

Weaving the Unseen

Materializing the Invisible Labour of Care

by

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Abstract

This research proposes that care—specifically domestic and parental labour—becomes perceptible through artistic practice. Moving beyond a purely theoretical construct, it positions care as a materially grounded, relational structure operating through repetition, pressure, and sustained bodily engagement. In this framework, care functions simultaneously as the subject, mode, and condition of the work.

Developed within the diasporic experience of fragmented time and the persistent lag of caregiving, the research unfolds through three interconnected bodies of work: *Everything Matters* (painting), *Weaving the Unseen* (textile), and *The Silent Gravity* (bronze sculpture). Across these series, care is revealed through material translation: domestic residues are transmuted into paintings; gesture drawings become hand-sewn textile bodies that record the rhythm of interrupted labour; and these forms are further reconfigured through 3D scanning and bronze casting.

A central contribution is the articulation of digital processes as transitional stages rather than neutral tools. Through 3D scanning and printing, embodied labour—initially formed via touch—is displaced and re-situated. This allows gestures of care to persist across material states, culminating in bronze works that condense the endurance of the Korean affect of *han*—approached here as a durational enactment of sustained responsibility—into structural weight. Simultaneously, informed by mycelial structures, the research understands care as an adaptive, distributed practice that reconfigures itself through relational proximity and interdependence in contrast to centralized control.

Consequently, care emerges through material and spatial relations—as an entangled field produced through the interweaving of the three bodies of work. By shifting the focus from theoretical discourse to structure and from conceptualization to material embodiment, this study repositions artistic practice as a site where invisible, silent maintenance becomes materially legible. The work remains an ongoing inquiry into the evolving relations between bodies, materials, and lived conditions.

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INTRODUCTION – Beginning in Small Times

Care in my practice does not arrive as a theory, but through lived experience—formed within ongoing changes, interruptions, and the continual need to adapt. It appears in fragmented intervals—brief moments that slip between everything else. A few minutes while broth simmers; the stillness inside a parked car between children’s lessons; the narrow stretch of hallway outside a pool; the quiet pause when they sit eating ice cream. These fragments never become extended studio hours, but they shape the temporal ground where caregiving and artistic making coexist.

The labour that unfolds within these fragments—lifting, driving, preparing, sorting, organizing, adjusting—holds little cultural visibility. Domestic and parental care is continuous and essential, although it is treated as too ordinary to mention, too repetitive to merit recognition, too easily understood as something natural. Within capitalist structures, labour that produces no measurable output or economic value is pushed to the margins, even as it forms the conditions that allow other forms of achievement to exist. Although these acts appear small, the stakes of care are never only domestic. The marginalization of care is not simply a private emotion, but a structural condition shaped by gendered divisions of labour, immigrant precarity, and capitalist systems that measure value through productivity rather than maintenance. Whose labour is recognized, whose becomes expected, and whose remains invisible are political questions long embedded in the social fabric. Attending to care at this intimate scale therefore carries broader philosophical questions: it asks how a society chooses to value the work that sustains life, and what forms of labour are quietly absorbed into the background of daily existence.

My research-creation practice emerges from this paradox: care is indispensable and structurally undervalued; it shapes the world but rarely appears in representation. I am compelled to give form to these almost invisible gestures—not to amplify them into grand statements, but to make their modesty perceptible, to bring into visibility what usually remains unspoken because its scale seems insignificant.

As an immigrant mother raising children within a cultural and linguistic environment different from the one that formed me, I inhabit a daily terrain where closeness and distance coexist. While some degree of lag between parents and children is generational and perhaps inevitable, this delay is intensified by the conditions of immigration, where children absorb language, humour, and social codes rapidly through their peers and institutions. I feel deeply connected to my children, yet I often arrive half a beat behind—catching up to idioms, jokes, or casual references only after they have already moved on. This soft and persistent lag forms an emotional undercurrent in my practice. It does not

appear as a dramatic theme; instead, it manifests as pauses, hesitations, and small recalibrations that echo the fragmented tempo of caregiving.

Rather than emerging from ideal conditions, my practice has developed through the continual adjustment of materials and methods to fit the emotional and temporal constraints of lived life. I do not aim to express resentment or martyrdom, nor do I dramatize the labour involved. Instead, I look for ways to reveal this work gently, without defensiveness, while allowing viewers to sense the physicality, pressure, and endurance embedded in small acts of maintenance.

The task is to make visible what has been rendered structurally unseen—not by enlarging it, but by allowing its quiet scale and modest presence to remain intact while becoming perceptible. This is where the research begins. The research unfolds through the following structure:

Chapter 1 introduces the research context and questions, outlining the context through which care emerges as a focus of the study.

Chapter 2, *Autobiographical, Material, and Artistic References*, establishes the lived, cultural, and artistic grounds that inform the development of the research-creation practice.

Chapter 3, *Methodology: Research-Creation as a Practice of Care*, outlines the research-creation approach, describing how the work is shaped through specific modes of working, processes, and material engagements.

Chapter 4, *Theoretical Frameworks*, provides the theories and concepts grounded to the study.

Chapter 5, *Practice-Based Analysis*, presents three bodies of work: *Everything Matters*, *Weaving the Unseen*, and *The Silent Gravity*.

Chapter 6 concludes the thesis by reflecting on the research, articulating how the practice of care extends toward the self and considering the broader implications of materializing invisible labour.

CHAPTER 1. Research Context and Research Questions

1.1 Research Context: Care That Persists Quietly but Rarely Counts

Domestic work and parental care are continuous, embodied, and essential, but they remain socially devalued. From early morning until late at night, my days are structured by labour—driving long distances, preparing meals, organizing, cleaning, lifting, sorting, and supporting emotional needs. This work produces no income, institutional recognition, or professional title, even as it sustains family life and enables other forms of work to exist.

This condition is shaped not only by broader social structures but also by my own lived experience as an immigrant mother navigating caregiving within a diasporic context. While these dynamics will be further examined in relation to Korean cultural sensibilities and relational modes of thinking later in this thesis, they inform how care is experienced as both materially present and socially unrecognized in everyday life.

Within these conditions of living—marked by gendered expectations, migration, childcare, and domestic maintenance—the central question of my practice shifted. Rather than constructing a conceptual system, my work turns toward the scale at which care is actually practiced—through hands, pauses, and materials—attending to how care persists quietly despite its limited social recognition.

1.2 Research Questions

This research explores how care can be engaged and understood through artistic practice, particularly in relation to domestic and parental labour. The research is guided by the following questions:

How can artistic practice materialize the small, repetitive, and often unnoticed labour of domestic and parental care?

- In what ways might care be explored through material, spatial, and relational aspects of artistic practice?
- How do the conditions of everyday life influence the forms, processes, and outcomes of artistic work?

1.3 Research-Creation as Working Within Interruptions

My research-creation approach is shaped by interruption and shifting conditions instead of stable or continuous working time. Developed within the context of caregiving and migration, the work evolves through adaptation to what is available, moving away from ideal or controlled environments.

This mode of working resonates with broader theories and approaches to understand life and practice as forms of persistence through instability. Anthropologist Anna Tsing describes survival in precarious worlds as unfolding through responsiveness to disturbance as opposed to stability or planned continuity (Tsing 83-86). A related logic appears in music composer John Cage's introduction of indeterminacy into artistic practice, where form emerges through chance, contingency, and attentiveness to conditions in contrast to predetermined control (Cage 17). Mycologist and writer Merlin Sheldrake similarly characterizes mycelial networks as "living labyrinths," systems that extend by continually adjusting their paths in response to interruption, resistance, and opportunity (Sheldrake 45). Together, these perspectives articulate a shared understanding of practice as adaptive, responsive, and cumulative.

Within this context, the processes I employ—observing domestic remnants, sewing figures in short intervals, inverting and stuffing forms, scanning, 3D printing, and casting in bronze—are not symbolic gestures. They are practical responses to the conditions under which I live and work. Each action is shaped by available time, bodily capacity, and material behaviour.

Interruption, in this sense, does not function as an external force that halts the work, but as a condition that shapes its rhythm and structure. This approach does not seek to separate care, labour, and artistic practice, but allows them to remain entangled and ongoing.

1.4 Overview of Artistic Practice: From Noticing to Weighting

The three bodies of work presented in this thesis develop through a shared movement from small, everyday acts toward increasingly structured material forms. They begin with attentive noticing of often-overlooked materials and gestures of domestic life, move through the formation of bodily and relational configurations, and culminate in the condensation of these gestures into material weight and spatial presence.

Rather than following a linear or hierarchical progression, the works remain grounded in the everyday scale of care—its repetitions, strains, and minor bodily negotiations. Through accumulation and repetition, small gestures and forms gradually gather into clusters and relational structures. As the work responds to lived conditions, forms shift in scale, material, and process, passing through textile, digital, and sculptural stages before returning to physical space.

Together, these three bodies of work *Everything Matters*, *Weaving the Unseen*, and *The Silent Gravity*, trace how care moves from perception to relation to weight, revealing it not as a singular act or emotion, but as a practice that persists, accumulates, and operates through material and social structures.

***Everything Matters* — Attentive Noticing as the Ground of Care**

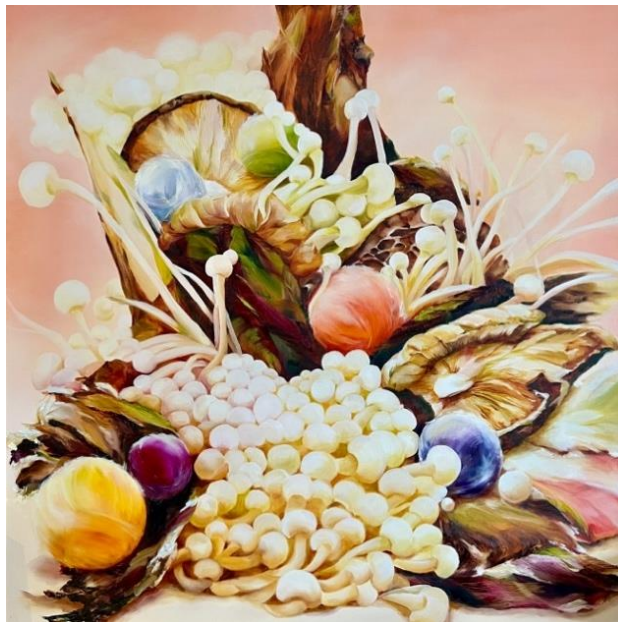


Fig. 1. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, *Everything Matters*, 2025, oil on canvas, 36x36 in. Photograph by the author.

This painting series begins from the residues generated through everyday life as a homemaker and mother. (See Appendix B Fig. A3) Mushroom fragments left from cooking, yarn remnants from my knitting basket, and twigs collected during walks are materials that would ordinarily disappear without notice. These fragments are gathered into small maquettes and subsequently translated into large-scale paintings. Alongside these domestic residues, I also documented wild mushrooms encountered during daily walks in my townhouse backyard, later translating some photographs into small paintings. This shift

functions as a material strategy for granting presence to elements of daily life that are often dismissed as insignificant. (See Appendix A Fig. A1, A2)

The series is grounded in the rhythms of repetitive domestic labour and care, as well as in the conditions under which one's sphere of activity gradually contracts into the home, rendering one socially invisible. Within this process, I experienced a growing sense of becoming nothing in social terms. *Everything Matters* emerged as a way of returning to my own life under these conditions—to affirm it, attend to it, and allow it to be seen. The decision to produce paintings that are large in scale, visually delicate, and time-intensive was a formal choice intended to resist the minimization of domestic labour and care.

Care begins with attentiveness—with what is allowed to matter and be noticed prior to action or outcome (Bellacasa 40-42). In this practice, attentive noticing is not an active mode of care that grants presence to labour typically relegated to the background. *Everything Matters* thus marks the starting point of this thesis: the moment at which caring for my daily life itself became an artistic and ethical practice.

***Weaving the Unseen* — Care as Relational Form**



Fig. 2. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, *Weaving the Unseen*, 2026, unbleached cotton, outgrown clothing, thread, and stuffing, dimensions variable. Installation view.
Photograph by Vivienne Valladares and Mattias Whalen.

Weaving the Unseen translates attentive noticing into relational form through hundreds of hand-sewn figures derived from quick gesture drawings made during moments of caregiving (See Appendix C Fig.A4—A6). The work emerged at a point when sustained painting was no longer physically or temporally possible. Following the birth of my fourth child and a period marked by multiple losses, the uninterrupted time and concentration required for large-scale painting became inaccessible. Under these conditions, drawing began as a minimal practice—executed intermittently in brief intervals—as a way of maintaining artistic attentiveness within fragmentation.

The figures twist, reconnect, and gather in clusters, reflecting how care reorganizes time, attention, and the body through repeated, sustaining acts. After stuffing, dotted seam lines re-emerge on the surface, revealing labour that is typically intended to remain hidden. Installed in proximity, the figures lean, press, and sag against one another, forming subtle physical relations that echo how care circulates across bodies and accumulates through repetition rather than through singular acts.

Material choice further grounds the work in lived experience. Most figures are made from unbleached cotton, recalling the restrained tactility and utilitarian character of domestic textiles from my Korean upbringing. Installed together, these bodies form a dense, interconnected field that emphasizes continuity, repetition, and mutual dependence. Embedded within this field are a small number of child-like figures made from outgrown clothing and coloured fabrics. Instead of being isolated or highlighted, these figures remain integrated within the larger formation, emerging intermittently within the mass. Their presence introduces moments of specificity—growth, vulnerability, and differentiation—within an otherwise continuous structure of care.

Through these relational configurations, *Weaving the Unseen* shifts care from a private, individualized activity into a spatial and material condition. Care is not represented narratively or symbolically, but made perceptible through proximity, pressure, and mutual adjustment—revealing it as a relational practice sustained through accumulation, responsiveness, and shared support.

***The Silent Gravity* — Care as Accumulated Weight**

The Silent Gravity extends the material logic developed throughout the thesis by tracing how domestic and caregiving labour—initially performed through sewing, adjusting, and sustaining fabric—translates into sculptural weight. Selected textile figures from *Weaving the Unseen* are 3D-scanned and rendered digitally, translated into three-

dimensional data, 3D-printed, and cast in bronze (See Appendix E Fig. A8). Through this process, hand-performed labour is carried into different conditions, allowing its gestures to be re-situated and read anew.



Fig. 3. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, *The Silent Gravity*, 2026, bronze sculpture. Installation view. Photograph by the author.

Bronze preserves every wrinkle, fold, and seam as a layered record of accumulated labour. Unlike fabric, which yields and sags under gravity, bronze resists collapse, holding pressure and tension in place. Its weight resonates with the Korean concept of *han*—an endurance shaped through time rather than singular emotion (Kim). When bronze figures are introduced within the textile field, they subtly reorganize spatial relations, altering how surrounding forms lean, lift, or settle. At the same time, when installed as independent sculptures, the bronze figures emerge as autonomous bodies, projecting outward from their earlier planar origins and asserting a distinct presence in space.

Through this final transformation, domestic care—long unrecognized as labour—becomes visible beyond emotion or representation, as a materially structured practice that operates within social structures through repetition, pressure, and endurance.

CHAPTER 2. Autobiographical, Material, and Artistic References

This chapter brings together the autobiographical, cultural, and artistic lineages that shape how my practice thinks through material, form, and process. These lineages establish the ground from which the work is developed.

2.1 Autobiographical References— Living Within Fragmented Time

My practice began during a period when caregiving dictated the shape of each day. After immigrating to Canada and leaving behind a demanding professional role, I found myself immersed in the intimate and cyclical rhythms of raising four children. Time no longer came in extended stretches but in small, unpredictable fragments, as caregiving conditions continued to shift.

This fragmented temporality sharpened my attention to the periphery. A trimmed mushroom stem, a fallen thread from repairing children's clothing, a twig found on the playground—these modest remnants began to enter my field of vision. This attentiveness extended into informal field documentation, including photographs of wild mushrooms encountered repeatedly in the townhouse backyard where I had spent time with little baby. The rhythm of caregiving—interruption, repetition, return—mirrored the rhythm of making. Sewing, drawing, and painting unfolded not despite these conditions but through them. Care was not outside the studio; it created the very conditions within which the studio could exist.

Living as an immigrant mother shaped this structure further. Although I share deep closeness with my children, I often move slightly out of sync with the cultural and linguistic world they inhabit. Their pace is quick, fluid, and attuned to the Canadian context; mine carries the cadences of another place. This subtle misalignment is not dramatic, yet it quietly permeates my work. The twisted limbs, leaning bodies, and subtle tensions in the sewn figures echo this emotional terrain—where intimacy and distance coexist, and where continual recalibration shapes daily life. It is within this condition of proximity and delay that my practice takes shape.



Fig. 4. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, *Weaving the Unseen*, 2026, unbleached cotton, outgrown clothing, thread, and stuffing, dimensions variable. Details. Photograph by the author.

