

Being-with the Painting Process

An Exploration of “Spacing” in Painting and Writing

Sin Park

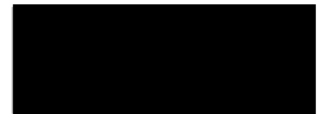
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Declaration

I, Sin Park (Sin Young Park), declare that the enclosed submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and consisting of the Thesis and the Portfolio of Works, meets the regulations stated in the handbook for the mode of submission selected and approved by the Research Degrees Sub-Committee. I declare that this submission is my own work and has not been submitted for any other academic award.



Sin Park (Sin Young Park)

4 January 2023



Professor Henry Rogers

20 December 2022

Is my theme the instant? the theme of my life. I try to keep up with it, I divide thousands of times into as many times as the number of instants running by, fragmented as I am and the moments so fragile – my only vow is to life born with time and growing along with it only in time itself is there room enough for me.

Clarice Lispector, *Água Viva* (1973)

Painting serves only to prolong for others the abstract pictorial “moment” in a tangible and visible manner ... For the painter, paintings serve only to take stock of these “moments”, to ascertain their nature or rather what they are. Little by little, by trial and error, canvas after canvas, they succeed in living the “moment” continually.

Yves Klein, *Overcoming the Problematics of Art: The writings of Yves Klein* (2003)

Abstract

This thesis is built upon an encounter with what seems to be a paradox in painting practice. In undertaking a PhD by practice, I have constructed it around a demand to manifest a form of new knowledge. My first intuition was to imagine that this knowledge would emerge at the interface of theory and practice, but I had gradually realized that sometimes such an academic understanding was not quite in place and that painting or the encounter with a painting was predicated on my engagement with the Deleuzian concept of becoming, a mode of existence.

I am not certain whether I gleaned this perspective as a theoretical construct or whether it was already embedded in my intuition of painting itself. My thesis seeks to present a two-way working relationship between painting and writing. It is not simply a case of representing a theoretical position on the one side and presenting the process of painting on the other, but rather attempting to articulate a process whereby both conditions find a co-extensive relationship.

In light of this, I have divided my thesis into two parts, each with a distinct focus. The intention is to elucidate my engagement with specific textual points of reference whilst tracing the internal dynamics of my painting and writing process. In this way, I draw together the different forces out of which a coherent presentation of practice began to appear. In Part One, drawing on a term used by Jean-Luc Nancy, I describe this as *being-with*: a way of understanding multiplicity and an existential mode of the painting process, which is explored with the idea of *spacing*. I then explain the practice of reading-with through my encounter with the work of Clarice Lispector and Cy Twombly. They both appeared to me as representing improvisation and invention.

In Part Two, I present a series of paintings made in different locations and describe spatiality as part of the processes behind them. I have attempted to discover a space in which a text about painting might emerge without the distance which, I would argue, normally exists between artists' works and art critical writing. Walter Benjamin would have viewed such figures as constituting a constellation (Gilloch, 2002), and this concept is the heart of my methodological composition.

I had the sense of passing through (considering) painting as much as passing into (embodying) painting, becoming aware of my perceptual processes (intuition, improvisation, sense, chance,

imagination). I was thus able to get closer to the forces which could be encountered within the process of constructing the work of art. I would not necessarily evoke this as a foundation for an artist writing about their own work: I would question the viability of this within my context because of my awareness that painting itself involves the suspension of thoughts. My PhD proceeded without the expectation of resolution and, in this way, kept alive a tension at the heart of the undertaking, a process of *being-with* both the activity of painting and the dynamic of writing.

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Introduction

My painting includes processes of stopping and suspension of thoughts which involves preparation, a coffee break, looking at art and reading books, going to shows, chatting with friends, and writing a journal about my psychological feelings and memories. Walking to the studio, sitting inside the studio, being inside the canvas, and walking away from my painting are also among the elements that make my painting.

Within this, I have found a key foundation: all elements within the painting process have a co-extensive relationship, and it is better not to disregard this. I have a sense of addressing living with theory, bringing theory into conjunction with my painting. This is not to bury my works into theory nor bury theory into painting; I want to engage in my practice with my surroundings, environments, influences, spatiality, and thoughts.

I have been thinking about the consequences of gradual shifts within painting practice: the shift from being to **becoming**, from representation to presentation, from object to space, from praxis to poiesis; by considering all these shifts I have introduced the idea of the process into the constellation of my research and developed a new sense of the outcome. The shift signifies the idea that I never arrive at a fixed destination. It is about everything being on the move, becoming, which is in a state of continuous interaction and transformation. Different elements come together to produce an unexpected effect, and I wanted to capture this in my research. I have staged my encounter with the relationship between theory and practice as a series of choices to be made, of something to pass through to achieve an outcome. And I have discovered a theoretical conception, Jean-Luc Nancy's idea of *being-with*, which leads me to the notion of *spacing*. These appear as major determinants within my theoretical exposition.

The book *Nancy and Visual Culture* (Giunta et al., 2016) opens up a productive space of encounter between Nancy's writings and his artistic practice. Nancy's thinking is applied with an emphasis not just on an image but also on the world beyond fixed meaning or signification. Although Nancy does not directly link the idea of *being-with* to the process of painting, applying his theory to painting has enabled a deeper insight into my painting process and my writing.

From this starting point, I propose the hypothesis that understanding the painting process demands consideration of a multiplicity of elements. I examine Nancy's ideas of *being-with*, *spacing*,

and the fragment as viable strategies for exploring the painting process and the cyclical relationship between painting, writing, and reading. In my research, the idea of *being-with* appears in painting and fragmentary writing I have made within the studio space; the studio as a site of reflection on *spacing* becomes the site of a co-extension between the studio space, the painting, and me. This research is about something more than the space within a painting or its subject matter (content); cyclical relationships (painting – writing – reading) have interwoven each other, making the experience more significant than, and different from, theorisation. I will argue that the experience of painting is a way of moving across different registers, reflecting changes, and providing challenges.

a. Development of Research and Thesis Structure

This general introduction establishes my central research question, as formulated below. The methodology section details two different approaches: autoethnography and theoretical reflection. These encompass my own painting practice, my digital journal, and my use of my experience behind the chosen scope in different studio settings.

There are rules I followed in conducting this research.

1. Take account of day-to-day studio practice and participate in residency programs.
2. Pay attention to my abstract responses to the different spaces I encounter. This is not abstracting the space, or responding to the space, it is being responsive to my moving from outside to inside, within the painting, standing aside and moving out from the space and the painting.
3. Document the process, monitoring my practice. Documentation is not about aiming for academic resolutions; it is recording the passages from the non-being of a painting to the being of the painting. In other words, produce paintings into presences, paying attention to the relationship between absence and presence on the canvas.
4. Observe the autonomy of painting.
5. Write about my psychological journey whenever thoughts come up, no matter how random they are.

With these rules, I have attempted to give a framework for understanding the complex and constant interference, multiplicity, and interaction within the painting practice. To achieve this, I set out the written component of this thesis in two parts. Part One offers philosophical and theoretical points of view to provide a rationale for this research and in doing so frames the relations between my painting practice, my creative writing, and my theoretical ideas. I present a discussion of the relationship between visibility and invisibility in images, drawing on the metaphysical contexts of ancient Greek origin, Immanuel Kant's aesthetic ideas, and the writings of John Sallis. I apply the ideas of imagination and invisibility to the ways we look at and interpret painting and how we understand what is beyond visibility. I consider George Didi-Huberman's account of why presentation is opposed to representation to argue "elsewhere knowledge", which suspends a fixed interpretation. Didi-Huberman discusses what we can gain from this elsewhere knowledge to focus on its relation to art practice with an emphasis on the painting process and on writing. This part of my thesis also brings into focus an ancient Greek lineage of poesis and praxis and discusses whether it may regenerate our thinking about "making" painting.

I then trace how the idea of the fragment can be applied to literary contexts in relation to my own painting process and my writing. I argue that the **fragmentary demand** seems to have provided a new form of texts and possibilities for the co-presence of thoughts. I focus on German Romanticism, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean-Luc Nancy, Maurice Blanchot, Gerhard Richter, and Hélène Cixous. As Part One progresses, the centre of gravity shifts from contextual research to painting – writing – reading. This involves focusing on Nancy's writing centred on the ideas of *being-with* and *spacing* and on Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's idea of becoming. I argue that this allows the painting process to be opened out as a way of being with curvatures, repetitions, entry and exit points, and undefined zones before the process of defined signification might occur. I then discuss the individual approaches of two individuals: the author Clarice Lispector and the painter Cy Twombly. I propose a way of "reading" painting and writing to find traces of inscription either on the surface of the canvas or as written images or texts. Then I claim that "reading-with" allows a connection between "writerly" painting and "painterly" writing, and Twombly and Lispector draw on an interplay of elements to enfold *being-with*.

Part Two changes tack to examine how my practice has evolved over time in relation to the ideas given above and how I have unfolded and explored my own practice through exposition. Examples of my own works are relevant to this thesis: I present photographic documentation of

my painting process, my digital journal, my paintings, and a daily series of drawings. I incorporate different writing tones, my “fragmentary voice”, including excerpts from my ongoing digital journal: fragmentary but active, explorative, descriptive, and analytical writing. In the programmatic set of chapters which explain each painting process I have made in different spaces, I am reaching towards a new set of questions without promising answers. On the other hand, the digital journal provides what could be seen as an answer to the questions posed by the painting processes. But these are fragmentary in that they seem at times too direct or too indirect, too deprived of explanation. Part Two presents a juxtaposition of concepts that have to be thought of in a *being-with* or constellational manner to be understood.

This research draws on ideas rooted in psychoanalysis, linguistics, and philosophy. Many of these ideas require the reader to have some understanding of these embedded concepts. Key terms central to the research can be found in the Glossary of Terms that appears at the end of this text. I have used bold type to indicate the first use of each term in my text. The appendix is a short project that explains a project I conducted from 24 March 2020 to 02 July 2020, during the first lockdown in the UK.

As this research is practice-led, the emphasis is given to my practice output from 2017 through 2022. Part Two describes my process organised in chronological order, whereas the Practical Output 2017 – 2022 (portfolio of work: submitted as a separate book of prints) starts with the most recent paintings going back to the oldest as it functions as the final output of my creative practice. This gives another insight into how my painting (primary output) and writing unite together. Perhaps the relation between my painting and my writing may function as a form of dance: requiring interaction between the two and combining movements made by my body, hand, and mind in multiple directions.

This research contributes to the field of painting study by detailing the painting process and my concerns as a painting practitioner through correspondences with philosophical the ideas of *being-with* and *spacing*.

b. Research Aims

1. To critically analyse *being-with*, establishing a framework for considering a way of understanding painting practice, and to explore the possibility of painting practice in relation to the idea of *spacing* leading to the concept of becoming.

2. To consider how the concept of the fragment appears and emerges in both painting and writing.

3. To understand *being-with* as a co-existence within a cyclical relationship between painting, reading, and writing.

c. Research Questions

The main questions of this research are threefold:

1. Given the emphasis placed on the act of painting as an emergent act, to what extent does *being-with* impact upon the development of painting practice?

2. If a painting practice is based on the concept of the fragment and the evocation/embodiment of *being-with* through *spacing*, how do ideas of emergence and becoming maintain the liminal in painting?

3. How might practical experimentation in painting process be employed to test out the concept of *being-with* in writing?

d. Methodology

This research is predicated both on my practice of painting and on the generation of narratives that derive from this. I am not assuming an easy transition from the realm of the visible to that of the textual. Therefore, I am dividing my research methodology into two different approaches: autoethnography and theoretical reflection.

d-1. Autoethnography

Autoethnography is setting a scene, telling a story, weaving intricate connections among life and art, experience and theory, evocation and explanation ... and then letting go, hoping for readers who will bring the same careful attention to your words in the context of their own lives (Holman Jones, Adams and Ellis, 2013, p.85, cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.765).

My research is informed by my own reflection on the experience of being a painter. In practice, a creative impulse towards action is born first, so the making process is followed by research. In other words, the research is done in-between or after the event through the act of observing, investigating, and contemplating my painting practice. The first stage of my research is based on autoethnography. The autoethnographic method offers artists a voice; it has enabled me to write about personal experiences and their relation to my painting process, bringing insights into the making process. As the education scholars Kitrina Douglas and David Carless stated in chapter two of “A History of Autoethnographic Inquiry” from *Handbook of Autoethnography* (2013):

... autoethnographers have drawn on systematic sociological introspection and emotional recall, “memory work”, introspection, self-introspection, interactive introspection, self-ethnography, diaries, free writing, and song writing (Douglas and Carless, 2013, p.98).

This introspective approach to research allowed me to use my iterative and continuous personal experience to contribute to new perspectives on my practice through journaling, collecting thoughts, reminiscing memories, and recording the process of painting. These experiential tools enabled me to explore the possibility of research that “exists, relates, and interacts in the present chronological moment” (Douglas and Carless, 2013, p.102).

I have gathered autoethnographic notes about my painting throughout my painting process, and to correspond with these, I have documented each stage of the process of painting. This required me to write notes as part of my daily routine. I was not hesitant to write about motivation, inspiration, emotional responses, books, artists, and exhibitions, as these influences would be relevant to my practice. Initially, my ideas and my flow of thoughts work as receptive and emergent in the painting process. Continuous thoughts appear, and mark-making emerges within the space of the canvas, which is in accordance with the inscription process, which in turn records the relationship between my body and the surface of the painting. My research methodology is set up to combine these seemingly irreducible aspects together and find the syntax of both. When including excerpts from my digital journal, I experienced a temptation to edit and ignore paradoxical ideas so that they would be more coherent and make more sense. I had the option to take the time to add, expand, and understand my feelings in retrospect, but I realised I needed to engage with the highly unstable nature of my responses as a psychological

reflection, a subjectivity within my practice, rather than disregarding them. This gathering of my thoughts enabled me to open up new possible meanings, alternative interpretations, and insights about my process.

There is a semi-automatic aspect to my painting process: one mark leads to another, and each mark made on the canvas has either continuity or discontinuity. Writing simultaneously with painting both interrupts the process and captures my encounter with the canvas. The act of writing about this in Part Two helped me to explore this **paradox** and this subjectivity and eventually provided me with a better sense of my emotional response. This methodology helped me to confirm my doubts about my painting process and to maintain my personal authority in this research project. This way of approaching research writing is comparable to that generated by Colleen Tenni, Anne Smyth, and Carlene Boucher in their article *The Researcher as Autobiographer* (2003), in which they monitor the emotional, psychological, carnal, and intellectual responses to data that they have gathered themselves as researchers working from their own experience. As they state in their article, “it is about writing rich, full accounts that include the messy stuff – the self-doubts, the mistakes, the embarrassments, the inconsistencies, the projections, and that which may be distasteful. It is about writing all of it” (Tenni et al., 2015, p.3). I made commentaries on the painting process at each stage of documenting the work; this comes alongside a description of studio spaces where the paintings were made, exhibitions that I visited, and artworks I looked at, thereby helping me to discover a new connection with artists and contexts, all of which contributes to the broad sense of spatiality.

d-2. Theoretical Reflection

In the paper, *Inquiry through Practice: Developing appropriate research strategies* (1996), Carol Grey argued that the meaning of “practice-led” could encompass both reflections on practice and practice itself. A record of the studio process provides a means of creating new relations of knowledge to production. This approach to research not only enables the “primacy of practice in the research process but proclaims that techniques and tools used by the practitioner can stand as research methods in their own right” (Barrett and Bolt, 2007, p.151).

- Material Thinking

Paul Carter's idea of "material thinking" (Carter, 2004, p.29) is central to the book *Practice as Research: Approaches to creative arts enquiry* (2007), edited by Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt. Carter explains in Chapter 1, "Interest: The ethics of invention" that "material thinking" is a model offering a way of considering the process of making: "The condition of invention – the state of being that allows a state of becoming to emerge" (Barrett and Bolt, 2007, p.15). Carter states that the act of invention is positioned "neither after nor before the process of making but in the performance itself" (Barrett and Bolt, 2007, p.19). The act of painting is a bodily-engaged performance. From the point of view of creative research, "materials are always in a state of becoming" (Barrett and Bolt, 2007, p.19) and, materialised in the act of invention, encompass an artist's creative intelligence: the "intellectual adventure peculiar to the making process" (Carter, 2004, p.xi). Barbara Bolt borrows Paul Carter's term "material thinking", which he explains as follows: material thinking "is what begins to happen wherever artists talk about what they are doing, in that simple but enigmatic step, joining hand, eye and mind in the process of material thinking" (Carter, 2004, p.xiii, cited in Barrett and Bolt, 2007, p.30). Bolt agrees that material thinking occurs when hand, eye, and mind are joined, but differentiates her understanding of material thinking by highlighting the importance and relevance of "handling" within this concept. Bolt appropriates Martin Heidegger's conceptions of "handling" and "handability" and suggests how new knowledge emerges from ongoing performative engagement and human involvement, describing it as follows:

Heidegger argues that we do not come to "know" the world theoretically through contemplative knowledge in the first instance. Rather, we come to know the world theoretically only after we have come to understand it through handling. Thus the new can be seen to emerge in the involvement with materials, methods, tools, and ideas of practice (Barrett and Bolt, 2007, p.143).

Using David Hockney's drawing practice as an example, she argues that the act of "handling" is a vehicle for shifting thought to "visual argument", "visual thinking", and "secret knowledge". Thus, as her title suggests, "Material thinking is the magic of handling"; this approach enables us to consider the very tissue of making and recognise that "the materials and processes of production have their own intelligence" (Barrett and Bolt, 2007, p.30).

When I began my PhD in Painting through Practice, I had a deliberate approach: “My practice begins with no preconceived notion of the final outcomes. I am guided by a series of intuitive decisions and improvisations within the use of oil medium” (extract from my digital journal, 2017). I felt that I needed to “handle” or “produce” paintings in order to see which arguments and discoveries were emerging from my practice. In this sense, painting becomes an “object” not bounded by stable definitions. As Bolt states in the journal article “Material Thinking and the Agency of Matter”, “in the artistic process, objects have agency, and it is through the establishing of conjunctions with other contributing elements in the art that humans are co-responsible for letting art emerge” (Bolt, 2007, p.1). The material nature of the work is thus the basis of experiencing the work as an autonomous emergence. Within this experience, materials and processes provide tacit knowledge which is “grounded in material practice” and allows painting to be a “co-emergence” (Bolt, 2007, p.3) within process where “the outcome cannot be known in advance” (Bolt, 2007, p.3). Bolt’s notion of “co-emergence” also provides a rationale for utilising the painting process and writing. This permits me to set about a material process whilst recording that process and my own critical commentaries in writing.

Part One – The Context

This chapter begins with a focused review of relevant contexts for my inquiry. The first approach is to investigate the consequences of understanding the painting process and writing about painting. I examine the idea of visibility and invisibility in painting, I consider poesis, and I then discuss a method for describing the process of painting in text with reference to the idea of the fragment.

-Visibility and Invisibility

Starting with the blank canvas and the impulse of creating an image, I bring something into painting which did not exist before on the surface. I regard this as a process of painting by inscription whereby the resource of imagination is trying to organise images. A painting carries out the process where an image occurs, and the imaginary symbolises the image in abstraction.

Let me talk through the idea of visibility first. What is utterly visible in painting is what we can see. Seeing images as either being internal or external goes back to the origins of Greek philosophy. There has always been an ambiguity between these two modes of looking. The Platonic tendency was to treat image-making as two kinds of external imitation, “eikastic” (accurate likenesses) and “phantastic” (deceptive likenesses) (Joyal, 1997, p.220); in contrast, Aristotle tends to concentrate on “psychological processes, ultimately of perception” (Aristotle, 2018, p.45) of the image as a mental representation and thus lends the psychological workings of imagination a perceptive and rational analysis. The Platonic paradigm of the image as a form of painting – an external copy of nature, which is itself an external copy of transcendental ideas – is replaced by the Aristotelian paradigm of the image as an internal activity of mind mediating between sensation and reason. The image serves as a bridge between the inner and outer worlds. It is both a window into the world and a mirror in the mind.

