

*I'm gonna spawn.*

I'm gonna spawn.  
MFA Thesis

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## Acknowledgements:

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## Works Exhibited in Kuvan Kevät 2024:

### *“I must find the answer within myself”*

Oil on linen, pine frame  
measurements without frames: 126 cm x 140 cm  
with frames: 131 cm x 145 cm

### *“Last drop”*

Oil on linen, pine frame  
measurements without frames: 31 cm x 41 cm  
with frames: 36 cm x 46 cm

### *“Weaver”*

Oil on linen, pine frame  
measurements without frames: 123 cm x 149 cm  
with frames: 128 cm x 154 cm

### *“Comet’s tail”*

Oil on linen, pine frame  
measurements without frames: 32 cm x 42 cm  
with frames: 36 cm x 46 cm

### *“I’m gonna spawn”*

Oil on linen, pine frame, black alder carving  
measurements without frames: 31 cm x 41 cm  
with frames: 36 cm x 46 cm

## Kypsyysnäyte

Maisterin opinnäytetyö koostuu taiteellisesta ja kirjallisesta osasta. Taiteellinen osuus oli esillä Kuva/Tila-galleriassa Kuvan Kevät 2024 -näyttelyssä 4.5.–2.6.2024 ja sisälsi viisi kehystettyä öljymaalusta.

Opinnäytetyöni käsittelee kysymyksiä, jotka nousivat esiin siirtyessäni tekstiilitaiteen kandidaattiohjelmasta maalaustaiteen maisteriopintoihin. Tämä näkökulman muutos sai minut tarkastelemaan kriittisesti suhdettani maalaukseen, ei pelkästään materiaali valintana, vaan osana laajempaa viitekehystä. Vertailemalla ajatustapojani maalaamisen ja kutomisen välillä aloin pohtimaan luomisen tarvetta laajemmin.

Maalarin näkyvän roolin ja kutojan usein piiloon jäävän työn välinen ristiriita nosti esiin kysymyksiä siitä, kenen tarinat nostetaan esiin ja kenen tarinat jäävät unohduksiin. Tutkin näitä kysymyksiä hahmojen, kuten kastemadon, hämähäkin ja Yorkshirenterrierin kautta, jotka toimivat oppaina ihmiskeskeisten kertomusten ulkopuolelle. Osoittaen, että luominen ei rajoitu vain ihmiseen, – sammakon munat hyytelömaisissä säikeissä ja hämähäkin verkot ovat paitsi selviytymisen myös luomisen tekoja.

Kirjallisessa osassa tarkastelen, miten materiaalit itsessään kantavat merkityksiä. Tutkimalla omaa taiteellista työskentelyäni pyrin kontekstualisoimaan työni ja pohtimaan taiteilijan asemaani samalla, kun kamppailen Eurooppalaisen maalaustaiteen väkivaltaisen historian kanssa. Pohdin motiivejani maalata ja avaan joitakin ajatuksia opinnäytetyöni yhteydessä syntyneiden teosten taustalla. Ylläpitäen dialogia prosessien ja ajattelutapojen välillä, jotka opin keskittyessäni enemmän kutomiseen, pohdin, miten kuroa umpeen näiden kahden erillisen lähestymistavan välistä kuilua. Päädyn siihen johtopäätökseen, että ratkaisevaa on tietoisuus ja suhde materiaaleihin, sekä niiden tunnustaminen aktiivisiksi osallistujiksi työssäni.

## Summary

The master's thesis project consists of an artistic and a literary part. The artistic component was exhibited at Kuva/Tila gallery during the Kuvan Kevät 2024 exhibition in 4.5.–2.6.2024, and featured five framed oil paintings.

My thesis project addresses questions that emerged when I transitioned from a bachelor's in textiles to a master's in painting. This shift in perspective prompted me to critically examine my relationship with painting, not just as a medium but also as a larger framework. By comparing my thought processes while painting versus weaving, I began to uncover a larger theme centred on the concept of creation.

The contrast between the painter's visible role and the weaver's often hidden labour raised questions about whose stories are highlighted and whose are erased. I explore these questions through figures like the earthworm, spider, and Yorkshire terrier, which serve as guides for thinking beyond human-centred narratives. They show how creation is not limited to the human, but shared across species —frog's eggs in gelatinous sacs and the tarantula's silk webs are not only acts of survival, but also acts of creation.