2.2 Cultural References — Korean Sensibilities of Endurance, Restraint, and Quiet Persistence

Although I now live in Canada, the emotional textures and material sensibilities of my Korean upbringing remain deeply embedded in my work. These influences emerge not through overt symbolism but through the atmosphere surrounding my choices of material, gesture, and form.

2.2.1 *Han* — Quiet Accumulation and Emotional Compression

The Korean concept of *han* has often been interpreted, particularly through modern discourses shaped during the colonial period, as an expression of sorrow, resignation, and emotional restraint. In these interpretations, *han* was framed as a defining national sentiment—an accumulation of sadness and suffering that characterized Korean life as passive and enduring. Such readings, developed in part through colonial-era Japanese scholarship, including the writings of Yanagi Sōetsu, functioned less as neutral cultural analysis than as ideological constructions (Yanagi Sōetsu). By aestheticizing *han* as a quiet, melancholic sensibility, these interpretations recast historically produced conditions of violence and structural oppression as inherent emotional traits, compressing experiences of resistance and agency into narratives of endurance and victimhood (Y. Kim)

This framing of *han* did not remain at the level of cultural interpretation but extended into everyday social relations. By presenting emotional restraint and endurance as inherent traits, it contributed to the normalization of structural conditions, particularly within domestic and gendered labour. In everyday language, *han* is often associated with women, reinforcing expectations that emotional compression, sacrifice, and silent endurance are naturalized aspects of feminine experience. In this way, *han* operates not only as a cultural concept, but as a term through which uneven distributions of labour and responsibility are rendered ordinary and unquestioned.

In this research, I approach *han* as a condition of emotional compression formed through repetition, duration, and sustained responsibility, and as an underlying sensibility of care—one that accumulates gradually within the body rather than as a negative emotional state. In this sense, *han* functions both as a descriptive term and as a sensibility that permeates my artistic practice—a generative force rather than a stagnant residue of the past. It is quiet, persistent, and structurally embedded in everyday life, particularly within practices of care.

In my bronze works, especially *The Silent Gravity*, this understanding of *han* becomes material. The density of bronze holds emotional weight in contrast to the softness and adaptability of fabric used elsewhere in my practice. While textiles sag, fold, and adjust to pressure, bronze resists and condenses it. This condensation occurs through a process of digital translation: hand-sewn textile forms are 3D scanned and reconfigured, allowing accumulated pressures and distortions to be carried into a different spatial register.



Fig. 5. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, *The Silent Gravity*, 2025, bronze sculpture. Details. Photograph by the author

Also, In *Weaving the Unseen*, *Han* extends beyond the objects themselves, becoming perceptible through shadow, spatial relation, and proximity. The shadows cast by the suspended forms operate as a diffuse and relational field, where the accumulation of subtle tensions and adjustments is sensed not as a fixed object, but as an atmospheric presence. In this way, *Han* moves between condensation and dispersion—between weight and shadow—emerging both as material density and as a quiet relational force within the installation, one that actively reshapes the surrounding space through its persistent presence.



Fig. 6. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, *Weaving the Unseen*, 2026, textile installation, dimensions variable. Installation view. Photograph by the author.

2.2.2 Generational Embodiment — The Lives of My Grandmother and Mother

My cultural sensibility also emerges from the embodied practices of my grandmother and mother. My grandmother’s life was formed through frugality, repetition, and the quiet maintenance of the household: selecting fabrics carefully, sewing by hand, mending and repurposing objects to extend their lives. Her gestures taught me—without speaking—that care is often practiced through endurance rather than display.

My mother’s daily work carried a similar rhythm. She cooked, repaired, supported, and sustained others through steady, unacknowledged labor. Growing up, I did not fully recognize the value of these gestures. I pursued study and professional achievement, unaware that these opportunities were held up by their invisible support. I did not wish to replicate their lives, nor did I understand their practices as models of value. Only later did I realize that my work is not an attempt to idealize their experiences; rather, it is a speculative effort to render visible what was structurally overlooked: the emotional and physical weight of quiet, sustaining labor. Through my practice, I seek to name and materialize the structures of care that made my own life possible.

2.2.3 Unbleached Cotton — Softness, Restraint, and the Afterimage of Loss

Unbleached cotton carries the material memory of my childhood. Historically used in Korea for baby diapers, *baenet-jeogori*¹, dishcloths, and undergarments, the fabric is closely associated with everyday care and bodily proximity. Long before it was absorbed into the ideological narrative of the “white-clad people”—a construct shaped through colonial ethnography²—it functioned as an intimate domestic textile that touched the skin of newborns and supported daily labour. Its warmth, softness, and muted appearance align with the restrained aesthetic that permeates my practice, making it a material choice that feels both instinctive and structurally embedded.

This material sensitivity became more pronounced following my father’s death. In Korea, mourning garments are traditionally made of white, unbleached cotton, situating this fabric not only within practices of care but also within rituals of loss. In the aftermath of his passing, I became aware of forms of care and emotional labour that I had not fully recognized during his life—care that had operated quietly, without articulation or acknowledgment. This delayed recognition shaped the orientation of my work, directing attention toward forms of care that persist without visibility or affirmation.

In this context, whiteness signifies neither purity nor spectacle, but quiet endurance and subdued reflection. These resonances became present in *Weaving the Unseen*, where soft curves, slightly sagging forms, and re-emerging seams register a condition in which vulnerability and persistence coexist. Sewing operates here as a method of holding together what has been dispersed, allowing softness to carry the afterimage of loss without narrating it directly. Through unbleached cotton, care appears not as sentiment but as a material state—one shaped by restraint, repetition, and the quiet labour of continuation.

¹*Baenet-jeogori* is a traditional Korean infant jacket characterized by its soft, unbleached fabric and lack of fasteners, designed to protect a newborn’s delicate skin. In the context of this study, it represents the primary material layer of domestic care and the beginning of a lifelong durational enactment of parental responsibility.

² For discussions of the “white-clad people” as a colonial ethnographic construction, see Yanagi Sōetsu (1972); Yoon Jin-suk (2001).

2.2.4 Diaspora as Material and Sensory Condition — Two Textures, Two Homes

The diasporic dimension of my work appears most clearly in the dual-material bodies of the child figures. Each form combines unbleached cotton with red-check fabric—buffalo plaid—deeply associated with Canadian and Québécois material culture, from lumberjack shirts to winter garments (Garton). This textile reflects the world my children move through daily: schoolyards, winter clothing, and the visual codes of Canadian life.

Set beside unbleached cotton, the seam between these materials becomes a point of negotiation rather than separation. It acknowledges the bicultural terrain of my children’s identities, shaped across two textures, two languages, and two emotional worlds. Adult figures, made entirely of unbleached cotton, emphasize my own groundedness in a single cultural origin and my position within the labour of sustaining a family that moves between contexts. In this way, diaspora in my practice is not symbolic but material—the fabric itself holds the story.



Fig. 7. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, *Weaving the Unseen*, 2026, unbleached cotton, outgrown clothing, thread, and stuffing, dimensions variable. Details. Photograph by the author.

2.3 Artistic Content Review

The following section situates this research within a lineage of artistic practices that engage with care, maintenance, repetition, and material transformation. These practices provide critical frameworks for positioning, extending, and developing my own work.

2.3.1 Mierle Laderman Ukeles — Reframing Maintenance as Art

Mierle Laderman Ukeles’s *Manifesto for Maintenance Art, 1969!* defines maintenance labour as “all the work that keeps life going” and challenges the hierarchy through which art

has historically privileged creation, progress, and productivity as its primary values (M. L. Ukeles). Ukeles extended this declaration through performances such as *Maintenance Art Performance Series* (1973–74) (M. L. Ukeles, *Maintenance Art Performance Series, 1973-74*), including *Washing/Tracks/Maintenance: Outside* (1973), (M. L. Ukeles, *Washing/Tracks/Maintenance:Outside*), in which she scrubbed floors and cleaned exhibition spaces, bringing repetitive and invisible domestic labour into the center of the art institution. These actions produced no new objects and left no visible results; precisely through this absence, they exposed how care and maintenance labour—despite being socially essential—have been systematically excluded from recognition as meaningful outcomes.

This practice prompted a critical shift in my own understanding. It revealed that my desires are not personal excesses or deviations, but the result of a condition in which care and maintenance labour have been persistently denied recognition as productive or valuable. Experiences that had long been dismissed—by others and internalized by myself—as personal complaints or emotional conflicts became legible as effects of a socially structured system of valuation. Grounded in this recognition, my work seeks to make visible how care and maintenance labour do not simply deplete energy, but generate forms, sustain relationships, and enable the formation of subjectivity over time. My desire is not something to be excluded from this process; rather, it emerges as a condition that must be acknowledged once care labour itself is recognized as producing outcomes.

2.3.2 Louise Bourgeois — Emotional Catharsis, Material Memory, and Feminist Inheritance

Louise Bourgeois describes art as “a form of emotional catharsis” and characterizes materials as “carriers of memory” (Bourgeois 54). In the *Femme Maison* series, Bourgeois directly exposes the condition in which women’s identities are absorbed into domestic space and unpaid labour. By fusing the female body with the architecture of the house—often replacing the head with a structure—these works articulate the erasure of female subjectivity within social and domestic frameworks. This gesture functions not only as a personal expression, but as a critical recognition and denunciation of structural conditions that confine women to the private sphere.

Across later works such as *Cells* and *Spiders*, Bourgeois continues to materialize emotional experience through spatial containment. Psychic states—fear, care, vulnerability, attachment—are held within steel armatures and architectural enclosures, transforming emotion into something that can be preserved, stabilized, and controlled. Care, in this context, appears as an inward condition: an emotional intensity that is contained, suspended, and materially secured within bounded structures.

My practice situates itself within this lineage of feminist recognition and critique, while simultaneously marking a clear departure from it. I belong to a generation that has grown up benefiting from the achievements of earlier feminist artists, including Bourgeois, who rendered women's lived realities visible and reframed domestic labor and care as political and social concerns. However, despite these advances, the responsibilities of care and domestic labor persist, and the desire for mothers' participation in social and professional life continues to demand negotiation, adjustment, and sustained struggle. My work addresses this post-achievement condition—the residual tensions that remain after recognition—by attending to how balance, adaptation, and persistence are enacted in everyday life.

Where Bourgeois's *Cells* confine emotional memory within architectural boundaries, my textile figures disperse outward across walls and spaces, forming relational networks rather than enclosed rooms. These figures originate from approximately one hundred recurring patterns; however, no two outcomes are identical. As patterns are transferred to fabric, sewn, and filled, subtle variations emerge through differences in fabric tension, thickness, elasticity, and the pressure of the hand. The resulting hundreds of figures are structurally connected yet formally distinct. This variation is not incidental but integral, registering the accumulative adjustments and adaptations that characterize care labor as it is lived and performed.

Rather than resolving care through emotional catharsis or symbolic enclosure, my practice understands care as an ongoing, socially distributed process—one that sustains itself through repetition, maintenance, repair, and continual reconfiguration. In this sense, the work aligns with a broader shift within feminist theory, moving from the exposure of women's conditions toward an understanding of care as a relational and infrastructural practice (UkelesLandermanMiele) (Bellacasa). Material memory in my work is not sealed or preserved within fixed forms; instead, it circulates, transforms, and integrates into social structures, continually reshaped at the intersection of motherhood, artistic practice, and lived negotiation.

2.3.3 Claire Brunet — Materializing the Ephemeral and the Time Embedded Within

Care and maintenance at home are consistently undervalued within capitalist frameworks because they do not produce clearly visible outcomes or measurable products. Although essential to sustaining life, this labour unfolds continuously throughout the day, repeats daily, and leaves little tangible residue. As a result, care work is often performed but not recorded, present but not accumulated, and experienced as ephemeral. My practice begins from an attempt to materialize this disappearing labour—to translate what has been

repeatedly performed, but left without trace, into form, and to visualize that care and maintenance do, in fact, produce outcomes.

Within this framework, Claire Brunet's *Snow Tree – Arbre Neige* (2021–2023) serves as an important methodological reference. What resonates most strongly in her work is the way it fixes what is fleeting into material form while simultaneously holding an accumulation of time within it. The sculpture does not simply arrest a moment; it condenses the temporal conditions and duration that precede that moment. Rendered in bronze with a white patina, the sapling maintains a quiet tension between ephemerality and endurance, achieving physical weight and spatial presence without expanding into a grand or monumental narrative.

My textile works similarly seek to register care and maintenance labour as a process shaped by repetition, bodily effort, and emotional investment. Sewing, stuffing, and adjusting are not merely steps toward a finished object, but accumulative actions through which time, labour, and relational conditions are embedded into form. To preserve this accumulation without idealizing or flattening it, I adopted 3D scanning and printing as intermediary processes from Brunet. These technologies allow irregularities, pressure, and subtle variation to be carried forward into another material state.

This methodological shift marked a decisive turn toward bronze as both material and process in my practice. While bronze is traditionally associated with permanence and authority, in my work, it serves to sustain what has been shaped through care and maintenance. The translation into bronze is an extension of softness—an insistence that the time and labour embedded in repetitive acts can persist beyond their original conditions. In this sense, my sculptures function as material condensations of accumulated time. They represent care as a subject; at the same time, they carry forward traces of repetition, pressure, and duration, allowing what was once ephemeral to remain materially present.

2.3.4 John Cage — Indeterminacy, Peripheral Presence, and Attentive Practice

John Cage's introduction of indeterminacy into musical composition was not only a technical experiment with chance-based methods, but an ethical reorientation shaped through his sustained engagement with nature. The practice of mushroom foraging—attending to what emerges unpredictably, without planning or control—offered Cage a model of perception grounded in patience, openness, and the acceptance of contingency (Cage 17). For Cage, indeterminacy did not mean the absence of intention, but a shift away from authorial control toward the conditions through which sound and perception arise.

This orientation is made explicit in Cage's *4'33"*. By framing ambient and unintended sounds produced by the audience and the surrounding environment as the substance of the work, Cage displaces compositional control and allows music to emerge from what is already present yet habitually ignored (Cage). Meaning, in this context, results from attentive listening: an openness to peripheral presence.

Cage articulates a related ethos in *The Mushroom Book*, where he emphasizes affirming life as it is, rather than imposing order or “suggest[ing] improvements in creation” (Cage 45). This stance resonates with my own practice and with Anna Tsing's account of survival and coexistence within disturbed environments (Tsing). Like mushrooms that emerge amid disruption, my work develops within conditions of interruption, fragmented time, and continual negotiation. Caregiving and domestic labour do not appear as obstacles external to artistic practice; instead, they constitute the terrain in which it must be carried out. In this context, my attention to modest materials and peripheral forms—discarded remnants, small gestures, and quiet accumulations—functions as an attentive practice. Making occurs through interruption, as a way of staying with what quietly persists at the edges of perception. Cage's work affirms this mode of engagement, positioning indeterminacy and attention as conditions through which artistic practice can endure.

2.3.5 Eric Cameron — The Aesthetics of Repetition and Accumulated Time

Eric Cameron's *Thick Paintings* demonstrate how repetition can gradually erase recognizable form while preserving duration as material evidence. Cameron repeatedly coats canvases and everyday objects with layers of gesso and paint—immersing, covering, and returning to the same surface over extended periods of time. Through this process, original contours become unreadable, yet they are not removed; they persist internally, held within accumulated layers of material (Cameron).

In these works, repetition functions as a sustained return. Time does not progress toward resolution; it thickens. What is recorded is the duration of labour that has passed over the surface. Cameron reframes painting as a durational archive—one in which material accumulation replaces representation, and persistence replaces expressive intention (Townsend).

This logic extends beyond repetitive handwork and into the material outcomes of my own practice. Gestures of care and maintenance are condensed into objects that carry visible time. As in Cameron's layered works, the original gestures become unreadable as discrete acts, yet they persist materially within the form. What emerges is a temporal accumulation made tangible.

In this way, my work understands care and maintenance as realities that generate objects through duration. Time spent in repetition is held, thickened, and preserved. Whether in textile or bronze, the resulting forms function as material archives of lived time—objects through which care becomes legible not as sentiment, but as sustained structure.

2.3.6 Lee Ungno — Constraint, Repetition, and Collective Form

Lee Ungno's *Gun Sang (Crowd)* series provides a critical framework for understanding repetition as an artistic response to historical and material constraint. During his imprisonment in South Korea between 1967 and 1969—under a military regime marked by Cold War-era political repression—Lee was wrongfully incarcerated as a political prisoner. In these conditions, he produced numerous figure drawings and sculptures using only what was immediately available, such as rice paste and newspaper. Under extreme limitation, repetition functioned as a means of sustaining presence; figures accumulated to endure confinement. In these early works, repetition operates as survival rather than expression (Lee, *Works from Prison*) (Y. Kim).