Immanuel Kant clears away any confusion that arises from the traditional error of construing imagination as a secondary mediation between body and mind. In *Critique of Pure Reason* (1787), he described imagination as the “unknown root” (Kant, 2018, p.138) of the two stems of human cognition – sensibility and understanding. Kant claims the definition of imagination as “a faculty for representing an object even without its presence in intuition” (Kant, 2018, p.151). Kant conceives of the imagination as a faculty of representation responsible for **intuition**. This happens, for example, in the act of making from nonsensible memory an image of something

you already have seen. According to his theory, nothing could be known about the world unless it was first performed and transformed by the synthetic power of imagination. This means that artist inquiry engages in an unknown state of imagination in practice. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling's idea of imagination expands Kant's idea of the "unknown root" of human cognition. He defines the imagination as "such a wavering between finitude and infinity" (Carter, 2004, p.5). Whereas Kant stressed the synthesis of the two stems of human cognition – "sensibility and understanding" (Kant, 2018, p.138) – Schelling's theory incorporates motion. This "wavering" is the state of moving in flux between the finite and infinite. Imagination is wavering in between them.

An act of creation thus posits imaginative experience. It is between nothing and the state of something, always the in-between; this notion further applies to the idea of "becoming". In relation to concepts of the in-between put forward by Kant and Schelling, the idea of visibility should be examined as a way to understand and describe the painting process. The idea of the invisibility of painting is discussed in the book *Transfigurements: On the true sense of art* (2008) by the philosopher John Sallis. He first claims that the historical, philosophical conception of art no longer serves a metaphysical framework:

The Platonic differentiation between intelligible and sensible has been disrupted now that the very schema of intelligible truth and sensible image has ceased functioning (Sallis, 2011, p.17).

This focuses on understanding painting as something beyond the sensible and intelligible truth and proposes to see the presence of something virtually invisible in images, which enables the visible to "illuminate", as Sallis puts it:

Hence, these [at least thirty paintings of haystacks by the French painter Claude Monet] paintings present something that borders on invisibility, something virtually invisible. They present the light as it spreads across a scene so as to illuminate things. They make visible the light that grants things their visibility; for normally, what we see are visible things and illuminated scenes, not the light that makes them visible, that illuminates them. The light itself remains virtually invisible until the genius of the painter comes to make it visible (Sallis, 2011, p.21).

A momentary interruption of visibility (configuration of line and colour) opens various moments of invisibility; this can be “unseen”, “barely imagine[d]”, the “content of painting”, a “reflection of depiction”, and something “virtually invisible” (Sallis, 2011, pp.20–21). When artists produce paintings on canvas, imagination, content, and thoughts are not visible. They are invisibilities to which the artists respond, and eyes and hands are united in identifying the invisible and making it visible. I will apply the idea of visibility and invisibility to an understanding of my painting *Beyond the End of the Road* (see pp.63–70 of this thesis).

The ability to play with images comes from the imagination and the imaginary. Certain habits in artists bring repeated instances of impressions or images, thus forming artists’ signatures. Imagination as an agency overcomes the self-same by producing the differences, which in turn points towards the production of an indeterminate artistic practice. This results in various modes of visibility which still have a realm of ambivalence; it deals with images and the strangeness of recognition. This, in part, derives from Kantian aesthetics, which describe the question of beauty as being a-cognitive.¹ In turn, art historians such as George Didi-Huberman have clearly articulated this understanding of art. In the book *Confronting Images* (2005), Didi-Huberman proposes:

To commit ourselves to the paradoxical ordeal not to *know* but to *think* the element of not-knowledge that dazzles us whenever we pose our gaze to an art image (Didi-Huberman, 2005, p.7).

This implies that the examination of the presentation or presentability of the image (our gaze) is subject to our gaze returning the image before the “figured figure [representations]” to the “figuring figure” or the process by which something becomes visible.

It would be to return to a questioning of the image that does not yet presuppose the “figured figure” – by which I mean the figure fixed as representational object – but only the figuring figure, namely the process, the path, the question in action, made colors,

¹ Experience of beauty stimulates our cognitive powers and thereby enhances our cognitive activity. Kant defines beauty as being judged through an aesthetic experience of taste. This experience must be devoid of any concept, emotion, or interest in the object we are describing as beautiful. Most of all, the experience of beauty is something that we feel.

made volume: to the still-open question of knowing just what, on a given painted surface or in a given recess in stone, might become visible (Didi-Huberman, 2005, p.141).

The world of images does not announce logic, but rather it creates spaces within it, and the force of negativity resides there. It is thus necessary to think of the “power of the negative” within the image. This force eats away at the “visible” (the order of represented appearances) and destroys the “legible” (the order of signifying configurations). The image is a paradox, acting as a restriction that holds one in a dilemma between knowing and seeing (Didi-Huberman, 2005, pp.142–143).



Figure 1.1 Fra Angelico, *The Annunciation* ca. 1440 – 1445, fresco, 176 x 148cm, © Museum of San Marco, Florence

Didi-Huberman starts with a mediation on *The Annunciation* (Fig 1.1) by the Italian painter Fra Angelico. He states that the painting “creates a vague impression that there isn’t much to see” (Didi-Huberman, 2005, p.11). What is visible and legible in the work conveys little in terms of defining features that are based on themes and concepts as units of knowledge: the meeting of the angel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary. As soon as the painting is visible, our eyes offer themselves for reading and the fresco sets about “telling” its story. There is something underdetermined and ineffable, the artist’s bliss, angelic temperament, and religious status.

The visible, the legible (translatability), and the invisible are functions within the painting that are disembodied. The artist either grasps the world of the visible or does not grasp the region of the invisible; this is where metaphysics becomes possible from the simple, non-existent frame to the ideal beyond the entire oeuvre. This is precisely what draws me into what is invisible and ineffable. The image transmits knowledge (visible, legible, invisible) while dismantling the “transformed not-knowledges”. In other words, the historical subject of knowledge about painting and the theory in the image opens to a “lack of knowledge”. From here, I might claim that the painting suspends a relationship to interpretation and, with it, a certain mode of attention leading to a form of “not grasping the image, of letting oneself be grasped by it instead”: therefore, of “letting go of one’s knowledge about it”. Angelico’s work “passes on the chain of knowledge”, but also “break it up to the point of its unravelling to displace its paths and make them signify *elsewhere*” (Didi-Huberman, 2005, p.16).

-Poiesis

The book *The Man Without Content* (1999), a work of philosophy by Giorgio Agamben, examines the essence of productive activity, of people’s “doing”. Agamben deconstructs the idea of doing by taking examples from ancient Greece; the Greeks made a distinction between poiesis, “the activity in which a person brings something into being that did not exist before”, and praxis, “the manifestation of a will that produces a concrete effect”. Poiesis, in Agamben’s description, records the passage from non-being to being, and this perspective encourages the connection that it is “a mode of truth understood as unveiling” (Agamben, 1999, p.68).

The Greeks, to whom we owe all the categories through which we judge ourselves and the reality around us, made a clear distinction between poiesis (poiein, “to produce” in the sense of bringing into being) and praxis (prattein, “to do” in the sense of acting). As we shall see, central to praxis was the idea of the will that finds its immediate expression in an act, while, by contrast, central to poiesis was the experience of production into presence, the fact that something passed from nonbeing to being, from concealment into the full light of the work (Agamben, 1999, p.68).

Through this idea, poiesis constructs the space where an artist finds their absolute affirmation and where they ensure the freedom and **duration** of their action. So, in my view, if we want to come to an adequate understanding of painting, we are best advised to regard the canvas’s outcome not in terms of observation of materiality, nor of expression beyond visible reality, but

as a presentation of what it means to “produce” something new into presence; “produce” for artists is shaped by the artist’s desire and “will of will” (Agamben, 1999, p.73).

The creative process somehow rests on forgetting the principle of poiesis; it prioritises doing over “becoming”, and this serves to secure the results of a process as the immediately visible impacts of that process. If we have a problem, we already have the belief that there is the concept of a solution, a way of knowing from absence to presence. In effect, the creative process becomes our source of presence; in turn, we disclose our way of being in the world through it. Poiesis preserves the relationship between absence and presence; its mode of disclosure is that of shifting boundary and reconfiguration, pushing us out and beyond. It knows nothing about the self-same, pushing us into the realm of difference instead.

We can see how the very notion of artistic autonomy started with the blurring of the distinction between poiesis and praxis, that is, from the interpretation of art as a mode of praxis that finds its expressive dimension in “will”. The idea of poiesis resembles my attitude towards painting practice. The painting process can be simply stated as one action following another: colour and mark-making interacting with the surface of fabric with intuitive and improvisational senses embedded in its process. There is a predetermined premise in existence; paper, drawing book, fabric, stretched canvas, specific mediums, and the artist’s hands; in most cases, there is an event of surprise, in other words, an unknown ahead of us, where creative practice will lead the artist to a different realm of non-knowledge. Painting goes beyond knowing, and with each moment in the painting process the surface of the stretched fabric starts to behave differently; “this means that the emphasis shifts away from what the Greeks considered the essence of the work – the fact that in it something passed from nonbeing into being, thus opening the space of truth”, the “creative genius and the particular characteristic of the artist process in which it finds expression” (Agamben, 1999, p.70).

- Fragmentary Demand

Many of my paintings’ processes are accompanied with text fragments; often, these function as intervals of thought rather than extended explanations or completed sentences. A feature of my juxtaposing these text fragments with my process of painting is that it does not aim at a consistency (of content) or programmatic method but aims instead to develop its own “content of silhouette” (Phelan, 1998, p.150). Rather than assembling a vision of culture or a historical fitting into art worlds, I present my painting process within fragmentary demand, which has a

goal to go forward to its destination rather than to arrive at a formal resolution. As such, though, my processes also seem to open out the question of how the work of art assumes a bounded condition. The resulting exploration of the painting process and writing is not to be discovered as a comprehensible reading; there is not much discernible meaning in any such reading intended in any direction. I could, from this, say that the fragment finds its echo within the poesis.

A question arises: What is the fragment? I will examine how the philosophical and literary fragment unfolds alongside its function within modernist contexts. The German Romantics did not fear uncertainty, ambiguity, or incomprehensibility. They included the subconscious and the entire subjective experience of the human race in their investigations. Even as they discussed interpretation, criticism, commentary, and multiplicity – seemingly logical concepts – they believed there were no definitive, absolute, and distinctive answers. The German Romantics were looking for a comprehensive understanding of the world that did not exclude any fundamental perception. “Incomprehensibility” as a vital idea could underlie the basis of their fragmentary writing as a new manner of reflection on the world. The philosophical reflections of Romantic thinkers could be considered as dominant factors that allowed them to accept a new style of writing. They were using language – in a poetic way. The proper form is a fragment, as they saw in poetry. The romantics considered this as the way to comprehend subjectivity in the midst of fragments. This approach allowed poets to negotiate any issue in an open but still distinctive way and to acknowledge the inexplicable. To think about the fragment leads into, on the one hand, a history of practices and, on the other, a **constellation** of concepts. The main point is to attempt to find an orientation in regard to the fragment; for instance, does it fall before totality, or does it exceed totality? If the fragmentary demand exceeds, it is because it creates new forms of exposure and, as such, stands as the very exposure of thought itself as a possibility.

The book *The Literary Absolute* (1978) by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy is the first authoritative study of the emergence of literature in German romanticism. The subject of the fragment within Jena Romanticism² is of central importance. As the name indicates, the fragmentary texts are far from being homogeneous or even consistent in their form and consider writing as their own object.

² Jena Romanticism is the first phases of Romanticism in German literature, represented by the work of a group centred in Jena from about 1798 to 1804.

In a way, the fragment combines completion and incompleteness within itself, or one may say, in an even more complex manner, it both completes and incompletes the dialectic of completion and incompleteness (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, 1988, p.50).

As Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy observe, the fragment involves an essential incompleteness in the form of totality or unity. The totality of fragments cannot be situated at a single point, being detached and standing for itself. What is installed is “the totality of the *fragments* as a plurality and its completion as the incompleteness of its infinity” (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, 1988, p.46).

Totality is not the sum of all. It is the co-presence of the part as the co-presence; it gives “contour” (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, 1988, p.50) to the fragments.

In the book *The Infinite Conversation* (1969), Maurice Blanchot attempted to develop intellectual insights around questions that arose from fragmentary writing. According to Blanchot, writing is not about exteriority (form) nor its continuous meaning (content), but rather the opening, which represents the fragmentary demand, one that does not exclude but somewhat exceeds the totality of the book. He states:

Writing marks but leaves no trace; it does not authorise us to work our way back from some vestige or sign to anything other than itself as (pure) exteriority – never given, never constituting or gathering itself in a relation of unity with a presence (to be seen, to be heard), with the totality of presence or the unique, present-absent (Blanchot, 2016, p.426).

For me, writing about the painting process is like Blanchot’s theory. The act of writing about the painting process occurs in relation to the painting; it appears alongside the work’s production between the act of writing and what I would call (borrowing Blanchot’s phrase) “the absence sense” of the painting. Throughout the process, I stand in between the painting and the writing; I am in between the totality of these forms. Within this, I would argue that the fragment generates a state of “becoming” instead of completing and perfecting. Also, fragmentation not only demands thoughts, the painting process, and writing about painting, but it also makes a demand on me, calling for a certain kind of response to each process as a painter in a shared existence. This thesis thus needs to be seen as a response to a fragmentary demand or alternatively to a demand made by the fragmentary.

The philosopher Gerhard Richter writes about the minor genre of Denkbild in the book *Thought-Images: Frankfurt School Writers' Reflections from Damaged Life* (2007). Richter examines four German writers, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Siegfried Kracauer, and Theodor Adorno, who was associated with “a poetic form of condensed, epigrammatic writing in textual snapshots” (Richter, 2007, p.2). Typical of this approach to writing is the reconfiguration of conceptual and aesthetic strategies and the way the writing process attends both to thought and to the texture of the language which conveys it. Their writings are related to their content in the sense of the form; differentiating the content becomes irrelevant because the presentation or “performance” of a text profoundly informs its content: “What they say cannot be thought in isolation from how they say it” (Richter, 2007, p.2). This approach to writing addressed the challenge of dealing with that which, in ordinary terms, cannot be spoken or said but might be captured indirectly through the deployment of an image.

The idea of the fragment is also relevant to a discussion of Hélène Cixous' concept of *l'écriture féminine* (feminine writing). The concept first appears in the essay “The Laugh of the Medusa” (1975). There is much to say about feminine writing as it relates to Western patriarchal concepts of masculine and feminine as opposing sexual identities. Here, my interest is strictly focused on the idea that *l'écriture féminine* is a style of writing that does not adhere to the dominant conventions of language and on Cixous' position towards the act of reading. Disruptions in the text, such as gaps, silences, puns, and novel images, characterise feminine writing. It is naturally a deconstructive language with continuity, plurality, indeterminacy, and flexibility. Cixous' essay posed a question concerning the idea of “within” that she claims must be exploded. She writes:

If a woman has always functioned “within” the discourse of man, a signifier that has always referred back to the opposite signifier which annihilates its specific energy and diminishes or stifles its very different sounds, it is time for her to dislocate this “within”, to explode it, turn it around, and seize it; to make it hers, containing it, taking it in her own mouth, biting that tongue with her very own teeth to invent for herself a language to get inside of. (Cixous, 1975, p.887)

Cixous claims “[women] must write... and bring women to writing” at the beginning of the essay, then reconfigure the idea of “within” to “shatter the framework of institutions, to blow up the law, to break up the truth with laughter” (Cixous, 1975, p.888). Cixous conceives the act of reading has consumed our identity in the world in ways that are utterly singular (based upon

phallogentrism); therefore, there is always an untraceable slippage that occurs between the word and the world, and for this reason, reading is never a uniform act.

1.1 Being-with

The idea of *being-with* was influenced by Martin Heidegger's existential idea of *being-with*. Nancy's writing covers a huge range of concerns and intellectual references. His main ideas (relevant to my own practice) are centred upon *being-with*, *spacing*, becoming, multiplicity, the fragment, the work of art, image and finite thinking. Everything is interlinked in his philosophical speculations, but especially in this chapter; I examine Nancy's idea, which gives form to exploring my painting process within *being-with*, *spacing* and becoming.



Figure 1.2 Caravaggio, *Death of the Virgin* 1606, 369 x 245cm © Louvre, Paris

Nancy articulated an ontological understanding of painting in the essay entitled “On the Threshold” (in the book *The Muses*, 1994). The essay examines the painting *Death of the Virgin* (Fig 1.2), arguing that the painting enables the viewers to enter “either to the inside or to the outside of ourselves” at the threshold of death, of the world, of existence, perhaps even as the **threshold**.

From the inside of (the) painting to the outside of (the) painting, there is nothing, no passage. There is painting, there is us, indistinctly, distinctly... Here, (the) painting is our access to the fact that we do not accede – either to the inside or to the outside of ourselves. [Caravaggio's] painting paints the threshold of existence. In these conditions,

to paint does not mean to represent but simply to pose the ground, the texture, and the pigment of the threshold (Nancy, 1996, p.61).

In this way, Caravaggio's painting is not a documentation of the world, it is about the painting's objects, such as the ground, the texture, and the pigment, which are a mode of existence in itself (Nancy, 1996, p.67). Nancy suggests painting functions in this way; he said, "See the invisible, not beyond the invisible, nor inside, nor outside, but right at it, on the threshold, like its very oil, its weave, and its pigment" (Nancy, 1996, p.59). To Nancy, painting is not much presenting the world as presenting it; painting travels to its feeling of a threshold and, in this way, constitutes a limit for itself. This is a material understanding of a limit and an impossibility of the world, existence, and threshold. Even though his idea is understood metaphysically, the concept of threshold provides supportive evidence that painting is a mode of existence and further has informed the way I describe my painting process as within the idea of *being-with*, my painting is predicated on a mode of existence.

- *Spacing*

Nancy was a fan of the Japanese artist, On Kawara. Kawara's work appeared as part of the conceptual art movement of the mid-sixties and engaged with time, death, existence, and the making of time. In 1965, Kawara painted three canvases work (Fig 1.3), "ONE THING", "1965", and "VIET-NAM" were inscribed on his work. The year 1965 indicates point in the Vietnam War when US combat troops were first sent to Vietnam (I will return to this work in relation to *spacing* below, p.24).

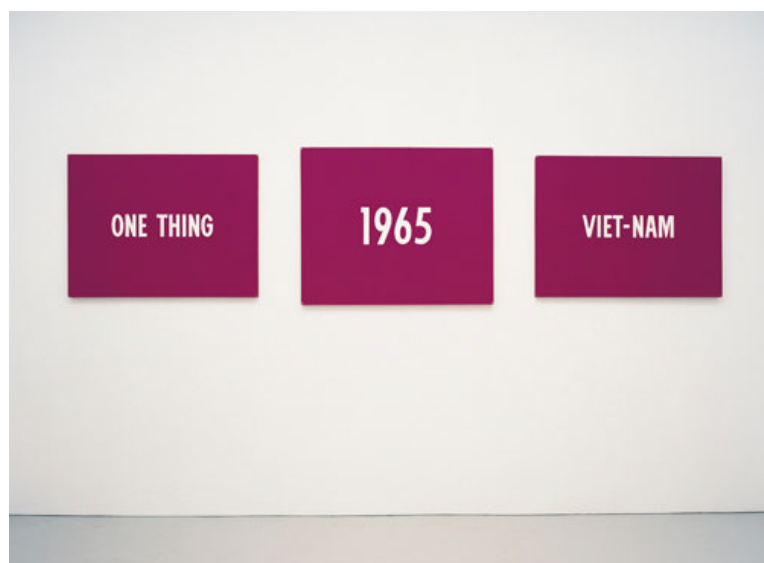


Figure 1.3 On Kawara, *One Thing* (3 parts) 1965, 118 x 131cm © Artist

Nancy gave a lecture, “The Technique of the Present”,³ in January 1997 at the Nouveau Musée/ Institut d’art contemporain, Villeurbanne, France where On Kawara’s works were shown in the exhibition *Whole and Parts 1965 – 1995*; Nancy articulated the idea of *presence* as:

It [Presence] is the act through which the thing is brought forth: *prae-est*. It is brought forth or brought before its nature as a thing, before everything that thrusts this nature into the world of its various connections: origins, relations, processes, finalities, becomings ... It draws its support from this movement alone, and its permanency lies in this very passing. And yet presence is the very thing that would seem to shelter the thing from any such passing (Nancy, 2005a, p.191).

