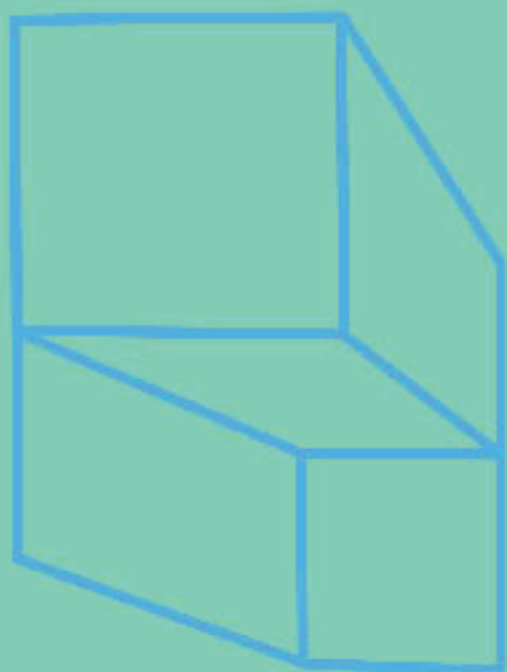


Painting; with drawing



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*or* footnotes for paintings

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Master of Fine Arts Thesis Project

Date of Submission:



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The thesis project I am submitting consists of a total of twelve works for the artistic component. This is made up of 9 paintings, 2 specific objects and 1 booklet of digital diagrams.

#### Details of artistic works:

a. taken from the series *Exploded geometries and alternate symmetries*, oil, acrylic, masking tape, surface incisions on board, 841mm x 1189mm, 2017

b. taken from the series *Exploded geometries and alternate symmetries*, oil, acrylic, masking tape, surface incisions on board, 210mm x 297mm, 2017

c. taken from the series *Exploded geometries and alternate symmetries*, oil, acrylic, masking tape, surface incisions on board, 841mm x 1189mm, 2017

d. taken from the series *Exploded geometries and alternate symmetries*, oil, acrylic, masking tape, surface incisions on board, 841mm x 1189mm, 2017

e. *Reconstructure I*, acrylic, tape, wood on board, 210mm x 297mm, 2016

f. *Reconstructure IV*, acrylic, tape, wood on board, 210mm x 297mm, 2016

g. *Redoubt*, wood, acrylic, wire, card, nails, mdf, gypsum, wool, electrical tape, mesh, cable ties, dimensions variable, 2017

h. *Ambient Plasticity*, oil and acrylic on board, 210mm x 297mm, 2018

i. *Centrosome*, oil, acrylic, gold leaf, mdf, pine, screws, nails, glue, 297mm x 420mm, 2018

j. *Signal Conjugation*, oil, acrylic, incisions on board, 1220mm x 1720mm, 2018

k. *Half Integer Spin*, oil, acrylic, incisions on board, 1220mm x 1720mm, 2018

l. *Discrepancies in the Recollection of Various Principles*, A5 booklet of diagrams, 2018

There were two exhibitions involved with my thesis project; *I was told there would be cake* at Project Room, on view between November 3rd – November 17th 2017, and *Kuvan Kevät* between May 5th – June 3rd 2018. Artworks a – g were shown at the former and artworks h – l were shown at the latter exhibition.

The written component is made up of a series of footnotes that are possible renderings which to view the artistic component through. The artistic component operates as the real 'text' of the thesis project which can also be looked upon as articles. The emphasis between the written and artistic components should be understood as being equal. The written component is an extension of the artistic component and is, for all intents and purposes, conceptually interchangeable with the artistic component.

The items in this book expose not only the genesis of the works but also relate to the general things I think about constantly while I am making. This book, and my thoughts contained within it are as much 'objects' as my paintings are 'objects'; they should be objectified, interfered with, revered, rejected, challenged, challenged by, appreciated, endured, negotiated, translated as such, in peoples' appraisal of them. This selection of writing should be given the same consideration that the paintings are given.

Supervisors:

Rob Garrett (artistic)

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Examiners:

Samu Raatikainen

Taru Elfving





Painting; with drawing  
or footnotes for paintings.

'Drawing is an immanence, always pointing to somewhere else.'

- **Deanna Petherbridge**

Preface:

The writings in this book are to be viewed as a series of footnotes. The 'text' is the paintings that have been exhibited in two exhibitions. The footnotes are things that have come to mind; ideas, thoughts and propositions that have occurred while organising paintings or in the act of painting itself. They are also to be looked upon as things I believe, not things I expect to be believed.

The thing about the footnote is that it is a literary device used to direct attention to something other than what you are reading. In the context of my work as a visual artist, I use the footnote to refer to something other than what you are looking at when looking at a work of art. Additionally, footnotes can be used to give further explanation to something, becoming, for lack of a better term, an expanded reference.

In this regard it has a relationship to the title of this book, in that, the footnote can be seen to take on the role of drawing.

Some of the elements covered in the writings are thoughts around where ideas for images come from; the role or hierarchy between image and frame; process and decision making; causal and acausal relationships between things that, to me, have meaningful connections.

Effectively, the things in this book are reflections on my thinking that have had an effect on the outcome of the work I have produced whilst studying for my Masters. It could be considered musings around the awareness of art as evolutionary aesthetics.

It is part diary, part diagram, part instructional manual. I hope there is something of interest to be found here for the reader to discover.

If it seems at all fragmented, it is because that is the nature of the work.





1) As a child, I had this portable stereo that was of really good quality. My Dad had bought it on a family trip to Australia, and somehow, by the time I was a teenager, it had ended up in my possession. On the tuning dial, it picked up Medium Wave, the part of the broadcast band used for AM radio; along with FM signals. It also picked up Short Wave and Long Wave as well. If there is any uncertainty as to what these initials stand for, AM is amplitude modulation, FM is frequency modulation. Shortwave is used to transmit over very large areas; sometimes entire continents or beyond. It is also used for military over-the-horizon radar, diplomatic communication, and two-way international communication by amateur radio enthusiasts for hobby, educational and emergency purposes (HB9RYZ, 2018).

Being a kid that was not exactly gregarious and outgoing, this object held a fascination for me and gave me a level of companionship for the many hours I chose to be alone in my room and draw. It opened to me the world of music, even if I hadn't really developed my own sense of taste yet. Most music I was subjected to was commercial at this stage, although there was a local student radio station that was starting to emerge and broadcast on FM, generating my interest in the more non-commercial variety of music.

This was the era when even mainstream bands played their instruments as electronic music was just beginning and it also marked the American invasion through media on a small colonial outpost like New Zealand; I still enjoyed listening to Casey Kasem's *American Top Forty* on a Sunday.

The other thing this object offered me was an ability to let me use my imagination. Often when I was bored, I tuned in to the radio's ability to pick up shortwave signals. This meant I could listen to messages broadcast from other parts of the world. These broadcasts were made up of what sounded like artificial, robotic voices; weird synthesised tones; morse code; snippets of dialogue repeated over and over other things (often in foreign languages) that

sounded as if they were intercepted random signals.

In my mind I could travel to other places whilst still in my bedroom and I found it fascinating how this was able to collapse the concept of time for me. I was tapping into something that was happening so far away yet occurring simultaneously. I was intrigued by this. It didn't matter if I wasn't able to understand the language or what the noises meant; in fact, that made it even more intriguing.

My appreciation for these communiqués was on a different level. I was listening to these things in more of a Vitruvian sense. In other words, I was interested in the patterns, arrangements and harmonies in what I was listening to and it was through how my brain was processing the disposition of that information and translating it into something rhythmic and pleasing that I was sympathetic to. The architecture of what I was listening to seemed more important to me than understanding what I was hearing, and this enabled me to create an alternate reality.

As I turned the tuner from one end of the dial to the other, I started listening more to the signals in between radio stations. These noises were more other worldly and pushed my imagination to generate explanations for what was behind these transmissions. Of course, UFO's and aliens were the culprits. This was before I found out that sound is a part of the light spectrum and that a percentage of what is broadcast filters out to the dark recesses of space; destined to be received by other intelligent lifeforms (Shlain, 1991, pp. 284 - 287).

Occasionally scanning the tuner would reveal more earthly communications of people using Short Wave or CB radios. Although, the sensation was the same; that I had stumbled across some sort of secret communication between entities that had no idea I was listening in.

Sometimes, although I knew it wasn't possible, I would wonder whether what I was listening to was aware it was being listened to and whether I would be able to be tracked down through this

interception of signals.

I think what it really was that was so intriguing to me was that I could bring other parts of the world, or universe, into my room. It allowed me to retrieve the sonic character of objects that were beyond the apprehension of my senses and make them present. All through a piece of wire and a small bit of electronic componentry.

2) The idea of aeriels is a curious one for me, especially when applied to the human form. I like to think that an aerial is what humans are. What is the brain but an orb of electromagnetic activity atop a structure sending and receiving electrical information. It has even been put forward that the electromagnetic field of the brain is consciousness (Radler, 2002). This helps me with accepting the idea that a collective unconsciousness is plausible.

It seems to me that when we create something, we are re-enacting an apprehension of the mind. It could be said that the thing that is being created already exists before it has been made. As the maker, we have received the information in order for the thing to be made.

In Timothy Morton's book *Hyperobjects* (2013), he speaks of a sphere of influence (p. 63), where objects exert imperatives on the sensitivities of apprehending objects which results in an interconnectedness of things (p. 83). This, he maintains, places the power on the side of the apprehended object, not on the object apprehending it. Is it possible the object can transmit a signal, to draw on our attention, for it to be apprehended in the first place?

3) Recently I was reading a book called *Atom and Archetype*. It is the correspondence between Carl Jung and Wolfgang Pauli which reveals how these two great minds developed the concept of what would become known as synchronicity. The irony being of course that they had been investigating the idea of things that have a



meaningful connection with no causal explanation independently in their respective fields of psychology and physics, and only discovered this on writing to each other through an unrelated matter.

Jung was most inquisitive about the ways the psyche produces images that influence our beliefs even if those beliefs are not provable. He referred to these images as archetypes. They are psychic representatives of the instincts and manifest themselves identically at all times in all places. This alert to the observer, that of a particular presence on what is being observed, can assist in a focusing on the energy patterns of the material universe. For Pauli, this meant he was able to pursue material reality beyond the human experience (Zabriskie, 2001, p. xxviii).

Jung's great idea was the concept of the collective unconscious, which is the sharing among the same species the structure of the unconscious mind through archetypes. The appearance of the spiral as a symbol used by many different ancient civilisations is something that has always perplexed me. How did so many different cultures that we assume were isolated from each other all come to use this symbol at relatively similar periods of time? Another is the concept of the pyramid. Or the concept of gods / idols. If ever there was evidence needed that our brains are interconnected wirelessly through the electromagnetic field, these things could indeed point to it.

4) The large horn antenna was the apparatus that was used in the discovery of Cosmic Microwave Background Radiation (CMB), the signal that is understood to be the remains from the Big Bang. Initially, the antenna was going to be used in collaboration with a satellite system, called Echo, to amplify radio signals for long distance transmission. This programme became obsolete and the device ended up in the hands of two scientists who went on to discover CMB and received the Nobel prize for their efforts (Levine, 2009).