While Lee's prison drawings established repetition as a response to constraint, the *Gun Sang* paintings for which he is widely known emerged more fully in his later career, particularly from the late 1970s into the 1980s. In these large-scale works, densely clustered figures fill expansive canvases, dissolving individual bodies into rhythmic collectivity. Although materially and formally distinct from the prison drawings, these paintings retain the same underlying logic. What changes is the scale. Constraint gives way to expansion, yet repetition remains the primary structuring force through which collective form emerges (Y. Kim).

Lee's practice demonstrates how repetition functions as a historically conditioned response. His work articulates how form can arise from limitation—how sustained repetition under pressure produces relational structures that exceed individual expression. While my own circumstances are not defined by war or imprisonment, my practice similarly operates within persistent forms of constraint shaped by caregiving, migration, and the structural undervaluation and non-deferrable nature of maintenance labour. In this sense, repetition in my work also emerges as a response to lived conditions. As in Lee's *Gun Sang*, repeated forms in my practice accumulate into collective and relational structures, allowing care to become visible as a sustained condition shaped by time, pressure, and circumstance beyond personal sentiment.

2.4 Where These Contexts Form a Ground for Practice

These autobiographical, cultural, and artistic lineages establish the conditions under which my practice operates. They orient material choice, execution, and decision-making as the work develops, providing points of reference when direction is uncertain.

Under conditions of fragmented working time and the non-deferrable demands of care labour, my structure of making takes shape through repetition and return, and through material choices made in response to lived conditions. These conditions directly organize how the work unfolds in everyday life—how time is used, how work begins and stops, and how materials are engaged within interrupted temporalities.

Before turning to theoretical frameworks, it is therefore necessary to clarify the methodological conditions through which this work is produced. Chapter 3 discusses the practical and temporal structures that organize my making within these conditions.

CHAPTER 3 — METHODOLOGY: Research-Creation as a Practice of Care

This chapter outlines the approach of my research-creation practice as it emerges from the lived conditions described in the previous chapter. The work develops through ongoing processes of making shaped by repetition, interruption, and the physical labour embedded in a life of caregiving.

The practice unfolds within spaces and temporal rhythms where domestic tasks, caregiving responsibilities, and artistic production coexist without clear separation. Within this entangled context, making does not proceed linearly or continuously; instead, it moves through cycles of return, adjustment, and accumulation. Materials and processes emerge in response to what is available, sustainable, and possible within these specific conditions.

3.1 Temporal — Fragmented Time as Material

The primary ground of this research lies in the discontinuous temporality of domestic caregiving. Working within fragmented intervals, artistic practice adapts to these temporal rhythms, shaping its processes, materials, and scale. *Weaving the Unseen* and *The Silent Gravity* emerge directly from these constraints.

The gesture drawings that form the foundation of these works originate in moments of care. They are simple and immediate traces of bodily positions formed through caregiving. In isolation, they remain fleeting. However, as these gestures are translated into patterns, adapted to material behaviour, sewn into textile figures, and later cast in bronze, they begin to accumulate as material traces of sustained engagement.

Embedded within this process is a record of bodily rhythms produced through care—rhythms shaped by repetition, interruption, and ongoing physical labour. Each figure thus becomes not only an imprint of gesture, but a material register of how care organizes the body over time.

The work unfolds through cycles of return, adjustment, and accumulation. Fragmented time, in this sense, operates as a generative force that shapes how the work is made, sustained, and transformed.

3.2 Autobiographical Situatedness — Knowing Through Living

In this research, knowledge emerges directly from lived experience and is enacted through ongoing processes of making. My practice develops within the realities of caregiving, diasporic life, and fragmented time, where making cannot be separated from the circumstances in which it unfolds. This approach resonates with Donna Haraway's argument that knowledge is always "situated and embodied" (Haraway, *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective* 583), suggesting that ways of knowing are formed through specific bodies, locations, and lived realities rather than as abstract or universal.

These autobiographical conditions are not confessional but epistemic. They operate as structuring forces that shape the choices, constraints, and adjustments through which the work takes form. The negotiation between cultural inheritance and personal agency, the emotional and logistical labour of supporting children who inhabit a different cultural world, and the persistent repetition of maintenance work generate relational pressures that organize how the practice is sustained over time. These forces shape scale, repetition, material selection, and the relational architectures within the work. Autobiographical life, therefore, does not function as the ground through which the work is formed, sustained, and made possible.

3.3 Material Translation as a Mode of Working

Across my practice, different materials register care in distinct ways. Painting and maquettes operate through acts of looking and arrangement; textile emphasizes softness and relational dependence; 3D scanning records pressure and deviation; and bronze materializes weight and endurance. Rather than representing a singular image of care, these materials make perceptible its qualities across shifting material states.

Material translation operates as a connective process that brings these differences into relation. Material choices do not follow predetermined plans but emerge in response to the constraints of making—bodily limitation, temporal rhythms, and the demands of care. Through these shifts, care becomes perceptible as a condition that takes form differently across materials.

In this research, translation is a mode of knowledge-making. As forms move across materials—from domestic remnants to paint, from gesture drawings to textile bodies, and from sewn forms to digital processes and bronze—the work undergoes transformations in weight, tension, and visibility. These shifts carry the earlier states forward, allowing gestures to persist while acquiring new capacities. In this sense, translation produces the framework through which the work can continue, transform, and become perceptible.

3.4 Observational Ground: From Attentive Noticing to Mycelial Thinking

This observational practice emerged during a period when my painting process was interrupted. While working on *Everything Matters*, my fourth pregnancy and subsequent childbirth made sustained studio painting physically and temporally unfeasible. As extended periods of making receded, attention shifted toward walking, waiting, and remaining within the rhythms of caregiving.

During daily walks in the backyard of my townhouse—often while settling a baby to sleep or accompanying a child learning to walk—I began informally documenting wild mushrooms encountered along familiar paths. These observations unfolded over two years, following repeated routes and seasonal returns. The mushrooms appeared unpredictably, surfaced briefly, and disappeared again, drawing attention to forms of persistence that operate largely beneath perception. When time allowed, some of these photographs were translated into small-scale paintings on canvas, functioning as quiet extensions of this observational process (see Appendix A, Fig. A1-A2).



Fig. 8. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, *A Mushroom*, 2024, oil on canvas, 9x12in. Photograph by the author.
Fig. 9. Field photograph of a wild mushroom in the artist's backyard, 2024. Photograph by the author.

Observing mushrooms prompted reflection not only on ecological systems, but also on forms of labour and support that operate out of sight. Underground mycelial networks sustain forest ecologies by filling gaps, redistributing resources, and maintaining conditions for growth without announcing their presence. When mushrooms surface, they momentarily reveal the existence of this hidden network. This emergence occurs at specific moments tied to reproduction and environmental change.

Within this dynamic, I began to recognize parallels with domestic maintenance and care labour—work that sustains life structurally while remaining largely unseen. Care, like mycelial networks, becomes most perceptible not through its continuous operation, but in moments of heightened demand or transformation. These brief emergences offer partial glimpses into the ongoing labour that sustains the entirety of the system.

Attentive noticing, first developed through painting in *Everything Matters*, expands into an understanding of care as a distributed and relational system operating beneath visibility. *Weaving the Unseen* emerges from this shift. This mycelial mode of thinking later takes material form through relational textile bodies, where support, proximity, and dependence are enacted as structural relations rather than symbolic representations.

3.5 Sensory–Material Reasoning — Thinking Through the Hand

Thinking through the hand defines the approach of this research, where creative thinking unfolds through direct, tactile engagement with materials. Rather than beginning with conceptual decisions, the work develops through material interaction, where judgment emerges through touch, resistance, pressure, and repetition. Following Tim Ingold's

proposition that making involves “thinking through the hand” (Ingold), material engagement is understood as a form of reasoning that unfolds within action.

Within this approach, making operates as a mode of inquiry. Decisions arise through continuous negotiation with material behaviour. While this section establishes sensory–material reasoning as a way of working, detailed discussions of specific works and processes are addressed in Chapter 5, where these operations are traced through practice.

3.5.1 Maquette Construction — Attending Through Arrangement (*Everything Matters*)

In the early stages of this research, small still-life maquettes constructed from domestic remnants—such as mushroom fragments, twigs, and yarn ends—functioned as tools for perceptual reasoning. These assemblages guided compositional decisions through texture, balance, and internal rhythm. Looking, arranging, and lingering became modes of attending to material presence.

In this sense, painting functioned less as image-making than as a practice of sustained attention, aligned with John Cage’s emphasis on noticing unintended and easily overlooked aspects of everyday experience (Cage).

3.5.2 Sewing, Stuffing, and Anastomosis — Negotiation Through the Hand (*Weaving the Unseen*)

In *Weaving the Unseen*, textile figures emerge through repeated actions of cutting, stitching, turning inside-out, stuffing, and closing. These processes are shaped by material resistance, gravity, hand pressure, and interruption. Turning introduces torsion and collapse; stuffing produces uneven densities that shift posture and balance.

Through these constraints, bodies are reconfigured beyond anatomical logic. Anastomosis³ arises as a consequence of negotiation between hand and material

³ *Anastomosis* is a term I use to describe bodily configurations that emerge through material constraint rather than anatomical intention. The term is adapted from ideas introduced in Merlin Sheldrake’s *Entangled Life* (2020), particularly his account of mycelial growth as a process shaped by continuous response, entanglement, and environmental pressure instead of predetermined form. In my work, *anatomosis* refers to bodies shaped by gravity, resistance, and material negotiation, moving away from pre-existing anatomical logic.

(Sheldrake). The hand does not execute a plan; it responds, adjusts, and recalibrates in relation to material behaviour.

3.5.3 3D Scanning and Casting in Bronze— Transitional Translation of Embodied Labour (*The Silent Gravity*)

When selected textile forms are translated through 3D scanning and cast in bronze, tactile decisions made by the hand are neither erased nor abstracted. Minute traces of labour—such as stitch direction, compression folds, and variations in density—are preserved and condensed within the material.

At the same time, the digital stage introduces additional transformations: 3D scanning irregularities, digital artifacts, and subtle distortions that emerge through translation. These are not mere errors; they are active components of the process through which the work is reconfigured.

Within this trajectory, digital mediation functions as a transitional stage that re-situates embodied labour within altered spatial and material logics. Gestures initially formed through touch, pressure, and repetition are displaced from their original context and reorganized within a digital field, where they are suspended, reoriented, and prepared for further transformation.

In this sense, the digital stage extends the work of the hand. What is carried forward is an accumulated record of contact, effort, duration, and adjustment. Bronze sculptures do not overwrite softness; instead, they stabilize the pressures embedded within it, allowing embodied labour to persist as structural weight across material states.

3.6 Care as an Operating Ground for Practice

Across the approaches outlined in this chapter, care operates as the ground through which practice unfolds. It shapes temporal rhythms, material processes, and relational structures, allowing research-creation to emerge through repetition, adjustment, and sustained engagement.

Within this framework, making is inseparable from and entangled with the conditions of caregiving. The work develops through ongoing negotiation with interruption, limitation, and material response.

Care thus functions not only as a theme to be represented but also as an operating ground that enables the work to continue, transform, and take shape. It is through this ground that knowledge is produced—emerging through action, material engagement, and the persistence of embodied labour across different forms.

CHAPTER 4 — THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: Thinking Care as Material, Relational, Precarious, and Mycelial

This chapter situates the research-creation practice within a set of theoretical conversations that help articulate how care operates as material, relational, precarious, and mycelial. While the artworks emerge from lived conditions—domestic labour, diasporic caregiving, and fragmented temporalities—this chapter builds upon the processes addressed in Chapter 3 to map a conceptual terrain that resonates with what the work already performs: care as labour, relation, distributed support, and material endurance. The theories offered here provide a frame of reference that clarify the structural dynamics embedded in the actions, pressures, and material translations that unfold across painting, textile installation, and bronze.

4.1 Care as Labour

Care has long been understood within feminist theory as a form of labour that is continuous, embodied, and materially necessary, yet structurally undervalued. Domestic and caregiving work—cleaning, feeding, maintaining, anticipating—does not produce discrete outcomes or measurable productivity, and is therefore frequently rendered invisible within capitalist systems of valuation. Maria Puig de la Bellacasa defines care as “everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our world so that we can live in it as well as possible,” while emphasizing that care is never neutral or purely benevolent, but shaped by asymmetry, obligation, fatigue, and dependency (Bellacasa 3-5). This understanding of care as ambivalent labour is central to this research. Care operates through repetition and duration rather than singular events, and its effects accumulate slowly through bodily effort and sustained attention. As Helen Molesworth argues, domestic labour is structurally erased not because it is insignificant, but because it resists conventional measures of value and completion (Molesworth 34). Care persists without resolution; it must be performed each day again, regardless of recognition or outcome.

In this research, care is not approached as emotional expression or narrative content, but becomes perceptible through material behaviour—through tension, compression, and

structural strain. These conditions register labour as ongoing and unresolved, shifting attention toward what labour does to bodies over time rather than how it is felt.



Fig. 10. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, *Weaving the Unseen*, 2026, Detail. Re-emerging seams and surface tension reveal labor that persists beneath restraint. Photograph by the author.

Mierle Laderman Ukeles's articulation of maintenance as a form of artistic labour provides an important point of reference here. Ukeles insists that maintenance is not opposed to creativity but constitutes the conditions that allow life and production to continue (Ukeles, *Manifesto for Maintenance Art*, 1969). Read through this framework, repetitive actions such as stitching, tightening, adjusting, and returning function not as preparatory or subsidiary tasks, but as the primary site through which care becomes materially legible. Care appears here as labour that sustains and strains structures simultaneously—necessary, enduring, and fundamentally ambivalent.

4.2 Relational Ontology

In this research, care is understood as a relational condition. Donna Haraway's concept of sympoiesis—“making-with”—offers a framework for articulating this position. As Haraway argues, no entity comes into being in isolation; all formation occurs through entanglements among human and nonhuman actors (Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* 58). Relationality emphasizes that existence itself takes shape through proximity, interaction, and shared presence.

This relational logic manifest through the arrangement of heterogeneous elements that retain their specificity while entering contingent alignment. Relation operates as a dynamic equilibrium formed through placement, pressure, and adjacency. Elements maintain their difference while participating within a shared structural field. Relational structures emerge

through distributed support, proximity, and continuous adjustment, where cohesion results from ongoing recalibration. among elements.

Haraway's assertion that knowledge is always "situated and embodied" (Haraway, *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective* 583) further extends this framework. Material conditions register this situated entanglement. Different materials, carrying distinct cultural and sensory histories, coexist and form structures through contact, layering, and interdependence. Within this framework, care is a condition of being-with. It organizes objects, bodies, and space through proximity, tension, and sustained mutual adjustment.

4.3 Precarity and Assemblage

In *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, Anna Tsing shows how life unfolds within conditions of uncertainty, where relations are shaped through ongoing negotiation. Precarity, as Tsing describes, is a condition of collaboration across difference—a state in which stability is continually negotiated rather than assumed (Tsing 28). Beyond signifying fragility, precarity names a mode of existence structured through responsiveness and ongoing adjustment. This framework clarifies how form operates under conditions of instability and interdependence in *Weaving the Unseen*.

Within this logic, forms emerge through connection, echoing Merlin Sheldrake's concept of anastomosis: a structural joining in which growth occurs through continuous response and entanglement (Sheldrake 51-52). Such formations are the material consequences of tension, pressure, and distributed support.

Assemblage thinking understands structures as interdependent components whose stability arises through distributed relations (Tsing 22-25). Stability remains fluid, emerging through continuous negotiation among forces such as gravity, pressure, and proximity.

This extends beyond form, shaping processes that respond to shifting conditions. Materials, scale, and structure take shape through what is available, sustainable, and relationally possible.

Within this assemblage, precarity becomes generative. Forms change of necessity. As Tsing observes, precarity reshapes participants through conditions of encounter (Tsing 27). Moving away from care as the production of idealized wholes, the work demonstrates how care produces bodies—and methods—that remain responsive, continually reconfigured

through tension and proximity. Care, here, is the structural condition through which relation persists.

4.4 Mycelial Structure

Mycelial thinking enters this research as a structural model grounded in biological behaviour. Mycelial networks consist of branching hyphae that grow directionally in response to environmental signals, redistribute nutrients across distance, and stabilize ecosystems by filling the spaces between soil particles, roots, and stones (Sheldrake 49). Their resilience derives from distributed reinforcement—an architecture of support that emerges through continual micro-adjustments.

This structural behaviour offers a parallel for the installation logic of *Weaving the Unseen*. Stability arises from the relational space between bodies—the slight angles of leaning, the points of compression, the friction between stitched surfaces, and the gravitational pull acting on each textile form. Through physical closeness and distributed tension, the figures generate a system of shared support where weight is distributed across the collective. What appears cohesive is sustained through dispersed forces and ongoing recalibration.