As such, Kawara’s art can be understood as pure exposure to the process of temporalising, present, and time passing and becoming on the surface of his paintings. Nancy, in the same lecture (1997), explained Kawara’s question regarding “the present of presence”, “how can we expose what is unexposable?” (Nancy, 2005a, p.192). Nancy explained:

The present does not lie ahead in time since what lies ahead in relation to a past is immediately behind in relation to a future (unless the opposite is the case). In both senses, however, the present in time is nothing; it is pure time, time shielded from temporality, the space in which pure time opens out and is unexposed. Space does not represent time, like a line that would trace the immobile figure of a mobile process; rather, it opens time, distends it, distends instant itself so as to set up this unpassing present that time itself is ... Space is the origin of time, therefore, both its null point and the entire extension of its successive character. It is the opening of time, the simultaneity of its spacing (Nancy, 2005a, p.192).

Kawara’s work has historical events and embedded inscriptions on paintings which introduce the technique of *spacing*. This “produces the world, an ordering of the world, the world in part or as a whole”; at the same time, *spacing* enables us to present painting as “the whole in each part ” (Nancy, 2005a, p.195). These ideas take possession of their singularity, which sits on the edge of “the simultaneity of its *spacing*” (Nancy, 2005a, p.192). It is the veritable openness of its undefined references. With the idea of *spacing*, Nancy gives a closer reading on the triptych series

³ The lecture was given in the exhibition space where On Kawara’s work was being shown.

One Thing (Fig 1.3). He argues that the classical format of the triptych is “the articulation of a *spacing*, a space that can open onto or close around what can be seen either as part of that space or as belonging to another space altogether” and that it folds and unfolds in space (Nancy, 2005a, p.196).

Each of Kawara’s canvases requires eight hours of labour to produce, so in a literal sense each painting is a record of a day’s labour. The labour of the event simply implies the “intersection of time and space – its opening”. *Spacing* is related to the time as *spacing* of time. However, it is “neither a mode of being nor an operation of or in being” (Nancy, 2005a, p.199). It takes place only under the condition of “the *spacing* of time”. Nancy further explained:

The *spacing* of time is neither a mode of being nor an operation of or in being. It is what allows for there to be something (rather than nothing), whatever that something may be. The *spacing* of time, therefore, is a *spacing* prior to or outside of being. More exactly, It is the act of being – not in the sense of the action of a subject but in the sense of an act coextensive and cooriginary with being itself... So little is it “something”, therefore, some particular thing, that not only is it *in* neither space or time, it is neither space nor time; it is, so far as it is, more along the following lines: space and time are the names or the double name – space – time – for the necessarily double nature of what is essentially outside itself (whose essence lies in this outside – itself) (Nancy, 2005a, p.199).

The term *spacing* also appears in Nancy’s books *Being Singular Plural* (2000) and *The Ground of the Image* (2005). He writes, “*spacing* could not be confused with spreading out or with gaping open, but only with the intersection” (Nancy, 2000, p.140). In turn, painting enables *spacing* to be presented as its own presence. In all these aspects, an entire cosmology is opened that centres the world in ways that allow the presentational project (painting) to complete itself. In effect, the painting is a centred totality within a circulation of *spacing* realms.

... circulation goes in all directions at once, in all the directions of all the space-times opened by presence to presence: all things, all beings, all entities, everything past and future, alive, dead, inanimate, stones, plants, nails, gods ... Circulation – or eternity – goes in all directions, but it moves only insofar as it goes from one point to another; *spacing* is its absolute condition. From place to place, and from moment to moment,

without any progression or linear path, bit by bit and case by case, essentially accidental, it is singular and plural in its very principle (Nancy, 2005b, p.5).

Central to the *spacing* realms, the *spacing* of the composition is positioning of the feeling that the painting is a form of circulation across different vectors of presentation. In the essay, “The Date, Paintings of On Kawara”, published by the Art Institute of Chicago (1991), the exhibition curator Anne Rorimer gives a thorough analysis of his date paintings, *Today Series* (Fig 1.3). Kawara’s ongoing, open-ended series⁴ involves simple monochrome paintings. The date on each painting is the date of production. Although his work follows conventional composition, “two-dimensionality, rectilinearity, and painting surface” (Rorimer, 1991, p.126), Kawara’s inscription consists of the letters and numbers of the day’s date, the surface, and the space between each work, and this circulates in the form of being itself in its becoming. It does not result in a “configuration of abstract” (Rorimer, 1991, p.126). Thus the work in question displaces signification. I would argue that the painting process is situated between compositions, leading to intervals or *spacing* in order to convey that which cannot be expressed by direct means.



Figure 1.4 On Kawara's 13th Street studio, New York, 1966. © One Million Years Foundation

Nancy’s book *The Birth to Presence* (1993) argues that the movement of the body articulates the space of Chora (Nancy, 1993, p.348), where the pure separation of forms and colours would be equal to the total indistinction of a single material mass. He states:

⁴ On Kawara began his *Today* series on 4 January, 1966. These paintings range from 8 x 10 inches to 61 x 89 inches.

Painter imitates the line drawn by withdrawal, the silent coming and going in which presence exchanges itself ceaselessly with its own disappearance – leaving and coming back ceaselessly from farther away, from farther back, from the bottomless region from the space of Chora, where the pure separation of forms and colours would be rigorously equal to the total indistinction of a single material mass – coming and going: the infinite in the finite, or rather, the infinite of the finite. Alternation as simultaneity. Departure in arrival. The movement of the immobile (Nancy, 1993, p.348).

Overall, the *spacing* of time in painting is being at the same period, removed from the world, outside of it and inscribed into the fabric of becoming. Painting actively participates in the continuity of time and includes events and time in the artistic actions. Studio-based research in painting operates in an arena where spatiality is integral. It shifts the focus of painting itself away from the idea that painting is “produced” while gathering knowledge or examining the relation to the surface of the painting. The painting surface develops a field in which knowledge is emerging. Rather than a painting being the outcome of the research, I apply the notion of *spacing* to comprehend the painting process.

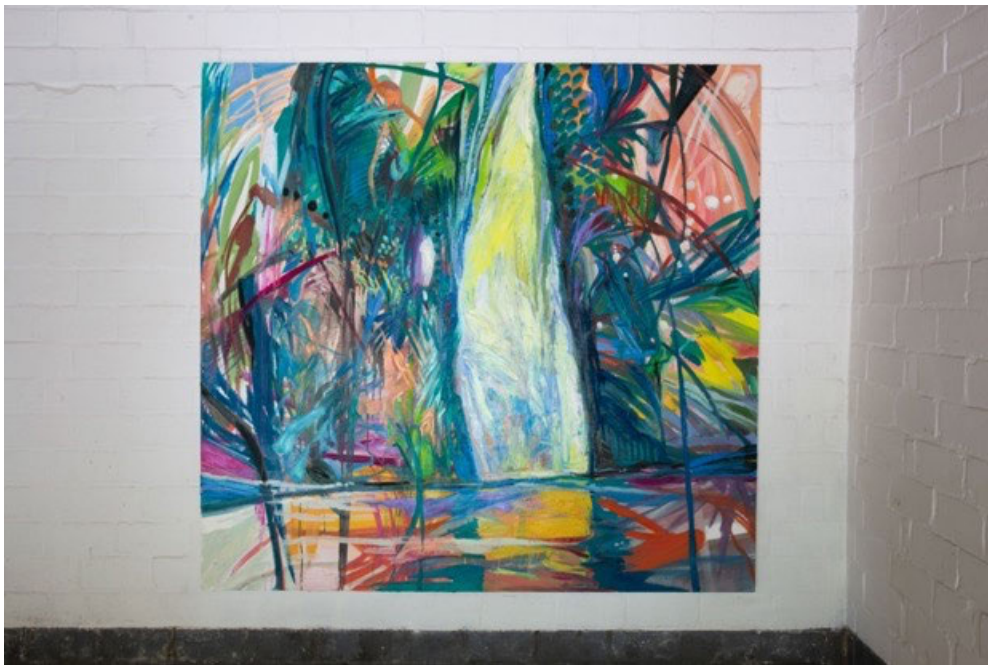


Figure 1.5 Installation view, *Clearing* 2018, acrylic, oil pastel and oil on canvas, 180 x 190cm

I face an empty canvas and start to make a mark. Then I find that painting is not “speaking” of the desire to create symmetry of the painting surface and the world. Something is lacking; is it a

lack within the subject (me, painter), or is it a lack within the painting (object)? A third space is produced here between an object and a subject or *spacing* within the painting. The way I look at the painting (Fig 1.5) does not cohere with the way my painting “looks out” at the world, because there is an interruption between looking at and looking out. Within the structure of desire falls the possibility of completion. It is as if the desire is always a search for an elsewhere which is impossible to realise. The surface of a painting is a simple zone of invitation to an infinite array of gestures open to bodily trace and inscription. Painting can be the actual space of thinking and thoughts occurring during the painting process.

In the unveiling of each painting process, *spacing* comes into play in an understanding of painting. Anything can be integrated during the painting process in ways that might stretch out the actual designation of *being-with* a painting. My painting is simply the free play of the gestures regulating a movement outside of gravity or a force of indexicality. Abstraction is not the result of subtraction but a process of this condensation that manifests a point of concentration existing within its own radiance.

From the start to the end of the painting process, the authorship of my paintings is displaced and replaced quickly; authorship belongs either to me or to the painting itself. This means I am trying to make a painting with a specific intention, but the painting is trying to undo this because there are always unexpected events on the surface. On the canvas, where the power dynamic shifts from me to the painting, this secret play of the two “authors” (one real, one imagined) overflows on the surface. Indirect and informal, this unforeseen conflict within the painting evolves, creating tensions, almost unintelligibly “becoming” something unexpected. In so doing, the idea of *spacing* distributes energy between attentiveness and unrecognisable blind attention; this tension enables me to encompass “being in”, “with”, “from”, and “around” painting.

- *Being-with*

In Julius Gavroche’s essay “Jean-Luc Nancy: Of being in common”, Gavroche likens the logic of *being-with* to passengers on the same train. When passengers are in the same compartment, they are seated next to each other in an “accident, arbitrary and completely exterior manner” (Gavroche, 2021). They are seemingly not linked but are together as they travel on the same train, in the same space, same direction, and same period. Gavroche explains *being-with* as

a relation without relation, or rather, being exposed simultaneously to a relationship and the absence of a relationship. Such exposure is made up of the simultaneous immanence of the retreat and the coming of the relation, and it can be decided at any moment by the least incident ... it never ceases being decided at each instant – in one direction or in the other, in one direction *and* in the other, in “freedom” and in “necessity”, in “consciousness” and in “unconsciousness”, the undecided decision of stranger and neighbour, of solitude and collectivity, of attraction and repulsion (Gavroche, 2021).

Thus, being has no common exposition; there is no substance, no essence, and no common identity, as with the passengers on the same train, but there is the idea of “being” in common.

In the book *At the Limits of Presentation: Coming into presence and its aesthetic relevance in Jean-Luc Nancy's philosophy* (2007), Martta Heikkilä uses the word “stranger” to explain Nancy’s notion of art. She emphasises the matter of strangeness as access to the presence of art:

What is crucial to Nancy’s notion of art is a matter of strangeness. Art means access to what cannot be anticipated: art comes into presence on its own limit and as this limit, which borders on what is still strange, that is to say, unknown, impossible, and negative to it, and even remains so (Heikkilä, 2008, p.291).

Then how can we grasp the idea of *being-with* as a conjunction of understanding the painting process and writing? In the book *Being Singular Plural* (2000), Nancy prequalifies the ideas of “being”. It is essential to reiterate this concept to understand Nancy’s idea of *being-with*. “Being” means making sense and “articulations of the difference between nothing and something” (Nancy, 2000, p.172). Following this, “being” is both relational and differential. All being is being towards something and assumes this as a form of relation. The “with” is not the sign of reality or “intersubjective dimension”. According to Nancy, the “with” “constitutes unity/disunity and also uncovers traction and tension, repulsion/attraction, of the between us” (Nancy, 2000, p.61). The “with” stays between us, and we stay between us. However, the “with” remains only as the “interval between us” (Nancy, 2000, p.61).

Nancy differentiated this idea of *being-with* from Heidegger's notion of being, as it is expanded in ways that do not subordinate it to the idea of the subject. Nancy's thoughts on *being-with* provide Being as its constitution; it occurs as a "multiplicity of the totality of being": As Nancy proposes in the book (2000):

The time of Being (the time that it is) is this simultaneity, this coincidence that presupposes "incidence" in general. It assumes movement, displacement, and deployment; it assumes the originary temporal derivative of Being, its *spacing*. But this plurality is no longer said in multiple ways that all begin from a presumed, single core of meaning. The multiplicity of the said (that is, of the sayings) belongs to Being as its constitution. This occurs with each said, which is always singular; it occurs in each said, beyond each said, and as the multiplicity of the totality of being [*l'étant en totalité*] (Nancy, 2000, p.38).

To exemplify this idea of *being-with* as the totality of being and to establish the relation between painting and the notion of *being-with*, I return to my practice as a painter and a researcher. As a practitioner, I spent a number of years painting with an oil medium; particularly, I was captivated by the effects that oil creates on the canvas. Such a fascinating fact about oil painting to me: there is push and pull of the inside and the outside; this is modulated by tension/traction from my hand to the canvas and from brushes to the marks. The oil medium demonstrates a capacity for enduring the impact of negation. The painting process records what I am experiencing at that moment, the moment the painting transforms itself from nothing to something as a result of unexpected drips, marks, the impact of wet-on-wet medium, the limits of the body and surprises within its reaction to the canvas. The tension between the inside and outside then leads to the question of *spacing* and the relationship of the space within the painting to the painter's body and the outside world. This, in turn, implies observations about *being-with* within the studio in conjunction with the imaginary location of the image. Observation is linked to theorisation, leading to a poetics of encounter. Here, the idea of *being-with* becomes the critical vehicle to articulate and disseminate an alternative methodology to understand my painting process.

Continuing the focus on my practice, when I paint, I am in the position not only to see painting but also to sense optical exposure around me. Sometimes motivation comes from unrecognisable blind attention; something is there. Something comes out from this, returning or disappearing

during the practice. Blind attention can be a mere detail which includes what I see, what I feel, and what I pass through and think on the day I made the painting. Painting is a series of folds of space, temporalities of finitude, memory presences, moods, **affects**, inscriptions, intensities, and emergencies that produce a condition of entanglement outside of a demarked resolution of all elements of play. This gives rise to the feeling that the painting is close to being a labyrinth composed of both form and desire, and this extends the life of the painting beyond the painter to an “exposing of the general co-appearance of beings” (Nancy, 2000, p.70).

As Nancy states in his book *Multiple Arts* (2005), if the artist’s work is the “organisation of this experience”, the notion of *being-with* has the potential to explain what happens in the making of paintings (Nancy, 1996, p.215). Nancy writes:

In time, I come before what is coming; I come right up to a thing that comes up to itself. I come, in other words, right up to the coming of the thing. What we call an “artist’s work” is nothing other than the organisation of this experience (Nancy, 2005, p.215).

When I paint, if the studio space allows, I try to spread all my paintings out and have a “conversation” with the paintings. I am used to being in (surrounded by) paintings, and part of being in the studio is the sensation of being lost within them. It is like one eye is in real space, and one eye wanders into other paintings, perhaps elsewhere but planning future action. This is a strange feeling. Painting is capable of being in time but also resistant to that time, which implies that painting is never fixed in location or time. Within the act of spreading things out, there is intuitive openness at play within the canvas, a sequence of gestures and strands of thought leading to experiences of *being-with* through the assembling and completing of paintings. As Nancy describes in *Multiple Arts* (2006), “What makes the event an event is not only that it happens, but that it surprises” (Nancy, 2009, p.159). I would argue, then, that what makes painting a painting is not only that it happens, but that painting surprises us.

- Becoming

The process of painting is not engaged solely with a single activity, such as utilising a technique or exercising creativity; it also involves the sensations artists are exposed to, the thoughts they progress, and the feelings they are experiencing while making the painting. What happens on the

surface of paintings is that they cannot be named, only seen. It is this quality that provides an orientation towards “becoming”.

New suggestions are offered by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in the book *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), with its exploration of the complex nature of the concept of “becoming” and variability with regard to its encounter. Deleuze proposes these ideas as a tool of analysis, not recognition. If we are examining painting as “becoming”, then painting needs to be located as the in-between of the individual (painter) and their environment. This in-between is a state of being ungrounded. Becoming makes both sides of the exchange between the individual and their environment part of the same entity, which then exists independently from either side of the exchange.

Deleuze and Guattari build on the above idea that “Affects are becomings”. Affect is “not a personal feeling, nor is it a characteristic; it is the effectuation of a power of the pack that throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel”(Deleuze and Guattari, 2005, p.240). Within this, understanding affects can be read as close to the dynamics of desire, thereby opening out relationships to multiplicity and the transformations of relations. In this respect, intensity as a property can be equated with affect. The authors attempt to separate affect from sensation or perception. In this way, affect is not located in the subject or object but in a place between the two. On a temporal level, it is a zone of anticipation and restlessness. Affects express the modalities of experience independently of actual things in themselves. Therefore, affect is the entity entirely separate from either subject or object. The painting process cannot be figured as a single line or idea but is derived from scattering across fractured surfaces of continual “becoming”.

Here we can take a clue from another passage in Deleuze and Guattari's *What is Philosophy?* (1994):

Becoming is neither an imitation nor an experienced sympathy nor even an imaginary identification. It is not resemblance, although there is resemblance. But it is only a produced resemblance. Rather, Becoming is an extreme contiguity within a coupling of two sensations without resemblance or, on the contrary, in the distance of a light that captures both of them in a single reflection (Deleuze and Guattari, 2015, p.173).

Such a notion is based upon a disavowal of the idea of a fixed identity or stable subject. It simultaneously opens with it the sense of everything being on the move. Knowing this, I proceeded without feeling that sensations such as doubt should be eliminated. Instead, I was free to encounter a landscape of emotional space. Therefore, this opens an understanding of the relationship between method, invention, and experiment as a series of switching devices that coexist with the unfolding of painting practice.

1.2 Reading-with

What is implicated in this project is a cyclical relationship between painting, writing, and reading. *Being-with* plays an essential role in these coexistences. According to Nancy's idea, which I explained above, *being-with* is not an applicable concept for the togetherness (of these three); rather, it develops the central idea that nothing can exist in isolation. Painting, writing, and reading do not solely exist alone; all "come into contact" (Nancy, 2009, p.5). It is not a continuity of one and then the other; it is the contiguity of all: of being. The analysis of this demands an understanding of these circulated relationships. Each interferes *with* the others, from which comes an extreme closeness which emphasises the distancing between them. It is not having "access to a thing"; rather, it is having "access to an access" (Nancy, 2009, p.4).

If "to come into contact" is to begin to make sense of one another, then this "coming" penetrates nothing; there is no intermediate and mediating "milieu". Meaning is not a milieu in which we are immersed. There is no milieu [between places]. It is a matter of one or the other, one and the other, one with the other, but by no means the one in the other, which would be something other than one or the other (another essence, another nature, a diffuse or infuse generality) (Nancy, 2009, p.6–7).

Being-with the painting process aligns closely with the recording of the process of painting. The writing about the painting process is "coming into contact" with reading. Reading is finding traces of inscription either on the surface of the canvas or as written images or texts. There is a struggle underway between being close to the meaning and gaining knowledge; however, touching upon one another gives "an access" to "one or the other, one and the other and one with the other". Painting – writing – reading, as a result of this, circulates.

In the book *The Writing of the Disaster* (1980), Maurice Blanchot states: "Un-knowledge is not the lack of knowledge; it is not even knowledge of the lack but rather that which is hidden by knowledge and ignorance alike: the neutral, the un-manifest" (Blanchot, 1995, p.63).

Investigating cyclical relationships is not so much about gaining knowledge but rather an attempt to understand un-knowledge as animating the liminal *spacing* being explored in this thesis.

