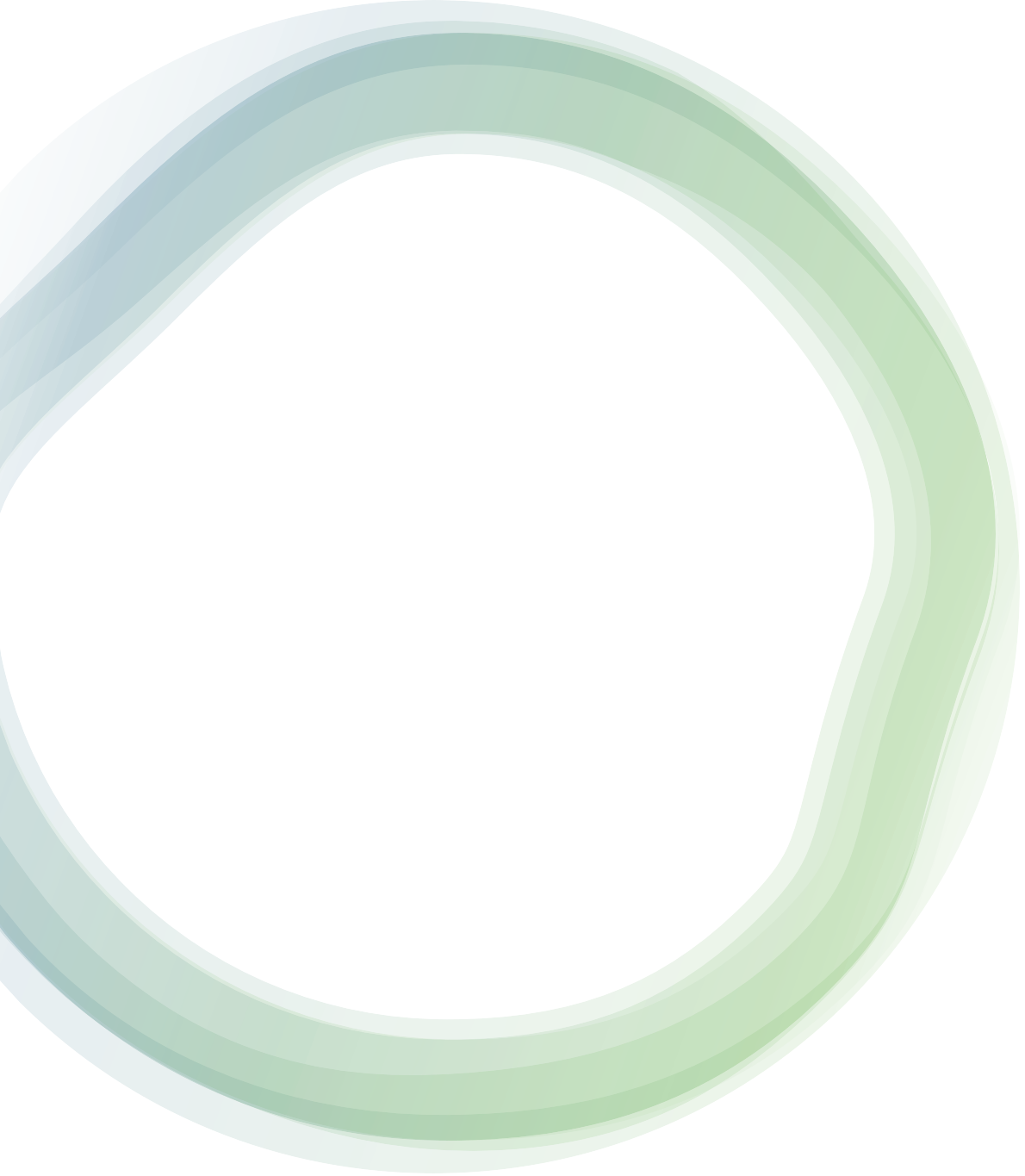
Film clips and sensory breathers

“the role of the body is not yet
fully recognized in the process of
knowledge creation”