The anastomotic formations within the installation intensify this parallel. As figures twist, fuse, or extend outward, they form clusters that expand in multiple directions, conceptually echoing the branching logic of hyphae. This approach clarifies a shared structural principle: systems derive stability from dispersion, adaptive orientation, and the capacity to occupy the intervals between discrete elements.

Importantly, mycelial thinking informs both the conceptual framing of the work and its development through distributed, adaptive decision-making. Working within fragmented intervals, the work advances through incremental adjustments made across shifting conditions. Each action responds to available materials, time, bodily capacity, and spatial constraints; the accumulation of these dispersed decisions gradually shapes the structure of the work.

Sheldrake observes that a mycelial network “records its recent history in its branching structure” (Sheldrake 53). Likewise, each figure retains the material traces of its formation—the tension of seams, the density of stuffing, and the torsion created through adjustment. These embedded decisions shape how the form leans, resists, or redistributes weight within the larger assemblage.

Care emerges here as a distributed system maintained through subtle, continuous recalibration. This perspective identifies a shared relational pattern, clarifying how dispersed support, hidden labour, and adaptive interdependence operate across both biological and artistic systems. Mycelial structure, in this sense, offers a way to understand care as a resilient yet decentralized architecture of relation.

4.5 Material Vitality — Agency, Memory, and Pressure

The political theorist and philosopher Jane Bennett articulates how matter participate in the formation of the world through its own capacities and forces. Bennett’s theory of vibrant matter provides language for understanding how materials in this practice actively shape form. For Bennett, matter possesses “thing-power”—a capacity to exert force and generate effects beyond human intention (Bennett 5). Materials act within the processes through which form and relation are organized, operating through material forces such as resistance, pressure, and weight. Material vitality is evident in the physical behaviour of the textile. Cotton stretches, collapses, and strains unpredictably when stuffed; seams intended to disappear re-emerge under tension. Gravity acts unevenly across soft forms. These behaviours demonstrate that form result from negotiation with material forces.

In *Everything Matters*, the construction of maquettes reveals how objects shift balance as they are repositioned, generating unexpected spatial relations through physical closeness and gravity. The inclusion of leftover mushrooms—kitchen remnants—introduced temporal variability into these arrangements. As the mushrooms dried or decayed, their forms subtly contracted, softened, or collapsed, gradually altering the balance of the composition. These changes were unfolded through the material processes of drying and decomposition, confirming that form remains contingent upon the ongoing behaviour of matter.

In *Weaving the Unseen*, the acts of stitching and turning fabric inside out introduce tensions that exceed initial intention. The density of stuffing and the pull of seams produce torsion and subtle distortion, intensifying the three-dimensional presence of the figures. Structure emerges from material responsiveness under pressure.

The lost-wax casting process intensifies this material agency through transformation. In *The Silent Gravity*, soft stitched bodies are translated through digital scanning and casting into dense metal forms. This transition condenses their origin: seams, folds, pressure marks, and printing striations remain visible, yet their behaviour changes under increased weight. What was once pliable becomes structurally fixed, reorganizing how force is distributed across the form.

Historically, bronze is tied to monumentality and public authority—what Rosalind Krauss describes as the stabilization of collective memory (Krauss 3-4). My work acknowledges this lineage but redirects it. The casting process preserves a history of making, ensuring that the accumulated gestures of cutting, stitching, and stuffing migrate into a permanent state. Drawing on Louise Bourgeois’s view of material as bound to memory (Bourgeois), the medium becomes a record of distributed labour as a sustained material presence.

Material vitality is observable in weight, resistance, and structural consequence. Care becomes legible in how materials redistribute force and reorganize space over time.

4.6 Synthesis

The theoretical approaches outlined in this chapter articulate the structural framework inherent within the practice. Labour, relational interdependence, precarity, distributed support, and material agency provide a conceptual context through which the work is understood as a manifestation of these dynamics.

With this grounding, the following chapter turns to a closer examination of how these conditions materialize through specific works, forms, and spatial arrangements.

CHAPTER 5. PRACTICE-BASED ANALYSIS: CARE ACROSS PAINTING, TEXTILE, AND BRONZE SCULPTURE

In this chapter, I discuss three interconnected bodies of work—*Everything Matters*, *Weaving the Unseen*, and *The Silent Gravity*—to articulate how care becomes materially legible through practice. I approach care as a set of structural conditions that emerge through making: attentiveness, pressure, dependency, adjustment, and endurance.

The discussion follows how gestures and residues generated within everyday caregiving are translated across painting, textile installation, and bronze sculpture. In *Everything Matters*, care begins as a disciplined mode of noticing—an attentive relation to peripheral domestic remnants and the slow labour of painterly organization. In *Weaving the Unseen*, that attentiveness expands into spatial relation, where numerous forms generated through repeated handwork lean, sag, and hold one another through distributed support. In *The Silent Gravity*, those same pressures are condensed and stabilized through digital translation and casting, allowing weight, tension, and accumulated labour to persist in a different material condition. Together, these works offer a practice-based account of

care as an embodied, relational, and structurally sustained force—made visible through how materials register strain and continuation.

5.1 *Everything Matters*: Care as Attentive Observation



Fig. 11. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, *Everything Matters*, 2019, oil on canvas, 48x48 in. Photograph by the author.

Fig. 12. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, *Everything Matters*, 2024, oil on canvas, 30x40 in. Photograph by the author.

Fig. 13. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, *Everything Matters*, 2025, oil on canvas, 36x36 in. Photograph by the author.

5.1.1 Domestic Residues as Maquettes

Everything Matters is a long-term painting series that begins with slow, insistent observation of everyday residue (See Appendix B). The series begins with attention to what remains after routines of caregiving have passed: mushroom fragments left from simmering broth, twigs gathered while watching my children at the playground, and unfinished balls of yarn. These materials occupy the periphery of domestic space, remaining largely overlooked, discarded, or absorbed into the background of daily maintenance.

In this series, such materials are gathered into small maquettes. These maquettes operate as perceptual devices—structures that organize attention. Through arranging, repositioning, and lingering with these minor forms, I use the maquettes to study balance, proximity, internal rhythm, and tension. They establish a way of seeing before any image is composed.



Fig. 14. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, maquette for *Everything Matters*, 2019. Documenting stages of material change and observation. Photograph by the author.

Seen closely, these residues already hold layered time. Tight gills run beneath mushroom caps; dried twigs reveal cracked bark and fibrous strands; twisted yarn forms knots and tensions. As these materials dry, compress, or subtly deform, the maquettes register change as an ongoing process. These materials register what Bennett describes as “thing-power”—the capacity of matter to act, respond, and register force beyond human intention (Bennett 5). The materials are not inert; they quietly record histories of touch, use, and environment.

The maquettes thus function as sites where material vitality is already at work, anticipating the discussions of transformation, pressure, and responsiveness articulated in Chapter 4. Care, at this stage, is practiced as sustained attention—an act of allowing minor materials to matter until their temporal and physical qualities become perceptible.

5.1.2 Painterly Translation: From Maquette to Surface

While the maquettes provide a structural ground, the painting’s forms are translated through painterly decisions. Elements such as mushroom gills, bending twigs, and twisted yarn enter the canvas through emergent relationships of colour, brushwork, and layering. Painting operates here as a process of translation, transmuting material relations onto the surface.

Colour in *Everything Matters* is built gradually through repeated mixing and the accumulation of multiple translucent layers. Earthy tones are constructed through this luminous buildup, allowing subtle shifts in hue to register depth, compression, and atmosphere. Paint is sometimes applied thickly, producing areas of density and weight, while in other passages it is thinned, softened, or allowed to blur. Brushwork ranges from

forceful and insistent to light and dispersed, creating transitions between clarity and ambiguity across the surface.



Fig. 15. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, *Everything Matters*, 2025, oil on canvas. Detail views highlighting variations in painterly handling. Photograph by the author.

This variation in handling is intentional. Certain areas are rendered with careful attention to material detail, while others dissolve into suggestion, rhythm, or tonal field. The modulation of intensity and restraint reflects differences in observational distance and duration—how closely and how long attention is held. The paintings adjust their pictorial language in response to the material being observed. Through these shifts, the surface records both what is seen and the movement, pauses, and return of attention over time.

This painterly approach is shaped through engagement with contemporary painting practices, particularly the work of Claire Sherman. Her paintings frame surface as something built through density and layering, allowing peripheral or eroded scenes to carry visual weight. This sensibility resonates with an improvisational openness akin to John Cage’s practice, where intuitive gestures respond to the unfolding events on the canvas. In these moments, a single, fluid stroke often captures the essence of a material—such as the grain of wood—more truthfully than meticulous rendering, creating a generative tension that invites further translucent layering. This connection is central to *Everything Matters*, where painting operates as a constructed surface shaped by both sustained observation and the immediacy of accumulated attention.

5.1.3 Attentive Observation as a Practice of Care

In *Everything Matters*, care emerges as a mode of sustained observation embedded in the structure of painting itself. The repeated return to minor forms, the refusal of

compositional urgency, and the slow accumulation of paint position attentiveness as a material practice.

The residues depicted in the paintings—mushrooms, yarn, fabric, and organic fragments—represent the subtle traces of daily maintenance that rarely register as labour. These works make the presence of caregiving perceptible through its residues. Time is embedded through surface density, layering, and the persistence of painterly return.

As Maria Puig de la Bellacasa suggests, care begins with attentiveness—through deciding what is allowed to matter and remain present (Bellacasa). In this series, attentiveness is enacted through painting as a durational act. Looking, mixing, layering, and adjusting function as ways of holding space for what would otherwise remain peripheral. Care, here, a structural condition: a sustained orientation toward what persists quietly through repetition.

Everything Matters establishes the ground for the works that follow by framing care as a durational act of noticing. This attentiveness remains a foundational condition that extends into subsequent works; it is the point where care begins to shift into relational structure and material weight. As the practice moves from the painted surface into three-dimensional space, the labor of care—enacted through a multi-staged process of observation, three-dimensional making, and painterly translation—results in the physical tensions and bronze densities of my later installations.

5.2 *Weaving the Unseen: Relational and Mycelial Architecture of Care*



Fig. 16. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, *Weaving the Unseen*, 2026, textile installation, dimensions variable. Installation view and detail. Photograph by the author.

5.2.1 From Gesture Drawings to Fabric Bodies

Weaving the Unseen is a large-scale installation composed of several hundred hand-sewn fabric figures (see Appendix D, Fig. A7). *Weaving the Unseen* began under conditions that made sustained painting difficult: the birth of a child and the death of my father. The practice shifted toward smaller, fragmentary acts of making that could be carried out within the rhythms of caregiving and loss. The work deliberately adopts a labour-intensive mode, reflecting an understanding of care not as an emotional or romantic condition, but as a physically enacted practice sustained through repetition, proximity, and bodily effort.

Each figure originates from a quick gesture drawing made in moments of care—holding, leaning, lifting, sweeping, steadying (see Appendix C, Fig. A4). Drawn in five- to ten-minute intervals, these incomplete lines are translated into patterns for small textile bodies (see Appendix C, Fig. A5). Over one hundred such drawings form the basis of the work. As the process repeated, however, details shifted: proportions changed, gestures tightened or loosened, and different fabrics introduced new tensions. Although the figures share a common method of origin, each one ultimately becomes a distinct work, shaped by variation within repetition. Though each figure measures only 10–25 cm, together they fill an eight- to twelve-foot wall, forming a densely unfolding terrain.

The figures are produced within fragmented units of domestic time: in the few minutes before leaving the house, in hallways outside swimming lessons, during laundry cycles, or in the car while waiting for school dismissal. Cutting, stitching, turning inside-out, and stuffing unfold as minute-scale tasks. This broken yet recurring temporal structure mirrors the rhythm of care—repetition, interruption, and continuation—directly embedding the tempo of caregiving into each figure.

To maintain focus on gesture rather than narrative, the figures intentionally contain no facial expression, ornamentation, or individualized markers, and employ a deliberately reduced use of colour. By withholding expression, the work avoids framing care as sympathy, sacrifice, or maternal softness—representational modes that often oversimplify its complexity. Instead, the viewer must read the bodies through posture alone: the twist of a spine, the sag of a leaning torso, the torque in a lifted arm. These gestures carry the ambivalent dimensions of care—strain, endurance, hesitation, burden, and suppressed desire—without naming them explicitly. Neutrality becomes a strategy that allows the physical logic of care to surface.

Early in the process, I questioned what kind of overall form the connected figures should produce. I sketched various possibilities: loosely intuitive connections, symbolic shapes such as a heart, or simplified human figures curled into a single crouching posture. These attempts reflected a desire to stabilize the work into a legible, unified form. However, as the process continued, it became clear that such predetermined structures conflicted with the logic already emerging through the work itself. The figures were being shaped by a mycelial mode of making—one that continuously transformed through accumulation, adjacency, and response.

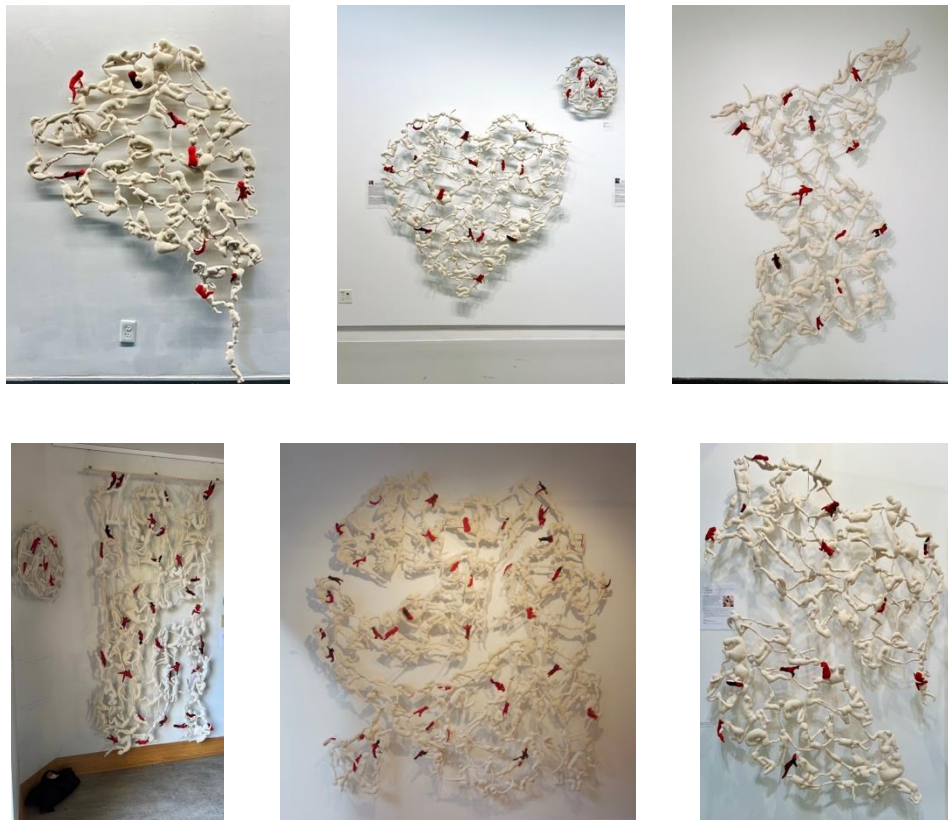


Fig. 17. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, evolution of compositional thinking in *Weaving the Unseen*, 2025-2026. Documenting the conceptual development of relational structures. Photograph by the author.

At this point, the installation began to take its cues from a remembered landscape. I thought of the small wooded hill behind my townhouse, where willow trees stood and leaves brushed against one another in the wind. It was a place where I carried my baby to sleep, played ball, and encouraged first steps—a vital 'field of care' where the silent, compressed weight of my *han* found a space to gradually unravel through the rhythms of nurturing. The installation's expanding, non-hierarchical form echoes this environment, branching, leaning, and spreading without a single centre. The vertical presence of tree

trunks and the lateral diffusion of roots offered a spatial logic that aligned with the work's unfolding relational structure. In response, subtle earthy and green tones were introduced, allowing colour to register place and memory.



Fig. 18. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, *Weaving the Unseen*, 2026. (a) Installation view, textile installation, dimensions variable. (b) Reference image of a willow-covered hillside in the artist's backyard. Photographs by the author.

5.2.2 Anastomosis: Distortion as the Material Condition of Care

Although similar in scale, the fabric figures in *Weaving the Unseen* refuse conventional anatomical logic. Arms detach and reappear near the head; feet connect directly to calves; necks are severed, rotated, and reattached in unexpected places. Some figures fuse into two-bodied forms, while others share a single torso with multiple limbs. These configurations are structural outcomes of how the figures are constructed to function as single, continuous bodies.