In this chapter, "Reading-with", I present one author, Clarice Lispector, and one painter, Cy Twombly, as examples to show how reading fits into contextualisation. Both books I reference

in this chapter have an unexpected connection which starts with “reading with”: *Reading with Clarice Lispector* and *Reading Cy Twombly*. I explain reading about text and images mediated by the idea of inscription. To clear up confusion about the concept of inscription, I shall begin with how inscription is understood within the scope of this research. In painting, inscriptions are known as an artist’s signature on either the front or back of the canvas. It records the authority and provenance of the painting and gives clues about the painting. The verb “to inscribe” commonly means writing, carving, marking, drawing, painting, or engraving onto something. Within this set of meanings, the word “inscription” is capable of describing painting. The hand leads the brush through the surface of the painting. The inscription process does not know enough of itself yet emerges in the language of painting. Painting can be understood as writing, an act of inscribing through mark-making. It is an inscription process on the surface; it makes things perceptible.

In the book *Origins of Semiosis* (1994), the linguist Götz Wienold explains: “writing, inscription and fixed text are born together”. According to Wienold, the inscription is a part of certain types of text that “does not presuppose that the whole of language can be written”. He emphasises that inscription “is not written in the sense that one writes language according to the textual cohesion of spoken language” (Winfried, 1994, pp.455–456).

The philosopher Jacques Derrida also includes the possibility of a space of inscription in his book *Of Grammatology* (1974); he states that writing signifies inscription and the durable institution of a sign. It is taken to mean something durable and something arbitrary which occurs “outside of the horizon”. Outside of the world may be seen as a space of inscription. Within this, inscription comprises signs and indications and may contain mark-making and fragmentary text.

If “writing” signifies inscription and especially the durable institution of a sign (the only irreducible kernel of the concept of writing), writing generally covers the entire field of linguistic signs. In that field, a certain sort of instituted signifiers may then appear, “graphic” in the narrow and derivative sense of the word, ordered by a particular relationship with other instituted – hence “written”, even if they are “phonic” – signifiers. The very idea of institution – hence of the arbitrariness of the sign is unthinkable before the possibility of writing and outside of its horizon. Quite simply, that is, outside of the horizon itself, outside the world as space of inscription, as the opening to the emission

and to the spatial distribution of signs, to the regulated play of the differences even if they are phonic (Derrida, 2016, p.44).

The painter Willem De Kooning said in an interview with critic David Sylvester (March 1960), “Content, if you want to say, is a glimpse of something, an encounter, like a flash – it’s very tiny, very tiny, content” (Sontag, 2009, p.1). This implies that the inscription process, which is implicated in the production of the painting, stands without explicit relationship to what could be termed meaning or content. The painting, in the context of the statement by De Kooning, is more an emptying of potential meaning than its construction. In *The Space of Literature* (1955), Maurice Blanchot states, “To write is to make oneself the echo of what cannot cease speaking – and since it cannot, to become its echo, I have, in a way, to silence it” (Blanchot, 1989, p.27). Although this statement addresses literature, it can be related to the context of painting. So, in the space of the painting, the inscription process becomes an echo chamber of what it can not explicitly signify. The painter is simply left to explore the non-relation that opens out within the act of the painting. This could be termed the negativity of the painting process, or put in more simple terms, the idea that perhaps the artist faces away from the world rather than presenting themselves to it.

- Clarice Lispector

I have paid close attention to the book *Água Viva: The stream of life* (1973) by Clarice Lispector. She liberated the way of expressing the process of art by opening it up to all possible thoughts and, in so doing, provided a means of understanding how creative thoughts work. Her text can result in discursive confusion for the reader because it has a disorganised order. Lispector expands her writing practice, rather than stating or focusing on one matter; she structures multiple identities in her book according to her thoughts. Her writing style has become my strategy, which has influenced my approach to describing my painting process in language. In my description, I weave in elements of theory, reminiscences of my childhood, and exhibitions I have visited. In a way, painting – becomes – thinking – becomes – writing – becomes – painting. The painting and the writing have had to function at the same level of importance, rather than one coming first and the other “explaining”.

Água Viva is a novel, a story about presenting the human experience and existence. It is a story of falling into life, about multiple identities (including being a painter), fear, exhilaration bound

up within desire, a story of work, being a lover, and all those identities' relationships to the world. In Portuguese, *Água Viva* literally means "living water". The title captures the fluidity of her long diary-like text and hints that there is no direction, rational discourse, or filtered emotion; rather, the novel consists of fragmented notes about the mind and thoughts like water flowing in a stream. It is unsurprising that Lispector had doubts about *Água Viva*: "That book [*Água Viva*]; I spent three years without daring to publish it, thinking it would be awful. Because it didn't have a story, it didn't have a plot" (Lispector, 2014, p.xiii). Indeed, the novel evades a conventional sense of writing. Long before I knew Lispector's work, I was aware and wary of the tendency of the written components of my practice to assume fragmented forms, of the pleasure and fascination as well as the unease and struggle evoked by written language. It was not because of the second language I am writing in for this thesis; my unease and pleasure were more related to the question of how to comprehend the visual world in a written sense. Having a number of options for language – Korean (mother tongue), English, Chinese, and the visual language of painting – gives me many choices to express myself. Yet, the way I paint and unfold my thoughts has no relation to my spoken language (as a form of direct communication). It is more like there is no option but to be discursive, in other words, to liberate myself. Fascinating glimpses in Lispector's book made me recognise that contact with the world (and with painting) is immediate and instant; the struggle with engagement in language and sensation is a given. She writes: "Now it is an instant. Do you feel it? I do" (Lispector, 2014, p.39).

My impression of Lispector's book was nothing more than the opposite of the typical experience of her writing. I did not think the book was hard to read. I followed the text with amusement. Until I read other reviews of *Água Viva* describing the book's most discussed traits, the unconventional form, uneasy translation, and lack of structure, I did not recognise those aspects. Instead, I was thrilled to experience the autobiographical element of the text. As I often say that my work is about a walk of life, instant meeting with colours, lines, and movement of the world. It is based on an encounter with others, writing, scenery, a book, exhibitions, and a moment of passion.

And what she writes:

About me, in the world, I want to tell you about the strength that guides me and brings me the world itself, about the vital sensuality of clear structures, and about the curves that are organically connected to other curved shapes. My handwriting and my

circumvolutions are potent, and the freedom that blows in summer has fatality in itself (Lispector, 2014, pp.33–34).

I feel a kind of affinity towards Lispector's work because my painting/writing often links to my habitual pattern as guidance (perhaps, in the world, from the world): the notes in my digital journal contain many incomplete sentences, I have made many unfinished drawings with only one line, and the subject matter and titles of my paintings often come during (or after) the process of making them. More importantly, I might not be certain about what I am doing while making a painting. It is hard to describe why I use specific colours and feel satisfied or dissatisfied with my paintings. All I know is that I am *being-with* the painting, *spacing* the painting and myself.

'Try to understand what I am painting and what I am writing now. I'll explain in painting, as in writing, I try to see strictly at the moment I see – and not to see through the memory of having seen in a past instant. The instant is this one. The instant is of imminence that takes my breath away. The instant is in itself imminent. At the same time, I live it, I burst into its passage into another instant (Lispector, 2014, p.68).

It is just after 3:00 a.m. I am about to hear the newspaper deliveryman coming. I am walking around my studio just before dawn. I squeezed paint tubes onto palettes. I then began reciting why I do art, what is my goal in the future: I paint myself out of my nightmares and into my fantasy. I paint out of my resentment and into my passion. I paint because it allows me to confront the truth, which I haven't thought of, or which I do not want to face. I paint to quell the pain. I paint because I do not need to speak, as painting itself is a language. I paint to have conversations with people, the unknown, friends, and family. I paint in the solitude that originates from being surrounded by a lot of people. I paint to mollify the voices shouting inside me, outside me, all around. I paint to create connecting links in a world that often appears as two opposite poles, day and night, bright and dark. I paint to help people view the world differently. I paint to provide answers even though these answers could make me feel worried. I paint to remember. I paint to be remembered. I paint to forget. I paint to understand people's abnormal actions which in term helps me understand the hidden secrets that those people try to hide. I paint to know better about humans that I cannot control at all. I paint because I believe art is powerful but at same time, I also know that it is sometimes powerless. I paint because art is a paradox. I paint to deliver beauty. I paint to surprise – with the belief that art could be magical.

Extract from my journal, 2017

As I wrote in the digital journal, my painting is often related to my memory; there is no clear point of departure for my painting. No representational images or narratives explain my work. It is more like an effort to capture “the number of instants” running through the day, week, or month I am making a particular painting. My sense of the space I am in opens as endlessly divisible, creating edges by which access to the world and a singularity of meaning is rendered impossible. The image (Fig 1.6) below is a drawing project that started on the first day of the lockdown in the UK in 2020. (Further explanation can be found in the Appendix, pp.117–119)

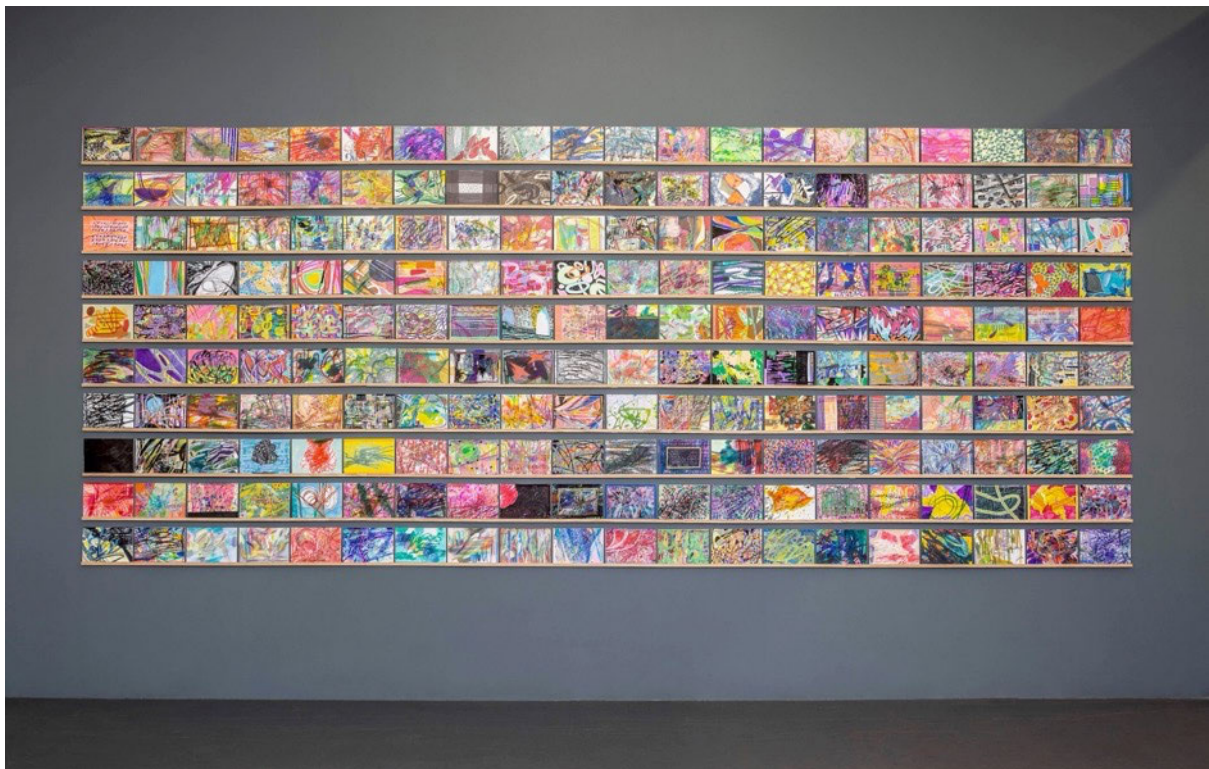


Figure 1.6 Installation view, *Drawings from Isolation 1 – 200* 2020: 9 December 2021 – 30 January 2022 Courtesy of Patricia Fleming Gallery Photo: Keith Hunter.

I am falling into the unknown realm of painting. Painting has the constitution of the “fragile” moment, a stray gesture incapable of finding direction or explanation that leads into a space of oblivion in time. I “read with” my painting process while following a trace of experience, like Lispector, that I have undergone in my painting through the documentation of my work in photos as part of my research. Still, it is hard to articulate each stage in making a painting and the logic of each decision I made because there are missing events and thoughts. Not every decision in painting is motivated by logic. But there is a logic behind that. There is no logic in my exploration of the painting process and writing. Perhaps, like Lispector, I throw bait in order to comprehend and continue.

So writing is the method of using the word as bait: the word fishing for whatever is not word. When this non-word – between the lines – takes the bait, something has been written ... so what saves you is writing absentmindedly (Lispector, 2014, p.15).

Helene Cixous, who admired Lispector's work, wrote literary theory and fiction and on politics, philosophical poetics, and feminism, becoming associated with *l'écriture féminine*. Cixous discussed Lispector in her seminars and edited the book *Reading with Clarice Lispector* (1990). She analysed silence as Lispector's "technique of the performative" (Cixous, 1990, p.57). As Cixous writes:

She [Clarice Lispector] enters and exits with words of silence, like water, and at the same time, she performs it. This makes the other side, or the other side's life appear. She says at some point that she has made a secret pact with the other side. A simple and paradoxical thing happens: if she wants to salute the chair that she only sees, from the moment she salutes it with words, there is a subject, and she is taken in the salutation. (Cixous, 1990, pp.36–37)

The painting shown in Figure 1.7 examines the fragments within the oppositions of I and Other and Inside and Outside. I would argue that using narrative subjects such as memories of lived experience as starting points can constitute a ground for a sublimating discourse in painting that makes conscious/unconscious distinctions irrelevant. *Agua Viva* is not able to be summarised. It has only an accessible format, "It diffuses and spreads" (Cixous, 1990, p.99).

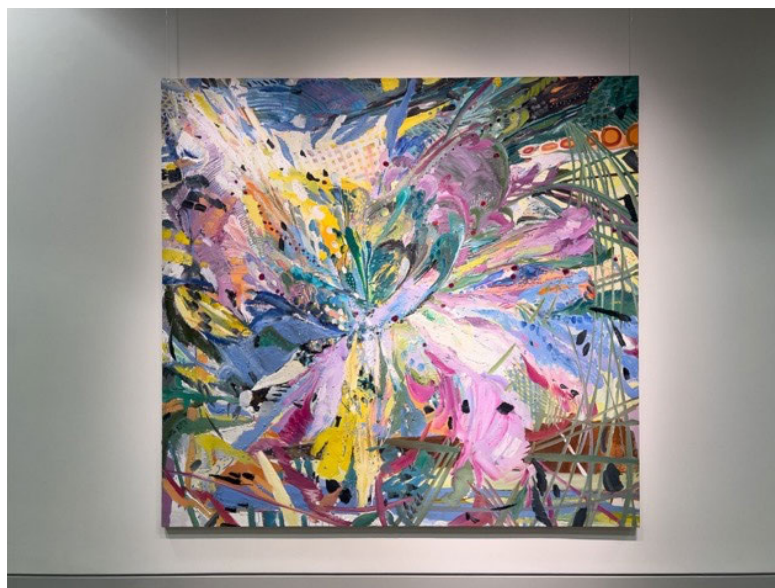


Figure 1.7 *Necessary Prequel* 2020 – 2022, 170 x 180cm, acrylic, oil pastel and oil on canvas Photo: Maria-Christina Onca

On the level of examining my painting in writing, the experience of wanting to insert my voice in a frank manner is the basis of my motivation. Writing about the process of painting is the drama of writing, of thoughts. It is the only possible approach for me. I agree with Cixous' idea that "My painting has no words: it is beyond thought" (Cixous, 1990, p.24). My painting has no words: it is beyond thought and performance. To some degree, it may just be an accumulation of my experience. Written language is unlike brush marks on painting, which do not require communication. Whereas Lispector's writing is like a brush mark with a sense of temporality and gesture, her writing has long passages to sustain the sense of "nowness" and instance. In each event in the paragraph in the book, there is a sensation that does not meet the conclusion, and between the sections, there is *spacing* which "has an unheard bodily rhythm, and the sentence without sentence" (Cixous, 1990, p.70).

- Cy Twombly

Twombly said about his painting, "I spill my guts out on the paintings, and then they want me to say something about them" (Jacobus, 2016, p.5). What he said serves to reflect something else; something starts from not describable at his gut level and to provide a point of being something else is presented in his work. Writing about theory draws upon symbolic meaning, and poetic fragments drive much more imaginary text, which enables it to be closer to painting and take down what it does "say" in work.

Cy Twombly's relationship with the idea of the fragment (poetics of incompleteness) begins with his fascination with writing (scribbles on canvas) and poetry. He writes marks, makes stains on the canvas, and uses poetry to be closer to one of these languages rather than separating painting and literature. Twombly's poetics fragments are connected to the sensation of movement and a sense of the unboundedness in his work. Both "reading" and looking at his works brings viewers into the time and the *spacing* of his painting. This gives a sense of *being-with* the embodiment of the relationship between painting, writing, time, and space. Perhaps the secret of his inscriptions in this regard breaks up the formal coherence of entities and suggests a new way in which things might be read from the standpoint of the loss of narrative modes of communication in time and space.

In his book, *The Responsibility of Forms*, Roland Barthes includes a chapter about "Cy Twombly: Works on Paper (1979)". Barthes writes:

TW [Twombly] alludes to writing (as he also often refers to culture through words), and then he goes off somewhere else ... Far away from calligraphy, from that formed, drawn, deliberate, shapely writing ... the essence of writing is neither a form nor a usage but only a gesture, that gesture which produces it by permitting it to linger (Barthes, 1991, p. 158).

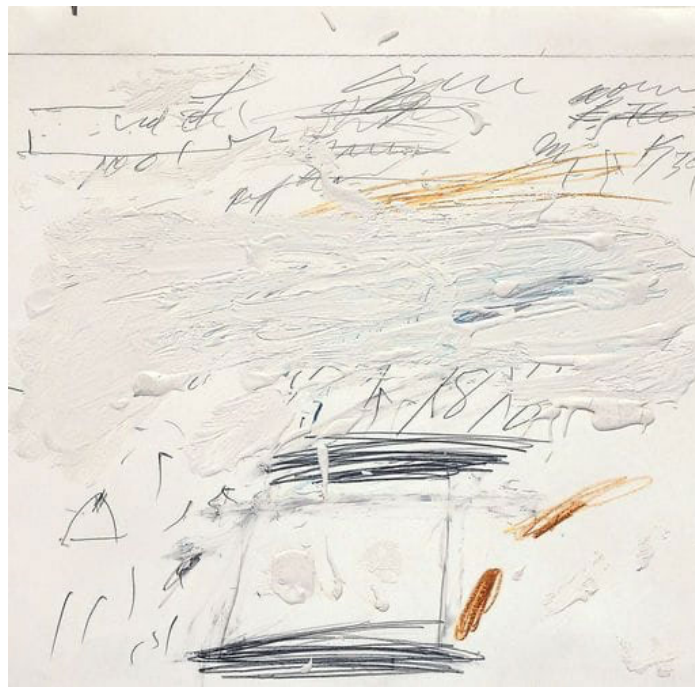


Figure 1.8 Cy Twombly, *Poems to the Sea* 1959, oil-based house paint, pencil, 22.9 x 31cm © Cy Twombly Foundation

The image in Figure 1.8 shows an example of Twombly's "writings". The cursive loops over the surface of his canvas are recognisable; waves sign, the sign of this wave (inscription). In *Reading with Cy Twombly*, Mary Jacobus describes Twombly's manifesto regarding painting's primary act as "the direct and indirect pressures brought to a climax in the acute act of forming". He continues: "To paint involves a certain crisis, or at least a crucial moment of sensation or release" (Jacobus, 2016, p.87). The word "release" reminds me of **emptiness** and fullness. Some of Twombly's structure works are more fixed using calligraphy – Scribble. This links to the Chinese aesthetic of emptiness and fullness.

The French writer François Cheng explains Eastern aesthetic discourse in his book, *Empty and Full* (1979). It draws upon three fundamental principles: the notion of breaths, full and empty,

and the alternation of yin and yang. The vital breaths and yin and yang are “the preeminent site of transformation, the place where fullness can attain its whole measure” (Cheng, 1994, p.36). Emptiness is “a way the Chinese conceive the universe”, and it is not a negative concept, something “vague or non-existent”; it is “dynamic and active” (Cheng, 1994, p.36). Cheng explains that within the Eastern understanding, when the painting surface is empty, that is the source of the infinite, and it is also the space where breath becomes the source of universal animation.

