



# repetitive action repetitive action



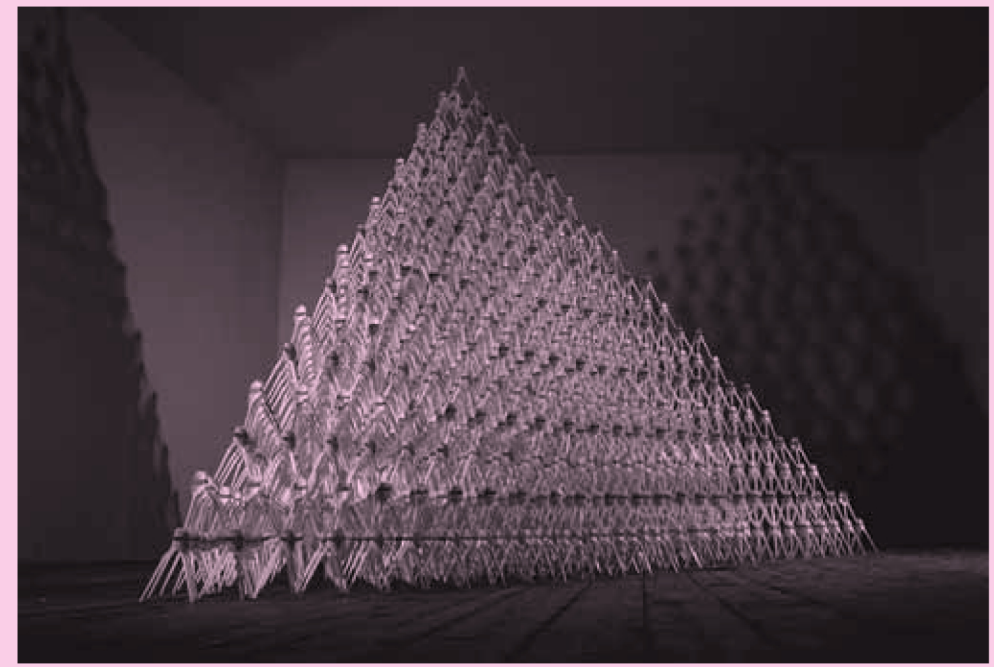
Jill Townsley

Jill Townsley is an artist and Senior Lecturer in Contemporary Arts. Her work is sculptural, usually large in scale and often installation based. She frequently utilises digital media to reveal the process within her work. Jill has an MA in sculpture from the Royal College of Art and is currently in the final stages of a practice-based PhD for which she received a Gladstone Fellowship from The University of Chester. She has exhibited nationally and internationally, most recently in *Second Lives – Remixing the Ordinary*, the inaugural show in the new galleries at the Museum of Art and Design, New York (2008–2009). Other exhibited works include *Moments in the Domain Rules* (2009) The Winchester gallery and *Satie 840* (2008) Unnatural Histories: London. Jill was nominated to contribute to Open Frequency on Axis Art in 2009.

Publications from her research include a conference paper entitled *Repetition and Process in Art Production – A Practitioner’s Account* presented at the *Repeat Repeat* Conference (2007), published by the Centre For Practice

As Research In The Arts (CAPRA) at the University of Chester. Jill is also a regular contributor to the research at Liverpool University’s Centre for Architecture and the Visual Arts (CAVA). Her work was recently published in the *Winchester School of Art Research Anthology* (2009), Southampton University.

Future exhibitions will include *Moments of Repetition*; a solo exhibition at The Nunnery Gallery, London. Opening in March 2010, this show will present a selection of work produced during Jill’s PhD research. New work has also been commissioned for 2011 contributing to a group show *Compulsive, Obsessive, Repetitive*, curated by Sanna Moore and opening at the new Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne in July–August 2011. Jill is a member of Bow Arts Trust, London. Her website can be found at [www.jilltownsley.com](http://www.jilltownsley.com)



While Jill’s work is generally large in scale the physical action applied to its construction is of a domestic ‘hand-held’ dimension, and always excruciatingly repetitive; her work has been described as ‘*repetitive to the point of obsession*’ by Open Frequency AXIS, Moore (2009). Her work reflects a long-term interest in repetition, not as an endlessly repeated subject or object, Warholian like in presentation, but embedded within the process of production. The idea that a small action could gather importance through repetition becomes compelling as the futility of the singular process changes by its relationship to repetition. The curator Myriam Blundell says of Jill’s work; ‘*she explores how things that appear to be constant are in fact always changing*’.

The purpose of the repeated action within the work is more complex than a means to an end. It is not just a prerequisite to forming a critical mass or achieving a particular form.

In many cases there are far more logical and practical ways of fulfilling the initial aim. For example, welding sheet metal to form a 2-metre square cube, rather than hand looping brass wire as observed in the work *Brass Cube* (2003). The close connection between the repetition and the action of process – often symbiotic – raises many questions. Specifically how subjective results of repetitive action, such as ‘failure through repetition’, ‘temporality’, ‘erasure’ or ‘shifting authorships’ have influenced the processes followed within the production of artwork, and how outcomes may (or may not) be contextualised with broader theories of repetition.

Each action of labour within Jill’s artwork reinforces this point of view and in doing so repetition presents us with a triumphant failure. The failure of labour (the hand or process) to repeat absolutely – a mimesis which raises further questions around ideas of singularity. Repetition also appears to take

some control in the authorship of the resulting work. For example, if a piece of work is only finished when the repetition obliterates itself through its own action; as in the five drawings entitled *Scribble Square*. The question is raised; where does the will of the artist reside?

Jill’s original aim is also to negate the self through repetition, presented only as an unobtainable ideal. The vision for the work is often to produce a logical form, a regular solid, cube, pyramid, grid or square. The process is chosen to utilise simple actions such as looping, scribbling or tying. Jill states this results in ‘*nearly cubes, sort of squares and wobbly grids.*’ The failure to replicate the logical forms (because of the repetition at the heart of the work’s existence) may however be generative, questioning the logic of the original ideal and challenging our general belief systems.