When I think about paintings, or objects, or drawings to make,

I have found myself wondering about how ideas are distributed, most specifically those from a time when our world wasn't so connected. For example, how Darwin and Wallace developed similar ideas on evolution because they had unknowingly read the same book on economics (Flannery, 2016). Or how Alexander Bell and Elisha Gray were independently working on inventing the telephone. There are many examples of simultaneous independent discovery; the steamboat, calculus, oxygen, colour photography and the telescope are just a few examples (Gladwell, 2008). This phenomenon is called multiple discovery. This got me thinking about the possibility of the distribution of imagery and as whether, as artists (particularly painters for me) we pick up our ideas on what to paint through what is already 'in the air'.

There could be a case made for the invention of abstraction following the invention of the camera. There seemed to be simultaneous investigation into the geometric form taking place in painting from various groups of artists all around the world. Did they all come to the conclusion of using geometry in its most embellished form because it was the most obvious choice? Or was it something else? Painting can be referred to as a hyperobject. Every painting that has been made, is being made, will be made, has some aspect of paintings past, present and future embedded into it. When I make a painting, to me the painting is something that already exists. I am just a conduit for it to materialise. It is almost like painting has its own archaeology, its own anthropology; it is its own species.

5) Is it possible for ideas to travel through the atmosphere like radio signals? Is the source of our imagery that we use as visual artists nothing more than the background radiation of ideas floating through the ether? I have had the experience of independently thinking of something to make only to find that it already exists. When I have found this out it seems to be that it is the first time I

have known that what I was about to make, already had been. The thing in question is not something I had known of prior to thinking of it. For myself, I can't help contemplating that ideas have a wave function and, like radiowaves that can circumnavigate the globe, have a way of appearing and making themselves known.

In the documentary *The mindscape of Alan Moore* (2005), Moore talks about his esoteric beliefs with his career in writing and a hypothetical area he conceptualised known as the 'Idea Space', describing it as '... a space in which mental events can be said to occur, an idea space which is perhaps universal'. The idea space Moore talks of could operate similarly to what we refer to as a download mirror. This is a website that is the replica of an already existing site, so, the idea space could be a universal space that is a replica of our minds. The idea space could be said to be the space which we have access to ideas as pre-existing forms; what I prefer to call the 'mind field'.

This reminds me of the Kantian idea of noumena, or things in themselves. This relates to objects that are not the correlate to some consciousness that observes them (Harman, 2018, p. 77), that the objects are in fact autonomous. This does not mean that the objects are conscious themselves, it just means that they do not need to be apprehended by the senses in order to be. The concept of an idea space would give noumena the perfect environment with which to reside in.

All of this can sound a bit like tinfoil hat conspiracy; delusional fantasy at best. Ironically, the use of tin foil hats in an experiment at MIT at the beginning of the 21st Century discovered the use of said hat amplified the frequency range of the wearer in the area that is used by mobile communications, broadcast satellites and aeronautical radio navigation (Solniak). I consider that as something worth thinking about.

Ever since Karl Jansky discovered cosmic radiation in the 1930s we have had an understanding that celestial phenomena are detectable through radio waves. Maybe the same is possible for

thoughts and consciousness too.

6) In the Calvin Tompkins biography on Marcel Duchamp, he writes of an idea attributed to Duchamp in which he talks of a shadow being a two dimensional representation of a three dimensional object, and reasons that the three dimensional object could therefore be a 'shadow' for something that exists in the fourth dimension (1996, p.57).

This idea has a relationship, I think, between the image and the frame and where each of them sit within the context of their own hierarchy.

The image, or what determines the area of the image, is designated by the frame. The frame can be a physical boundary that demarcates a position of inside and outside of the frame, or it can also be a historical referent or something ideological that defines 'art', or furthermore, something philosophical that has the potential to point to the existence of either one of them.

Allegorically I could liken the roles of image and frame to the skeleton and the body: the image (body) is held together by the frame (skeleton). Interestingly, in this example the frame is internal, and the image is external, which could be considered opposite to the conventional frame / image function in a traditional example of an easel painting.

In order for the image to exist, it must be framed; given context. When we say that the image extends beyond the frame, it is still defined as an image by the frame. So, the image relies upon the frame for it to be determined an image. In this sense I would say that the image is parasitic to the frame.

But what about the frame? Is the frame determined because the image determines it? Can the frame become the image, framed by the image? As a framework for an altogether different concept of image I look again to Duchamp whose *Green Box* with its instructions, diagrams and notes, which is considered instrumental to

understanding the *Large Glass*, seems to have more importance than the painting itself (Tomkins, 1996, p.2). I'd contend what we are really looking at when viewing the *Large Glass* is actually the *Green Box*, which the *Large Glass* is directing us toward.

Where the image is naturally parasitized by the frame could be in the perception of a narrative.

An example of this presented itself to me in a group critique I was taking part in. The group were looking at a painting that was made from a photograph. The question came up whether anyone thought it was naïve. I said I believed it was because it looked as though it was painted in a manner that was unsophisticated, innocent. The person who posed the question said they thought it wasn't naïve. At this point, I made a bit of a throwaway comment that I thought all paintings taken from photographs were naïve to some degree. Someone challenged me with the question 'what about Gerhard Richter?'. I wasn't sure how to respond, so the argument collapsed. Rest assured though, the irony of that moment wasn't lost on me. However, I still think the comment holds true, even to Richter. I think it is because there is perceived to be a power of authenticity in the photograph, that what we are looking at is supposed to be an authentic moment, which is itself naïve to believe. I am not certain that a painting of a photograph can undermine the perception of that power or attempt to reproduce it. So, either the challenge to the photograph is naïve or the result in painting it is.

Essentially, if something is considered naïve, this may overshadow its semantic content. However, from an ontological perspective, as Graham Harman suggests in his book *Object Oriented Ontology* (2018), '...every image we encounter gives us just an outline or shadow of the inwardness of the thing itself' (p.85).

Of course, this intrigues me because I use photographic imagery as a source in a lot of my work. I am wondering how the comment I made applies to the work I produce. Maybe it is of no consequence as the images I use tend to be of architecture or inanimate

things or aren't searching for a narrative. Maybe that is the element that points toward naïveté, the idea of narrative.

7) There is more to this thought of mine that all paintings from photographs possess a degree of naïveté. Especially with the example of Richter. David Joselit mentioned in his essay *Reassembling painting* (2015) that Richter blurred the photographic image to render it aesthetic and cancel its status as a picture (pp175-176).

In his use of the blur it might seem as though Richter is trying to prevent the viewer from recognising the image. To use the example of the Richter painting *Uncle Rudi* (1965), when I saw it, it amplified what the image was of; not obscured it. To me it was even more obvious that it was of a German soldier with all the implications that go along with reading it as a symbol in that way.

The same can be said for his other paintings with this type of treatment. The blurring brings attention, in a way that is more in focus, to what you are looking at; toilet rolls, stukas, Uncle Rudi, etc.

I find it also has this effect on the narrative of the image in that the blurring amplifies the narrative or necessitates that a narrative exists or should be present. The only thing that has the ability to destroy narrative, destroy the image, destroy context, is time.

Conversely, painting destroys time in the way we normally apprehend it. It is not the only thing that has this power. But there is an irony there, to employ a medium that can capture a moment in a unit of time and translate it with one that can destroy how we experience it.

What about the idea of blurring framing the image as a commentary on the fallibility of memory? Maybe this is so, but I'm not sure the idea is an affective one, as the idea of photography itself achieves that aim.

In Mira Schor's *a decade of negative thinking* (2009) she quotes

Richter as saying, 'I blur things to make everything equally important and equally unimportant' (p163). I think this is because Richter himself realises that the painting of recognisable forms from photographs is naïve. It is probably why I consider his abstract work to be much stronger.

When we look at something, we take on the role of an actor engaged in the act of looking. When we look at something, we don't necessarily look at it for what it is. We tend to look at it from the perspective of our own personal viewpoint and associations we have as individuals. Graham Harman says it better when he states '...in art the part of the image which looks towards the object is subordinated to our efforts, as basically thespian beings, to become the new object generated by the metaphor' (p.85).

It's peculiar how photography is used to 'inform' painting by translating the image of the photograph to one of paint. It is perfectly acceptable to do this for photographs where the subject is recognisable. How credulous would it seem to be to use photography in an abstract way and then translate those images into paint?

8) I find myself thinking, in what I would call an armature for a painting, the relationship between image and frame could be related to the idea of altruism how Richard Dawkins describes it, that it is more than just favouring others at the expense of the altruist (p. 57).

In his book *The Extended Phenotype* (1982), he sets out that altruism is, in itself, a selfish act as it involves a level of manipulation; that the 'altruist' is forced or manipulated into giving something to the beneficiary. Somehow, I think this is applicable to painting. But who is the altruist and who is the beneficiary?

The image and the frame have a relationship that is symbiotic. Without the frame, whether the image exists inside or outside of it, images may lose all meaning. Without the image, there is nothing to frame. There is a mutual conflict between the image and

the frame. The frame itself can exist as part of the image and the image has the capacity to take on the role of the frame, by acting as the support to the thing that it is constructed of, physically or conceptually.

So, if I question the value of the image, am I questioning the impossibility of the un-concealment of the image, and the idea that the framework of the image is more 'truthful' than the image of the image?

In the example of painting, there is something of an arms race that occurs between realistic interpretation and abstract representation, both for the prevailing preservation of a particular format within a local environment. To quote Dawkins again, 'one lineage will tend to evolve adaptations to manipulate the behaviour of another lineage, then the second lineage will evolve counter-adaptations' (p. 61).

It is almost a case of survival of the fittest which relies on a manipulated framework in order to allow for what is on the surface to exist as an image; the manipulated framework being an applied theory or concept.

The problem I am having with my paintings is that everything is on the surface and visible. Regardless of what the image is, the viewer is in the position of recognising what they are looking at as resembling something of familiarity. What if I was to invert my painting so the surface, traditionally the bottom layer, is on top and people will only see what remains of an 'image' which is only recognisable as a framework. Would this relieve the viewer from the burden of reading the image as something other than is intended?

9) In the *Guardian* there is an article about two young women who are writing art criticism in their own terms in a bid to disestablish another corner of the perceived white male hierarchy in the art-world (Goh, 2018). Their language is non-formal, non-academic,



littered with emoji's; their point of view wholly subjective and emotional. I wasn't too sure how I felt about this challenge to art criticism because I can see many problems with their position as much as I can see many positives. These women are disregarding the established history of art criticism. It did make me think though that the current time we live in as this is being written is one that I can only best explain as exploded. I think that the fundamental rules that used to govern art have become as unravelled as they could be.

Generally speaking, anything can be art. This openness includes the 'necessity' to justify its position as art. Something can be made, presented and can be justified unjustifiably (as in not necessary to be) with 'I don't know', 'I made it', 'because it's cool'. Arguably the focus on contemporary art, including art criticism, seems to be more directed in favour of the social over the philosophical or the psychological.

To look at myself painting in terms of its history, I would say there exists an element of refusing to recognise its history; or an attempt to refuse to re-enact the history of painting. There tends to be this action where it is thought to be necessary to constantly refer to human history in order to advance the civilisation. To talk of learning from the past, this tendency can let the actions of history dictate the path of the future. We tell ourselves, as a species capable of terrible acts, that we must never forget what has gone before. Within the context of art, it seems to me that events that have occurred in the canon of painting will make themselves known, regardless of what you paint, what materials you use, whatever physical space you are in; as Mira Schor suggests, 'every stroke of paint carries art historical DNA' (2009, p.138). I want whatever paintings I make to be a continuation of painting, not an emulation. Even if the result is trite, contrived or looks like a failure, or is in and of itself a terrible act.