In the written part of my thesis, I explore how materials themselves carry stories. By examining my own artistic practice, I aim to contextualise my work and reflect on my position as an artist, all while grappling with the violent history embedded in European painting. I reflect on my motives for painting and explain some of the thoughts behind the works created for this thesis project. Maintaining a dialogue with the processes and ways of thinking I learned while focusing more on weaving, I consider how to bridge the gap between these two distinct approaches. Coming to the conclusion that what seems to be crucial is an awareness and relationship to the materials. Recognising them as active participants in my work.

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## Introduction

In January of 2023, I started the master's program in the painting department after graduating from my bachelor studies in the textile department of Gerrit Rietveld academie. I had not painted regularly in years, and the idea felt terrifying.

As I set up my new studio and sorted out my stiff, almost dried-out paint tubes, I felt like I had plenty of images in my head, but I was not sure how to paint them. I had expectations of what impression the paintings should make: they should look careful yet effortless or “fresh”; they should have a wildness that is carefully contained. I should stand on the cusp of almost losing control while still remaining completely in charge. I had to make the conscious decision to paint as much as I could—to paint at all. To paint 3-6 small paintings a week and let the images emerge in whatever manner they needed to, without judging the outcome.

In this process, I started to notice that while I was weaving, I rarely had such high expectations regarding the outcome. This observation led me to thoroughly question my position as an artist. What is it about painting as a medium that attracts me?

When I began my thesis project in the fall of 2023, these questions did not dissipate; instead, they embedded themselves into my practice. The dynamic between the visibility of the painter in a painting and the largely invisible role of the weaver began to resonate with larger questions about whose narratives are brought to the surface and whose are obscured, erased, or forgotten.

This became a matter of material storytelling and epistemic politics: Who speaks, and who is silenced? What kinds of labour and histories are rendered visible on the canvas, and what remains hidden in the warp and weft of the woven textile?

Painting, with its historical gravitas and public spectacle, contrasts sharply with the intimate, tactile gestures of weaving, prompting me to consider how each medium enacts a different kind of world-making, each entangled with its own networks of power and erasure.



## The Earthworm (Magician)

I think I am attracted to figurative painting because of the power images wield. The immediacy of an image to evoke associations and reactions that might not be translatable into words is similar to how music creates an unavoidable reaction in the listener. A painter has the possibility to wield that power by creating an image that does not correspond with any specific time or space, as a photograph does.

Images do not have to correspond with reality, but they can still resonate with a deep truth for a viewer. Realism is not mandatory to depict something real. When I look into Saturn's eyes in Goya's<sup>1</sup> *"Saturn Devouring His Son,"* I have no doubt that the dread I see isn't the same dread inside me. Hilma af Klint's paintings are arguably not "realistic," but when I look at them, I agree: this is the logic of nature; this is how things exist. In this way, I see the painter as a magician—able to summon, shape, and describe aspects of existence that might be difficult to express in other ways.

The impulse to paint comes from a specific observation of how

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<sup>1</sup> Francisco Goya, *Saturno devorando a su hijo*, *Saturn Devouring His Son*, 1820-1823

light acts against a surface, a secret that is too scary or harsh to articulate, or from seeing something that reminds me of another time in my life, or anything else really. The combination of visual cues and emotions forms the intention for the painting. I paint toward that intention.

It starts as an undefined cloud of different feelings, references, and associations. It is both clear and unclear at the same time; in the same way that in a dream, someone can be Winnie the Pooh and my mother simultaneously, there is no contradiction in the dream. However, once I try to explain this out loud, it suddenly feels very contradictory. The limitless dimensions and non-linearity are difficult to describe in a linear and three-dimensional reality. I think similar things happen to a thought while painting. Something borderless depicted on a flat and rectangular surface is bound to be a simplified version, almost like a symbol of it.