Fig. 19. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, *Weaving the Unseen*, 2025-2026. textile figures (detail). Fabric figure demonstrating anastomosis through redirected limbs and reattached bodily segments, formed as a single continuous sewn structure. Photograph by the author.

Anastomosis clarifies the structural logic of the work, describing systems that branch, separate, and reconnect while operating as a continuous whole (Sheldrake). This logic closely mirrors the method through which the figures are made. For each form to operate as one sewn and inverted piece, patterns are designed to split, reroute, and rejoin surfaces. Seemingly discrete parts are stitched apart to be reconnected elsewhere, resolving the figure as a single body. What appears anatomically incoherent is, structurally, a continuous entity.

This logic extends beyond individual figures to the work as a whole. The installation develops through dispersed points of making—multiple pieces formed separately, adjusted repeatedly, and eventually brought together into a shared structure. Like an anastomosing system, the work spreads, reconnects, and consolidates. Fragmentation is the condition through which unity is achieved. The distorted anatomies thus register the necessity of designing for continuity under conditions of division.

Within the context of caregiving, this structural logic becomes legible at the level of the body. Care does not operate through intact, autonomous forms but through bodies that stretch, overlap, and reorganize themselves in response to others. As María Puig de la Bellacasa argues, care cannot be understood as a purely nurturing or harmonious condition; it is shaped by ambivalence, obligation, and material entanglement (Bellacasa). The figures embody this condition by showing how coherence emerges through continual reattachment and adjustment. Anastomosis, in this sense, describes both a method of making and a condition of care. Although anastomosis enables continuity under conditions of division, the labour that sustains this continuity remains visible. It re-emerges at the surface of the fabric, where seams, tension, and compression are preserved.

5.2.3 Labour Returning to the Surface

The visibility of stitching in *Weaving the Unseen* is intentional. While sewing fabric with outward-facing seams would be faster and more efficient—allowing labour to remain immediately visible—I deliberately chose a more complex process in which the fabric is sewn with its outer surfaces facing each other and then turned inside-out. This method initially conceals the stitches, producing a smooth and restrained surface that appears resolved. The decision to hide the seams mirrors the structural condition of care and maintenance labour, which is often rendered invisible once its function is fulfilled.



Fig. 20. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, process sequence of a single fabric figure in *Weaving the Unseen*, 2025. Documenting the stages of drawing, patterning, cutting, stitching, turning, stuffing to produce a singular form. Photograph by the author.

In order to invert the figures, however, the patterns must be designed to split and interrupt the body in unconventional places. Limbs and necks are cut, redirected, and rejoined in positions that allow the form to be turned and closed as a single continuous body. These anatomical disruptions are therefore not expressive choices, but technical necessities arising from a process that prioritizes concealment before reappearance.

Once the figures are stuffed, the concealed labour is intentionally brought back to the surface. The filling is dense enough to create sustained internal pressure, causing the seams to re-emerge through the fabric. This pressure is calibrated to ensure that the stitches remain visible. To accentuate their return, I use pink thread, allowing the seams to register subtly against the unbleached cotton. From a distance, the figures appear minima and abstract; Up close, the accumulated labour becomes perceptible through small constellations of stitching that quietly interrupt the surface.

This strategy aligns with the decision to remove facial expressions and individualized features, focusing the viewer's attention on the structural presence of the work. By resisting overt declaration, the installation demands a close, durational looking to recognize the labor that is often structurally overlooked. The research emphasizes how care is known through material tension, repetition, and trace.

The curator and art critic Helen Molesworth argues that domestic labour is “structurally erased” within patriarchal capitalism (Molesworth). In *Weaving the Unseen*, the returning seams mark the limits of this erasure. Care labour does not disappear when concealed; it persists as pressure, distortion, and material memory. What surfaces is not

decoration or emphasis, but evidence of work that continues to hold the structure together, even when it is not meant to be seen.

5.2.4 Relational Architecture: Proximity, Voids, and Shadows

In *Weaving the Unseen*, the installation functions as a form of relational architecture. Stability emerges through clustering, proximity, and the distribution of weight across multiple bodies. Figures lean, brace, compress, and counterbalance one another, forming a system of shared support.

This architecture develops through incremental decisions made during installation. In early configurations—where figures were positioned too closely to one another or placed directly against the wall—the shadows collapsed and failed to activate the surrounding space. The installation appeared dense, yet visually inert. To address this, I widened the spacing between figures to create voids between bodies and used screws extending more than ten centimetres to establish distance from the wall. Through these adjustments, shadows are invited into the installation as a spiritual support.

The shadows occupy the voids created between bodies and between body and wall, transforming absence into an active spatial condition. This void functions as a generative interval that allows relational continuity to unfold. Care, in this configuration, circulates through space, inhabiting the intervals between bodies. It moves through the collective, connecting, buffering, and sustaining relations as fluid rather than without fixed presence.

In this sense, care functions much like soil between trees or the mycelial networks that inhabit the underground spaces between plants. Mycelium fills gaps, mediates exchange, and enables systems to endure. Care operates in *Weaving the Unseen* in a similar way. These relational conditions resonate with the Korean concept of *han*, discussed in Section 2.2.1. In this work, *han* operates as an affective ground—a quiet, persistent energy that accumulates within relations and holds the structural field together. My task is to render perceptible the conditions through which care quietly exists and circulates.

5.2.5 Material Lineage and Diasporic Care

Material choice in *Weaving the Unseen* is an aesthetic decision and a continuation of cultural memory. Beyond its cultural associations, the fabric is chosen for its direct link to practices of care and maintenance. The persistent use of unbleached cotton draws from domestic textile traditions in Korean households, where white fabric is closely associated

with proximity to the body—appearing in *baenaet jeogori*⁴, diapers, dishcloths. Whiteness here functions as a surface through which time accumulates and as an indication of the unprocessed and elemental—material that remains close to its original state.

Within the installation, coloured fabrics are introduced through reused materials drawn from my children’s lives: outgrown clothing and fabrics once used as swaddling clothes during infancy. When working with these materials, I combined them evenly with unbleached cotton. This balance reflects the condition of cultural mixture through which my children are growing. The material pairing makes visible a subtle gap between us: I remain anchored in one cultural and linguistic lineage, while my children grow within multiple frameworks that I am still learning to inhabit.

Adult figures are made exclusively from unbleached cotton, reinforcing continuity within a single material lineage. This choice is inseparable from the circumstances under which the work began. Following the birth of my fourth child and the death of my father, painting became untenable. A lack of physical time, bodily exhaustion, and emotional collapse made sustained studio practice impossible. Textile work emerged as a necessary adaptation to these conditions. In this context, unbleached cotton carries dual significance: it evokes both birth and mourning, life entering and life departing, held within the same material register.

Across the installation, whiteness operates as a receptive condition. It allows traces of labour—stitching, tension, compression, wear—to remain perceptible without emphasis or spectacle. Material here absorbs and carries it. Through this accumulation, lineage is understood as something maintained through ongoing acts of care.

5.2.6 Unintended Deformation and Spatial Expansion

As the work progressed, unintended deformation emerged as a defining condition of form. This was catalyzed by the decision to join unbleached cotton with repurposed swaddling gauze—a material once used to wrap my own children. By integrating these used fabrics, I sought to reflect the shifts in my identity shaped by marriage, childbirth, and immigration. When these two fabrics with differing tension and density were joined, the surface began to gather and crease along the seams, registering uneven resistance. This

⁴ *Baenaet jeogori* is a traditional Korean infant garment worn shortly after birth, typically made from white cotton.

deformation intensified once the forms were inverted and filled. As stuffing was introduced, the two fabrics pulled against one another with unequal force, producing torsion and asymmetry. The contrast between the front and back materials became increasingly visible: limbs twisted and crossed, and the torso curled toward the side made of the firmer fabric. Through this negotiation of tension, the figures assert a three-dimensional volume.

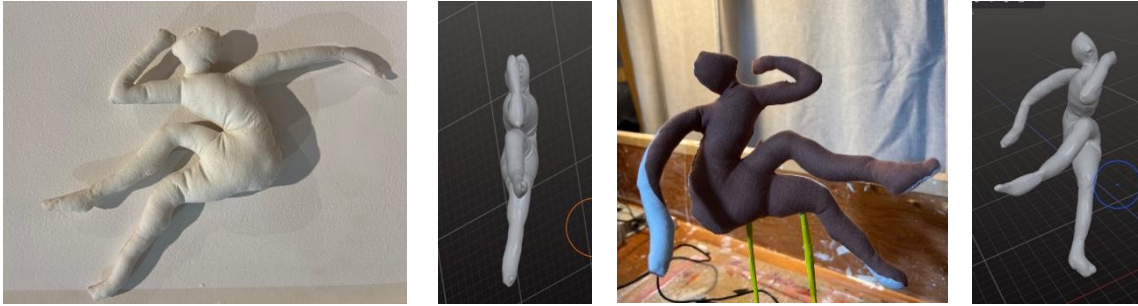


Fig. 21. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, *Weaving the Unseen*, 2026, Detail. A comparison between two textile figures: one constructed exclusively from unbleached cotton (right) and another incorporating mixed fabrics, including swaddling gauze (left). Each figure is presented with its corresponding 3D scan profile image, documenting the translation of soft, tactile surfaces into digital coordinates. Photograph by the author.

As deformation accumulated, reliance on wall-based support revealed its limits. When the figures rested against the wall, gravity pulled downward, gradually neutralizing the twists and tensions generated through sewing and stuffing. I sought to preserve these distortions, as the torsion embedded in the bodies held traces of physical strain and gesture from moments of care. Allowing those traces to flatten would conflict with the logic of the work.

For this reason, the figures moved away from the wall and into space. This spatial expansion emerged through repeated making and incremental adjustment. Small decisions—altering fabric combinations, adjusting stuffing density, modifying attachment points—responded to immediate material needs. Over time, these minor changes accumulated into a shift in how the work occupied space.

The movement away from the wall thus reflects a gradual evolution. Spatial extension became a means of preserving the material record of the making process. By allowing the figures to project into space, the deformations generated through sewing, inversion, and compression remain active. Expansion was a way of maintaining the physical evidence of process and holding onto the gestures embedded in care.

At this point, the textile bodies approached the limits of what softness and suspension could sustain. The persistence of torsion, volume, and weight indicated the need for a different material condition—one capable of carrying accumulated pressure without

collapse. This moment marks a threshold within the project, where the conditions established in *Weaving the Unseen* give way to forms requiring grounding, mass, and self-support, leading directly into *The Silent Gravity*.

5.3 The Silent Gravity: Condensation, Translation, and Structural Weight



Fig. 22. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, *The Silent Gravity*, 2025-2026, bronze sculpture, dimensions variable. Detail. Photograph by the author.

The Silent Gravity consists of a series of small bronze sculptures derived from hand-sewn textile figures in *Weaving the Unseen*. This transition followed whether a form could carry the structural conditions of care into a different material state.

The selected textile bodies were digitally scanned, translated into three-dimensional data, 3D-printed, and cast in bronze (see Appendix C, Fig. A6). Throughout this process, the figures retain the postures shaped through sewing, stuffing, and bodily negotiation: limbs bend unexpectedly, torsos fold, and gestures appear suspended mid-action. In this new state, the behaviour of the form undergoes a shift. In bronze, these gestures hold, resist, and extend outward into space, no longer yielding to gravity.

The surfaces of the sculptures preserve traces of their transformation. Seams, compression marks, and irregular densities remain visible alongside layered striations produced through 3D printing. These are records of pressure, duration, and accumulated action. The bronze gathers earlier material states, allowing them to persist within its dense structure.



Fig. 23. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, *The Silent Gravity*, 2025-2026, bronze sculpture, dimensions variable. Detail. Photograph by the author.

The Silent Gravity marks a point of condensation within the practice. Gestures, repetitions, and relational pressures that once remained dispersed are compressed into weight. What is condensed here is the duration of care—the repeated acts of holding, adjusting, maintaining, and enduring that shape both bodies and forms over time.

5.3.1 Condensation — Bronze as the Accumulation of Life and Labour

The bronze surface holds multiple temporal layers at once. Traces of sewing, compression, and digital stratification remain visible, forming a condensed record of accumulated labour. These marks register a duration built through repetition and sustained physical effort.

The sculptures emerge from a sequence of material translations: gesture drawings made in moments of care, textile figures shaped through sewing and stuffing, and 3D scans that register pressure and distortion. Bronze gathers replace these earlier states; it condenses them. In this process, material transformation operates simultaneously as an alchemy of emotional life, embedding tension, pressure, and affect within the condensed form. Each work holds the repetition of hand movements, the resistance of material under tension, and the gradual accumulation of form over time (See Appendix E).

This condensation can be understood in relation to the Korean concept of *han*, approached here not as expressive emotion but as a condition formed through duration and endurance. *Han* accumulates quietly through repeated responsibility, deferred recognition, and sustained bodily effort. In *The Silent Gravity*, this accumulation becomes material. Bronze carries weight as compressed persistence—holding pressure without release.

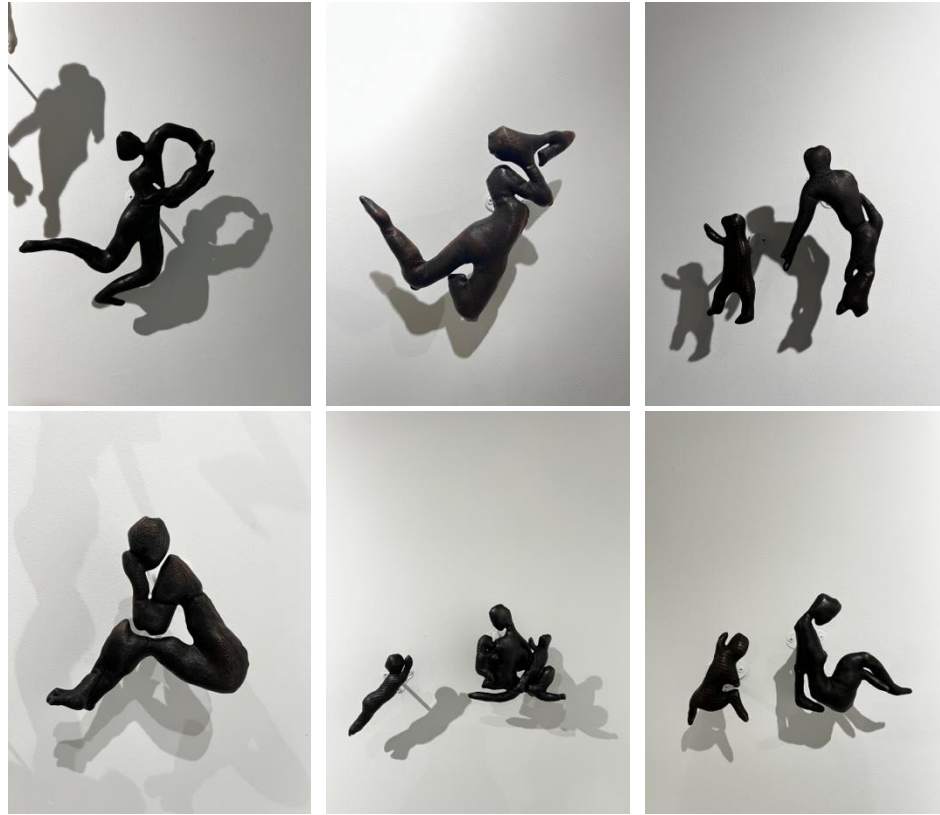


Fig. 24. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, *The Silent Gravity*, 2026, bronze sculpture, dimensions variable. Installation view of the individual elements. Photograph by the author.

This process maintains care at its lived scale—small, bodily, and continuous—while granting it material density. The sculptures avoid elevating domestic labour into heroic form or aestheticizing endurance as virtue. What has been structurally overlooked is now condensed into a tangible presence.

At the same time, condensation introduces a tension. Bronze fixes what would otherwise remain in motion. The moment of casting arrests gestures that, in lived experience, would continue to adjust and respond. What is lost in mutability is gained in legibility. By holding a gesture at the point of greatest pressure, the sculptures make visible the intensity of labour that is often unnoticed. In this way, the work sustains a double condition: care continues as an ongoing process, while its accumulated weight becomes momentarily perceptible in form.

5.3.2 Translation as Evolution — Digital Mediation

In my practice, the introduction of digital scanning for three-dimensional translation emerged from the conditions of the work rather than from a predetermined conceptual plan. As *Weaving the Unseen* expanded, the accumulation of textile bodies required a way to carry their structural complexity forward. Digital processes entered as a continuation of this need, preserving the integrity of the form without flattening or simplifying it.

Within this process, 3D printing re-materializes time and pressure. By adjusting the orientation of each form during printing, layered traces develop across the surface, recording duration through repetition. These layers function as records of production, registering the very process through which the form is realized.