10) Contemporary history of painting usually starts with 'this is what happened at the turn of the Twentieth century' with a run through of the usual suspects; painters and genres alike. We need to talk about painting in a way that reflects the choices we make about it today, not from the perspective of 'after whomever'. As artists, we need to emphasise what can be done with painting, over and above what has been done.

I have this idea that the obfuscation of the past is the better way forward. In *A Decade of Negative Thinking* (2009), Schor states that 'every era is determined by the discipline of art history' (p.141). Now, I don't know about you, but I don't feel comfortable being under such a heavy load of painted history, so I would like to ignore it when people say my work reminds them of 'X' modernist painter. The conversation should be about what is in front of us, not what is behind us; in much the same way a flock of birds feed off the ground by foraging then leap frogging over the bird in front of them to stay at the front of the flock, this is the most effective way of covering new ground and sustaining the flock. This does not mean I have no regard to acknowledge the past. But, as Barnett Newman said in *The Plasmic Image*, 'We are freeing ourselves of the impediments of memory, association, nostalgia, legend, myth, or what have you, that have been the devices of western European painting. Instead of making "cathedrals" out of Christ, man, or "life", we are making it out of ourselves, out of our own feelings...' (1990, p.127). It also does not infer history must be destroyed either in order to move forward. It is likely this iconoclastic thought comes to mind because the concept of reality now is remarkably different compared to what it may have been even 50 years ago, as we live in a frequently more obsolescent present. I fully recognise and understand that whatever future actions may be, they have direct connections to previous events which stretch far back in human history. My thought is that it is necessary to disconnect from those historical entities to have the ability to truly advance forward in a meaningful manner.

Peter Plagens, who is a painter and art critic, said something about the act of painting having value because of its history, and painting because of that is just valuing habit on a cultural scale (Fendrich & Plagens, 2014). I would have to agree with that sentiment. The constant referencing of the past has stifled our creativity and made an environment where the referent itself is more important than the thing that has been made; or another way of looking at it is the thing that has been made is nothing more than a referent to something prior which is given more value than what is being looked at. This is especially disconcerting and prevalent when considering Modernist Painting. There seems to be no longer an interest in striving toward the creation of a prototype.

What made me interested in the idea of modernism in the first place was, as a collective, the modernists were looking to the future with the idea of creating something new, something better, and I feel some of that ambition has been lost because it is easier to accept that we are trapped in a present which is an endless loop of cynicism and confirmation bias.

11) Baudrillard spoke a lot about history and grappling with its complexities in his essay *hot painting* (1990). In it, he says that the consequences for history cannot be disregarded. That the ideas of narrative and recital of events has become impossible and that in order for them to permeate they must become separated from history. This is because, as he sees it, events occur too rapidly, and in doing so, no longer have consequences. This is also evident in the political and social spheres where, he maintains, events no longer exert autonomous energy to move us and because of that allow us to be collectively irresponsible (pp. 39 - 41).

From here, history needs the bastard offspring of modernism to enable it to rise above itself. It could take the shape of a rupture not too dissimilar to what happened in the late 70s with Punk except, instead of succumbing to the nihilistic catch cry of 'no

future', it could be something altogether more apolitical, more humanist. Within art alone, to maintain the status quo will mean to get lost in an increasing cycle of self-referential quoting, already evidenced by Mira Schor in what she calls a 'persistence of styles' (p.13) where styles are taught to and practiced by art students who possess a diluted awareness as to what it is they are doing, or why they are doing it. It is nothing more than building a hall of mirrors.

The image must become autonomous and with that autonomy comes the freedom from 'the referential sphere of the real and of history' (Baudrillard, p. 38).

12) The only real potential I see for the human race to exist in the first place is for it to explore its ability to make stuff. We have evolved because we have been able to make more stuff or better stuff. We can also combine stuff to make even more stuff. How did this come to be?

If you look at the beginning of the Twentieth century, there was something quite revolutionary that happened to humanity that was best expressed in art. We were able to extend this idea of the ontic element. This wasn't the first time such a shift happened in our self-awareness.

Saying we invented art, though, is like saying we invented fire. Art feels like it is a supernatural force and we (humans) are a product of it. We are a manifestation of art which is why we make. We make art to make ourselves.

If there may be a governing biological aspect to painting, that humanity is a product of art making, then technological advancements have only been made possible because art has allowed us to realise those advancements. Essentially art making, or painting in my regards, has the place of the selfish gene and we are its survival machines.

For example, I entertain the idea there is every possibility that

the spear began life after we learned to draw with sticks that had been burned in the fire; the act of drawing sharpening the sticks to a point. From this position we made better materials to draw with, and better instruments to hunt with.

In David Hockney's book *Secret Knowledge* (2006), he writes of the impact optics had on painting, how the level of realism in Western painting appeared suddenly after lenses were being made. For me it is more interesting to turn that around and see it as the impact painting had on optics. It seems obvious that the use of mirrors and lenses to assist painting would have influenced a pursuit to make better mirrors and lenses to capture more detail, sharper images, eventually leading to one part of the story in the history of photography and any subsequent industry that uses optics.

If computers are the next life altering technological innovation, will an interaction with art making take computers to a place that hadn't been previously considered or even thought possible? Peter Hughye's images in his exhibition *Umwelt*, at the Serpentine Gallery, is exploring some pretty strange territory in this very direction, where the images produced are the result of collaboration between computer and organic mind.

13) To me there is something poetic about art existing as a unit of selection, much like a gene, that allows us to survive in order to, eventually, create something that will allow us to continue to survive so we may create something.

The idea is that art is more than just an expression of our aesthetic sensibilities. That it is in fact part of our genetic code and an expression thereof. The cells that determine this are the motivators behind the things we make. This is for the purpose of creating patterns of thought within us to recognise problems and to adapt to overcome those problems; to invent solutions through creative engagement and to enhance the environment for the benefit of

the host organism. This ensures that the cells, and the organism that carries them, survives. For me this provides an answer to the question 'what is the purpose of art?'

14) If I look at painting as imprinting itself onto us as a species driven thing, as in painting as species, I can see it uses us to replicate itself. There are many painters now, some successful, a lot of them are unsuccessful. There must have been many unsuccessful painters in the past and even more so, a lot of unsuccessful paintings. Even successful painters make unsuccessful paintings as well as unsuccessful painters make successful paintings. If the paintings that survive are the most successful, in a 'genetic' sense, that means even unsuccessful painters can be good replicators, good survival machines for painting. Maybe what I mean by this analogy is successful paintings are those that break the ancestral lines and introduce new mutations into successful bodies. 'Bodies' could equally be generations of painters or genres of painting.

15) I had come across a text about the relationship between media, aesthetics, technology and science, and how each influence the other to create new medias, aesthetics, technologies and sciences (Root – Bernstein, 2013, p.268). To me it seems obvious that art is the guiding principle in all these elements. If we didn't make, we wouldn't have things such as media, technology, aesthetics and science. It made me wonder what the ontology of art making could be. Humans have a tendency to think that they are the smartest guys in the room. But say our nature as humans was being determined by something else. Something that operated in a much longer temporal scale. Paintings temporal perspective is longer than ours, which is why I consider painting be a hyper-object, to use a term coined by Timothy Morton. We make things that will outlast us, but not as monuments to ourselves, instead as

a way of marking, in that particular time, how we understand and think about this thing called existence.

Let's say the things we make were already anticipated to be made. Sometimes when I am making a painting, I have the feeling it already exists as an object not yet apprehended by the senses as to be a physical object. All I am doing is going through the motions, so it can be in the same temporal space as I am.

There is this sentence I read in Timothy Morton's book, *Hyperobjects* (2013), which reminded me of the sensation I just described. It goes, 'Relativity is what guarantees that objects are never as they seem, and not because they are ideas in my head – but because they aren't' (pg64). I have asked myself many times why I make abstract paintings, why do I not paint in a more realistic manner. Perhaps it is because the object of my paintings is not what it seems. The ideas for them feel like they exist outside of my head. My painting is just a reified example of an already existing object. They feel like imaginary quantum states but already existing as ones that I could never think of.

As I delved further into *Hyperobjects*, Morton started to talk about painting in a manner that aligned with how I was thinking when I was in my studio '...painting emits spacetime, emits an aesthetic field. The painting is a unit, a quantum that executes a function. It is a device, not just a map but also a tool, like a shaman's rattle or a computer algorithm.' (p. 75).

16) If, as was mentioned earlier in footnote 9, anything can be art, then I suggest the invention of atomic and sub-atomic particles would have to be the greatest of all artworks. These things conjured up by men and women who had no ability of proving that what they spoke of existed except through abstract representations of equations, are responsible for some of the most beautiful works of conceptual art ever conceived. And what did they create? Not only the structure of the atom and the transformation of our

perception of reality, but an entire industry whose sole purpose comes down to proving the results of their ideas by building huge supercolliders to smash together particles to determine the building blocks of the universe and whether there is something unknown inside the unknown.

17) The delicate advantage that abstraction has in painting today is the same that it was when it first materialised. It does not compete with the abundance of reproduced figurative images sourced since the invention of photography which has continued through film and video, and now through our everyday encounters with digital technology and the Internet. It is worth remembering, as Peter Plagens suggests, that abstraction lets paint be paint and does not try to substitute it for other materials (Fendrich & Plagens, 2014).

18) To be a bastard offspring of modernism, it is necessary to embrace perceived imperfections and irrationalities of reason. Cross boundaries, but do not collapse them; or collapse them if that is what is required.

One element we need to escape from is this idea of categorising what is made as being 'between' this and that. Between abstract and realism, between painting and sculpture, between real and imaginary, between language and visual image, etc. The thing I think of that is a more acceptable form of categorisation for me, and something I find motivating, is Russell's paradox. Russell's paradox is found in naive set theory and allows for the existence of contradictory entities (Morton, p.78). For me that is an idea that intrigues me; painting as a set of all sets that do not contain themselves. For it would hold true then for painting to be a '...style of a changed space-time continuum; and that hence the modernist arts require, for their comprehension, criteria different from those



appropriate to earlier art.' (Bullock & Trombley, 2000, p. 540).

19) There is this unwritten law in the live performance of music. Maybe it is just in the circle of guitar music that this particular law exists, I'm not altogether sure. It is something along the lines of this. If you make a mistake while playing, repeat it. The idea of this is, of course, to disguise the error and present it as an intentional part of the song. Like I said at the beginning, it is probably a concept that is more common in the 'rock' world, as it wouldn't be an idea you could apply to chamber music or anything that required following a rigid framework.

The thing about music is that there are generally two sides to it. Those that know theory and those that do not. I have often wondered about the purpose of theory as, in the example of music, it could be argued it is becoming somewhat obsolete due to the proliferation of digital automation. To that end instruments are going the way of theory also. But anyway, let's return to the idea of the repeating of an error to disguise that one has been made. In its simplest form, this is the principle of improvisation. Improvisation allows for the possibility of what you hadn't thought of playing to become real. It enables the possibility of being open to the idea of potentials, of less regimented paths to outcomes you weren't sure how to reach.

There is a maxim that threatens to contradict the one of 'if you make a mistake while playing, repeat it', that runs parallel to it in the world of improvised music. It is 'never play it the same way twice'.