My hand tends to repeat the movements it has made before; mannerisms could be seen as personal style but also as another filter through which the idea has to push to reach the canvas. Several choices have to be made during painting, all of which shape the cloud of thought into a more solid form. I often find myself in some sort of thought loop, repeating a sentence or a thought while I paint, like a mantra. At the same time, I consciously aim to transfer that loop through my hand onto the canvas. I strive to infuse as much of the original intention into the physical painting as possible. I think of it as a form of sympathetic magic, which Mike Kelley writes about in his book *Foul Perfection* (2003):

*"This ending of the socially destructive practices of human and animal sacrifice and the burial of precious goods by replacing them with sculptural stand-ins probably came from necessity, yet it established the idea of sympathetic magic, that the image of something could function analogously to the thing itself. Beyond that (This is the germ of the concept of kitsch), a less precious thing could be substituted for a more valuable one"*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Mike Kelley, *Foul perfection*, (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2003), p.88

I paint by glazing layer upon layer of transparent colour washes, mixed with thick dammar-infused linseed oil. This achieves a depth of colour unparalleled to mixing the pigments in one layer. When I started to paint "*I must find the answer within myself*" I was thinking about the elegance of a knot, how something can contort around itself in such harmony and symmetry, not for the sake of the choreography, but to link into a strong bond.

The rules of physics determine which part has to go over the other in order for them to tangle in the optimal way. The power to carefully modify the shape of things. Everything is in a state of transformation, people set intentions every day to alter their surroundings and themselves.

The earthworm knotting into itself was a way for me to recognise the worm's ability to perform magic, the earthworm's tremendous ability to transform matter itself, and in process create fertile grounds for life. The sliminess of the worm, and the oil gliding effortlessly in the canvas made me realise how there is sensuality in the urge to create, and the borders between reproducing and simply producing began to fade.



*"Last drop"* photo: Inkeri Virtanen

## The Dog (Invisible string, which is actually an invisible net)

I was taking care of my aunt and uncle's little Yorkshire terrier, Pate, in January 2024. Pate came with me to my studio every day, he had his own pile of pillows in the centre of the room. For 2 weeks he was present in the room while I painted. He would sleep most of the day, then roam around the studio smelling the carpet infused with drops of paint and pigments, sawdust and glue. Must have been full of peculiar smells. He would look at me while I was painting and I sensed confusion, I don't know if he ever saw humans act this way. To stand in a silent room and stare at the wall for hours.

I think that my expectation of having a dog at the studio would be almost the same as being alone, but that was not the case. I felt an active connection between us, it was like a string was tied between us and it would vibrate ever so slightly all the time; there is another consciousness in this space. I took note of the fact that he would always look at me and never the painting. I started to wish that I would be able to see it through Pate's eyes, could he enjoy it in any way? Could there be paintings made for non humans? Few times I looked at him and asked; "what do you think?" pointing at the painting "should I add another layer?" -- he would look at the door or the leash, which I interpret as him wanting to leave. I thought it was interesting that for me the painting was like a space in a space, a portal of sorts, but for him the rectangular canvas was nothing to look at, there was no other dimension to jump to.

In the end of those two weeks after a long day of painting (Pate's dinner time was approaching) He got of his pillow fortress, stretched for long while and when I expected him to come for me to put on the

leash and get ready for leaving like all the other nights, he instead turned towards the painting. Then he looked at me and looked at the painting again. I froze completely looking at him, looking at the painting. I felt like there was some kind of fragile focus at hand, like a mirror clear surface of a lake that would ripple from the tiniest drop. I obviously cannot know if Pate was looking at the painting, or experiencing it in any way, but in that moment I felt honoured by the chance that he would. His gaze on my painting felt important. That night I took a picture of his eye and used it as a reference to paint "Last drop".

Pate's gaze activated a way of thinking which brought names to some of the thoughts that had lingered namelessly behind my recent paintings. Thoughts which Donna Haraway wrote proficiently before me in *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (2016):

*"It matters what ideas we use to think other ideas." I compost my soul in this hot pile. The worms are not human; their undulating bodies ingest and reach, and their feces fertilize worlds. Their tentacles make string figures. It matters what thoughts think thoughts. It matters what knowledges know knowledges. It matters what relations relate relations. It matters what worlds world worlds. It matters what stories tell stories."*<sup>3</sup>

That invisible string I felt connecting me and Pate, is actually a net which connects with every little thing in this world. Or as Haraway puts it: *"The more one looks, the more the name of the game of living and dying on earth is a convoluted multispecies affair that goes by the name of symbiosis, the yoking together of companion species, at table together."*<sup>4</sup> This notion has been the most urgent motivation in my recent paintings. The earthworm and the tarantula are the heroes of the large paintings in this ensemble because they work as symbols for those whose tales are mostly left out in the stories of men. In their viewed insignificance they get stepped upon and the alchemy and craft they perform is overlooked. These are the stories I want to centre.