For the stroke to be animated by the breath, emptiness must not only inhabit the stroke; it must also guide the wrist of the painter ... The painter is not to begin painting until his hand reaches this point [the result of great concentration] of culmination, which suddenly yields to emptiness (Cheng, 1994, p.36).

The act of inscribing of a poem in a painting inaugurated in the Tang period (618 – 907) to Sung period (960 – 1279), introduced the idea of full and empty words (words without meanings). “The poem inscribed in the blank space of a picture is not just an artificially added commentary” (Cheng, 1994, p.96), it is inhabited in the space, and there is no distinction between the painted elements and the calligraphic signs. This made possible the understanding that poetry and painting were linked, to the extent that painting was often referred to as a form of silent poetry. In turn, poetry was said to aspire toward a condition beyond language so that the vital breath is free to circulate. There is the *spacing* between empty and full.

Twombly’s space of release and the sensation of inscription creates an imaginary room in art, “a form of silent poetry”; the poetic space safeguards the space of enjoyment (Jacobus, 2016, p.76). Twombly’s poetics of incompleteness draws on the survivals and fragments of the past (Jacobus, 2016, p.4). Cy Twombly’s paintings may be read as “nothing”, which is secluded in the notion of “the emptying out that takes place” (Jacobus, 2016, p.77).



Figure 1.9 Cy Twombly, *Untitled* 2002, acrylic, wax crayon, and pencil on handmade paper, 56.9 x 38.7cm © Cy Twombly Foundation Photo: Peter Schailchli.

When I viewed an exhibition of Cy Twombly's painting (15 September – 17 December 2022, Gagosian Gallery, London), a thought arose that this show reveals such an organized sense of Twombly's last decade of his works. Twombly's works on paper blur the distinctive differentiation between painting, drawing, and writing; his work has such a plane of consistency. It is as though these works are not only created out of his usual large scale but, as part of their process of becoming something, have inscribed the temporality. There is then the sense that these works exist in-between two forms of empty and full, the plain paper emptying and the saturated hues as a more distant source that might be understood as a memory (e.g., the image of flowers, Fig 1.9) or more obscure than this simple understanding. In such a consistent practice, Twombly has interiorised his practice as a painter to return to a multiplexity of cultural, literal, and linguistical meaning; memory, pigment, matter, language, and light all take their place within a play of difference that brings me into the *spacing* of time.

Part Two – Thoughts on Painting

Part Two of this thesis is an invitation to the reader to wander and wonder within painting practices I have carried out in different locations. It is arranged as a collection of fragments of thoughts on painting. There is, of course, a whole array of preoccupations woven into these continuous encounters. These include the ideas of failure, visibility and invisibility, memory, identity, mark-making, calligraphy, material understanding, and chance. I present each of these ideas related to eight specific paintings alongside excerpts from my digital journal, drawing attention to the principal preoccupations or the main ways of figuring outside of determinate readings within my painting practice and my experiences.

Whilst I only introduced *Agua Viva* in Part One, there are two other major influences in my research. One is not more important than the others or lesser; however, the weight of my focus is mainly on Clarice Lispector. Simone Weil's *First and Last Notebooks* (1970) and Etel Adnan's *Seasons* (2008) are the two other books. The relevance of all three books to my work is not so much in what is written as in how it is written. In each case, there is a kind of engagement in writing that had no formal preconceived sense of its final form. Lispector had doubts about whether *Agua Viva* was a book with any conventional purpose; her goal was “to rearrange conventional language to find meaning, never to discard it completely” (Lispector, 2014, p.xii). Simone Weil's *First and Last Notebooks* were produced through the medium of her notebooks which reflect her intellectual shorthand and the emotional self-portrait of her passionate engagement with the affairs of the world. The book is thus a sketch of how she discerns the world and records her life. When reading Etel Adnan's collection of poems, *Seasons*, specific images and impressions might come to mind. Her engagement with poetic language, such as “Leaves fall and fall. Those that stayed orange or yellow shine under the rain or the snow” (Adnan, 2008, pp.29–30), evokes an intuitive response to vivid orange or yellow colour, the movement of nature and her paintings (Fig 2.1).

Adnan states, “It seems to me I write what I see, paint what I am” (Guggenheim Museum, New York, *Etel Adnan: Light's New Measure*, 8 October 2021 – 10 January 2022). Adnan's writing is not a way to persuade but rather gives a chance to observe her mind and vision. In all three cases, is the texts are challenging for the reader to read because of the textual and temporal demands they make.



Figure 2.1 Installation view, Etel Adnan: *Light's New Measure*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 8 October 2021 – 10 January 2022. Photo: David Heald © Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 2021

I record my painting process in a manner as fragmented as mark-making might appear – the recording proceeds in both painting and writing. I would compare these written thoughts to the *spacing* and inscription process that occurs when I make marks on the surface of the painting and when I write down my thoughts on the painting process. The painterly marks on the surface are traces of the relationship between my body and the painting. The digital journal is, in some ways, another method for reflecting on that relationship. In composing these two, painting and writing, it has been possible to observe that there is the sense of always being in the middle, *being-with*, and as such, without a conventional beginning or end.

Painting is durational in a way that is heterogeneous. My process is an attempt to draw together these two different economies of flow and interruption. I wanted to bring writing closer to painting; to achieve this, I tended to write without too much by way of editing. In a sense, I was looking for a voice to occur in the space in-between painting and writing; these passages are not negative, something is dwelling there, but it resists direct naming and might be regarded as void. Some of the notes in my digital journal describe feelings without much mediation; there is no form, no plot, no filters, just trains of thought that appear sporadically. If my painting is a

method for rupturing space, then writing is being deployed in the opposite direction. In other words, the writing starts to be organised as a series of gatherings, *spacing* of information, or occasionally contradicting thoughts. In contrast, paint marks scatter on the surface of the painting, or these relations between the two may come the other way around. Seeing my vision and my written voice together is a balancing act that sustains the mutual understanding between painting and fragmentary writing.

There is a danger of being on the edge of textual incompleteness or ambiguous boundaries of meanings, but these are risks that fall upon such a research project. Part Two includes textual fragments excerpted from my digital journal that will serve as interruptions within the more composed meditations presenting photographs of the process of painting and the final outcomes. The outcome of my practice side has been shown in Practical Output 2017 – 2022 (a separate book), anchored by a complete version of the visual images of my finished paintings and my digital journal during my research period. All these texts were made alongside my painting practice and were responsive to exhibitions, films, books, time, death, my own experience, art history, artists, and painting. Fragmentary writing (my digital journal) is as important as the visual images; this functions as supportive information about my practice.

- Writing about the Process of Painting

I was entertaining a paradox of trying to paint whilst writing about the process of painting. It is not just a matter of moving from one medium to another; it is also switching from something invested in the body and sensation to something more cerebral. Of course, this is a problem that has often been confronted while writing about art, especially by artists themselves. The closer writing might come to painting, the further it seems to depart from a critical reflection on painting; academic distance appears to be able to hold its object to attention in ways that are more objective. To think I can be both painter and art theorist at the same time is to confuse the relationship between the intimacy and the distance experienced by the painter. The purpose of writing my journals is to explore the tension between the quest to discover what might be regarded as tacit or embodied knowledge within a painting practice and the enjoyment of painting as a form of non-knowledge. Whilst acknowledging the difficulty of this task, I argue that in these writing paths, such tension and differences may reveal a process of experimentation, whereby the tension between knowledge and non-knowledge and, therefore, relationships of difference might become visible and legible.

- Poetic Language

The way I am writing is not born out of accidental encounters, but in some way, it is close to the act of painting. There is a degree of either spontaneity or intuition alongside a process of *being-with: being-with* both forms (painting and writing) as they acknowledge one another. In other words, I combine method, invention, and experimentation: a combination that keeps a relationship between abstract mark-making and cognitive encounters alive. The only way to reach the condition of painting is to consider the differences between ordinary language and invested language. Therefore, sometimes my writing confuses conventional meanings and often it appears to be poetic.

- Why Write?

Why is it important for me to write abstractly about my painting practice? I tend to look at paintings purely on the surface, with everything seemingly reduced to marks, stains, textures, colour, or depth within a field of close proximity. Even after reading the press releases of painting exhibitions and interviews with artists, the formal qualities of the painting endure for me, and language starts to fade. In effect, imagery still dominates my attention. Each time I attempt to find a meaning, the essence of that meaning slips away. What I am left with is a series of fragments that mix thoughts, emotions, constructions, and memories, all of which resist definite closure. Instead, I am left with something closer to the condition of a slippage.

Impressions rather than meanings, excess rather than clarity. This resides within the realm of desire as opposed to cognition which occurs within the stability of language. My experience of making and looking at paintings is closer to the way memories are consistently being reconfigured within the mind to the point that memory itself appears much closer to oblivion. I claim that the act of painting requires memory and that this is experienced, not fixed by systematic rules. I am processing and reprocessing these memories all the time, especially while making a painting.

2.1 Method

- Three-way Relationships – Spatiality, Inscription, and Judgement

It is useful to relate my description and analysis of my painting practice to the specific studios in which these works were done. This approach allows me to address an important aspect of *being-with* in relation to my painting practice: the relationship between the painting and the space (the studio) within the context in which it was made.

In the book *The Artist's Studio* (1900), British curator Giles Waterfield explored the idea of the studio. According to Waterfield, “studio” first comes in Renaissance Italy with the sense of a “studiolo”, a study, a place for reflection. The production of the place was a “bottega”, a workshop, whereas the “studiolo” was a private room for an apprenticeship (Waterfield, 2009, p.1). Within these senses, the artist is considered not only a craftsman but also a scholar. In Britain, the word “studio” has since the nineteenth century referred to the room where an artist works.



Figure 2.2 Lisa Milroy, *A Day in the Studio* 2000, acrylic on canvas, 173 x 216cm © Artist

The exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery, *The Artist's Studio: A Century of The Artist's Studio* 1920 – 2020 (24 February 2022 – 5 June 2022, London), provided good examples of how artists benefited from their own private or public studios. It showed where creative minds embark and where works are produced. The work by Canadian artist Lisa Milroy (1959 –), *A Day in the Studio*

(2000), comprises 42 acrylic-on-canvas paintings depicting her daily life (Fig 2.2). The artist's routine depicted in these paintings, with seemingly nothing out of the ordinary, just smeared into life, shows the act of creation dwelling in the studio. This prompted me to consider the importance of the locations where my research project was conducted. I have used many different studios for varying reasons, sometimes not through choice, during my PhD research period between 2017 and 2022: in a range of buildings in different cities and countries. One question arises: "What does the studio process reveal that could not have been revealed by any other mode of enquiry?" (Barrett and Bolt, 2007, p.162). The diverse range of studios I experienced as an artist residency participant, a researcher, and an artist, permitted various approaches and spatial explorations, as allowed or limited by the physical space of the studios. This provided a way to develop and respond to my practice within controlled and restricted conditions. Finding different entanglements of spatiality, inscription (gesture) and critical judgement (decision-making) was the key to perceiving my painting practice. I set up methods to limit my habitual approach to my practice in order to break the rules and challenge my conventional attitude. The methods enable me to go forward and make it possible to find new approaches between realised expectations and the yet-to-come realm.

The various studios I will talk about are listed below.

Studio One: 3rd Floor, Tontine Building, Glasgow (5 October 2017 – 30 April 2018)

Studio Two: 2nd Floor, Barnes Building, Glasgow (30 April 2018 – 12 September 2018)

Studio Three: ARNA residency, Harlösa (3 August 2018 – 11 August 2018)

Studio Four: Summerhouse residency, Düsseldorf (12 August 2018 – 1 September 2018)

Studio Five: 189 Gloucester Place residency, London (15 February 2019 – 1 April 2019)

Studio Six: 5th Floor, Stow Building, Glasgow (22 August 2019 – 18 February 2020)

Studio Seven: Elephant Lab residency, London (6 January 2020 – 31 January 2020)

Studio Eight: Home Studio, 134 Renfrew Street, Glasgow (15 November 2020 – 6 July 2022)

2.2 Spatiality of Painting

Painting is the space between what is before representation and what is after it. It provides glimpses into things. It is as much to do with what cannot pass into the image as what passes into it. The painter is that meeting point between emancipation and repression. That is why nothing is straightforward. Straightforward is for straightforward things. The painting exists outside this domain, and therefore it struggles to find a space for itself. The painting exists without the common sense of things, which are straightforward. When I drink my coffee, then I am straightforward because my lips and the coffee need to touch; but when I paint, my memory and the substance of paint should not mix together in any logical manner.

Extract from my journal, 2021

There are several ways that I encounter the interior and exterior aspects of my painting practice. The practice of painting allows me to experience a different level of spatiality. Painting is a practice of switching from three-dimensional to two-dimensional space, and this switching process is regulated by conscious decisions and unexpected consequences. In this regard, it is both controlled by the artist and subject to chance encounters. The first stage of the encounter is on entering the space of the studio, the space of the painting being located within this, so there is already a spatial difference. The next spatial encounter is the relationship between the space of my body and the canvas. They are both in space and producers of space which allows the space of the painting to open to this multiplicity. The canvas opens out in a myriad of directions connecting to me as the perceiving subject. This is the starting point of complex play undertaken by the subject (me) in relation to the object (the painting) in which nothing is pre-given. This play is mediated by gestures located between my body and the canvas. In this regard, there is always a third space between the inside and the outside of the work and between the mental and the physical.

Energetic movement can be related to the creation of space. Gestures, in turn, occupy the space of the painting; no matter how empty, a painting accumulates these gestures within itself; thus, gestures are the fabric of the invisible that folds into the traits of the visible in the painting. There is a tension between the fabric of the canvas and the body, which is recorded within the space made up of marks on the surface. Bodily energy infiltrates or even soaks into painting; this either manifests as excess or lack but is always present in some measure. In the book *Revolution in*

Poetic Language (1974), Julia Kristeva calls this pre-discursive space a “semiotic process”, but it might be understood as energy as much as a space. Kristeva states,

Discrete quantities of energy move through the body of the subject who is not yet constituted as such and, in the course of his development. They are arranged according to the various constraints imposed on this body – always already involved in a semiotic process ... In this way, the drives, which are “energy” charges as well as “psychical” marks, articulate what we call a chora: a nonexpressive totality formed by the purposes and their stasis in a motility that is as full of movement (Kristeva, 1984, p.25).

The painter’s body mediates the relationship between spaces and energy. The force made by the pressure of the brush on the canvas as “psychical” marks then articulates the space of the painting and the studio.

The artist’s studio is not just the space of creation but also can be the environment in which the artist self-locates, becomes stimulated, and defines themselves. In this sense, it can be a part of daily life as a creative studio, a meditation space, an office, or even a home. During the pandemic lockdown in March of 2020, my tiny flat on Renfrew Street in Glasgow became my studio. The limited environment and hermit-like lifestyle restricted my physical radius, which required the adjustment of the canvas size along with the type of medium. This made evident the impact of the studio itself in ways that might not ordinarily be anticipated.

If painting is a part of daily routine, it might orientate itself towards the production of that routine (or become a part of that routine). This is in opposition towards being in the process of making, including habitual mark-making, for habitual action always brings differences into the presentation of the new. In this way, a contest is set up between habit and surprise. On one side, there is a tendency to drift within the parameters of what is known, so alertness has to issue from this tendency. In this way, manual traits become mixed with external desire from which the “elsewhere” of the work might emerge. This is an outcome of the connection between interiority and exteriority, which results in a double exposure of both the painting and the perceiving subject. This process of exposure leads to a rupture that is formed within the fabric of the painting process; I would call this rupture the advent not only of the new but of the journey into a sphere of un-knowledge, and it is here that a “surprise” might occur.

The space of my painting is co-extensive with the space of my experience. The paintings appear to be abstract; at the same time they appear to possess a narrative of content, but one that is close to the *being-with*. Something does not quite add up because of the push and pull of these two impulses (abstraction and narration). The uncertainty of a moment reanimates my attention; at one point, it appears that I am attending to a mark, and at the next, I am thinking about how such marks cohere within the whole. Within this moment of doubt, I am caught in the space of not knowing how to proceed; thus, intuition takes its course because of its seeming indifference towards preconception, seeking only movement. In this way, I consider intuition pure because of its detachment from will.

2.3 Studio One: Failure



Figure 2.3 *Orb of Light* 2017 – 2021, acrylic and oil on canvas, 150 x 180cm

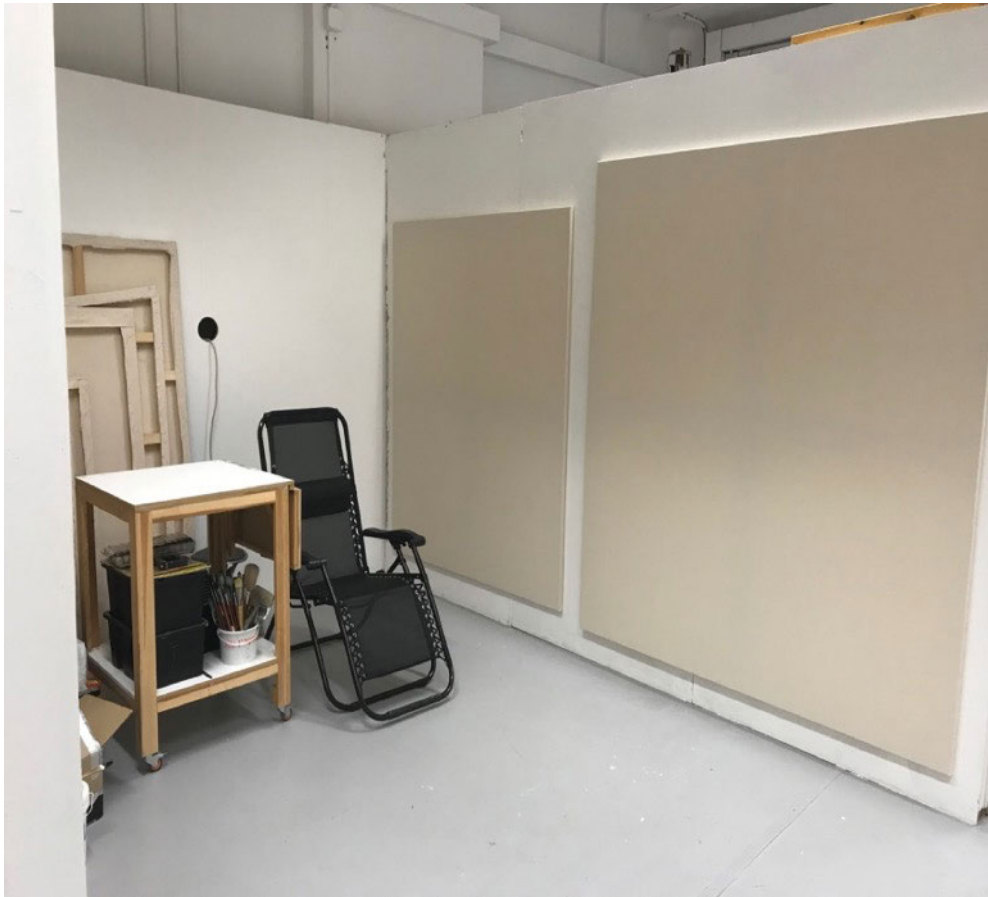


Figure 2.4 Studio One, Tontine Building, Glasgow

Basic Information About the Work

Title: *Orb of Light*

Year produced: 2017 – 2021

Medium: Acrylic and oil on canvas

Dimensions: 150 x 180cm

Location: 3rd Floor, Tontine Building, Glasgow

Date of occupancy: 5 October 2017 – 30 April 2018

In order to demonstrate how judgement (regarding a moment of failure) informs my painting process, I will now analyse a single work as it evolved in stages. This work, entitled *Orb of Light* (Fig 2.3), was made during April 2017 – 2021 using oil paint, acrylic, oil pastel, marker pen, and watercolours on stretched canvas. While making this painting, I photographed each stage before a new layer was added. I have presented these photographs in a grid formation for this thesis in order to provide a visual framework of the chronological order of these layers and illustrate how my painting process unfolds in a psychological manner.