Fig. 25. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, translation process from textile to bronze sculpture, 2026. From left: digitally translated model, 3D printing process, 3D printed form, and bronze sculpture preserving layered traces. Photograph by the author.

3D scanning operates as a transitional stage. It captures moments of tension, distortion, and compression generated through handwork and translates them into data while retaining their inherent irregularities. The resulting forms remain uneven, asymmetrical, and contingent. In this way, digital mediation extends the material logic of the work: it carries forward traces of labour while reorganizing the conditions through which those traces are held.

This translation shifts how care is sustained. In textile form, care operates through flexibility, yielding, and mutual dependence. Through digital mediation, these same gestures are held in suspension, allowing their structural properties to be examined and repositioned. The digital stage prepares the works for condensation.

During bronze casting, the layered traces produced through 3D printing are preserved. The surface retains overlapping records of handwork, digital translation, and material resistance as a continuous sequence. Through this accumulation, care becomes legible as a structural time—formed through repetition, persistence, and the gradual build-up of pressure.

5.3.3 Emergent Bodies — Installation, Relational Structure

The bronze works of *The Silent Gravity* are presented in two distinct but interconnected modes. The majority are wall-mounted alongside *Weaving the Unseen*, positioned in proximity to the textile figures—sometimes embedded within the network, sometimes held at a slight distance. These works are not always immediately visible; depending on the viewer's position and lighting conditions, they may appear clearly or recede into the surrounding field.



Fig. 26. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, *Weaving the Unseen* and *The Silent Gravity*, 2026. Installation view showing the relational dialogue between textile and bronze elements. Photograph by the author.

Within this configuration, the wall-mounted bronze pieces function as part of the textile network. While the fabric figures lean, sag, and respond to gravity, the bronze forms exist between them, occupying the relational intervals that structure the installation. They remain partially embedded, allowing attention to shift between presence and withdrawal across the field.

By contrast, a small number of bronze works are presented as self-standing sculptures. These forms detach from the wall and extend into space, appearing to emerge outward from the relational field established by the textile installation. In these pieces, the material conditions—fabric tension, torsion produced through stitching, and distortions generated through repetition—function as active forces that define the sculpture's volume and dynamism.

When wall-mounted and self-standing works are presented together, the installation articulates a dual state of care. It captures both the quiet, embedded presence within a relational field and the moments where accumulated forces become visibly articulated through structure, weight, and spatial extension. Care remains distributed across the installation, unevenly perceptible and continually reorganized through the interaction of mass and void.

5.4 Translation, Space, Experience



Fig. 27. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, *Everything Matters*, *Weaving the Unseen* and *The Silent Gravity*, 2026. Installation view. Photograph by the author.

This section approaches the three bodies of work—*Everything Matters*, *Weaving the Unseen*, and *The Silent Gravity*—as a continuous process of translation, through which care moves across form, space, and experience. Each work represents a distinct phase of this translation, where care shifts through observation, relation, and condensed presence. These shifts are guided by an improvisational openness, emerging through small movements that are continuously formed and adjusted within the rhythms of everyday life. Care and artistic practice, rest and labour, overlap and coexist within the integrated conditions of lived experience.

5.4.1 Care as an Organizing Principle Across Three Bodies of Work

When viewed together, these three bodies of work are centered on the theme of care, revealing it as a generative principle that organizes form and relation. This approach

establishes a 'field of care'—a spatial and emotional landscape where the quiet, persistent energy of *han* flows and accumulates.

In *Everything Matters*, care begins as attentive observation. Peripheral materials—mushroom fragments, twigs, and domestic residues—are held within a durational act of looking. Here, care operates as a practice of noticing without passing over.

This attentiveness materializes through physical labour in *Weaving the Unseen*, where it expands into a connective architecture. Observation unfolds spatially through proximity, tension, shadow, and the distribution of gravity among multiple bodies. In this installation, care functions as relational logic that is continuously adjusted and sustained between bodies.

In *The Silent Gravity*, this relational condition is condensed. Gestures shaped through textile and digital processes accumulate as weight, allowing care to register as a condensed structural presence.

Across these works, care moves from the act of noticing to relation to condensation. This movement forms a continuous process composed of variations. The works remain interconnected through care as a principle that organizes both form and space, and the viewer encounters this continuity through movement between them.

The shadows that extend throughout the exhibition space further articulate this flow. They operate as a spatial extension of care, occupying the intervals between bodies and making perceptible what remains unseen. Withing these shadows, *han* lingers and circulates, registering accumulated emotion, repetitive labour, and relational tension. These subtle intervals suggest forms of care that persist beyond physical presence—as memory, trace, and connection.

5.4.2 Spatial Translation – Exhibition Structure

Within the exhibition context, material transitions extend into a further spatial translation. The exhibition operates as a ground through which the structure of care is sensorially translated. Although the three bodies of work occupy space in distinct ways, a shared principle of care flows across them, forming a relational field. In this field, the quiet and persistent energy of *han* acts as an affective ground and a generative force that binds the works together. The exhibition functions as a space where different media coexist and establish relationships beyond a narrative sequence.



Fig. 28. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, *Everything Matters*, *Weaving the Unseen*, and *The Silent Gravity*, 2026. Installation view. Photograph by the author.

Everything Matters, function as points of entry into an awareness of care, extending attention toward objects that typically remain peripheral. Within this field of attention, the presence of mushrooms operates as a quiet perceptual cue—recalling the distributed, connective logic that underpins the work. By encouraging prolonged looking rather than immediate interpretation, the paintings establish a temporal condition of staying-with.

Weaving the Unseen descends from the ceiling and extends onto the walls, spreading across the exhibition space as a continuous textile field. The fabric figures traverse ceiling, wall, and air, forming a relational structure through shadow, gravity, and spatial distribution. While most of the installation operates as an expanded network, a single crouched piece is installed separately, allowing focused attention on the gestures and relational tensions contained within its interior. This configuration enables viewers to move between the scale of the collective network and the intensity of an individual bodily state, encountering different densities of care.

The bronze works are installed either on the wall—at eye level but with irregular vertical positioning—or as self-standing forms on the floor. Though modest in scale, these works carry a concentrated presence and are exhibited as extensions of the textile structure. Positioned between attachment and emergence, the bronze sculptures register moments in which care accumulates, condenses, and becomes materially perceptible.

Lighting plays a critical role in organizing the exhibition space. *Everything Matters* is illuminated with focused lighting, allowing everyday materials to emerge as objects of attention. In contrast, *Weaving the Unseen* and *The Silent Gravity* use a limited number of

strong light sources, producing uneven illumination and allowing shadows to fill the voids between forms. Light reveals distance, relationality, and invisible structural forces. In the shadows, the compressed weight of *han* find a space to breathe and circulate, transforming the voids into active intervals of emotional resonance.

The spatial atmosphere of the exhibition favors a sense of calm and attentiveness rather than dramatic contrast or tension. This sensibility draws from a personal memory of a townhouse backyard and nearby wooded area—a space where nature and daily life were integrated; the sounds of rustling leaves and birdsong formed a soothing backdrop that regulated bodily rhythm. This memory operates as a spatial motif that shapes the exhibition’s rhythm, guiding the viewer toward a slowed pace and an attentive mode of presence. Through this environment, care becomes perceptible through a quiet spatial rhythm that allows sustained attention to emerge.

I intentionally avoided the use of external media—such as video, sound, or projectors—to maintain this quietude. I relied on the inherent properties of the materials and the natural silence of the space. This decision stems from a desire to present care without romanticizing it. By eschewing dramatic technological or emotional cues, the work invites a more direct, grounded encounter. It provides a space where care is open to be interpreted through the viewer’s own bodily experience and memory.

5.4.3 Relational Experience – Slowness, Ambivalence, and Bodily Attention

Within this spatial configuration, the viewer enters the exhibition as a bodily presence situated within the rhythms of care. Moving through the relational field formed by different mediums, the viewer slows down, pauses, shifts position, and adjusts attention. Some forms become visible only at close range, while others recede or disappear depending on distance and angle.

This mode of encounter emerges from experiences of care shaped through slowness and shared duration. Moments such as walking slowly with children, pausing without a clear purpose, or shifting attention between ground and sky are conditions in which care continues quietly. It remains operative without demanding recognition.

The exhibition space invites the viewer into this state of attention, calibrated to sustain an unhurried pace. This sense of ease coexists with the complexity and fatigue inherent in care. As the viewer approaches the works, traces of accumulated tension, pressure, and

repeated labour gradually emerge. Forms that initially appear stable reveal themselves as the result of continual adjustment and endurance.

Care is therefore presented as a multifaceted and ambivalent condition—encompassing stability and strain, ease and fatigue, persistence and burden. This exhibition sustains the condition. Through movement, proximity, and duration, the viewer remains alongside care, sensing how it operates quietly within everyday rhythms while carrying a weight that is neither dramatic nor negligible.

CHAPTER 6 — CONCLUSION

This chapter synthesizes how care becomes perceptible through artistic practice, drawing together the implications of the processes, works, and the relational exhibition environment discussed in the previous chapters. It articulates care as an operational principle within the work, examining how it is encountered through material engagement and relational structure.

6.1 Making Care Perceptible

This research presented how care becomes perceptible through artistic practice – a process that unfolds through persistent negotiation with repeated interruption and sustained engagement with materials. Rather than being in a single gesture or moment, care emerges through the intentional and accumulated actions that shape the work over time.

Across the three bodies of work, care is encountered in specific material operations. In *Everything Matters*, it takes form through attentive noticing—a sustained attention where minor and often overlooked materials are arranged and revisited over an extended duration. In *Weaving the Unseen*, care appears through the physical negotiation between hand and material, where cutting, stitching, turning, and stuffing produce interdependent forms. In *The Silent Gravity*, these accumulated gestures are condensed, allowing traces of the process and labour to persist beyond their original material state; what often remains unnoticed in everyday life becomes perceptible through material form.

Care is further encountered through the relational ways forms inhabit space—how they lean, support, and remain in proximity. By deliberately omitting facial expressions and restricting color, the work leaves care open to the viewer’s own lived experience. The audience encounters the work through a shifting spectrum of warmth, rhythm, tension, and

discomfort, reflecting the ambivalent and commensurate nature of care as it is actually lived.

In addressing the core research questions, this study illustrates that care transcends being a mere thematic subject; it functions as the very infrastructure of the work. It operates simultaneously as the object of realization, the governing methodology, and the essential context within which form is sustained. Ultimately, this research articulates a mode of practice where the conditions of everyday life—including career interruptions and domestic responsibilities—are the generative forces that materialize invisible labour into a tangible, aesthetic presence.

A central contribution of this research lies in demonstrating the methodological transition of care as it moves across materials. This technical progression renders pressure and duration into a permanent form, allowing the intervals of caregiving to be captured as tangible material traces. The digital stage, in particular, functions as a tool for condensation, reorganizing these accumulated gestures into a different spatial system where they exist as structural presence.

6.2 Significance of the Study

Grounded in Korean and diasporic identity, the significance of this research lies in its ontological reclamation of care-labour. By granting material weight and permanence to the fleeting energy of domestic work, this study affirms the physical reality of care-labour as a tangible presence that occupies space and registers time. Through the transition from soft textiles to dense bronze, the hidden and repetitive movements of maintenance are made undeniable as an embodied existence. By establishing this material presence, the research proves that the rhythms of caregiving—long perceived as interruptions to a career—are, in fact, generative sites for conceptual and technical transformation, producing new modes of structural and aesthetic knowledge.

This significance further extends to the methodological transition between traditional and digital mediums. By translating embodied gestures from drawing and sewing through 3D scanning and 3D printing, and ultimately into bronze sculptures using the lost-wax casting technique, this research demonstrates how the fleeting energy of domestic labour can be granted material weight and permanence. Ultimately, the interrelation among these bodies of work establishes a mode of practice where care is encountered as a lived condition, where Korean and diasporic sensibilities—specifically the transformative energy of *han*—operate intrinsically within the textures and spatial tensions of the work.

6.3 Reflections

My research begins from lived experiences shaped by migration, career interruption, and the assumption of full responsibility for caregiving and domestic labour. Within these conditions, care remains constantly present yet easily overlooked, performed within the rhythms of everyday life. This labour carries multiple meaning, experienced as fulfilment and reward, but also as burden, fatigue, and strain. This work holds these contradictions together.

Even within the closest relationships, this labour is often undervalued. I have wanted it to appear as it is, presented as a condition placed plainly before us. My aim was to find a visual language that exists beyond simple labels such as postpartum depression, laziness, selfishness, or desire. I sought to present care as a fundamental reality, resisting any attempt to reduce its complexity to a singular narrative or a specific psychological state.

From this specific vantage point, this research has allowed me to find a material strategy that grants care a tangible presence commensurate with its inherent value. Through intentional neutrality and deliberate omission, I am creating a rigorous space where care is encountered as a lived condition, independent of fixed interpretation. For me, this process has been the practice of reclaiming the narrative of my own labour—shifting from a search for shared recognition toward establishing a broader relational field where the enactment of care is rendered undeniable.

Through the sustained engagement with these three bodies of work, my understanding of care has shifted from a series of isolated domestic tasks to an interconnected ecological structure. In *Everything Matters*, the transmutation of everyday residues through brushwork taught me to find a distinct sense of presence in the overlooked. In *Weaving the Unseen*, the act of linking hundreds of figures became a way to physically map the collective field of support I inhabit—a network of interdependence that transcends the boundaries of the home. In *The Silent Gravity*, I found a method to condense the weight of extended durations into a permanent form. These practices have collectively transformed my perception of the intervals of my life; what I once saw as fragmented moments of interruption, I now recognize as the very energy that sustains both my life and my art. The resulting aura and the shadows that fill the space are visualizations of the invisible but powerful forces that keep this entire system in motion.

Within works generated through this creative research project, care becomes perceptible and acquires a corresponding presence. In my practice, care operates

simultaneously as everyday life, as subject, as context, and as the mode through which work takes form.

Care continues in this very moment; it moves across bodies and fills lived space. Within this ongoing movement, my work remains an evolving structure, continuing to shift and extend across new materials, spatial arrangements, and relational systems.

I return, then, to the ordinary—to the voices of children calling, to thoughts that circulate without rest, and to a life in which the movement of the hand and artistic impulse remain entangled. This research continues to take shape through adjustment, redirection, and ongoing negotiation within the life.

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Appendix

Appendix A. Field Observation and Painterly Studies

This appendix presents selected field photographs and related painterly studies developed through sustained field observation.



Fig. A 1. Selected field photographs documenting repeated encounters with wild mushrooms in the artist's backyard, 2018-2026. Photograph by the author.

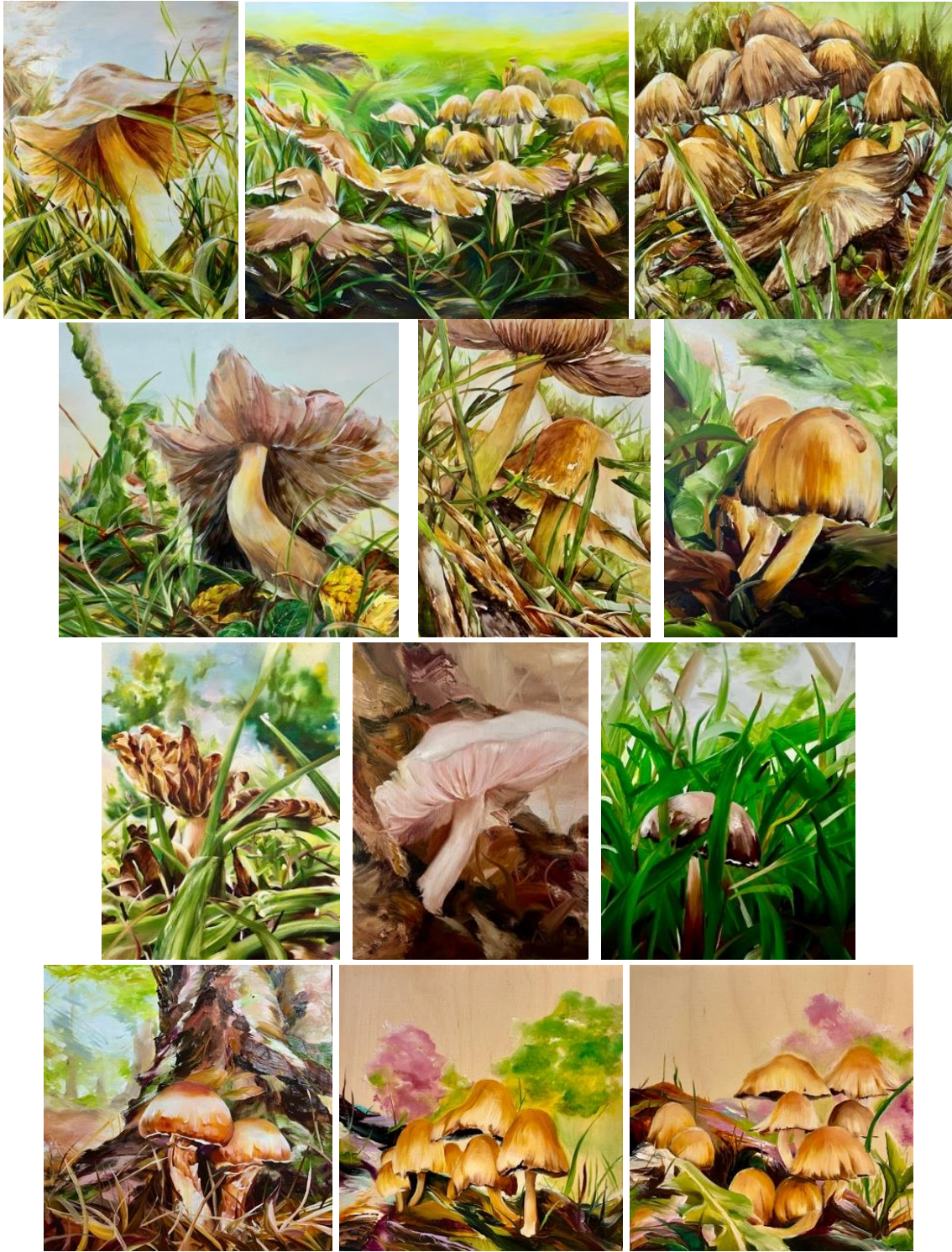


Fig. A 2. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, diverse scale paintings derived from field observation, 2018-2025. Watercolor, acrylic, and oil on paper and canvas, dimensions variable. Photograph by the author.