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3 Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Duke University Press, 2016) p.34-35

4 p.124



"Weaver" photo: Inkeri Virtanen

## The Spider (Weaver)

My artistic practice is divided in two different approaches. As if I would have set two possible roles for me to play and built characters based on the archetypes of *The Painter* and *The Weaver*. These two characters are opposite in many ways and when I am in the boots of one, it is quite difficult to try and tap into the thought process of the other.

*The Painter* is the master of the canvas, there are no constraints other than my own skill. Painting feels dangerous, it is as if I could fail at any moment if I don't pay attention. I have to be an active participant while I paint, I have to gather and refine my thought and guide the painting towards that with force and determination. The painting has to be viewed from a distance and really closeby, preferably in different heights, locations and lighting to truly see the overview.

Seeing the painting is difficult, as I am quick to assume how the painting is rather than actually looking. On top of that the vision is clouded by insecurities and expectations. Somehow as a painter I am aware of the fragility of my ego. As if everyone will see if I fail. When I am *The Painter* I have to be agile, sharp and present.

The process of learning how to weave was like learning a language. I thought that each mistake I made, each unexpected route the thread took, was adding to a codex that allows me to decipher the

movements of a weaver's fingers when looking at someone else's weave. As I sat on the loom hours after hours I felt heavy with the thought that so many women did not learn this skill out of curiosity, but out of necessity.

The repetitive rhythm lulls me into a reflective state, and I cannot help but think of the ears that heard the pounding of the loom and click of the pedals, the fingers which lifted the yarns and adjusted the edges, with the same automated choreography as me, and of the many others long after I am gone. I think that artist Kirsti Rantanen was describing that same feeling of connection through weaving in an interview:

*“Instinctively I return to ancient, primitive methods. My technical skills can be traced back to the stone age. When I weave, It is as if I was a woman from the stone age.”*<sup>5</sup>

Like Rantanen, I also lose the concept of time, and feel like a link in a chain, a part of a lineage. As *The Weaver* I mourn for all the mothers who could have been painters but had to be content with embroidering pillowcases, I drift away only to notice that all the while my hands and feet had continued the choreography.

I don't think this is a coincidence, but a reflection of the structures in the field of art and craft. If western painting history is full of drama, tales of male geniuses who reached the divine truth and were gracious enough to share it with the masses, the history of textile may be the opposite.

It is about the objects which are so necessary and crucial to people that they become almost invisible until they malfunction. Meaning, that people rarely think about their tea towels, shopping bags or pants until they break or don't act the way you wished them to. We rarely know who were the people making them, their labour is invisible not only historically but to this day.

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<sup>5</sup> *“Aivan vaistomaisesti palaan iki vanhoihin primitiivisiin menetelmiin, minun tekniset lähtökohtani voidaan jäljittää kivikaudelle asti, kun kudon olen kuin kivikauden nainen”*- quote translated by Inkeri Virtanen 9/2024  
Kirsti Rantanen, *Tekstiilin intiimi kosketus*, 1989 (Yle Elävä Arkisto)

We are aware of the exploitation that plagues textile industry, but the poor quality of sweatshop manufactured products is a mere ghost which haunts us as a reminder of unfairly compensated labour of workers in the global south.