20) As I have gotten older, I have become more aware of the idea of entropy. This awareness has come from learning new skills. Usually, the course of action goes along these lines. I try something I haven't done before. I find I am what could be described as a

'natural'. In other words, I have an intrinsic knowledge or in-built ability. I am co-ordinated. This is not true for everything I attempt, but, for the instances that it does apply, this is what usually happens. I tend to get worse the more I do it. Now, it is supposed to go the other way isn't it? The more you do something, the better you become? Not so in my case. It is like I peak first, which lasts for a short while, and then it is all downhill from there. It is not that often I get to experience the feeling of gradually getting better at something over time.

Of course, there is a paradox to entropy. It is defined as the increase of disorder in a system. The thing is that it is the return to the simplest state that system can exist as. That is why sandcastles blown by the wind will not reform as sandcastles, because of the increase of entropy. The simplest state they can exist as is a less ordered pile of sand. So, the simplest thing seems to be the least ordered which is also the most chaotic, and chaos seems very complex to me. Kind of makes you wonder about the Universe, doesn't it? How did that start? I mean, did it already begin fully formed and it has been becoming less ordered over time?

Anyway, back to this idea of improvisation. I guess improvisation (in the case of music) is a state of music with increased entropy. I have been in a number of bands and I can say with some confidence that the ones I found to be most enjoyable were the ones that were open to playing with some degree of improvisation. And when I say open, that is exactly the state you have to be in to operate in it. It's a strange feeling when, as a group, you create this unified field of music that has spontaneously arisen from nowhere that seems in control of taking the musicians on its natural course. What is equally strange is when the magic leaves the tune (whilst still playing) or you try to play again what had just been 'written' moments before, only to realise its failures as a composition; failures that weren't apparent, didn't even exist, on first playing.

This sense of improvisation is something I carry through to other aspects of art making. As much as my work can be planned out, I

don't dictate how things go together. On making a working sketch for a painting, my attention is drawn to what happens when that idea gets transformed through the translation via other media. Compositional elements begin to change; earlier decisions become rescinded as they adapt to their new environment. I try to remain open to other possibilities that present themselves which may not have occurred to me in the works inception.

21) Amy Sillman talks about this idea of a phenomenology of making where the tools of painting create the mandate of making (Taylor, 2014, p. 235). This has similar terms attached to it as a method of improvisation, where the body leads the mind, although the phenomenology of making seems to be determined by what is at hand. It suggests to me Heidegger's 'tool analysis', which pertains to the fact that when you look at something made, your interpretation includes, whether knowingly or not, the inclusion of the role of the tool and how that influences the maker and the material into the thing that has been made. What if the phenomenology of making was to find out how something was made? Wouldn't the simplest approach be to dissect the element of the whole into its constituent parts? The thing that would be missing though would be the nonconcrete essentials that caused certain things to occur: why did you place that there; what made you move in that direction; why is this area uncovered; what function does that particular instrument have, are questions that could come to mind as an example. It is my hope that through the unmaking of a phenomenology of making, or a reverse engineering of sorts, new divergences will emerge.

22) There is a visual element known as the exploded diagram. This type of drawing (technical) is used to show the relationship of parts in the assembly of an object. Every part is where it would

be in the assembly except that it is separated by an exaggeration of space between one part and another and suspended as if in mid-air.

The exploded diagram is something I have an aesthetic attachment to. I find them visually appealing. They remind me of when I used to take objects apart as a child.

It is not unusual for a child to take objects apart in order to satisfy a curiosity of how the object in question works. Most kids will put them back together and restore the object to how it was found. Some will even improve the condition so that the object functions more effectively. When I took things apart as a child, I had no interest in that. I was purely concerned with the constituents of the thing itself; what was inside and what was needed to make it work. It wasn't necessary for me to reassemble the object to understand its working, as by disassembling it I was engaging with the process of a re-assembly, a re-presentation. In pieces, the object was more beautiful because you could see the way one thing interacted with the other.

For me there is a cognitive similarity between exploded diagrams, taking things apart, and the paintings I make. In a way I am taking painting apart and I do not find it necessary to put it back the way it was found. In its state of 'disassembly' it seems to be more revelatory.

23) I made this work once, where I glued some wooden blocks together and covered it in burlap and wrote on the back of it 'armature for a painting'. There is something about that phrase that has pushed me on a new trajectory. Now when I look at something, how it is compiled or if it leaves elements of its making visible, evoke more of an interest for me than say its narrative or realistic rendition. Maybe armature for a painting is part of a greater scheme, that of an architecture of painting.

When I think of the term architecture, I think of structure. I

think of space. I think of drawing. When I think of drawing, I think of a state of preparation, or something in a suspended state. In turn that leads me to probability and potential which I like because that means these things embody, not so much uncertainty, more that they haven't quite yet decided what they're going to do.

The architecture of painting does not mean incorporating the architecture of the exhibiting space into the painting itself, although it could be that if you were to explore a similar avenue to Kurt Schwitters's *merzbaum*. It could be the point where the exhibition space ends and the painting space begins as well as how the painting is made (application of paint / tools used / composition) and its relationship to its support (materiality: board, canvas, paper; dimensionality: 2 or 3d, scale, inner / outer; manufacture: mass produced, found object / readymade, hand made).

With relation to an 'architecture of painting'; an artist that comes to mind is Andre Cadere. His 'objects' are round so you would always see the same 'side' to the work, no matter what your perspective. They are codified but contain a deliberate error. They are handmade but not perfectly made. They are portable objects and are always active. They are always art because they are always under the guise of being exhibited where-ever they are. These are all things that highlight the paintings architecture.

The other interesting thing about Cadere is that he was engaged with a concept he called *unstable equilibrium* (Radu, 2009). This term has its root in physics and relates to potential energy where a small disturbance produces a large change. In a way, it contains the prospect of a similar outcome to the effect of human error; small disturbance, large change. It is important to clarify that the term 'error' differentiates itself from the term 'chance'. Error should not be construed as chance as they are unrelated and should not be confused. Error, in my understanding of it, relates more closely to the disorder of a system whereas chance does not.

This is exactly the kind of thing I am interested in within the process of painting, a sort of self-contained butterfly effect, where

the approach to painting is finding inspiration in the things that grab your attention and steer you in other directions. These starting points need not be revealed as, by the time they have been considered and reconsidered, painted and repainted, the original inspiration will be beside the point.

24) There are only really two things I can say I trust that shape my understanding of the apprehension of this thing known as existence. The first is ontology; the nature of being. The second is hermeneutics; the theory of interpretation. Anything else feels like shoe-horning square pegs into round holes.

These two beliefs act like a filter to a misunderstanding of the object of painting which allow 'things' to express their right to be forgotten through the idea of painting with(drawing).

To utilise the territory of painting is to explore it as a site of causal and non-causal relationships of thought, materiality and metaphysical propositions. In this sense, it is almost like painting is the rationalising of an argument with myself. It is an argument about colour; an argument about placement; an argument about texture; an argument about all the elements of its physiology. Although the arguments may be long, the variations can be slight. Eventually the painting will become itself, not what I arrange for it to be.

25) I had been thinking of symmetry in relation to my work and upon reading *Atom and Archetype*, I came across this definition:

So the 'symmetry principle is simply a statement that something looks the same from certain different points of view.' But in the mathematics relevant to Pauli, 'a symmetry isn't a thing; it's a transformation. Not any old transformation, though, a symmetry of an object is a

transformation that leaves it apparently unchanged.’ Symmetry also states that all elements of a system can undergo transformations – rotation or reflection in a mirror – without being fundamentally altered... (Zabriskie, p. xxxvi)

This definition of symmetry reminded me of another concept, that of syncopation; a word I am familiar with in my role as a musician. Syncopation is defined as the transference of musical accents onto the subsidiary pulses of a musical measure (Bullock & Trombley, p. 853). The accent can shift without changing the rhythm. Essentially you are transforming the rhythm without changing it.

Both of these ideas are not too dissimilar to what Foucault terms ‘formation’, which are historical structures that change over time but also adhere to certain rules of formation (Graw, 2018, p.14).

So, if you are a drummer like I am, the idea of syncopation also includes the symmetry of your body: two arms and two legs. Unless, of course, you are Def Leppard’s drummer. Each limb can play independent rhythms and combined they make one syncopated rhythm.

The idea is to exist in this situation holistically, without concentrating on one part, e.g. what your left leg is doing, otherwise the pattern will fall to pieces. You can change the accents without changing the rhythm, so in this sense, syncopation is a symmetry.

What I really like about making things is what happens along the way. Things change as the idea goes from what you were thinking, to something existing in a physical space. Other things come in to play like gravity, balance, colour tension, thickness of line, level of opacity / transparency, ultimately the thoughts that you have which make you conclude whether the idea you have ended up with was a good one or something else. This is how I try to look at painting, as a syncopated symmetry.

26) Over the course of writing this thesis I have discussed an idea about a universal question of where does the impetus for art making lie? What is its general purpose; what is its function? It seems clear to me that, in my own practice, there are two acts within painting. The physical act and the psychic act. The physical act is obviously the act of painting itself. Something happens when I am in the moment of creating something. There is a point where it seems that the thing I am creating starts defining its own path to an outcome. This change in physical expression, of course, can be seen in conjunction with the psychic act; the outcome of which could describe the physical act as the symbolic representation of psychic processes.

What of the psychic act? Could it be considered as a thing in itself? I know when I am engaged in the act of making, alterations are made along the way. These alterations are sometimes deliberate and sometimes not. When they are deliberate, I convince myself that I have consciously made that particular decision. When not, I am left to consider whether the action that has been made is better than the one I intended to perform. If it is judged not to be better, it is categorised as a mistake. When mistakes are thought of as a better course of action, that is where it gets interesting. This is the psychic act revealing itself. Where does the overriding force come from to alter the creative path that existed in the mind of the artist; to follow a path they had not even considered until the artwork was being made?

With regard to this question, I have been thinking that the painting is already formed before the artist has even thought of it; it is anterior. The artwork has already determined how it is to be made.

27) Are ideas already present, so to speak, as something to be extracted from the vibrating particles around us? Carl Jung talked of the idea as form when he referred to the archetype. I would



say it is reasonable to assume that, as in the case of multiple discovery, many people are thinking of the same idea at any one time, and that that idea could potentially surface in more than one place. Jung was convinced of the psyche as a third species that participates with both spirit and matter and that it is of a material nature. Archetypes are physiologically connected ideas that, through synchronicity, become arrangers of physical circumstances (Meier, 2001, p.100). In this sense, the psyche is an object.

28) In Graham Harman's book *Object-Oriented Ontology* (2018), the proposition is put forward that ideas are considered to be objects, and according to OOO, objects are mutually autonomous (p. 12). That means all ideas already exist and we are just a mediator for them. This would explain why people are able to have the same ideas independently from one another; across timespans, geographical distances or even as contemporaries.

I was reading an article on cultivating talent by Elena Ferrante (2018) in which seems to corroborate this idea within OOO. Ferrante raises the point that if talent is not cultivated, you can end up in a situation of inventing the wheel, only to discover it has already been done. This statement sparked the thought in me that not only do ideas reflect the phenotypic nature of our genes, but that they are also, to a degree, determined. That anyone would think of something that had already been made struck me as curious. Does nature distribute an abundance of a single idea throughout the population to ensure it will be acted upon? This would not only account for synchronous events of multiple discovery but reinforce that creative endeavours are vital to furthering our evolutionary position.