Appendix B. Complete Painting Series: *Everything Matters* (2018–2025)

This appendix presents the complete *Everything Matters* painting series produced between 2018 and 2025. While selected works are discussed in the main chapters, the full series is included here to indicate the cumulative and durational nature of the practice.



Fig. A 3. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, *Everything Matters* series, 2018-2025. Oil on canvas, dimensions variable. Photographs by the author.

Appendix C. Visual Materials Supporting *Weaving the Unseen*

This appendix presents a collection of visual materials that form the foundational basis of *Weaving the Unseen*. It includes gesture drawings, pattern studies, and images derived from 3D scanning.





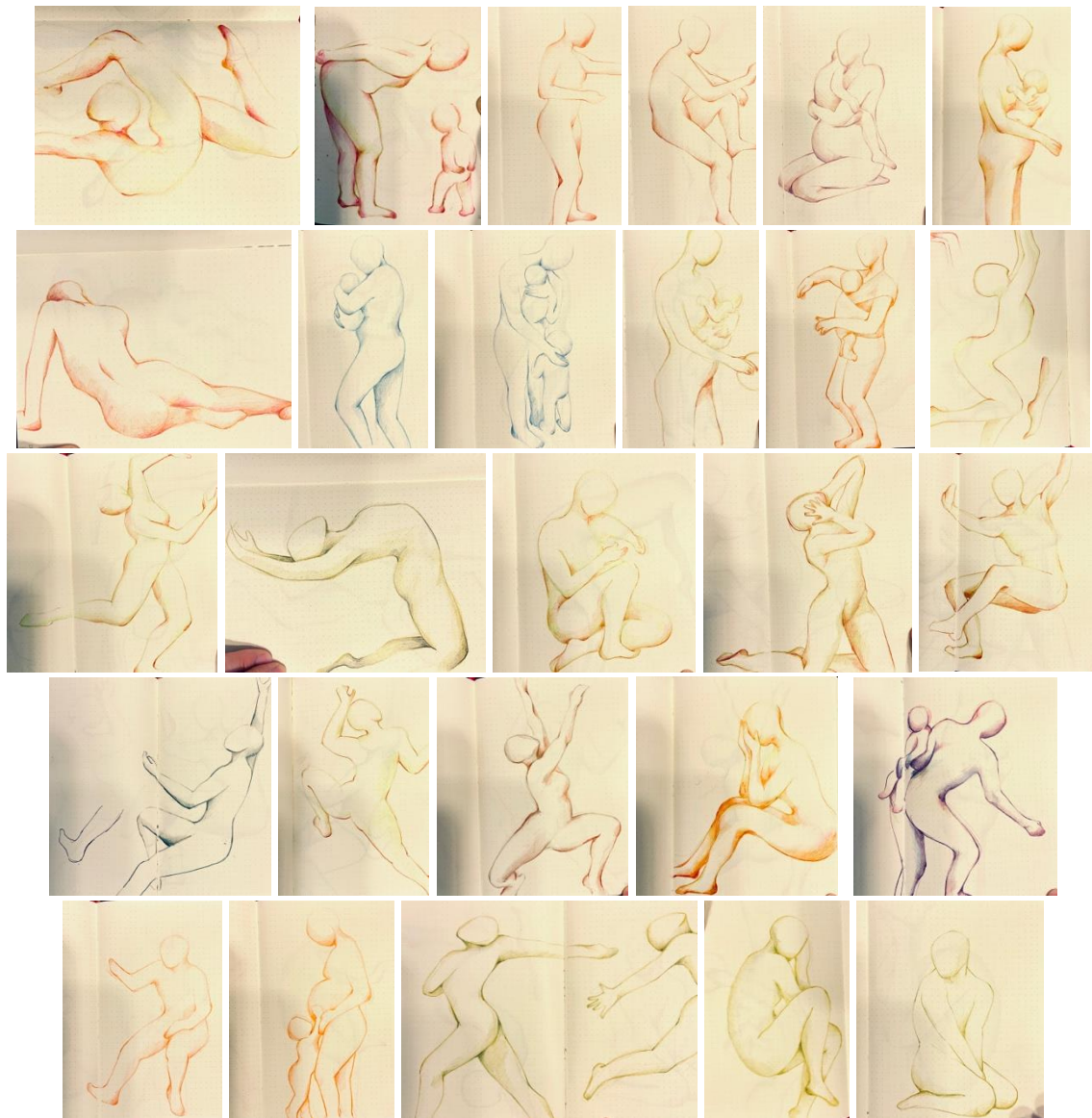
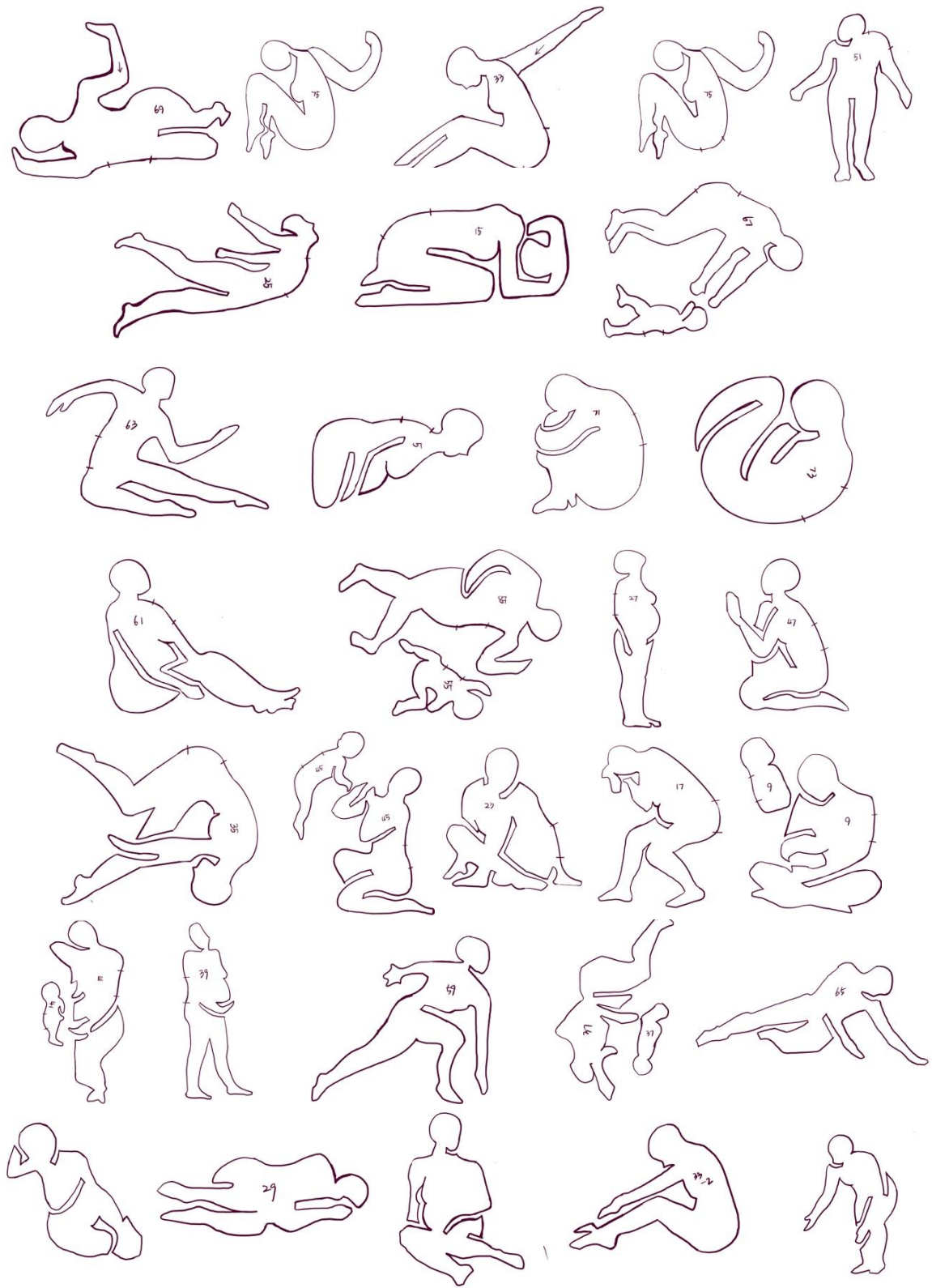


Fig. A 4. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, accumulated gesture drawings, 2024-2026. Colored pencil on paper, dimensions variable. Photographs by the author.



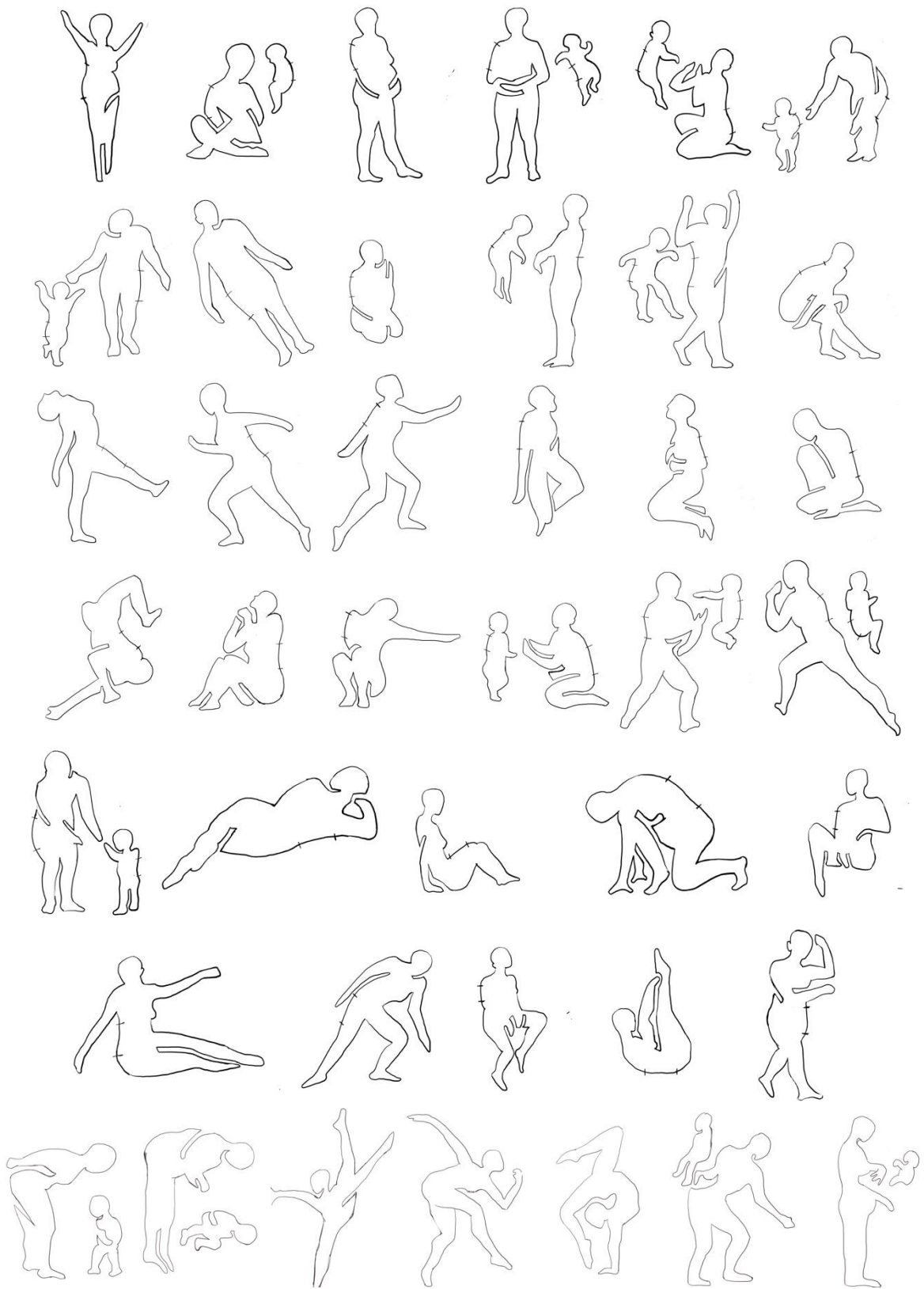




Fig. A 5. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, patterns derived from gesture drawings, 2025-2026. Digital drawing, dimensions variable. Photographs by the author.