This invisibility has to do with the fact that throughout history textile craftsmanship and labour has been associated as a feminine effort, and thus overlooked. Who's labour is worthy of a story? Ursula K. le Guin addresses this narrative bias in her essay "The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction"(1988):

*"We've heard it, we've all heard about all the sticks and spears and swords, the things to bash and poke and hit with, the long hard things, but we have not heard about the thing to put things in the container for the thing contained. That is a new story, that is news. And yet old. Before-once you think about it, surely long before -the weapon, a late, luxurious, superfluous tool; long before the useful knife and axe; right along with the indispensable whacker, grinder and digger-for what 's the use of digging up a lot of potatoes if you have nothing to lug ones you can't eat home in- with or before the tool that forces energy outward, we made a tool that brings energy home. It makes sense to me. I am adherent of what Fisher calls the Carrier Bag Theory of human evolution."*<sup>6</sup>

Le Guin is using the widely accepted narratives of prehistoric life as an example of how it is not arbitrary that we know of the gripping tales of mammoth hunt, but not the tale of the people who maintained life in ordinary ways, who gathered and crafted and cared for the community. Why is it that an axe, spear and a knife are named as tools but bottles, nets and needles are not? The history of weaving lacks the danger of a controversial image, it lacks the swift drama of stabbing a mammoth. It merely has been and is. Everywhere, no matter how rich or poor, everyone has an intimate relationship with cloth. Its continuous presence sinks it to the background.

In this context the loud immediacy of a painted image feels aggressive. It made the structures which are often hidden by a beautiful image apparent for me; Imperialism and robbery of colonies granted

European painters their pigments and made their Patrons rich enough to commission said works. It made it clear that this is a story with sticks, spears and swords.

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<sup>6</sup> Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction* (London:Ignota Books,2019-- first Published in *Women of Vision*, 1988) p.29

## The Axis (A fictional, but very real dialogue)

W: A Weaver who paints

P: A Painter who weaves

W: I am angry and annoyed at painting. I am angry that I am supposed to focus on the innocent smirk of “The girl with a pearl earring”<sup>7</sup> whilst I am experiencing that smirk in Mauritshuis, a mansion built for a prince who was the governor of Dutch possessions in Brazil assigned by the Dutch West India Company<sup>8</sup>, filled with treasures funded with the robbery of sugar and tobacco and labour of enslaved people. I am furious that I have to hear about the groundbreaking innovation of Jackson Pollock whilst his wife, Lee Krasner is still largely first known as his wife, even though her artistic practice was a major influence to him.<sup>9</sup> I'm sick of the romanticised narrative built around western painting.

P: I get it, but Isn't painting about more than just the structures around it, what about the experience of seeing a painting which resonates and you get lost in the choices the painter has made, how they have built something with the tones, the sharpness or the haziness, or how some markings are sharp and quick, some slow and thick, how that blue comes to the front and puts everything into harmony.

W: Our ideas of what are considered good paintings, the paintings which are beautiful and harmonious are shaped by the field of art which is shaped by intersecting oppressive structures, most prominently; colonialism and patriarchy, since it was/is imperialists, colonialists, aristocrats and newly rich venture capitalists who funded/fund the art market. How can we ignore that?

P: Is the purpose of art to be virtuous and good or is it just to exist? Isn't there value in the fact that it exists? Isn't it better that Picasso made these works which shaped a lot of painters to come, even though he was a misogynist asshole and “innovated” his “Primitivist” style on the base of totemic African carvings he saw in the Paris ethnographic museum?<sup>10</sup> Do you honestly think it would have been better if he never painted, or reached fame?

W: I guess this comes to the question of can you separate the art from the artist. I find it difficult to place myself into this continuation. The girl with a pearl earring is not beautiful enough to justify the violence which was part of its production. I am afraid that by being inevitably influenced by the 500-years of painting in Europe and Northern America, I am perpetuating some of the violence that is so crucially part of its history. We also know that the field is still unbelievably biased, and favours white straight men above others, you can see it in the statistics of any museum or gallery or auction you look at.

P: It is true, but you keep talking about painting as if it was a singular homogenic unit. It is one word for describing Enni Id painting every surface and crevice of her house, for Damien Hirst's mass produced dot paintings, for the cave paintings in Lascaux, for the portrait of Victoria and Elisabeth, for Malcolm Baileys intricate paintings of the cargo ships which transported enslaved Africans to Jamaica. There are a lot of painters whose work does not take any part in dissecting these structures, but there are also plenty of painters working in the margins, painters who try to shift the narrative away from the toxic history, or try to bring light to what has happened.