29) It would be impossible for me to determine, in any quantitative sense, how many times in my lifetime my mind has wandered.

And what is the purpose of that function of humanity that allows us to exist, both physically and mentally, in two different realities within the same place.

Upon looking, what is it we think we see that is there? It is not possible to see everything in its entirety. We only ever see fragments of what we experience as a reality. The limitations of our field of vision exemplify this. Not only do we not see the things outside of it, but we only see some of what is in it. Our brain tends to fill in the gaps and make up the rest, so we are able to have some kind of sense of a functional unity. If the universe is mostly made up of space, then the same can be said of our immediate surroundings as, obviously we are part of it...the universe. Which means, as we look out of the window, or across the room to try and catch someone's attention, or even as we concentrate on reading a book; most of what we see is nothing and the rest is composed of a physical and psychic interaction.

30) There is an interview with the artist John McCracken I chanced across, talking with Frances Colpitt, in *Art in America* that was published not long after his death in 2011. Here is a section of it reproduced. In it, he unveiled a realisation he had experienced:

FC: When you talk about the simultaneity of real time, I'm reminded of the story you once told me about an experience you had in high school, which seems to summarize what you're talking about.

JM: It happened on my last day at high school, after graduation. I lived about 20 miles from the school in the country in Northern California. That evening when I got off the school bus, my mind was full of thoughts about where my life might go next. I was thinking big, wondering thoughts. 'Is there a God?' 'What is the nature of everything?' I stood next to the almost-de-

served highway for quite awhile, looking off to the west toward the mountains, where the setting sun was turning the sky into a beautiful riot of color. And a strong, curious feeling came over me: I felt like I was being watched from behind, from up in the sky. It unnerved me a little, but it was kind of spiritual and food feeling, as if God were watching me. And that, for a while, was that.

And then one evening about 15 years later, I was in a contemplative state, remembering things, and I remembered that experience. And in remembering, I did what I think people often do, which is to remember from the outside, as if viewing a photograph of the event. So I saw myself standing there by the road, looking at the sunset, with the countryside spread out all around me. I drew the scene into focus in my mind, pulling it closer into view, moving closer to it. As I did this, I suddenly realized that I was 'coming into' the scene exactly at the point in the sky from which I had felt I was being watched 15 years before. I was utterly shocked. Something like a lightning bolt snapped between me and my past self, and I felt myself rubber-banding perceptually back and forth from one location to the other- from one body to the other. In a flabbergasted state I realized I had been watched then, and that the watcher was me, my future self!

The fact that I had thought I was being watched by an exalted spirit-something like God-was not, I had learned in the interim, so strange. People who have near death experiences often meet a dazzling spiritual being who later turns out to be themselves, or a part of themselves. That experience of mine was a small but effective illustration of the existence of a wider reality. To perceive the total reality—something close to the

‘real picture,’ in which everything really is simultaneous-would be, I think, incredibly confusing.

31) There have been discussions about whether emotions affect or can be transferred to what you are making at the time you are making it. Some choose to believe it, others find it irrational. Let say, for the sake of an argument, what I am feeling when I paint becomes part of the work, whether visible or not. What about what I am feeling when I am not painting. Can those feelings become part of the painting too? What about what I am not feeling? Can things I am ‘not feeling’ make their way on to the surface? And what about the general feeling in the room; past emotions expressed through events that have taken place there? Can that too also imbue itself into the work?

Furthermore, what impact does the work have on our physical being? Does the making of the work alter our personality? Are we a different person after we have painted a painting? Has the painting itself directed our minds to new ideas or understandings? It is not uncommon for painters to feel as though they are being guided by the painting they are making. Eureka moments and empirical outcomes should not be dismissed as subconscious influences bubbling to the surface.

32) I had a critique of my work once, where someone asked me if I was deliberately trying to be difficult. I quite like that as a strategy. There was something in that comment which resonated with my past. It took me back to a situation where my mother took me to see the family doctor because I was suffering from an ear infection. Her suggestion was, which I remember clearly, that I had what she called ‘selective hearing’. The funny thing was, I also had what I termed ‘aural hallucinations’, where I was hearing things that were not there. An example being, I was in the car with my

dad and he had said something to me as clear as day, although I can't recall what he said to me. I asked what he meant by it, and he was adamant that he hadn't said anything at all. Situations like this occurred intermittently for a number of years but I didn't bother telling anyone because I had this thought that my world I experienced was very different from the world the people in my world experienced, and that any analysis of it or conversation about it would point towards the result that it was a case of my selective hearing and me deliberately trying to be difficult.

But deliberately trying to be difficult as a painting strategy; I think there is something of that in my practice. It has a sense of ambiguity about it or this element of trying to deny the painting to a degree. I'm not sure how much of it is calculated on my behalf though, which would suggest that it is the painting that is deliberately trying to be difficult and not me.

33) I have to ask myself the question; am I interested in painting? My answer is I am not entirely sure. As it stands at this moment, today on whatever date it is I am writing this, and I would hasten to think I am still in possession of this response on whatever the date may be that this is being read, I am not exactly convinced by painting in the way it is presented contemporaneously. Maybe it is a case of looking further afield. What do I see apart from the endless quoting from the annals of art history: run of the mill, dead-eyed, abstract painting – empty. Not much seems to be getting done that didn't already exist before the 1960s. What seems to make it worse is the reliance on the use of different materials and the impact of new technology. Is the only thing that painting can achieve, with any authority, a critique of itself? Figurative / representational painting: empty. Anything recognisable to me seems a futile pursuit in where I want to be taken to with a painting. Why would I want my painting experience to mirror my physical one?

Maybe these thoughts are just an outcome of a crippling self-

consciousness on my behalf. If these are the thoughts I have, and I consider them to be true, what compels me to paint? I mean, I don't really consider myself to be a painter anyway. I'd say it is more accurate to say I'm an artist that currently paints. Just as I am a musician that tends to favour playing the drums. Both of these activities I find myself in the centre of (painting / drumming) are physical activities; and yet they try to get to a place that is extremely unphysical. So, maybe it is the act of painting which is what I am interested in. The metaphysical things are what I find most intriguing. Music, quantum physics, wireless transfer of information, ideas that are beyond the realm of our physical selves; anything that I may not greatly understand yet I continue to want to understand. This is the sensation I want with the encounter of a painting.

34) My painting is an expression of physical thought, not cognitive or rational; it is different from intuitive, which still comes from the mind as its primary source. Painting is something that seems to stem from some sort of irrationality. I make these things although I am not sure why. I mean, what is their worth? What is the meaning behind their making? Their intended sense seems to be unclear. This suggests my paintings come from somewhere external to my imagination.

In a way, painting for me is like a superstition; one which has a connection to survival. I have heard that superstitions are intuitions we know to be wrong, but we surrender to them anyway. Superstitions form from acts of repetition; repetitions that create and reinforce a system of belief. From this position it would mean that, for me, painting is a type of re-enactment; the performance of painting as a superstitious rite maintains the survival of an irrational habit.

35) Space is a subject often talked about in art. Space could be defined as the distance between two objects. Distance is the thing that makes space so interesting. Coming from an isolated country at the bottom of the southern hemisphere, distance is a concept I can easily relate in its simplest form. 16,648km between the cities of Helsinki, Finland and Auckland, New Zealand. That is about 40% of the circumference of the earth.

I grew up in a time where satellite TV was the most immediate connection New Zealand had with the 'outside world'. The only thing was that, when watching news from overseas, the little country I was growing up in seemed to be left off world maps when news items were using them to reference the locations of global events. Not all of them, but it did seem to be something I paid attention to and regularly looked out for to see if we were 'on the map'.

This seemed to be the case for NZ, not only in context of the news, but for most other things. The art world only had one NZ protagonist – Len Lye – and anything that was creative and local seemed quite parochial and suffered from irreversible cultural cringe and the distances that we would generate amongst ourselves. You see, good old NZ was suffering from, and to a degree still suffers from, an identity crisis. Probably the most damaging thing distance can generate is self-doubt, but that in turn can give one the ability to grow a thick skin and imbue in individuals a curious attitude and sense of discovery.

36) I don't know where this idea came from that I wanted to be an artist. If there is something I have learned over the years, it is that the reality of the situation is much different to what you think it will be. I guess that is the thing that drives us into our reality; to create what we think it will be.

I think I got into abstract painting because I perceived it to have the ability to collapse ideas of cultural and identity politics. I see it

as altruistic and egalitarian, compared to other areas of painting like figurative or still life which are a minefield of hierarchies. Romantic or not, it does enable one to go beyond the idea of being human.

The worst kind of abstract painting, or artmaking in general, is one that feels it is necessary to reveal its influences resulting in nothing more than a caricature. This is where distance (for the maker) is vital. To have the awareness of paintings history and not be guilty of plagiarism, pastiche or appropriation; which are not so different in their outcomes.

37) In Francis Picabia's lifetime, art went through a radical transposition. In a short period of time, many genres of painting and art making were created, explored, expanded and some abandoned. This was done through different techniques and media; things were literally placed on the other side of their inherent qualities. I feel these explorations were, in fact, about distance. Not only was each artist trying to distance themselves from one another, through different ways of seeing, but they were trying to reach something distant; the future. Or, the future future.

38) At its heart, the concept of distance holds another idea. The idea of proximity. This idea relates to how near one thing is to the other. I have been wondering about proximity in artmaking today which seems to be very apparent. A lot of contemporary artists, it seems, are making work from this position of a close proximity: I made this, it has relevance for me because I am close to it, therefore it is important. Obviously, there is nothing wrong with that and it is probably impossible to make something without it being subjective to some degree, no matter how hard I try. But this position, combined with the flattening of effect that technology has subjected us to through its illusion of 'connectedness',



provides the perfect environment for 'the worst kind of artmaking' to proliferate.

From my own experience, when I engage with a work, I do not necessarily require the personal view of the artist to enjoy it. In fact, it is almost a requirement that I not know. The work itself will generate meaning for me as a viewer, not the other way around. Maybe this has changed as a dominant attitude over time. As we have become more socially aware as a species, it seems more importance is being placed on the intention of the artist not on the quality within artmaking. I find this questionable.

I find this questionable because I am wondering if we are too close to the things we are making. There is less room for ambiguity. Most of what I look at these days doesn't require much in the way of independent thought; the intention of the work is obvious and not very interesting. I am not being cynical when I say I am applying Sturgeon's law here, which states that 90% of everything is shit. In fairness, Theodore Sturgeon, the person this law is named after (as he is the man this quote is attributed to), was reacting to critics of his science fiction writing who were saying it didn't have much worth. He was pointing out that most products in most fields are of low quality (Nichols, 2017, p.107). And this is from the 1950s. What can we say of the quality of products in most fields today? When I think of how many painters there are in the world now, let alone artists, maybe this statistic needs revision.

For me the very idea of the personal view is the interpretation of the viewer to discover, and it seems to me that people are making from the position of the viewer instead of the artist.

It may be the logical progression of post-modernism perhaps, which I will call millennial modernism, that not only is everything a quote, but it is accompanied by the undertone that what is being done is something special due to the application of technology, because - you know - we live in the 'information age'. The vacuity of this action is as you would expect, immeasurable, and, as it turns out, the world of painting is not impermeable to this 'just

add water' mentality. For an exemplary reference, read *surface, image, reception: painting in a digital age* on the rhizome website.