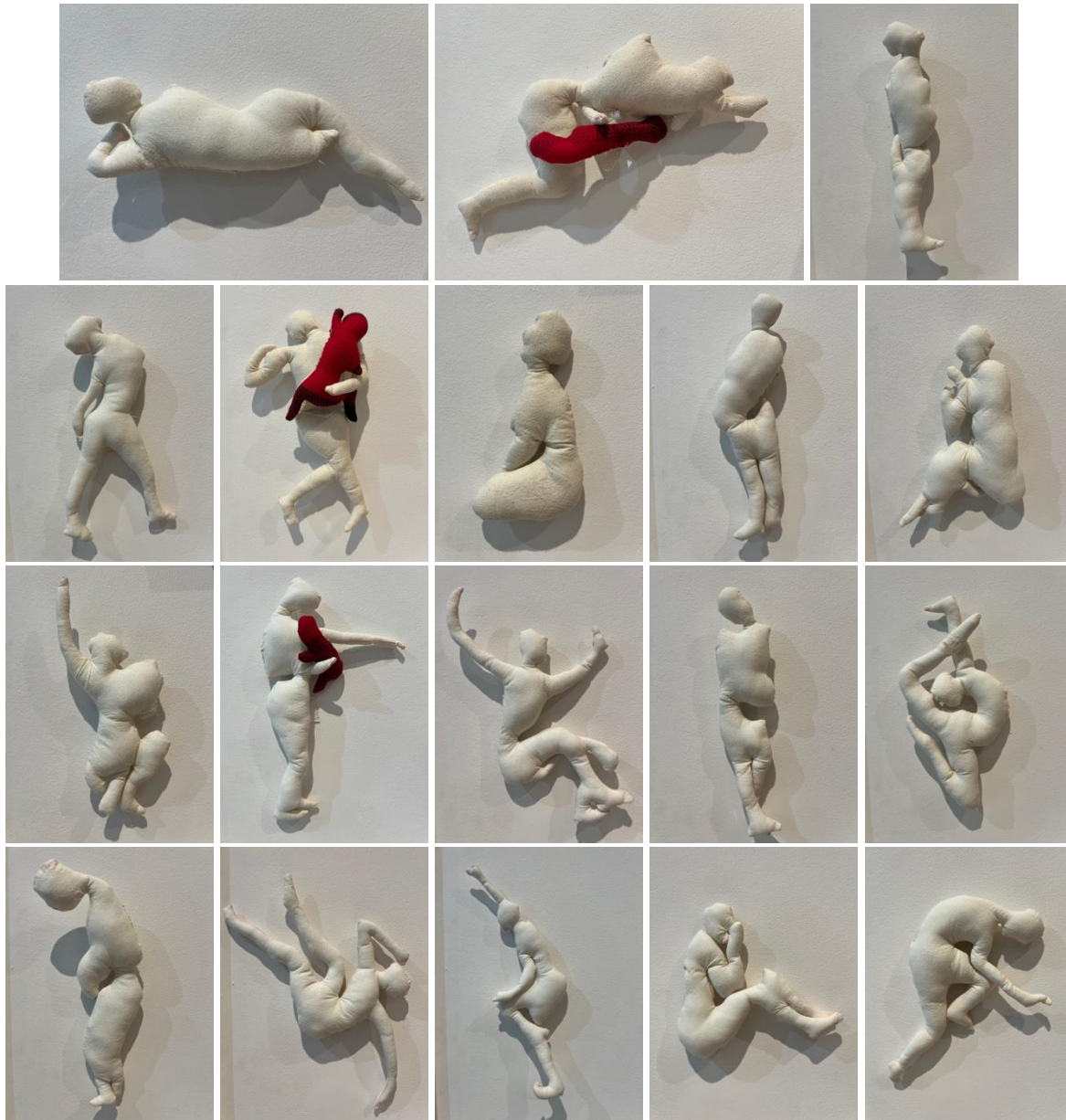


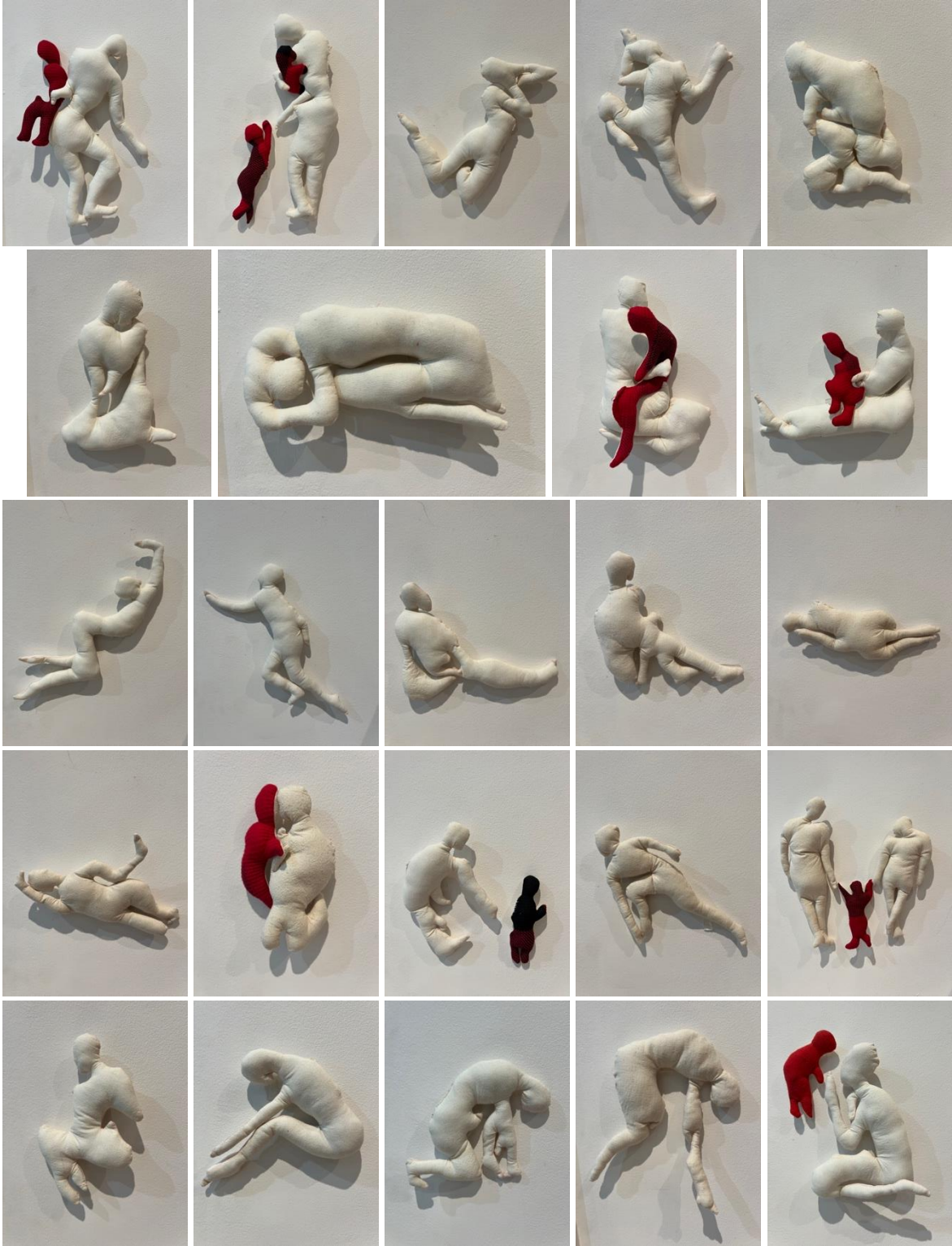


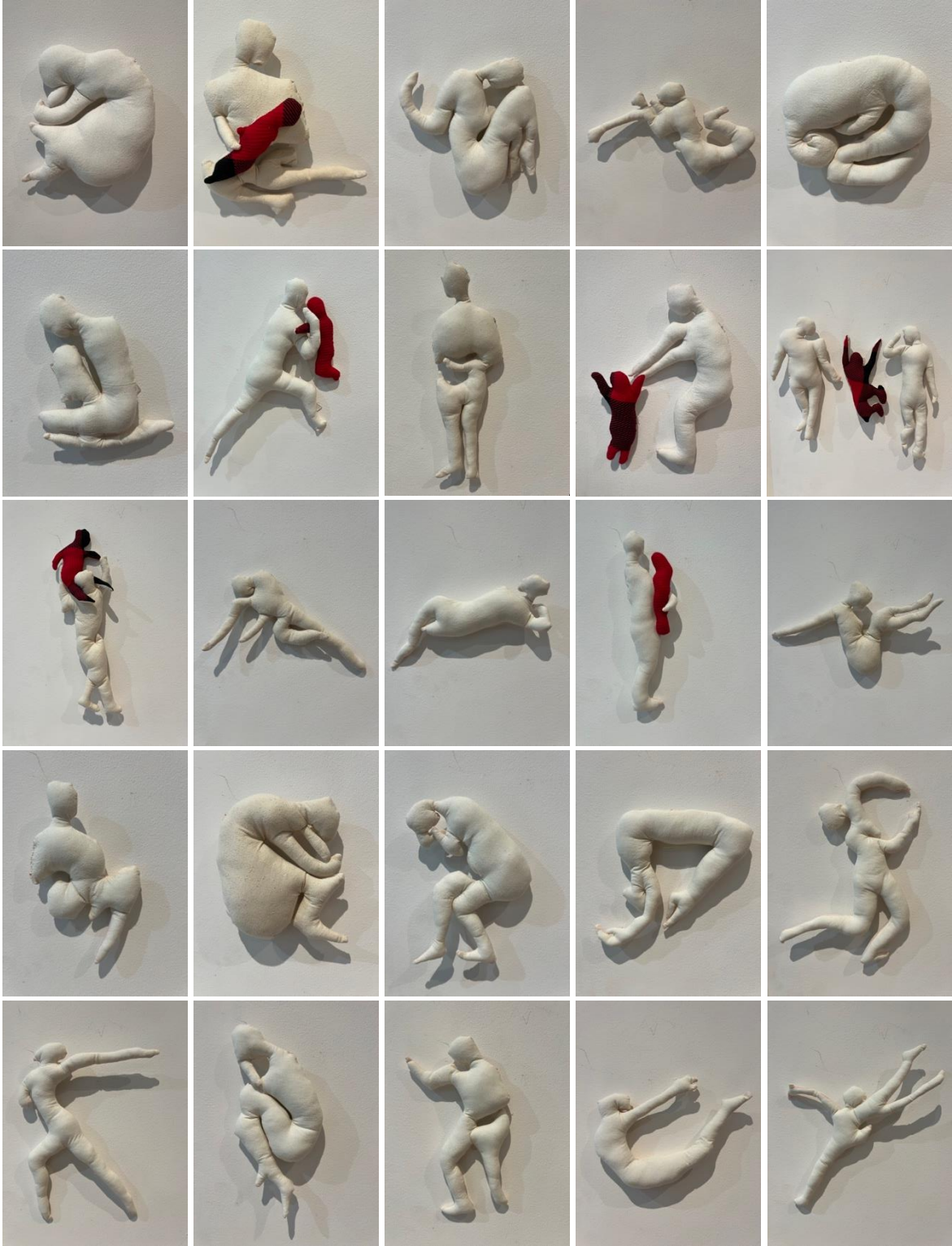
Fig. A 6. Sophia Kyungwon Kim digitally rendered images of 3D scans prepared for 3D printing, 2025-2026. Screenshots of 3D modeling software interface.

Appendix D. Images of Individual Fabric Figure

This appendix documents individual fabric figures produced as part of the *Weaving the Unseen* installation.







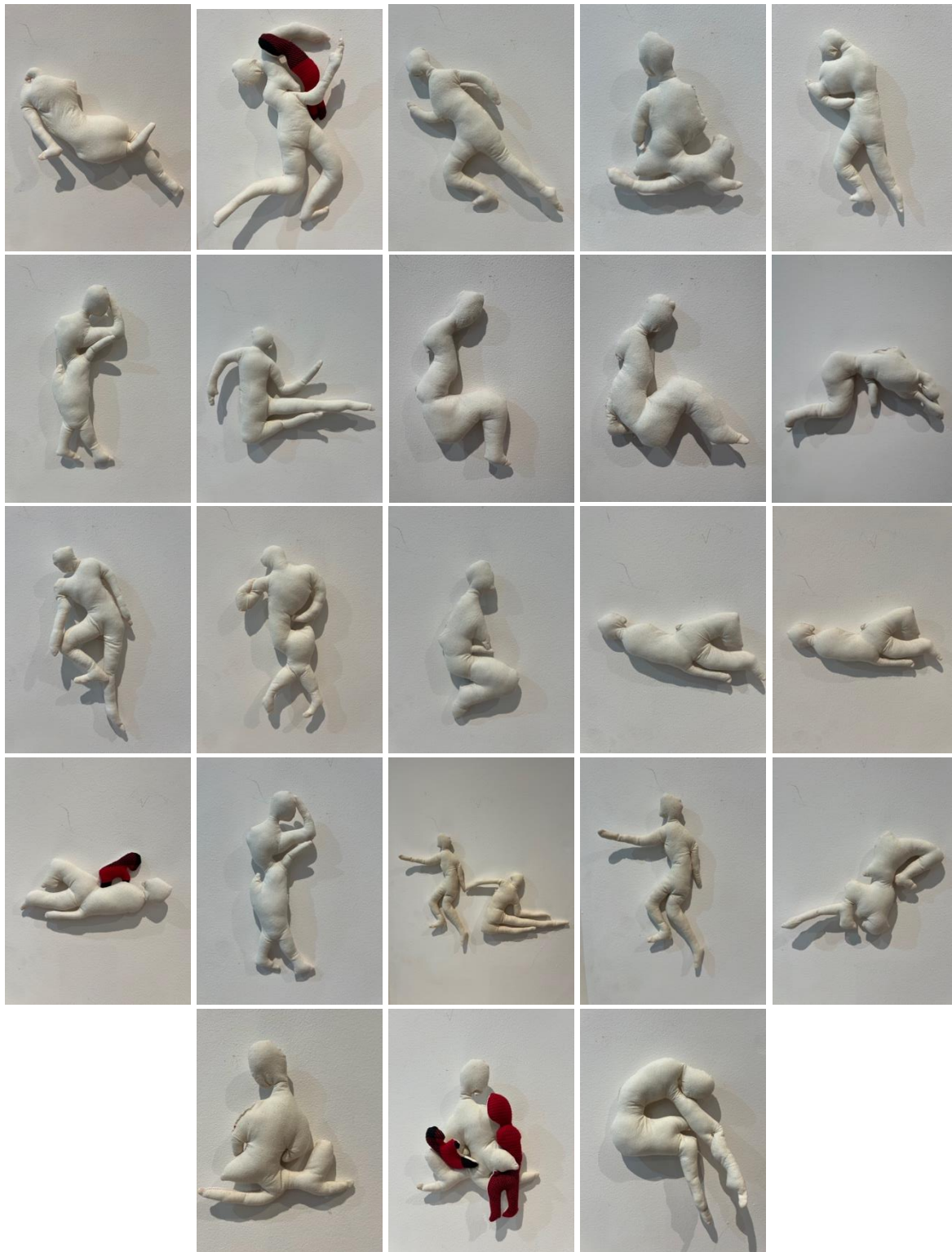


Fig. A 7. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, individual sewn fabric figures from *Weaving the Unseen*, 2025-2026. Mixed fabrics, dimensions variable. Photograph by the author.

Appendix E. The Elements of *The Silent Gravity*

This appendix presents the complete set of bronze sculptures produced for *The Silent Gravity*.

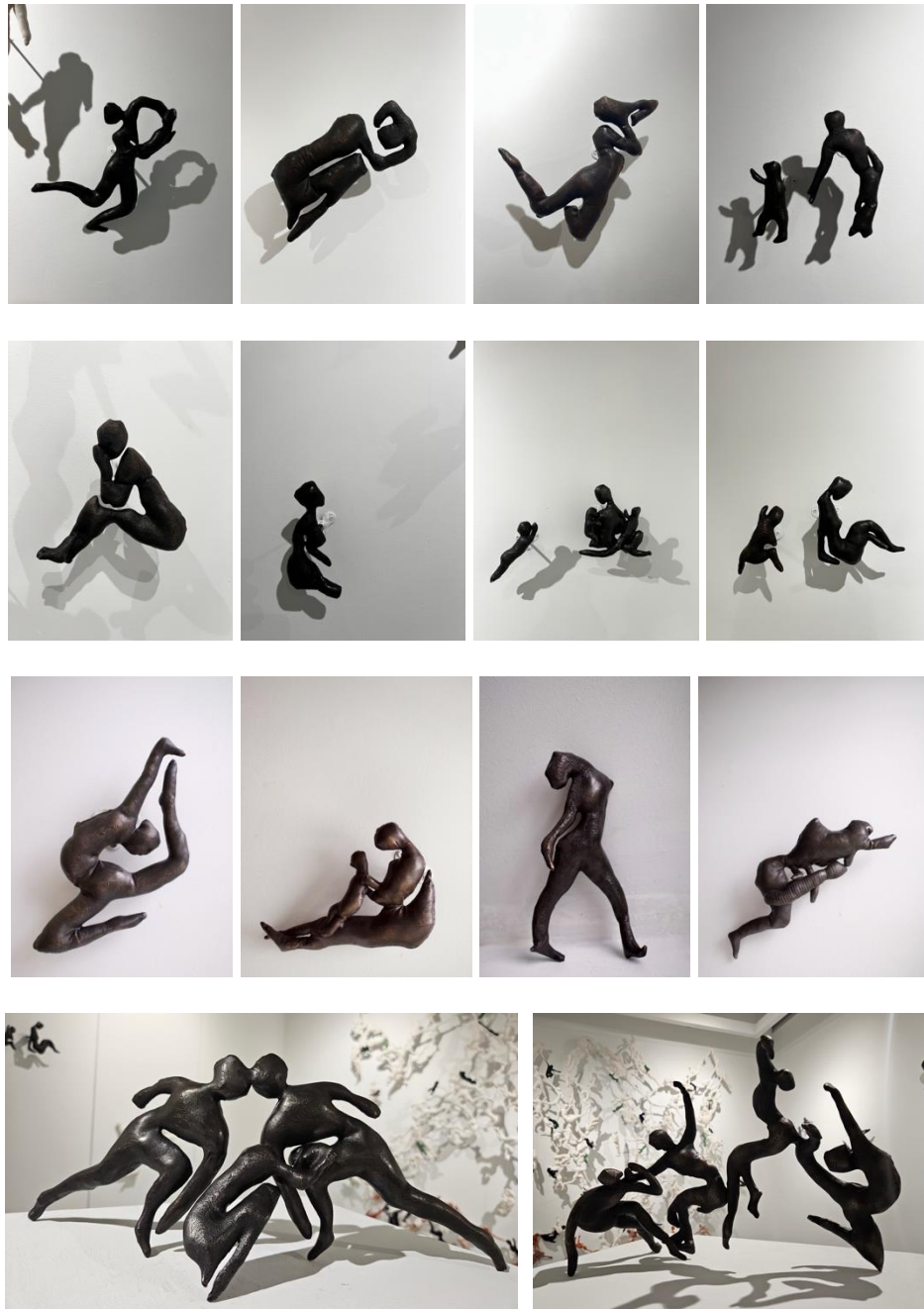


Fig. A 8. Sophia Kyungwon Kim, bronze sculptures from *The Silent Gravity*, 2025-2026. Cast from 3D-scanned textile figures, dimensions variable. Photograph by the author.