W: It is easy to forget that the other narrative already exists, since so often the conversation is centred around the canon of western painting. That canon produced paintings that I first got familiar with and fell in love with, and to find out the horrors entwined with it, makes me feel guilty. How could I enjoy a product of something so evil? The visual

satisfaction is so strong that sometimes I feel frustrated that it is not enough for me to justify my practice; to paint solely for the purpose of satisfaction, to make something beautiful.

P: But you were entranced by the beauty of paintings at first! It was what made you fall in love with painting. Weren't you the 17- year-old who cried at the sight of Botticelli's Primavera in Uffizi<sup>11</sup>, simply because there had never been such a shade of green before your eyes? There is value in accessibility; the experience of beauty in a painting is an access point for a viewer, the viewer does not have to be particularly educated in the context of the work to enjoy visual stimuli. Beautiful paintings appeal and can touch whoever comes to see it , and art should be for everyone. To be frank; Aren't your paintings going to be enjoyed mostly as beautiful objects, and all the meaning you assign to them will most likely stay between you and the painting... would that be so bad?

W: I think I keep trying to shove painting into one category and unsurprisingly I am not able to do so. It is as if a pendulum is swinging and I am trying to figure out what is my responsibility as an artist. Is the meaning I myself assign to my works and the satisfaction of creation enough to make them worthy of the resources put into them? Are my thoughts worthy enough to take space? Or is it just a principal value that the more art there is the better? I guess I have to internalise that the field of painting is both a cog in the colonialist machine and at the same time something that taps into the sacred human instinct to create, and enjoy beauty. It is neither an absolute virtue, nor evil.....

.....Nuance is a tricky thing to maintain, it is easy to slip into an absolute. The simplicity in the ability to state: "this is good, that is bad" is tempting.

I am not proud of it, but I fear I have created a binary in the way I think of painting and weaving, and in that process, in myself.

Assigning virtues to weaving, demonising painting. Keeping the carefully labelled and categorised parts of myself separate. Probably because I was simply not able to comprehend the multiplicity of it all. This creates a standstill, building walls restricts movement. I think I need you to know dear Painter, that I am you and you are me. I think

Brian Eno's diary excerpt "*Axis thinking*" verbalises this well:

*"This is a transition from polar thinking—the kind of thinking that says, "It's either this or it's that," or "Everything that isn't clearly this must be that"—to axial thinking. Axial thinking doesn't deny that it could be this or that, but suggests that it's more likely to be somewhere between the two. As soon as that suggestion is in the air, it triggers an imaginative process, an attempt to locate and conceptualise the newly acknowledged greyscale positions. I am interested in these transitions—these moments when a stable duality dissolves into a proliferating and unstable sea of hybrids. What happens at such times is that all sorts of things become possible: there is a tremendous energy release, a great burst of experimentation. Not only do the emerging possible positions on this new-born axis have to be discovered and experienced and articulated; they have to be placed in context with other existing axes to see what new resonances appear."*<sup>12</sup>

A crucial thing about this axis thinking is the fact that there is not a singular axis, but everything has endless axes, and they intersect and overlap. To move forward I state:

I am neither the the mammoth hunter nor the gatherer, but somewhere between them, I am neither the breaker nor the mender, but somewhere between them,

I am neither painting a meaningless and beautiful image nor weaving a purely practical cloth, but somewhere between them, both sides have a footing, I am both and neither. An important addition to remember is that it is not only myself, but most things are, as Eno said it; a proliferating and unstable sea of hybrids

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7 Johannes Vermeer, *Meisje met de parel*, *The girl with a pearl earring*, 1665

8 mauritshuis.nl

9 Kate Linker, "*Krasner/Pollock: A Working Relationship*", 2/1982, Art Forum

Rachel Cooke, "*Reframing Lee Krasner, the artist formerly known as Mrs Pollock*" ,2019, The Guardian

10 Primitivism, Key Issues, Tate Britain

11 Sandro Botticelli, *La Primavera*, 1478

12 *Axis Thinking*, a bulletin from Brian Eno's 1995 diary; *A Year with Swollen Appendices* (London: Faber & Faber, 1996) p.5

## The Moth

(In defence of making 1 version of a painting)

The way to learn how to be a good painter is to make a lot of paintings, this means that there has to be discarded paintings. I think this is an unfortunate truth. In most paintings the canvas is a victim of the image. It is hijacked by the pigment and the binder, it is secondary to the movement of the paintbrush.