And it is not necessarily about subjective vs objective viewpoints; it is more like centripetal vs centrifugal. If I think about the optimism that technology offered us in the late sixties, with our adventures into space and the ways it was thought that it would shape the future, it was a pursuit, as they said, for all mankind. Now, the technology we use most often, stimulates us with a swift pursuit to our own self admiring obsessions.

I watched Stephen Fry on The Rubin Report where he marvelled at the infantilism of this age we are in (Rubin, 2016). He suggests the things that are being made to be watched, the things to be read, the way speech and dress is being influenced, and the things that are made to be eaten are commonly designed to be easily consumable, he says, for people who are in a state of arrested development. I cannot disagree. But I think we can change this if we create more of a distance between the art / life imitation game.

39) If the idea that, as Alan Moore pointed out in *The mindscape of Alan Moore* (2005), we re-enact interactions with our past selves is true, then that brings in to question the concept of recollection. Would we not remember such interactions? The fallibility of human memory is well known. Technology comes in to play here as the more complex it becomes and the more we rely on it, the more it refracts our reality. If, for example, external data storage affords us the ability to free our minds of remembering, then we would not know of past interactions. The exception being fragments of knowledge that present themselves as *deja-vu*.

Would it be strange to find out that our online activity was just a series of interactions with our past online selves? We already accept that 'the internet' stores our personal data and website activity and uses it to personalise our online experience; to show us things we may like. Devices record and store our conversations,

search data and retinal reactions and uses that information to highlight items on video channels or show us ads for products we had talked about or recently looked at. What if it was using the same information to create avatars of ourselves for us to interact with online. What if the 'person' I was interacting with in the Arts & Design comments section of the *Guardian* was an avatar of me? How would I know? Would I know if I was reacting to a comment I had made several years earlier that had been retooled to fit the context of the conversation that I now had a different opinion on? Nevertheless, it would feel familiar wouldn't it? That I had been there before? Would I just put the familiarity down to coincidence?

The idea of interacting with past versions of ourselves without knowing they are our own past selves suggests that we are the algorithms designing the environment for our future selves.

40) When we use technology, we attempt to replicate the human experience. How? That's why machines were made, to be able to be a substitute for us; to make the things that humans make, but better. Whether machines are able to make things to a level beyond the capabilities of the human hand, though, I don't think this is necessarily true.

If we had a machine that would produce a single object, like a table, and a skilled human made the same object there is every chance the handmade object would be considered the better of the two. Where the machine excels is in the replication of the process of making with little or no error; they can do the task faster and without the effects of fatigue.

The use of machines means we can situate ourselves outside of the manufacturing procedure. Kind of like an artificial 'in the zone', a mechanical means of support.

When I say machines, this does not include tools that assist an artist. I am specifically referring to when the artist no longer has a

direct relationship with what is being made, i.e. a connection from brain to limb to surface, or if they are commanding something external to themselves in the making, in order to calculate or make decisions, then they are using a machine.

We can look back through the history of made objects and see examples of things made by the human hand that are beyond the skill level of what we see today made by machines. An example of this is when I saw the Damien Hirst exhibition, *The wreck of the unbelievable*, in Venice.

The first work I saw of this exhibition was the marble sculpture outside the Punta Della Dogana, *The fate of a banished man [standing]* (2017). What struck me immediately, when I was close to the work, was that it was highly detailed but left the trace of the machine. There is the possibility that this was deliberate given the fictitious nature of the exhibition. However, of this I am not convinced as it is not a necessary device to employ to point towards its 'fakery' when the whole exhibition was revealing in that nature, such as using a combination of cultural signifiers from different cultures and time periods within single works. I doubt the trace of machine tooling was a detail a lot of people even paid attention to, including the artist.

If we compare the Hirst marble sculptures to Bernini's, who was using marble so expertly that he gave it the ability to take on other material properties; marble reproduced as drapery or lace. And this was achieved without the use of machines. Bernini erased all trace of the hand and the tool by using marble dust as an abrasive, leaving many to comment on the softness and lightness of the material, as if they had been sculpted from wax or dough (Warwick, p. 14).

The direct relationship of the hand to material is what is important here. Anyone can imagine, but not everyone can make what they imagine, but to use machines only enables us as viewers the privilege to surrender to the artists inability to convey sensation.

41) Should we rely on A.I. integrated machines to produce paintings? There is a bit of a move in this direction by artists interested in using A.I. in their work; it is slowly beginning to be explored and take hold. Recently I have read two articles on A.I. art making. One in *artnet news* and the other in the *Guardian*. Both have their origins in the evolution of neural networks. The first article mentions the French art collective Obvious who are using what is known as a generative adversarial network (GAN) in which they input several thousand images into the network and the algorithm tries to generate a new image from the data it is given (Schneider & Rea, 2018). The other is slightly more interesting. Artist Pierre Huyghe uses what is known as deep image reconstruction to capture images of human thought and match it to images already stored in its system, and from that it generates a merged image (Judah, 2018).

The future end result could be an actual manifestation of paintings painting themselves. This could obviously extend to all forms of creativity; self-generating art machines. What then, for the human mind? If artistic creativity were to become automated, what effect would that have on how we define ourselves in comparison to other species? Would it create an overwhelming existential crisis for the human animal?

As Ellen Dissanayake points out in her book *Homo Aestheticus* (1992), 'the principle evolutionary context for the origin and development of the arts was in activities concerned with survival' (p.61). This also goes the other way and should be used in the present tense. Our principle evolutionary context for the origin and development of our survival is in activities concerned with the arts. If our ability or desire or purpose to make were to be supplanted by an artificial means, where would we place the emphasis on things 'made special'. Would the outsourcing of artistic creativity severely threaten our survival? Or would this threat feedback in to new ways of making?

42) When I say painting should be secular, it is because I am looking at it as though it is regarded as a religion, which in some ways I feel as though it is. Currently I am resorting to an interpretation of desecration within one section of painting; modernist abstraction i.e. geometric / hard-edge / ab – ex, etc. These can all be turned against one another in an attempt to accelerate the decline of their divine orthodoxy. In a way geometric abstraction is given the additional reverence of sacred geometry, Malevich's *Black Square* (1915) could be cited here as the cause. If we make that the point of departure for such reverence, the further we get from that point, the more sacred it seems to become.

Painting aligning itself with new technology only serves to disestablish itself as painting, which does nothing to disempower a phase of social order known as the history of painting, which is what I would expect it to do. If we look to the material quality, by using materials other than paint; it takes away from the 'at handness' of paint as a material. In other words, its ability to function as an entity of painting is hindered. What becomes primary is the mechanism of manufacture. This has been the case for as long as we have engaged in the act of reproduction.

Even though we may be able to reproduce the idea of painting through other material means, i.e. when we say something is 'painterly'; we are only ever looking at the mechanism of manufacture. Otherwise, reproductions of paintings in books and magazines, or on the internet, would be paintings. For me the same is true when we approach painting through the lens of appropriation or homage. These approaches are nothing more than mechanisms of manufacture.

The idea of reinforcing historical ideologies in painting, such as appropriation or homage, leaves us with something akin to a Skinner box. This is the chamber animals were often put inside of to monitor behavioural psychology via a punishment / reward system. Obviously, the more you get rewarded the more you will repeat the behaviour. It is not that I am against appropriation, per

se. It's just that in where it shows itself, it is used less as raw material to be reworked and more as a quote to signify some type of context.

Mira Schor wrote of the frequency of styles that she was witness to as a teacher in her book *a decade of negative thinking* (2009). In some of those essays she talks about how appropriation is valued and used in American art education with the consequence being that the students end up with an 'eroded consciousness of these styles original histories' (p. 13).

As much as I hate to use the words, but, Zombie Formalism anyone? It is probably the most obvious movement in recent times that exemplifies this consequence. And this brings me back to Dawkins. One example he uses to define the term 'extended phenotype' is in the making of artefacts.

When looking at artefacts made under the joint influence of genes in more than one individual, he suggests that 'a genetic mutation in one individual could show itself as a phenotypic change in the artefact. If the phenotypic change in the artefact had an influence on the success of replication of the new gene, natural selection would act, positively or negatively, to change the probability of similar artefacts existing in the future' (p. 210). This area of a joint influence of genes could extend to a genre of painting within the painting canon. For this example, I am saying a movement is group based and the directions it may take are susceptible to the behaviours of individuals within the group.

Biological interpretations aside, you don't have to be a genius to see that appropriation as a thing still has agency in the artworld. As Zombie Formalism indicates, the history that is being appropriated doesn't need to be that old, even.

Still, what is being applied to painting is a social mode of production which implies that it is not the consciousness of the paintings that determine their existence, but the social existence that determines their consciousness.

Now I don't know if this is good or bad. I mean, we live in an age

which is post-sampling, where the idea of 'mashups' is common place. I have always been against sampling, especially as a musical form because, in a way, it felt disrespectful; now it is so ordinary, not many people even recognise the term 'sample' anymore.

I guess to be comparable to painting, I don't so much want to sample it as much as say, cut the heads out of the family photographs of the modernist album.

43) There is a certain distance I experience between myself and my paintings. It shows itself at different stages for different paintings. Sometimes I look at the things I've made, and it feels as if I am looking at something someone else has made. If I experience a distance during the making of a painting, it is usually in the nature of an internecine structure. It feels as if it doesn't want to give anything to me, and I reciprocate by trying not to give anything back. Sometimes I try to force it into a specific shape and it ends up being resistant to my advances and pushes back, rebels; tries to be independent of me. I feel like the painting won't allow me to paint it as it is; like its features keep changing as I paint it and it is constantly just out of reach. The closer I get to it, the further away from it I am, as the adage goes. The reality is I am painting the same painting over and over again, but just different versions of it. Paradoxically though, it is never a version of itself.

44) I have this work. It is beautifully painted. It adheres to the rules of my current practice. It is what I refer to as a modernist icon painting, in that it portrays conventional painting with modern iconography. I really like it as a painting. There is something joyful about it. It says to me 'I work as a stand alone painting'. I would feel happy if it were on my wall exactly how it is. Then I start to feel it is tricking me into thinking that I should be happy with how it has presented itself in its own conventional way. Tricking me into thinking that modernism still has some breath left in its lungs.



Form follows function so the modernist principle goes, but the modernist style of painting, with all its emptiness, is not the form I was expecting to follow on from the function of painting. Not in the 21st century. So little painting, you might fit quite happily on my wall but I think there needs to be an addendum to that treatise and we need to turn around that precept to be function follows form. Or, better yet, maybe take out the 'follows' so that form and function can come together so that one may be lain over top of the other, transparent and reversible, able to be entered into and not have our analysis resisted by its flat surface.

When I look at this painting in the context of my practice, I realise it has to be destroyed. Not because I don't like it, I do. Actually, maybe destroyed is too strong a word. It needs to be unworked. It needs to be able to question the viability of what it represents. All the watertight arguments of why it exists have to unravel and expose that the parts of the painting are greater than its sum.

Modernist painting has allowed us to become complacent as viewers and as painters. My thinking is that a painting should be able to function in much the same way as a sculpture. Mentally you should be able to move in and around a painting analogous to the way you would physically walk around and / or through a three dimensional work. But I am not talking about illusionism here. I am talking about its structure being visible.

By leaving the painting in its natural 'finished' state would go against everything I am trying to discover in the output of painting as a practice. Exactly what it is I am trying to discover, I do not know, but, I would say I am trying to get there through a means of what I call *unwork*. By the term *unwork*, I mean painting needs to move to a place where it will relieve or remove itself from the burden of understanding.