The images (Fig 2.5) consist of a series of photographs documenting a single work in progress. These photographs show the chronological order of my painting process and how the work developed step by step. When I make a painting, there are numerous complex elements which affect how the painting develops, including invisible gestures and the recollection of thoughts. For example, I often simulate lines and the movement involved in making them before my brush tip touches the canvas. The photographs (Fig 2.3) show the stages in making this work; the written description of each stage taken at different times of the day explains my attempt at the time to set up a tension between visual language and mental ideation. This is a complex weaving together of the visual and the textual that integrates the visible and the invisible. My painting process is dynamic: involving the application of paint, additions, subtractions, and texture. Throughout the painting process, there is a creative tension between chaos and order, which leads, in turn, to a creative synthesis and resolution. Painting is a process of strife which the painter endures until they find release. Each passage finds itself interrupted either through doubt or simply the inability to continue; at this point, I invariably employ the camera to make a record. Before taking a photograph, I might rotate the canvas in order to get another perspective and, in this way, physically alter the relationship of my body to the canvas. There is also the impact on my sense of time in that the event of stopping interrupts the flow of the working process. Such interruptions appear to soak into the fabric of the painting. Perhaps another way of understanding this is that the interruptions transform my relationship to the painting and might be the point at which both the subject and the object morph together.

The Context

The work entitled *Orb of Light* was an unfinished painting I had left abandoned in my last studio in London. After setting up my first studio in Glasgow at the Tontine Building, I decided to trace back and revisit this old work with the aim of ruining the previous colour field. Was I trying to unlock some hidden potentiality, or was it a way of passing over an abandoned form? My recollection had faded, but the impulse of creating a new approach, in this case, applying the idea of failure, within the PhD research was likewise problematic. I was caught in the middle, neither able to go back nor forward. This presented an interesting dilemma because it meant that I had to isolate traits within the old painting. This was to invent another network that would announce a new configuration. The painting was covered in lavender purple and light sky blue, both of which eluded me but at the same time gave me the idea of withdrawing colours with solid black straight lines. There was a feeling of uncertainty within this encounter which implied the withdrawal of the impulse to complete this work. Yet there was a release, a feeling of

freedom from predetermination. The documentation below (Fig 2.5) records the struggle within the painting, which traces the detour that comes from the act of rotating the canvas. Looking back at the documentation and memory of this process leads me to believe that painting is much more complex than the mechanical recording of it. The documentation records the bones of the visual process, but this lacks the nuances of mental ideation.

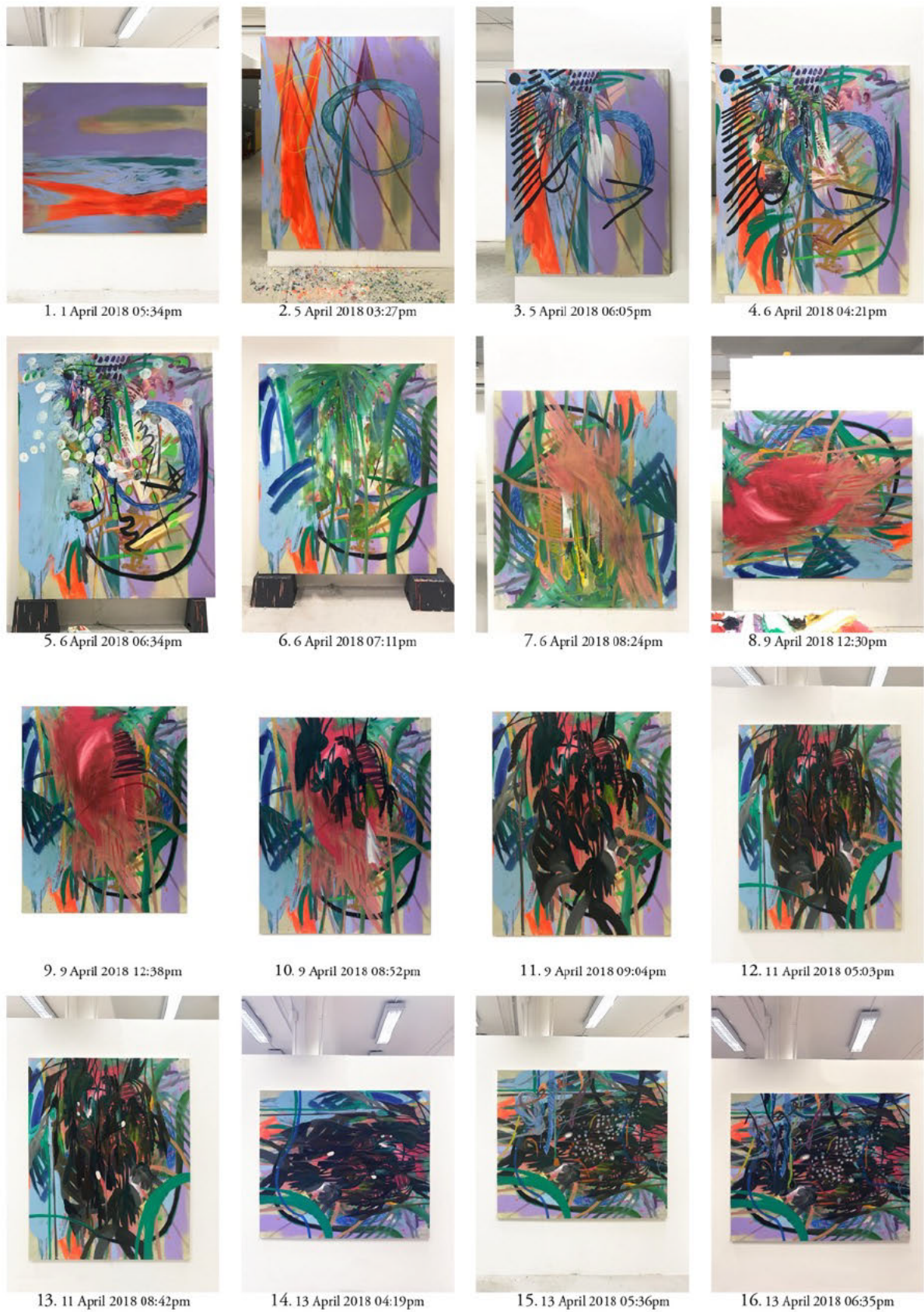


Figure 2.5 Record of Process and Observation on the painting *Orb of Light*

Record of Process and Observation (Fig 2.5)

1. 1 April 2018

In preparation for the painting, 9 ounces of fabric was stretched over wooden stretchers measuring 180 x 150cm. To further enhance the absorbency and colour retention of the fabric and the strength of the support, I carried out the sizing with golden transparent gesso four times prior to laying on the colour field. Due to the lack of fluorescent colours in the oil paint selection, I often start groundwork with acrylic to soak the colour into the fabric first. This was the last painting I made in London in 2017 before I moved up to Glasgow to pursue my PhD, and I decided to revisit this painting as I thought the fluorescent orange in the painting was not working.

2–3. 5 April 2018

When there is no way to go forward, rotating the canvas to see potential new imagery is one of my primary methods to proceed. Also, if there is no clear outcome evident to me, I organically allow intuition to intervene. If intuition fails, I often emulate the shapes in a previous painting. The oval shapes and the line in *Orb of Light* came from a previous painting, *The Shape of Evidence* (Fig 2.6). This motif is rendered by reusing the last gestures instead of creating new figures. In part, these brief remarks open out a relationship to repetition, circulating across my whole body of work. Repetition is distinguished from habit in that it never becomes mechanical or a sign of a fixed relation. Repetition is necessary for a practice to cohere, yet it might appear to give rise to anxiety. My main concern relates to the question of failure, which attaches itself to the rhythm of repetition. Each time I paint, I know that I have to face the reality of failure and the certainty that my accumulated habits and skills will keep reoccurring. Painting is a physical action, but it is also an emotional encounter, and this works on the constitution of the subjective experience that might be at the root of the acts of painting.



Figure 2.6 *The Shape of Evidence* 2017, acrylic, oil pastel, oil on canvas, 230 x 380cm

4. 6 April 2018

Once I started the work, I continued to paint using improvisation with steady mark-making. One of my fears was using black colour lines, which brought back a memory of Albert Oehlen's show at the Gagosian Gallery (5 February – 24 March 2016, London) (Fig 2.7). I also remembered reading an article from ARTnews by Nate Freeman (13 April 2017), the title borrowed from Oehlen's statement "I Just Enjoy Making a Big Mess". Considering mark-making as making a big mess influenced me, and this idea made me think of the brushstroke on the canvas again. When I was in the gallery, I did not enjoy Oehlen's painting; however, after reading the articles, his intention became "make sense". Using black or dark colours is always challenging for me, and whenever I use them, I think about Oehlen's paintings. I return to challenge my failure by paying attention to my feelings about failure. I know from a distance that the painting will fail me, and I will not be able to gain ultimate satisfaction from it. Exploring failure gives a sense of returning to confront it. Failure becomes difficult to articulate; for me, failure is an unethical judgement outside the domain of rational knowledge, and it is an emotional state.

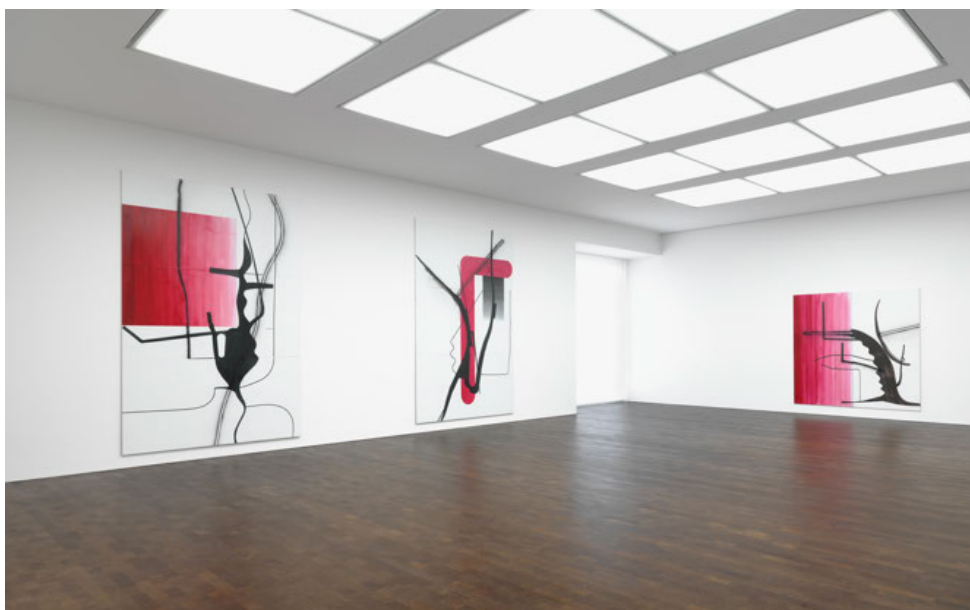


Figure 2.7 Installation view, Albert Oehlen, Gagosian Gallery, London © Gagosian Gallery

5. 6 April 2018

The way to get away from failure is not deleting past marks or cancelling them. The only way to overcome failure is by dismissing it for that moment. Everything can be re-used, even anxiety-inducing colours (such as the black lines mentioned above). In *Orb of Light*, the overcoating marks (white dots) on top of the ugly underlayers add to the chaos of the composition. Responding to failure is painful, for doing so insults and trivialises all my past efforts. It can be useful if it leads to change since this allows the work to move beyond failure and create knowledge. Confronting failure becomes a device to protect ignorance and acknowledge the continuation of the painting processes. Rendering the field of pleasurable and painful failure is the way to access the habit-breaking act of painting. Especially at this stage, I could not face looking at the painting. I felt something was wrong with the composition and pattern; it was too erratic. I had an urgency to understand what the level of completion might be.

6–9. 6 – 9 April 2018

I rotated upside down, vertically, again and again, to redo. I was reading the article “Provisional Painting Part 2: To rest lightly on earth” by Raphael Rubinstein (*Art in America*, 3 February 2012). According to Rubinstein, when Alberto Giacometti drew James Lord’s portrait in 1964, Giacometti had to cancel out each day’s effort until his eighteenth attempt, and then finally, he

admitted the portrait was not finished, it was rather abandoned or mishappened⁵ (Genet, 1995, p.312); this indicated the desire he dreamt in the portrait was something impossible to reach. The collection of conversations between the French writer Jean Genet and Giacometti and Genet's insight regarding his work showed Giacometti's anguish faced with the reality of being unable to complete a study. It was often a palpable component of his work. Genet described:

The whole time he (Giacometti) was struggling with Yanihara's face (one can imagine that face offering itself and refusing to let its image pass onto the canvas as if it had to protect its unique identity), I had the moving spectacle of a man who never made mistakes but who invariably got lost. He kept sinking deeper into impossible, ineluctable regions (Genet, 1995, p.322).

In a way, his work is always touched by the failure to complete, so it is like the presentation of an open wound which must be simply endured. This is an extreme case, but it is one that illustrates the role of personal anxiety in painting. Provisional painting doesn't seem to have been the product of significant struggle due to the work's quality of rawness. I felt I should avoid the obsession to accomplish work that is too finished. I should not fear the incomplete state of the painting and should follow my desire. This is a note I wrote about desire in my digital journal at this stage of making the painting.

Desire never completes itself but rather gives rise to the next desire, forming a chain of incompleteness. Therefore, desire is like an open ended pursuit or even restlessness that keeps alive the process of making and floating between the orders of absences and presences. Always in advance of itself, and yet behind everything, it touches both memory and the future, almost becoming a vehicle of mediating the connection between the two, by becoming the memory of the future.

Extract from my journal, 2018

In the book *Failure*, the editor Lisa Le Feuvre introduced the notion of failure applied to artworks. She quoted John Baldessari's advice to his students:

Art comes out of failure. You have to try things out. You can't sit around, terrified of being incorrect, saying I won't do anything until I do a masterpiece (Le Feuvre, 2010, p.14).

⁵ Genet mentions that Giacometti often used the word "mishappen".

As Baldessari advises, making something has to involve the idea of an intention to do something and recognising daily acts of failure. These ask an artist to take risks which provide opportunities for great artwork and potential for failure. To attempt to make one's own work, better works, or "new" works, challenging a habitual approach and breaking boundaries becomes important. When failure occurs, it draws a distinctive edge around normalised outcomes of works, where examining failure could tell us where our limitations are and, in other means, give us a moment to render failure into new acceptance, and experimented failure may drive artists beyond the level of success. Therefore, failure to me accompanies every process of painting, not only on the aesthetic level, as is clear from the amount of application and colour choice. Failure is a necessary part of the process. My failure also occurs as a result of pure accident. Applying the Indian pink colour all over the canvas was a pure accident. At this stage, I wanted to erase my past mark-making. Confronting my previous mistakes and admitting failure was the way to overcome them.

Failure will show a much better way to deal with the work, and listening to the error is the way to conquer the mistakes.

Extract from my journal, 2018

10–14. 9 – 13 April 2018

There is a repeating motif in my work which comes from persistent sources, organic shapes, which are also attached to my state of mind when I make the painting. I view this persistence as circular, related to the functioning of my own memory, sensations, and encounters. The composition/form of the painting occurs both as a result of my relationship to the surface of the painting but also within the more obscure depths of the painting. This establishes an oscillating pattern within the painting process. Without this painting process, there would be no primal energies exhibited within the work itself. It is this process which connects energies with form: the composition, and this is the source of the circulation that is the centre of the creative process.

14–16. 13 April 2018

My aim is to discover something that appears to be in waiting as a destination, only there are no signs that are in place for such an outcome. That is why the idea of having to break through or break out has currency when describing the activity of painting.

Extract from my journal, 2018

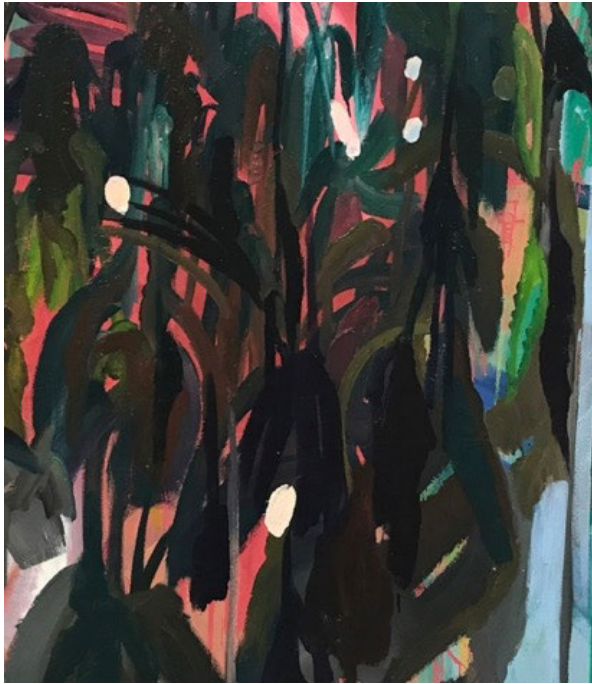


Figure 2.8 Detail of *Orb of Light*

organic shapes underneath. At this stage, I titled this painting *Orb of Light* (Fig 2.3).

When I rotated the canvas, I discovered the five dots (Fig 2.8). My initial emotion was frustration, because I thought these dots accidentally sat on the surface of the canvas. However, the more I looked at the painting, the more the white mark-makings became similar to radiating stars from the sky. When I found the image (Fig 2.8), that was the moment that failure shifted to successful failure. Intentionally I added double layers of white, so the middle part has a complete saturation of white colour. I decided to spread these orb shapes in the middle of the painting and, at the same time, tried to remove all the

2.4 Studio Two: Visibility and Invisibility

Stars in the night. A sky of black clouds with no direction. Down near the end of the road, oscillating dots appear. The window from my studio closes and simultaneously opens up to the world. The flickering lights from the cityscape are a ballet of colours, and their shadows and textures are displaced to this painting.

Extract from my journal, 2022



Figure 2.9 *Beyond the End of the Road* 2018 – 2021, acrylic, oil, oil pastel on canvas, 180 x 150cm

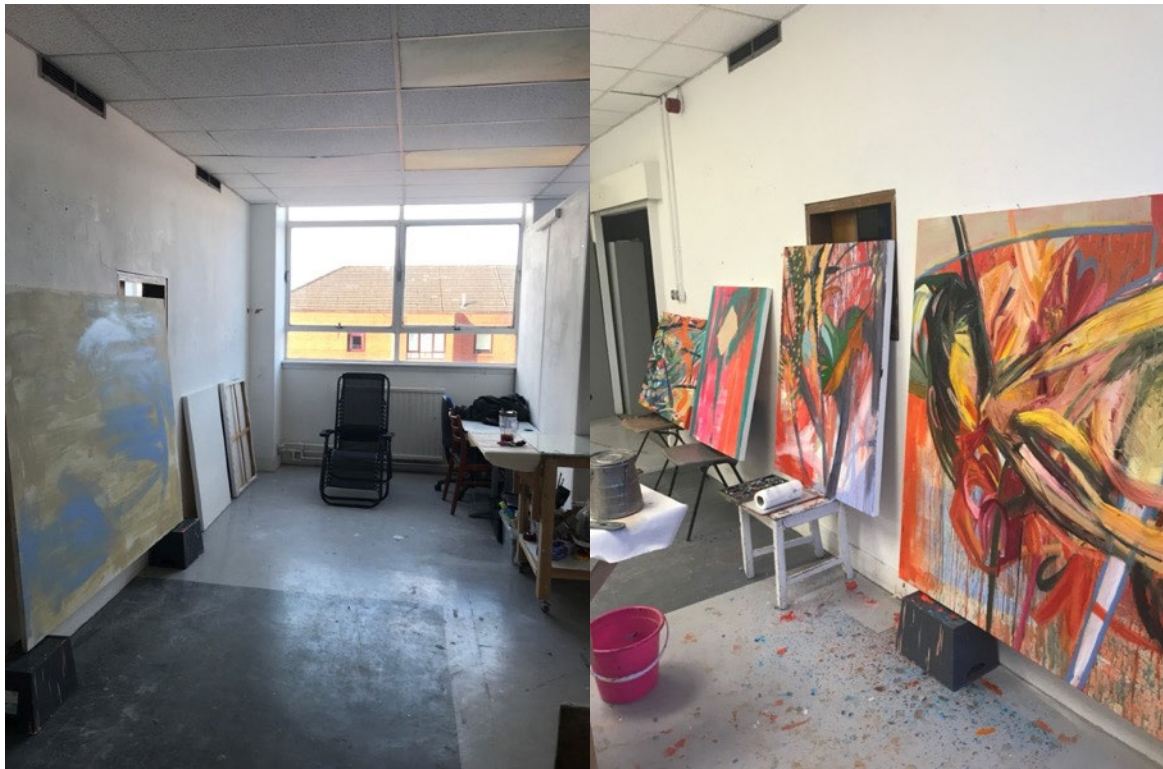


Figure 2.10 Studio Two, Barnes Building, Glasgow

Basic Information About the Work

Title: *Beyond the End of the Road*

Year produced: 2018 – 2021

Medium: Acrylic, oil pastel, and oil on canvas

Dimensions: 180 x 150cm

Location: 2nd Floor, Barnes Building, Glasgow (2018) – Home Studio, 134 Renfrew Street, Glasgow (2021)

Date of occupancy: 30 April 2018 – 12 September 2018

The Context

This painting was finished in 2018 and transformed into a completely new painting in 2021. I have included illustrations of both the former finished works (Fig 2.12) and the final completion (Fig 2.9) in this chapter. This painting is an example of how the studio affected the way I looked at the painting and influenced my painting practice. In fact, the idea behind this was still the same, concerning the studio window as a portal to the world and capturing the shapes and lines of the composition from external visual inspiration. When I looked at the painting again in 2021, my attitude towards the work changed, so I decided to redo the painting.