If I had cultivated, harvested and processed linen. Spun it to a thread, measured and installed that thread to a loom and woven it to a canvas or even oversaw the different stages of commercial linen canvas production, from seed to a roll of canvas. Then stretched that canvas to a frame, primed it and started painting. How badly would that painting have to fail for me to unstretch the canvas and throw it to the bin?

What happens to the act of painting if the the surface where one is painting onto, has an equal value to the image painted onto it? Maybe it is not realistic for most painters, because it simply does not suit their process and that is fine. It is a privilege to be in a space where one has the energy and time to consider this approach. Repairing and maintenance are slow. Battling with a painting which doesn't seem to go in the intended direction is slow and painting on top of a failed painting can be annoying, compared to a freshly primed canvas. I find

the Manifesto for Maintenance Art by Mierle Laderman Ukeles (1969) quite relevant to these questions;

*“C. Maintenance is a drag; it takes all the fucking time(lit.) The mind boggles and chafes at the boredom. The culture confers lousy status on maintenance jobs=minimum wage, housewives=no pay.”*

*clean your desk, wash the dishes, clean the floor, wash your clothes, wash your toes, clean the baby's diaper, finish the report,correct the typos,mend the fence,keep the customer happy,throw out the stinking garbage,watch out don't put things in your nose, what shall I wear,I have no sox,pay your bills,don't litter,save string,wash your hair, change the sheets,go to the store,I'm out of perfume,say it again--he doesn't understand,seal it again--it leaks, go to work, this art is dusty, clear the table,-call him again,flush the toilet, stay young”<sup>13</sup>*

Ambition and personal development as an artist are important, but I find myself questioning the strive towards a “great” painting as the whole notion of what I consider a successful painting is so fluctuating. I am so used to painting in such a goal oriented manner. Envisioning the outcome in my head, I move toward it like a moth to light, trying to navigate in the dark. But the light is often distant, shifting, a target no moth could reach. And here is where a different privilege shows itself—because if I, the moth, fail to reach it, I can simply walk away, abandon the work, and toss it aside. That ease, that freedom to let go when the journey feels too hard, is a privilege many do not have. For others, survival demands continuing the search, even when the light is dim or impossible to see.

I want to shift to a different address in the axis of “Paintings value as a pure unaccountable realisation of an artists free will”←-----→ “An artworks value will always be subordinate to the environmental resources it requires”. This can happen through a shift in the macro (an image)←-----→ micro (a fibre, pigment,material) axis. Recognising the materials used as active co creators in the work.

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13 Mierle Laderman Ukeles,*Manifesto! Maintenance art --Proposal for an exhibition* 1969, p.2 (1.C)

Malla Tallgren's material study-course in the first year of my master's studies was key to understanding the agency of material in painting. Understanding that each material, ingredient and chemical compound acts according to the physics of its nature, might be an obvious observation, but it changed my perspective of paint completely. I think I had simply been too occupied to figure out everything else in the realm of painting to stop and question, what makes this red paint red?

What a gift to realise that paint is not some abstract formulation of colour, but part of this world the same way I am. Pigments, fibres, oils, resins, chinks and glues carry their own agenda, and if I know about it I can either work with it or against it. I can shift my perspective from *"this did not go the way I wanted to"* to: *"this went the way the iron oxide wanted it to go"* Maybe this will give me patience and stay with the painting even when it "fails". To stay with it and spend the time to mend that dissatisfaction when I think it has been painted "too full" and now feels "stuffed" or try and see solutions for that one painting which I felt was better before I added that accent to the top corner. It is to challenge the sacred value of visual freshness and effortlessness.

When I know that the chalk I am using came from a rock, which formulated at the seashore with the calcium carbonate from thousands and thousands of seashells and crustaceans over thousands upon thousands of years, I might be more inclined to try and save the work which I deem "too chalky".