For me, this relates to the John Cage work *0'00"* in which the work is a score of one sentence that reads 'In a situation provided with maximum amplification (no feedback), perform a disciplined action' (Nyman, 1999, p. 92). What the Cage maxim suggests to

me is this is the space where the work exists in an autonomous state and is not distorted through the lens of interpretation. It is in its purest form as it is being made; its own transcendental state.

45) In his book, *Bartleby and co* (2000), Enrique Vila-Matas writes about artists of refusal. He uses Herman Melville's *Bartleby the Scrivener* as a starting point. Melville's Bartleby is a copyist in the legal profession; a man that, increasingly over time, adopts a perpetual response of 'I would prefer not to' at any request until his death of starvation, due to his preference not to eat, an idea that Kafka leant on for his short story, *The Hunger Artist* (p. 52).

Essentially, for Vila-Matas, taking the path of an artist of refusal is not a negation of making. Quite the contrary, he feels open to the idea that this is where one needs to be for future work to appear (p. 3). Because really, at the point of preferring not to, you are at an intersection where you either end up doing what you prefer not to do, or you affirm a choice of doing something else.

In one point in the book, Vila-Matas writes of a scene where Rimbaud, Wittgenstein and Duchamp are sitting around complaining to each other about being in situations where they are not creating any work and wishing they could be. Gombrowicz appears and states that Duchamp is the only one who has the right to no regrets as 'painting is the equivalent to giving up on everything that cannot be painted' (p. 155). When I read this quote, it says to me that painting is its own reality, and to be a painter you cannot possibly render what we think we know to be true because it will always come out not as we know it to be true. In short, reality cannot be painted. Maybe this is what Ad Reinhardt was getting at when he published his 'twelve rules for a new academy'.

Ad Reinhardt had an article published in *ARTnews* titled *twelve rules for a new academy* (1957), reproduced in 2015, which basically laid down a set of rules that denies the possibility to be able to make anything. I shall list them; there seems to be more than

twelve also.

No texture, no accidents or automatism, no brushwork, no signature or trademarking, no sketching or drawing, no shading or streaking, no forms, no figure or foreground or background, no volume or mass, no push or pull, no shape or substance, no design, no colours, no white, no light, no space, no time, no size or scale, no movement, no object, no subject, no matter, no symbols, no images, no signs, no chessplaying.

It goes without saying that there is a supplementary list that goes with these '12 rules'. It is obvious that this list is more about Reinhardt's attitude towards his contemporaries than anything else. It could be viewed as a set of rules that tries to lay down the parameters that will only allow his work to exist. I think it is closer to what Susan Sontag describes which '...regards art as a "means" to something that can perhaps be achieved only by abandoning art' (Vila-Matas, p. 68).

46) Often, I have found myself wondering whether the things I produce are entitled to be called paintings. It is something I am uncertain of. Not so much in my studio, when I am making them. But once they get released into the world and put on a wall, that is when the uncertainty creeps in. In the studio, they definitely feel like paintings; I feel like a painter, it all makes sense. Once they are installed in a space, it feels like they become something else. Something more constructivist than painterly, perhaps. It, this way of thinking, reminds me of an excerpt from Heidegger's *What is called thinking* (1968).

The event of withdrawal could be what is most present in all our present, and so infinitely exceed the actuality of everything actual. What withdraws from us, draws us along by its very withdrawal, whether or not we become aware of it immediately, or at all. Once we are

drawn into the withdrawal, we are drawing toward what draws, attracts us by its withdrawal. And once we, being so attracted, are drawing toward what draws us, our essential nature already bears the stamp of 'drawing toward.' As we are drawing toward what withdraws, we ourselves are pointers pointing toward it. We are who we are by pointing in that direction-not like an incidental adjunct but as follows: this 'drawing toward' is in itself an essential and therefore constant pointing toward what withdraws. To say 'drawing toward' is to say 'pointing toward what withdraws.' (p. 9).

It has got me thinking that maybe I am withdrawing from painting. Maybe it is more accurate to say that I am withdrawing from the paintings I have made which draws me toward the idea of painting. The things I seem to be interested in doing to my paintings, and how I feel after they have been made, suggests to me that I am more inclined to make the existence of the painting difficult; that I want to deny the painting or turn painting against itself; that I am becoming an artist of refusal. It is what I would call an act of soft vandalism.

47) While I am not one to adhere to any type of 'post' attitude towards the timescale of art history, I would have to believe that I am making work in what could best be described as a post Duchampian era. What seems to be happening is not so much a reduction in art making, but quite the opposite. There are more art classes in more art schools with more art students. More art is being produced than ever. I think what is happening, as to my way of thinking, is that entropy is making itself felt. The disorder in the system of art making is making itself known. Whilst I am not going to offer a treatise on the history of painting; that is the mode of making I operate in – painting; I will display elements of my

thinking.

If I was to start a movement; a school of thought whose participants were of like mind; a collection of painters who were to insulate themselves from the absurdity of contemporary discourse; a colony of artists that would coalesce into an 'ism' to ridicule the arrogance of postmodernists; it would be called *revisionism*. As a revisionist, I look at the history of painting to navigate a path for its future without resorting to what I refer to as terminal emulation, something that is so prevalent in our overpopulated art making community.

It is time to distance ourselves from readymade ideologies. Painting and drawing need to emancipate themselves from the umbrella term 'art' in the contemporaneous sense. Let the term 'art' belong to those who do sculpture, those who do performance, the printmakers, installationists, interventionists, photographers, filmmakers, ceramicists, gallerists, curators, social media influencers, activists, etc. Let painting be painting and drawing be drawing; painting with drawing, and within drawing painting.

Within the movement of *revisionism*, paintings will be like anagrams where the sequence of articles can be altered to acquire different meaning – akin to isomeric molecules whose formula is the same but differ in atomic arrangement.

One thing I have noticed about this idea of revisionism, is that we are currently engaged with it in a very profound way. We are looking back on human history and attempting to right the wrongs and rewrite the history that has been told. The history my generation was taught in school has now come to be understood as not how it happened. So, at the moment, history is being revised. However, while we are saying we were lied to and now it's time to tell the truth of the matter, we exist in a space that is hyper-normalised, where a feeling of improbability pervades everything and is becoming acceptable as reality. The idea of truth is beyond stable.

48) In *The love of Painting* (2018), Isabelle Graw writes 'artists are becoming virtual objects' (p.155). What Graw means by this is that the things surrounding the artist become part of the work and how we value the work is reliant on the artists persona. I would argue this has always been the case, but I find the statement interesting nonetheless. Maybe artists becoming virtual objects is the essence of 'unwork', to allow paintings self agency to come to the fore and obscure the artist, or at least reposition the artist to a virtual location. Another possibility could be that the real sentiment of the element of 'unwork' is an attempt to eliminate the identity of the artist.

This, to some degree, is evident with an artist like Francis Picabia, who went to great lengths to re-shape himself artistically through reinvention and self-erasure. As has been noted, Picabia's diverse body of work he left behind is testimony to his development of new selves and their resulting consignment to oblivion. He himself said 'What I like is to invent, to imagine, to make of myself at every moment a new man, and then, to forget him, to forget everything.' (Umland, p. 12).

Painting as identity erasure could be the ideal environment for which to exist as an artist of refusal. For Heidegger, the term 'being' is '...that which withdraws absolutely from any relation to humans or anything else.' (Harman, p.208). For me I know that once a painting is finished, whether it is completed or not, it is no longer a part of me. So, rather, it is the painting that has withdrawn from me. The act of making another is what becomes important and in some ways, it feels like an act of unmaking; the unmaking of the artist.

The painter Albert Oehlen has said that his concern is to '...produce an autonomy of the painting so that each work no longer needs a legitimising framework.' (Godfrey, p. 51). This is a sentiment I share. This compounds the idea that painting with(drawing) is not a negative term but one that finds painting as an object that exists in its own right, with its own properties. Alongside this, the

Heideggerian proposition that we are being drawn to that which withdraws lets me know when a painting is a painting.

49) The term *unwork* also relates to things that could be called companion pieces to whatever it is that is made. i.e. These are the things that are made, to make the things that are made.

It is not a Marquette or something that will be remade to simulate what it was when it was first made, it is closer to something that will be reorganised to make something different out of what was previously made, which may or may not have any resemblance at all to the *a priori*.

It is as drawing uses the future tense as its inspiration; it is notes on paper; it is knowing when to stop thinking; it is an alter-consciousness.

50) Deanne Petherbridge defines drawing as '... that element in a work of art which is independent of colour or actual three dimensional space, the underlying conceptual structure which may be indicated by tone alone.' (2008, p. 32).

So, if I look at one element of my work I use quite readily, the incision, this corresponds nicely with the above definition of drawing and also to some aspect of the term *unwork*. What am I doing when I make an incision in to the surface of my painting? In making a forceful cut into the visible, am I trying to destroy the illusion? Am I not removing something but adding another facet or surface; introducing a physical depth as well as a space?

Associations can be made with other artists who have used the incision in their practice; Lucio Fontana, Gordon Matta-Clark, Chris Burden are obvious choices to make but I like that you can attach the characteristic of reverse engineering to these artists.

One of my favourite works of art is Chris Burden's *Honest Labor* (1979) because, if nothing else, it is so unassuming. In this work

he was invited to be a visiting artist at a Vancouver University with the purpose of discussing his practice to a group of students. Burden approached this situation in his typical enigmatic way by requesting an empty lot, a pick axe, shovel and wheelbarrow. From 9am until 5pm he dug a trench 2 1/2 feet wide and 3 feet deep, neglecting to present it in a conventional teaching context. Of the event he quipped, 'Occasionally, someone would offer to dig for me, but after trying for a few minutes they would return the job to me' (Burden, p. 182). There is a relationship here of cutting into the surface of a road in road maintenance which demarcates which area of road is for removal, or the vicinity where an act of replacement will occur.

Culturally there is significance to the act of incision, such as the process of scarification of bodies or with geoglyphs like the Nazca lines; the ancient trenches found in the Nazca Desert in southern Peru. The Nazca lines are like painting in reverse as the surface of iron oxide coated pebbles is removed to expose the lighter contrasting sand underneath (Yirka, 2014). Iron oxide, as you will know, is used in the manufacture of pigment in paints, so it is like removing paint to make a mark on a surface. The true meaning of the lines is uncertain, but I had thought what if their purpose was to provide direction like a pathway. What is a pathway if nothing but to scribe a line.

To scribe a line is to connect one point to another; structure and integrity. Affirmation and doubt.