The idea related to this painting, *Beyond the End of the Road* (Fig 2.9), was the notion of visibility and invisibility. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in his essay “Eye and Mind” (1961), examined how a painter’s act of looking through the eye and body affects the world in order to explain representative existence in art. “What this ultimately means is that what defines the visible is to have a lining of invisibility in the strict sense, which it makes present as a certain absence” (Merleau-Ponty, 2007, p.375). Following Merleau-Ponty’s idea, I felt I might produce the invisible from the act of looking; I was not reproducing the visible but making unseen things visible.

By the summer of 2018, I had a temporary studio at the Barnes Building with a big window and a highway (visible outside) vertically crossing over the scenery. The vertical line I could see from the window formed the main composition. The surface of the painting might seem to attract sensations relating to encounters with memory, associations which interrupt the process of constructing the composition. It is as though there are surprises embedded within the layers of the painting which serve to change or alter the trajectory of the painting at any given juncture. This is largely unconscious, and as such, it is not within the realm of figurative representations but rather serves as a calling to the following inscription processes. This process of making the image can be compared to a recording machine marked by continuities, interruptions, pauses, corrections, intuitions, and improvisations. Obviously, such events are not necessarily visible, but they are, in some way, part of the fabric of the work, and this sets up the play between “visibility and invisibility” (see pp.10–14).

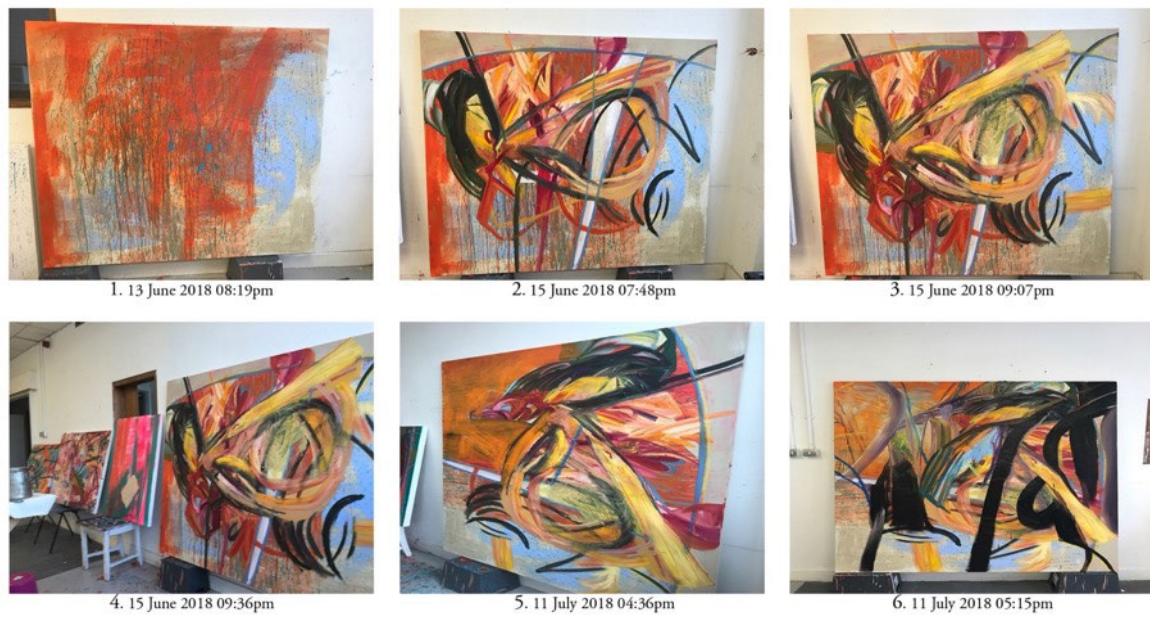


Figure 2.11 Record of Process and Observation on the painting *Beyond the End of the Road* in 2018



Figure 2.12 *Beyond the End of the Road* in 2018

Record of Process and Observation in 2018 (Fig 2.1)

1. 13 June 2018

For the painting *Beyond the End of the Road*, 12 ounces of cotton fabric was stretched over aluminium stretchers measuring 180 x 150cm. I primed the stretcher with the same method, golden transparent gesso in three layers. I chose two main colours, bright blue and brick brown, and splashed them onto the whole surface of the canvas to see whether I could use any of the mark-making from the unexpected result. I used acrylic to achieve this fluidity of the medium. The mixture of acrylic and water creates both fluid consistency and smooth touch on the surface. The dripped marks allowed me to share my unexpected gestures and participate in my dynamic bodily performance. The fluidity from the medium improves its lustre and allows it to glow and be its own form. This letting-be of form is indirectly a way of touching upon the idea of freedom from restriction. Freedom is a condition that erupts outside of habit. In painting, this freedom occurs when a new form starts to emerge and is experienced as an opening of the space of painting beyond cognitive boundaries.

The colour red was a tricky colour for me because it reminds me of either blood or the political colour of communism. One of my impressions about the Glasgow sky is the red sky at night. The weather in Glasgow is usually rainy and I see this red sky more than in any other city I have lived in. The elaborate impression of the city of Glasgow had slipped my mind.

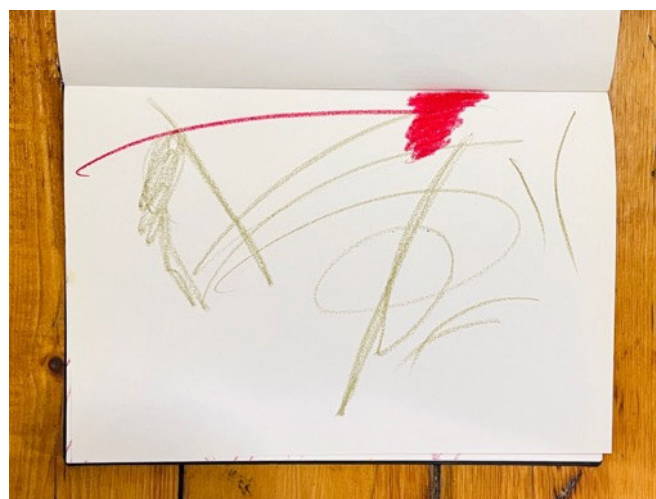


Figure 2.13 Drawing for the painting *Beyond the End of the Road*, 12 June 2018

2–4. 15 June 2018

This drawing (Fig 2.13) gave me the composition for the painting. I transferred the lines directly to the canvas. These lines resulted from the M8 motorway, the road I walked past to come to the studio in Glasgow. What was important about quick sketching was preserving the sense and the impression of the scene. What there was outside was dismantled at the end, what is left alone in the painting is the rhythm of the composition.

5–6. 11 July 2018

About a month passed before I restarted the painting; at this stage, the initial drawing, which contained my intention, was no longer important. I rotated the painting continuously and put a couple of outlines of shapes I could see in the landscape onto the painting. The line I drew on the canvas was not only from the visible shapes; sometimes, it was from the invisible movement the wind created. I completed the painting (Fig 2.12), or at least I thought I had.



Figure 2.14 Drawing studies for the painting *Beyond the End of the Road*, 21 January 2021



Figure 2. 15 Record of Process and Observation on the painting *Beyond the End of the Road* in 2021

Sometimes when I am painting, I imagine I am in a labyrinth, and I cannot imagine the way out. This might then give rise to another space, so in one way or another I always have a spatial plan in mind which is not part of the spatiality of the actual painting but is closer to my own imaginary version. From the outside such visions does not have a visible trace, but nonetheless they register in my own psyche.

Extract from my journal, 2021

Record of Process and Observation in 2021 (Fig 2.15)

7–8. 7 August 2021

The final version of the painting resulted from non-stop gestures on the same canvas I originally thought I had finished in 2018. I was working towards a solo exhibition at HSBC Space at the end of 2021 (which was unfortunately delayed to 2022 due to the pandemic). I looked at potential paintings for the show and became aware of the possibility of reworking this painting. I tried to cover most of the parts of the previous painting while at the same time retaining a certain part (in the lower right corner). I felt this painting was characterised by a relationship to rupture, rapture, visibility, and invisibility. Two drawings (Fig 2.14) became the foundation of this painting; I was able to utilise the technique of drawing with thin and thick textures I developed during the Elephant Lab residency (see Studio Seven, pp.95–102).

Rupture is like a dissent (disagreement, going downwards) whereas rapture is ascent (agreement, going upwards), but either way both extend the sense of spatiality. Rupture is a way of showing visibility by putting more brush marks on the surface, rapture is an invisible outcome of rupturing the surface.

When a brushstroke meets past brushstrokes on fabric, it produces an alert signal which then breaks open the space of the painting. This is the moment that the rupture happens in painting, and following this, there might be the possibility of opening out a space of rapture. If rupture is eruption, rapture is explosion in which there is a loss of the containing sense of definite inside and outside. Rupture fuses with chaotic movements, whereas rapture links everything together in order to release energy.

Extract from my journal, 2021

9–11. 13 – 21 September 2021

This was the view from my previous flat in 2021 (Fig 2.16), and this view became a source of inspiration for me during 2020 – 2022. The black colour and the mark-making in *Beyond the End of the Road* were simulations from the view I could look at every day from my studio.

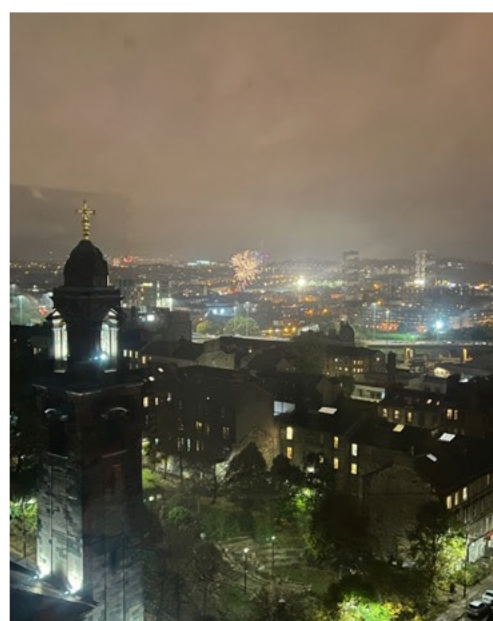


Figure 2.16 View from my studio, 13 September 2021

2.5 Studios Three – Four: Memory



Figure 2.17 *Clearing* 2018, acrylic, oil pastel and oil on canvas, 180 x 190cm



Figure 2.18 Studio Three, artist residency: ARNA, Harlösa

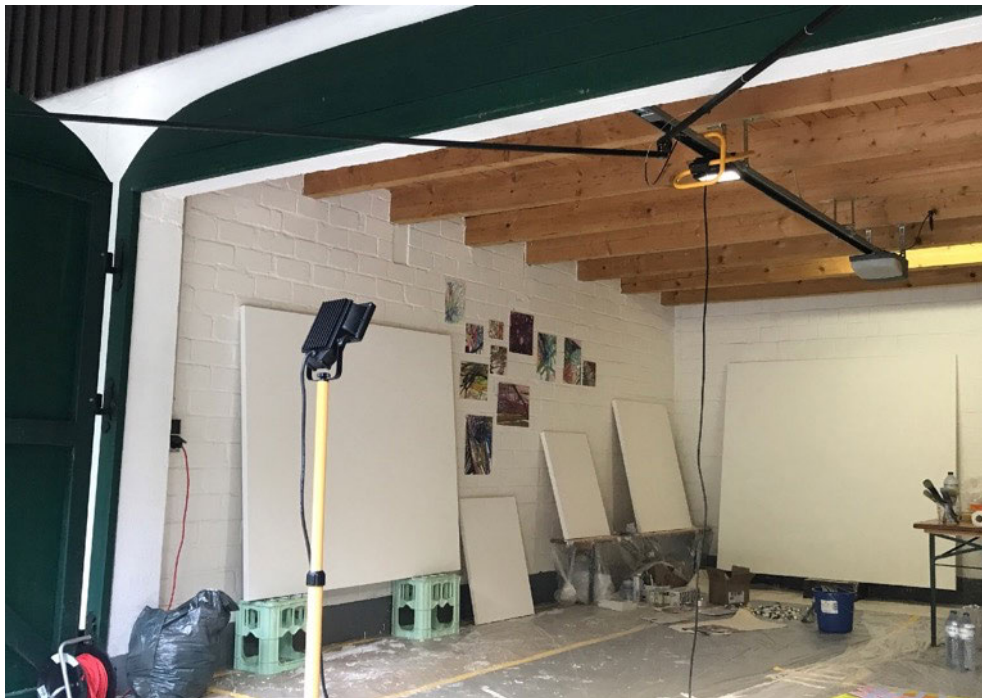


Figure 2.19 Studio Four, artist residency: Summerhouse, Düsseldorf

Basic Information About the Work

Title: *Clearing*

Year produced: 2018

Medium: Acrylic, oil pastel, and oil on canvas

Dimensions: 180 x 190cm

Location: ARNA residency, Harlösa, Sweden

Summerhouse residency, Düsseldorf, Germany

Date of occupancy: 3 August 2018 – 11 August 2018 (ARNA)

Date of occupancy: 12 August 2018 – 1 September 2018 (Summerhouse)



Figure 2.20 Outside the Summerhouse residency studio views

The Context

During the summer of 2018, I took part in two residencies. The first one was the ARNA residency in Harlösa, Sweden (Fig 2.18), and later I undertook the Summerhouse residency in Düsseldorf, Germany (Fig 2.19). Both were situated in remote locations away from the centres of the cities. There was an impression of emptiness, a mixture of pleasure and threat because it was in the middle of nowhere. In some ways, it was like there was nothing to see; however, the sensation of light from nature became the source of inspiration for my painting practice. Rather than anchoring me, it was closer to the sensation of displacement or the infiltration of absence. The ARNA residency lasted only nine days. I mainly explored the natural environment and focused on drawing with watercolour pencils (Fig 2.21). Right after finishing the ARNA residency, I moved on to Germany.

In Düsseldorf, when the day was bright, I would go into the garage studio, where the natural light formed patterns onto the canvas. When night came, the studio spotlights brightened up the details of the painting and changed the impression of the painted marks on the surface. The main experiment I carried out was to test out the ratio of oil solvents and oil paints, which led to unexpected results. Following this, I utilised the saturation of turpentine to enhance the flow of brush marks on the surface. The painting, *Clearing*, was finished in two days and every brushstroke on the surface was literally pushed and pulled by instant mark-making with a series of rapid decisions that led to the resolution of the form.

My painting is constructed around a network of memories, memories of other paintings, of light, intervals between marks, and the meeting points of sensations; nothing appears to escape these forms of attention. Memories are not specifically inscribed into the surface of the painting. Memories both surface and soak into the fabric of the work; they appear and disappear, intersecting the gestural autonomy of my painting. For instance, choosing colours might be predicated on the memory of the previous painting, or it might be associated with the sensation of looking at another work. Colour also anticipates the coming to be with a new imaginative matrix that is linked to desire. Parallel to the lines that I might draw there is also a network of lines that are created from within my impulse to create, and this serves as the intersection of the visible and invisible. This is the way of mapping the relationship of movements and psychological inscription.