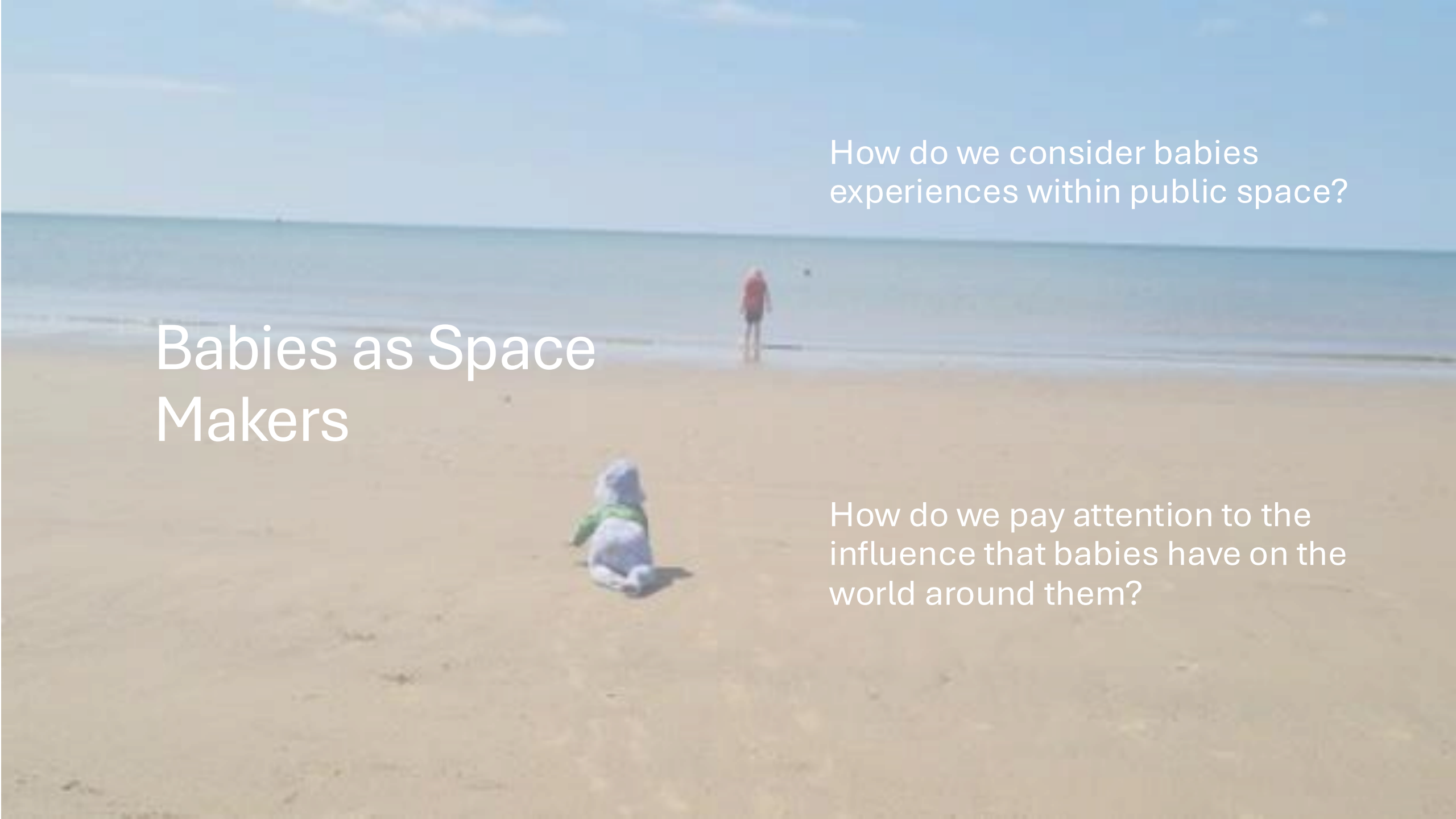
Groth and Mäkelä (2016)







Film clip breather



Babies as Space Makers

How do we consider babies experiences within public space?

How do we pay attention to the influence that babies have on the world around them?

	Centre 1	Centre 2	Restrictions
October - December 2020 (live sessions)	6 sessions for 4 families	Cancelled – no families	Soft lockdown
January – March 2021 (Zoom sessions)	8 sessions for 3 families	4 sessions for 3 families	Full lockdown
March – June 2021 (live sessions)	6 sessions for 4 families	6 sessions for 2 families	Under social distancing guidelines

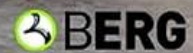


SPACE INVADERS

Race, Gender and Bodies Out of Place



NIRMAL PUWAR



‘Moments where unexpected bodies occupy a space becomes an encounter that ‘causes disruption, necessitates negotiation and invites complicity.’

Puwar, 2004:1





“We might describe an atmosphere as a feeling of what is around, and which might be all the more affective in its murkiness or fuzziness: a surrounding influence that does not quite generate its own form.”

Ahmed, 2014

Thresholds and liminal spaces

The ramp that leads to the accessible entrance at the library,

The automatic doors of the college,

The wobbly bit on a train that joins the two carriages,

The place the lino meets the carpet,

The gap between the blind and the window.