To provide direction, as in pointing to something else. That is the role of the incision in my work; pointing to something else contextually...like a footnote.





kuvan kevät



Installation view: Exhibition Laboratory, *Kuvan Kevät* 2018



*Signal Conjugation*, oil, acrylic, incisions on board, 1220mm x 1720mm, 2018



*Half Integer Spin*, oil, acrylic, incisions on board, 1220mm x 1720mm, 2018



*Centrosome*, oil, acrylic, gold leaf, mdf, pine, screws, nails, glue, 297mm x 420mm, 2018



*Ambient Plasticity*, oil and acrylic on board, 210mm x 297mm, 2018



*Discrepancies in the Recollection of Various Principles, A5 booklet of diagrams, 2018*



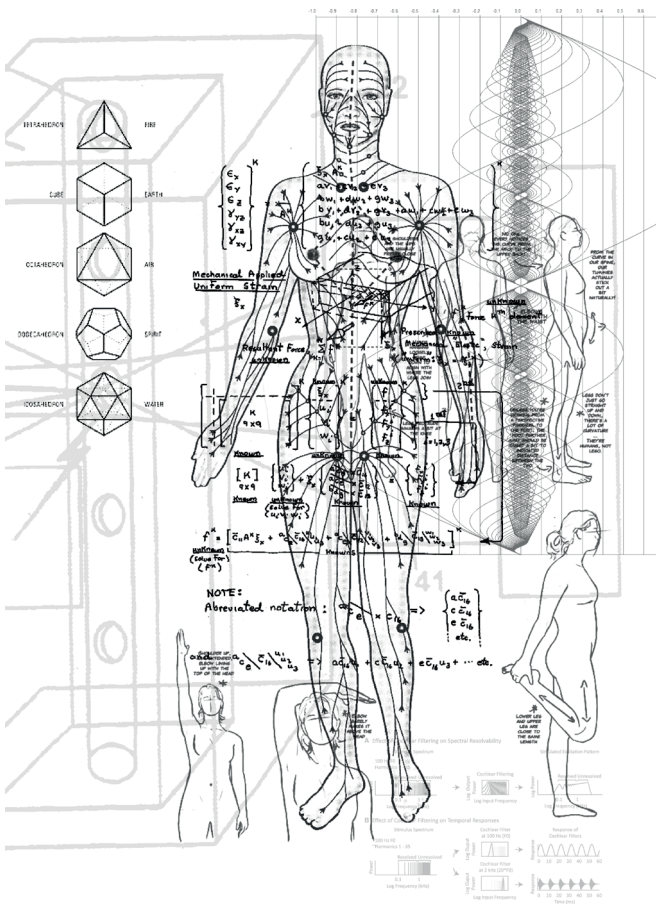


Plate M – Discrepancies in the recollection of various principles [digital diagram], 148mm x 210mm, 2018

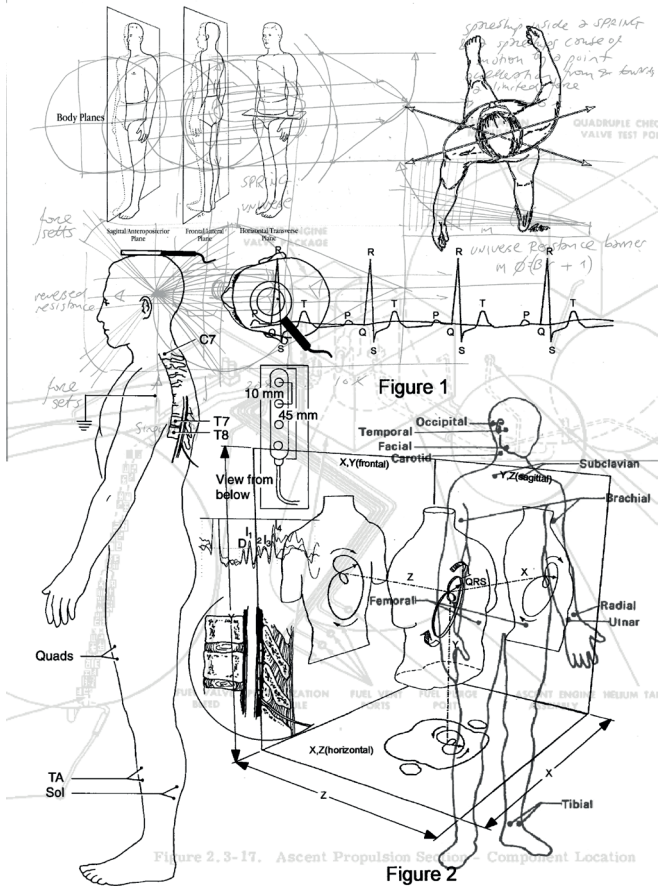
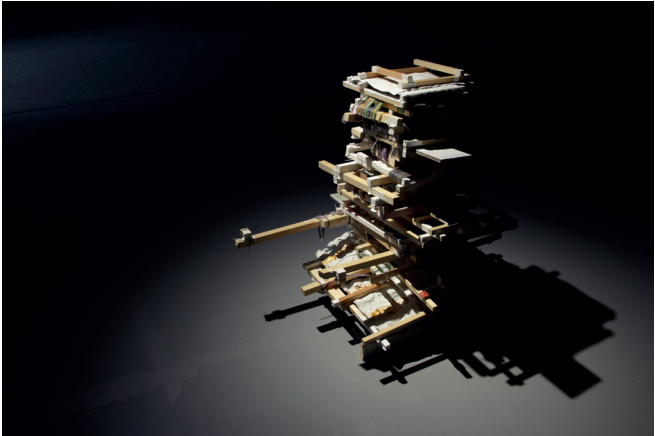


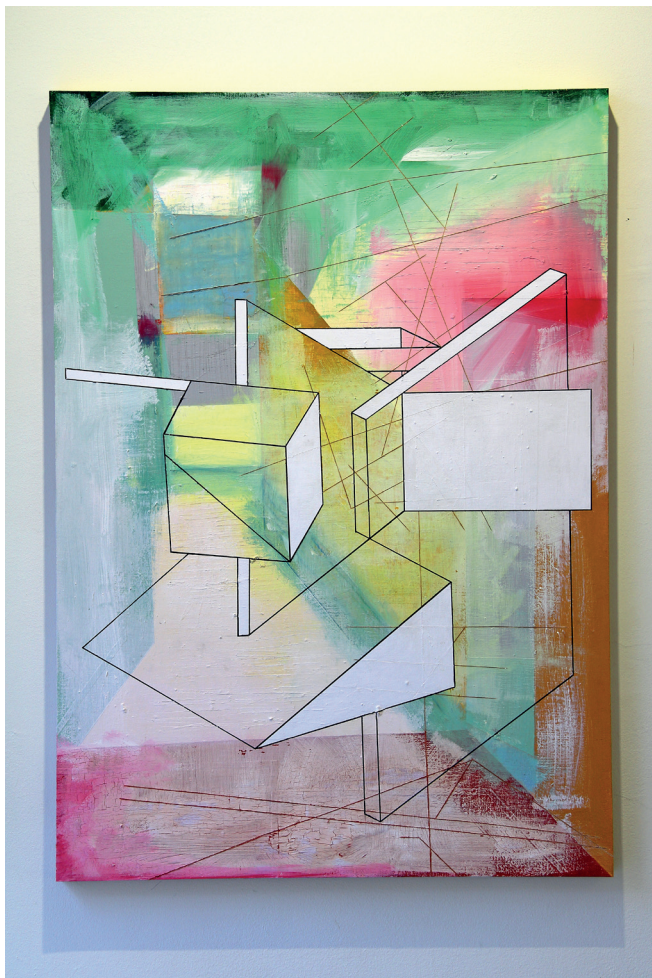
Plate Z – Discrepancies in the recollection of various principles [digital diagram], 148mm x 210mm, 2018



*Redoubt*, wood, acrylic, wire, card, nails, mdf, gypsum, wool, electrical tape, mesh, cable ties, dimensions variable, 2017

i was told there would be cake

mfa group show | project room | 3.11. - 19.11.2017



taken from the series *Exploded geometries and alternate symmetries*, oil, acrylic, masking tape, surface incisions on board, 841mm x 1189mm, 2017



*Reconstructure IV*, acrylic, tape, wood on board, 210mm x 297mm, 2016

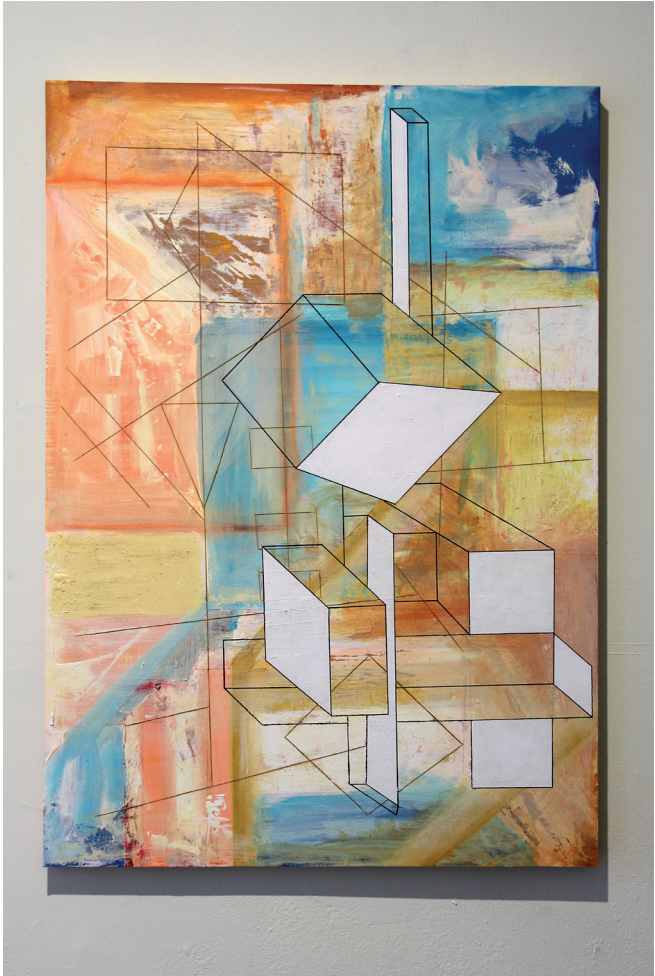


Foreground:

*Reconstructure I*, acrylic, tape, wood on board, 210mm x 297mm, 2016

Background:

taken from the series *Exploded geometries and alternate symmetries*, oil, acrylic, masking tape, surface incisions on board, 841mm x 1189mm, 2017



taken from the series *Exploded geometries and alternate symmetries*, oil, acrylic, masking tape, surface incisions on board, 841mm x 1189mm, 2017





taken from the series *Exploded geometries and alternate symmetries*, oil, acrylic, masking tape, surface incisions on board, 210mm x 297mm, 2017

## Lexicon of terms (titles of works)

### **Kuvan Kevat | Exhibition Laboratory | 5.05 – 3.06.2018**

#### 1. Discrepancies in the recollection of various principles

'...there is always a zone of ambiguity, indeterminacy, opacity or horizontality that accompanies every possible act of meaning' (Sandwell, p.101).

#### 2. Signal Conjugation

In this context, conjugation refers to a modification of some sort from the basic form.

#### 3. Ambient Plasticity

Organisms can be adaptable to changes within their environment. These changes can be incidental, peripheral.

#### 4. Centrosome

An organelle within which the organisation of cells take place and regulates the cell division cycle (when one cell divides into two).

#### 5. Half Integer Spin

Taken from a law in physics that relates to multiple particles possessing the same spatial probability distribution.

### **I was told there would be cake | Project Room | 3.11 – 19.11.2017**

#### 6. Exploded geometries and alternate symmetries

Refers to the separation of multipart features and the idea that symmetries can also be metaphysical.

## 7. Reconstructure

A neologism that relates to the impact of entropy when forms are reformed.

## 8. Redoubt

A redoubt as an object is a temporary earthwork structure; a fortification located outside of the main fort; a stronghold. As a word I like how it can be misconstrued as an affirmation of doubt, or to doubt again.

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