## The Spawn

*“I remember that tentacle comes from the Latin tentaculum, meaning “feeler,” and tentare, meaning “to feel” and “to try”; and I know that my leggy spider has many-armed allies.”-----The tentacular ones make attachments and detachments; they make cuts and knots; they make a difference; they weave paths and consequences but not determinisms; they are both open and knotted in some ways and not others. <sup>14</sup>*

Like the spider, the earthworm, and the small Yorkshire terrier I too “feel” and “try,” and navigate the world through my senses. Their bodies move and sense differently from mine, and it is precisely this divergence that allows me to use them as speculative vessels, to imagine their tentacular ways of being. What is a spider's relationship to their net, is it the same muscle memory that guides her through the netting and knotting that guides my fingers? How does the world reverberate through the earthworm's skin, or what stories does the terrier's nose tell?

The human world is stitched together with threads of efficiency, categorised by borders, labels,

and the imperative to produce and define. My artistic practice aims to resist this insistence on rigid clarity. I stretch out my own tentacles, playing with logics and their fraying edges, embracing the curious, the chaotic, the somewhat posthumanist. By centering these imagined perspectives, I cultivate a sensitivity that is not merely emotional, but sensory—a responsiveness that keeps me attuned to the world's textures.

I want to reach this tactility in my paintings; how to truly show the sliminess of the earthworm, to show their thin and translucent skin? To show the intense sensitivity of a bare tip of the penis, where the smallest draft of air could send shivers or how the eye of a Yorkshire terrier is so wet it appears to be a tiny but bottomless pond.

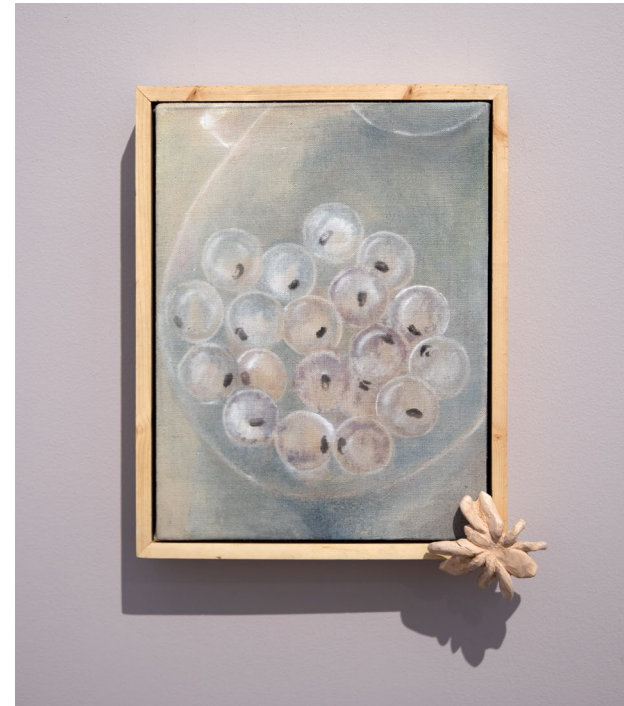
While painting I have to engage with the tactility of my subject matter thoroughly. I almost feel like a computer generating a render according to what I remember about it, imagining the source of light and how that material would interact with it. Painting with this bodily awareness—imagining the feel of a tarantula's fur or the uncanny sensation of being pregnant with frog spawn—blurs the lines between species. My body resonates with the spider and the frog, and I begin to question: what is the difference between my drive to create and a frog's instinct to reproduce?

*“I'm gonna spawn”* and *“Comets tail”* were the last paintings I made for the thesis project, merely a week or two before the build up. They link the miracle of biological reproduction and the same intense sensitivity entangled within the enormous craving to touch and be touched, to “touch” the viewer of my works metaphorically through the works as an artist.

They culminate a thought which is the conclusion I am coming to; that the impulse to create isn't uniquely human. It's a shared drive, rooted in the fundamental urge of all living beings to generate something beyond themselves. The frog's eggs, suspended in gelatinous sacs, are a kind of art, extending life beyond the individual. The tarantula's silk, spun into intricate webs, is a creative act of survival. My paintings might not be separate from these processes; it is part of the same urge to reproduce, not just biologically, but creatively—to bring new forms into the world.

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<sup>14</sup> Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Duke University Press, 2016) p.31



*"I'm gonna spawn"* photo: Inkeri Virtanen

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