Film clip breather

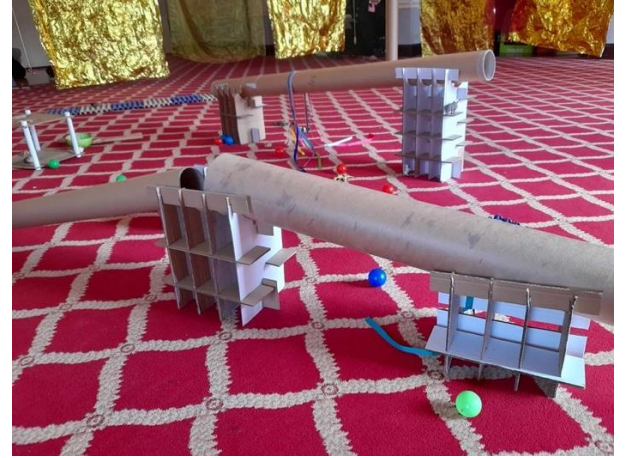


**Things of the Least:
lively exhibition-
making through the
material encounters
of under-3s**



Mary Greg Collection





Home Office Hotel and Platt Hall



Babies' material encounters

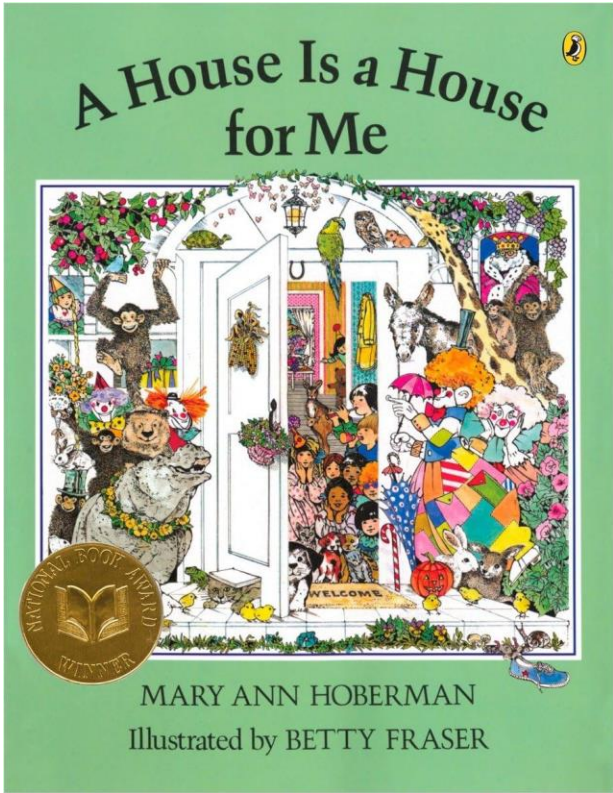


Movement

Touch

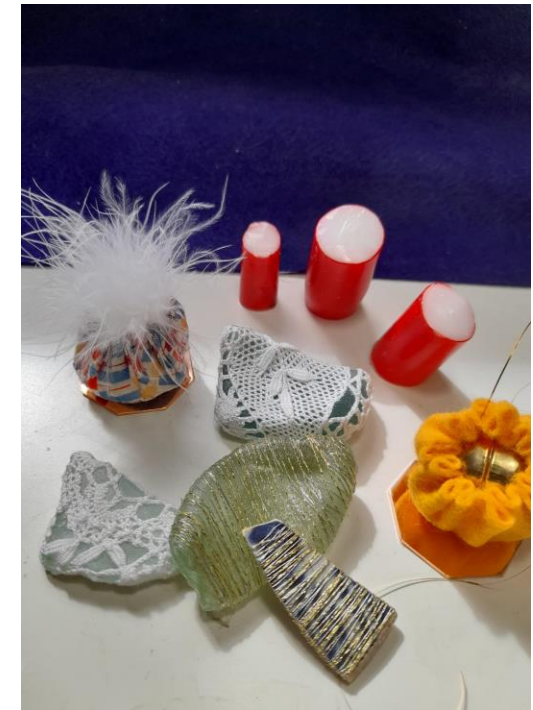
Proxemics

Gathering



“Cartons are houses for crackers.
Castles are houses for kings.
The more that I think about houses,
The more things are houses for things.”

Hoberman, 1978



Floor

“Banquet of small things”

Thimbles

Scoops and Spoons



Film clip breather



Welcome little stranger: working with under threes and their families to make Manchester a baby-friendly city

1. What do we mean by, and how do we pay attention to, 'the voices' of babies and toddlers?
2. How can cultural spaces support an understanding of the diverse lived experiences and voices of different babies across the city?
3. What methods can be used to embed voices of babies and toddlers in policy making?
4. What is the value of including babies and toddler's voices in city wide policy making beyond meeting their daily needs?

Telling the stories of in between spaces through the material adventures of babies and toddlers.

Waiting rooms - doctors, nurseries, health centres

Spaces of travel – trams, pavements, bus stops.

Small green spaces – patches of grass, forgotten benches.



References

Ahmed, S. (2014) 'Atmospheric Walls' [online] Feministkilljoys [Atmospheric Walls | feministkilljoys](#)

Groth, Camilla & Mäkelä, Maarit. (2016). The Knowing Body in Material Exploration. *Studies in material thinking*. 14. 1-21.

Manning, E., & Massumi, B. (2014). *Thought in the Act: Passages in the Ecology of Experience*. University of Minnesota Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctt6wr79f>

Puwar, N. (2004). *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies Out of Place*. London: Bloomsbury Academic. Retrieved March 3, 2025, from <http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781474215565>

Sparrman, A. (2024) 'Unlearning the child: An ontological politics outlook.' *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, pp. 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2024.2373774>