Extract from my journal, 2018



Figure 2.21 Small drawings from ARNA residency, installation view



Figure 2.22 Small drawings from Summerhouse residency, installation view

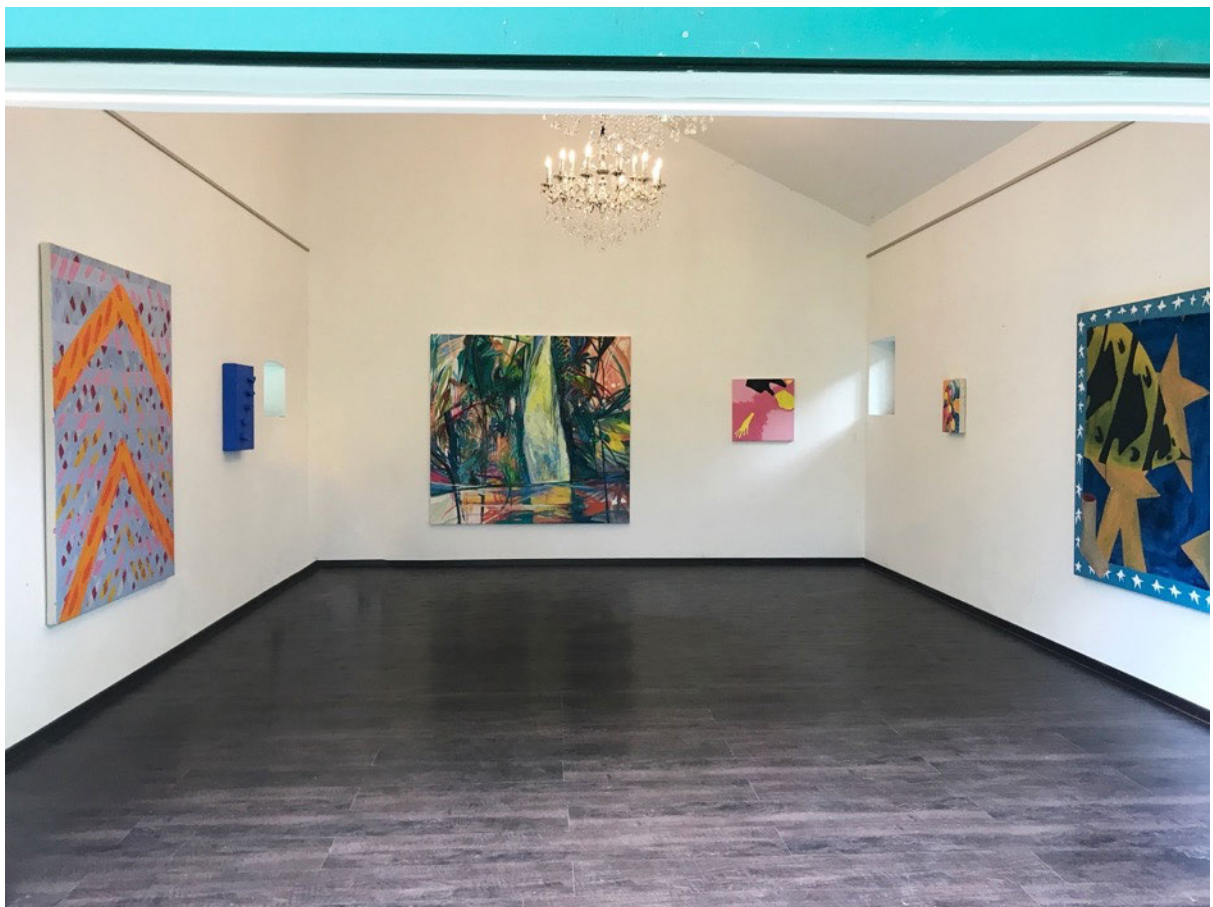


Figure 2.23 Installation view, Summerhouse residency, Düsseldorf

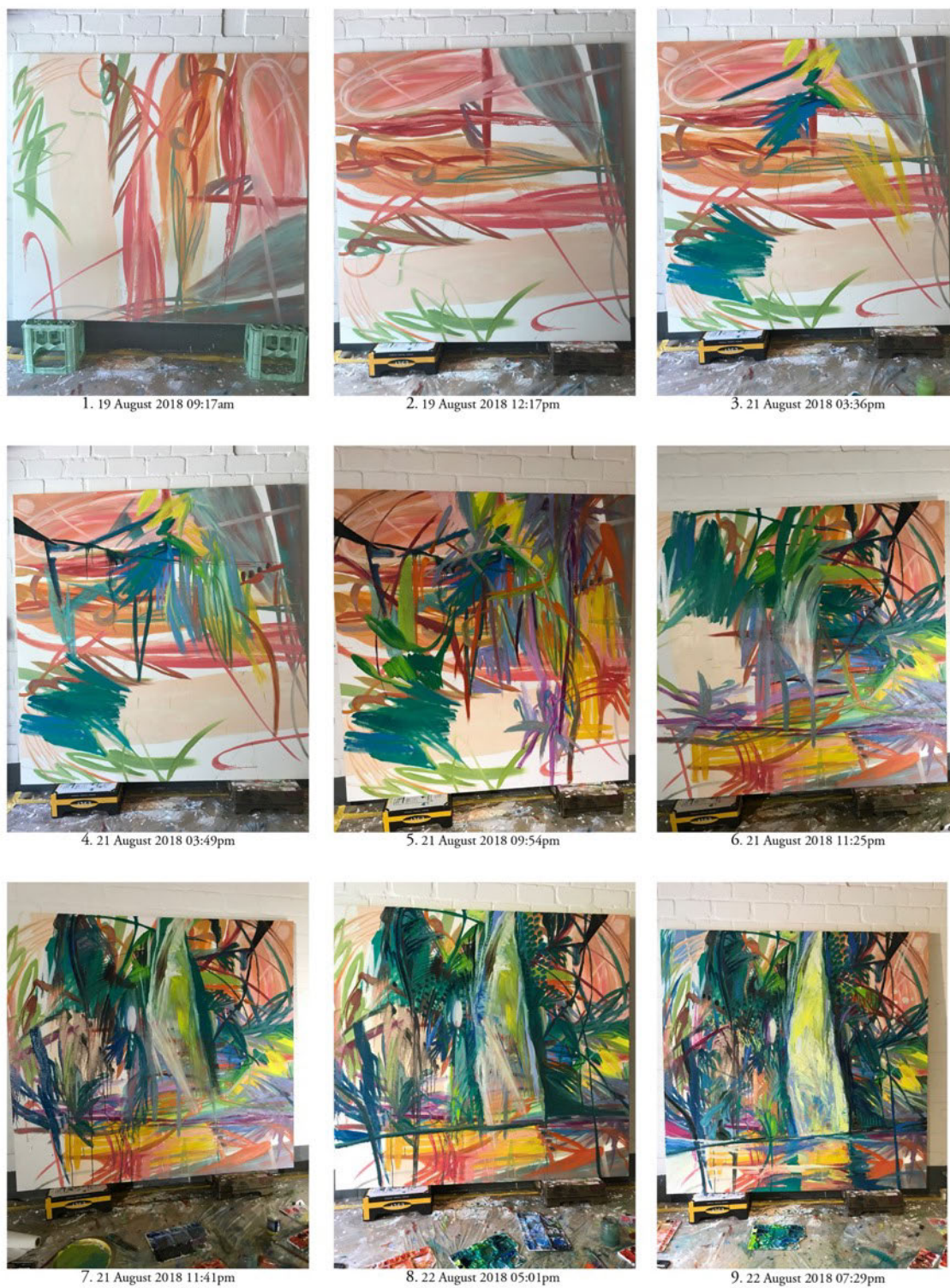


Figure 2.24 Record of Process and Observation on the painting *Clearing*

Record of Process and Observation (Fig 2.24)

1. 19 August 2018

In Düsseldorf, I was thrown into the middle of a forest. All I could see was the dense forest from the garage studio that the Summerhouse residency owner had converted into the studio space. (Fig 2.20) The movement of trees in the wind inspired me. I made drawings (Fig 2.22) of organic shapes with acrylic medium, and I transferred these onto a 180 x 190cm canvas. The differences between big and small scales of canvases are related to practicality and physicality. Small-scale paintings are approachable and at the same time enable me to control them fully without trying to get a distance from them. For the larger-scale painting, I have to step away to see the full image. The regularity of space is activated when the painting is immersed in sight.

2. 19 August 2018

On achieving the image, my retina was absorbed into its field and yet not able to accomplish any mobility of vision. In effect, the painting was stuck. So, I rotated the canvas constantly in order to find a way forward. It was like trying to discover what was the inside of the image or what its latency was. Perhaps there was something in the initial image that was too stable, and I was searching for a movement which would make it more unstable.

3. 21 August 2018

After rotating the canvas, I took a break and lay down on the grass for a while. I remembered a couple of lines that the trees had shown me. I then made a rough drawing on a piece of paper.

4–5. 21 – 22 August 2018

Followed by the green and yellow marks, I wanted to create a forest-like scene but avoided following the exact colours I could see in nature. I purchased metallic blue and purple oil paints and tried to put them on top of the canvas.

6. 21 August 2018

There was something not right about the metallic colours because they reflected the light and did not cohere with other colours. Therefore, I rotated the canvas again to restart my painting. I enjoyed the top right corner, which has lots of layers visible from the background, and I was

happy with the scratch marks I made. It was a surprise that sometimes, a part I did not like before suddenly could become meaningful.

The flow of decisions and the Intuitive choices of the colour palette draws on an otherworldly balance between chaos and order. The symphony of colours in turn serves to act as a counterpoint to the tendency to be overtaken by chaos. It is as if the painting process itself is an arresting of the tendency towards entropy which threatens the entire process. In this way, two opposing forces are always rubbing up against each other without the sense of one achieving final dominance.

Extract from my journal, 2018

7–9. 21 – 22 August 2018

At this stage, the painting accidentally forms an empty white block in the middle of the canvas, similar to one of the places I visited during my stay at the residency: Langen Foundation's Garden, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. I remembered there was a vertical gap in which I could see the clear sky, and the bright sunlight from the gap gave me a somewhat indescribable feeling. I titled this painting *Clearing*, following my impression. It is difficult to trace whether this outcome (Fig 2.17) was generated within the structure of memory or was entirely outside of it. In turn, this might challenge the idea that the formation of memory is singular in its origin. Instead, I believe that painting as a process mixes interiority and exteriority even on the level of memory.

2.6 Studio Five: Alloverness and Identity



Figure 2.25 *Cherry Blossom* 2019, acrylic and oil on canvas, 130 x 130cm

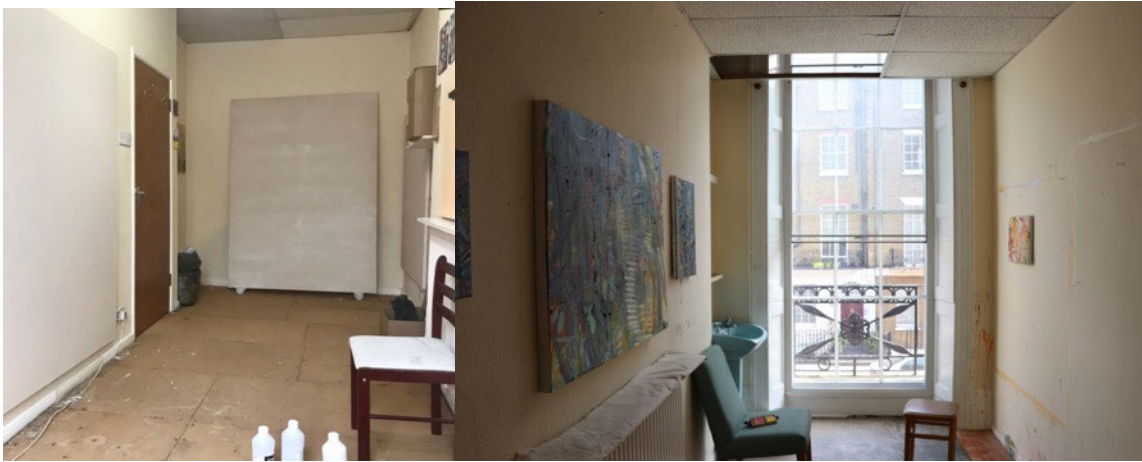


Figure 2.26 Studio Five, artist residency: 189 Gloucester Place, London

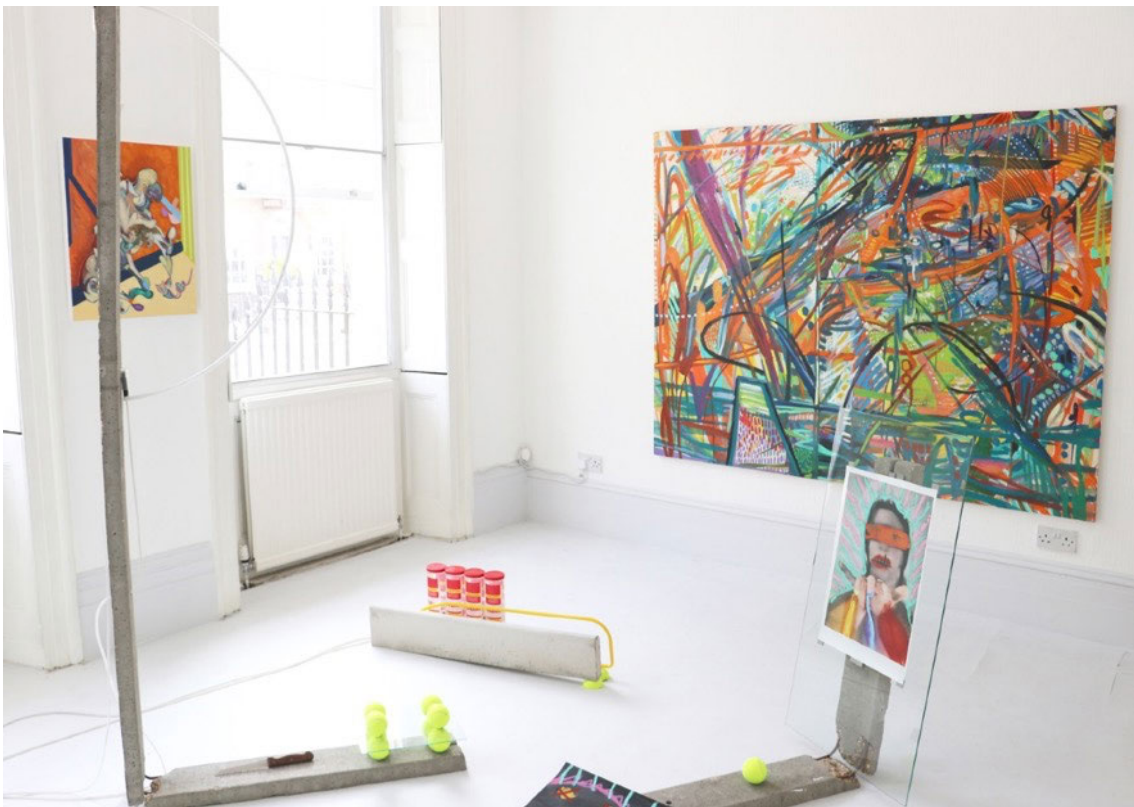


Figure 2.27 Artist residency: 189 Gloucester Place, installation view

Basic Information About the Work

Title: *Cherry Blossom*

Year produced: 2019

Medium: Acrylic, oil pastel, and oil on canvas

Dimensions: 130 x 130cm

Location: 189 Gloucester Place residency, London

Date of occupancy: 15 February 2019 – 1 April 2019

The Context

In the springtime of 2019, I stayed at 189 Gloucester Place, which is next to the Marylebone station in London, as a residency participant. The studio, which was in a five-story white Victorian house once used as a nursing home, had a small balcony and a narrow rectangular shape (Fig 2.26). My main concern at this time was allover composition and the notion of fullness and emptiness. I explored the idea of alloverness on the canvas from different cultural destinations, including Western and Eastern art. Acknowledging various overviews regarding alloverness helped me attempt to solve the question of which continent in painting history I am on at this given point.

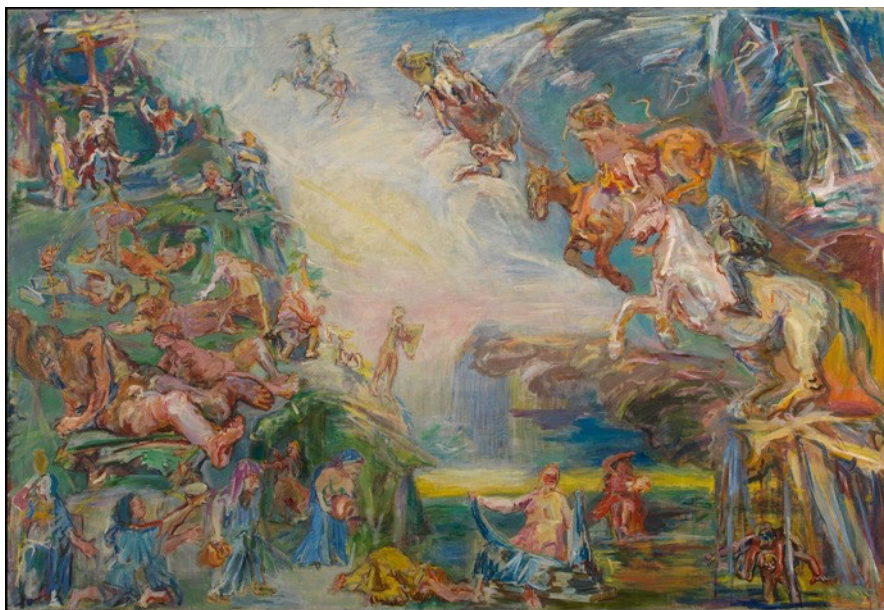


Figure 2.28 Oskar Kokoschka, *The Prometheus Triptych – The Apocalypse* 1950 © Foundation. Oskar Kokoschka/DACS 2021

While undertaking this residency, I visited the Courtauld Gallery, London. I saw a painting by the mid-twentieth century Austrian artist Oskar Kokoschka (1886 – 1980), which was commissioned for Count Antoine Seilern, called *The Prometheus Triptych* 1950. The Triptych dominates the space allocated for Kokoschka in the gallery; the middle piece (Fig 2.28) is a vast painting in which the figure and ground relationship sink into a painterly play which dissolves all distinctions of proximity and distance, giving an impression of alloverness. This is a form of dissolution that trembles on the edge of recognition.



Figure 2. 29 Cecily Brown, *Unmoored from Her Reflection* 2021, 149 x 539cm © Artist, Thomas Dane Gallery. Photo: David Levene

It forms an interesting relationship with a curved panel painting by Cecily Brown (1969 –) on the same floor: *Unmoored from Her Reflection* 2021 (Fig 2.29), which hangs at the top of the stairway. There is also a resemblance to Impressionist and post-Impressionist paintings, which are displayed on the same floor. Despite the different periods and contexts, it might be claimed that such relations between painters form a distinct tradition, one united by the concept of excess. We are given over to the display of folds of flesh, textile, and motion, and this provides a sense of becoming (offspring of the event). This presentation of alloverness is contrary to the sober alloverness found in the Korean **Tansaekhwa (Dansaekhwa)** – Monochrome painting movement, which draws on an entirely different tradition. Although I am interested in both manifestations of alloverness, I do not belong to either tradition. In the practice of American painter Agnes Martin (1912 – 2004), her subtle and biomorphic abstraction is close to Korean tradition, but also the Korean monochrome is close to Martin in terms of spiritual inspiration, meditation, and the idea of intuitive imperfection.⁶ Obviously, I share with the Korean movement an ambiguous relationship to both Western modernity and

⁶ Not only in Korean painting, there is also a great example of showing the notion of imperfection in Korean porcelain. A “moon jar” is a type of traditional Korean white porcelain made in the Joseon Dynasty (1392 – 1910); as the name suggests, the porcelain consists of two jointed hemispherical halves and it represents uneven natural shapes, embedding the idea of intuitive imperfection.

traditional Eastern painting, but I would describe myself as an eruptive painter who links calligraphic pictorial space with intuitive abstraction in which I am able to draw freely from a constellation of different painterly gestalts. There was a pivotal moment that happened when I went to the retrospective exhibition of Agnes Martin at Tate Modern in 2015; I had decided to move to the UK in order to be exposed to significant paintings such as this. Seeing her hand-painted works, looking at their ordered geometry and understanding her sexual orientation left a question: Is it possible to feel the subtle codes of dominant and submissive energies from artworks as informed by the artist's subject position? In turn, these influences have enabled me to think through the spatial poetics of gender and to consider gestures that may derive from sexual orientation. In Martin's work, as in my own painting practice, there is a distinct energy which manifests in motions which are insistent but also modulated by a tonal organisation that blends direct and indirect expression together, resulting in a density of expression, which is less frontal than the mainstream male modernist abstract painters. This approach reframes the different historical narratives of abstraction to include an emphasis on the role of women, particularly the work of Agnes Martin, Helen Frankenthaler, Hilma af Klint, Lee Krasner, and Joan Mitchell.⁷

⁷ Of these influences, Joan Mitchell is central because of the way in which she took her physicality into the realm of the liberation of line and colour as a second-generation Abstract Expressionist in the 1950s in New York. However, Mitchell argues against the categorization of the word "expressionist" because her work is in no sense autobiographical or emotionally self-expressive. She said, "It comes from and is about landscape, not about me" (Tucker, 1974, p.8).



1. 1 March 2019 04:02pm



2. 3 March 2019 04:10pm



3. 3 March 2019 05:10pm



4. 4 March 2019 10:24am



5. 4 March 2019 10:31am



6. 4 March 2019 01:04pm



7. 4 March 2019 01:56pm



8. 4 March 2019 03:05pm



9. 5 August 2018 12:17pm

Figure 2.30 Record of Process and Observation on the painting *Cherry Blossom*

Record of Process and Observation (Fig 2.30)

1. 1 March 2019

When beginning painting *Cherry Blossom*, I covered all surfaces with acrylic to hold the ground layer. Multiple layers of ground often allowed me to achieve an acceptable level of completion in the painting. The first coat was made with acrylic incorporated with speedy drying, efficiency, and vivid saturation. I scraped out a couple of areas with a knife to create directional marks while at the same time allowing the ground colour on the canvas to be visible.

2–6. 3 – 4 March 2019

A consideration of chaotic scenes took place. The painting *Cherry Blossom* can be an example of how I create a balance between controlling areas of paint and loosening up by revealing a tiny part of the background marks. This activity contributed to my control of these aspects, providing an inactive surface and arresting a sense of chaos. Since there were no preparatory drawings for these paintings, there was a lot of hesitation related to the application of each new layer. Therefore, the canvas was rotated numerous times, revealing the possible upcoming colour choices and marks.

7–8. 4 March 2019

Even though I was satisfied with my previous marks, I made the decision to put blue paint all over the canvas and restart the painting. A relatively new method I was involved in was scraping oil paints. These sharp marks created a new way of mark-making that oil brushes could not formulate. Even though these marks seemed to be covered on the next steps, the textural space made by this gesture remained and could be noticed.

9. 5 March 2019

I went to the Bonnard show at Tate Modern (Pierre Bonnard: *The Colour of Memory*, 23 January – 6 May 2019). I was inspired by the show and had the urge to depict the outside world from the window. On the way to the Marylebone tube station, there was a small park where I saw cherry trees in full blossom. The pink colours occupied my mind: seeing the trees had an unconscious influence on the painting, which I ultimately titled *Cherry Blossom* (Fig 2.25).

2.7 Studio Six: Mark-making and Calligraphy



Figure 2.31 *Closing Ceremony* 2019, oil and oil pastel on canvas, 180 x 190cm



Figure 2.32 Studio Six, Stow Building, Glasgow

Basic Information About the Work

Title: *Closing Ceremony*

Year produced: 2019

Medium: Oil pastel and oil on canvas

Dimensions: 180 x 190cm

Location: 5th Floor, Stow Building, Glasgow

Date of occupancy: 22 August 2019 – 18 February 2020

The Context

When I was allocated a new studio on the fifth floor of the Stow Building (Fig 2.32) in Glasgow in 2019, I embarked on a series of oil paste drawings on paper (Fig 2.33) as a study of oil pastels. The main reason I initiated oil drawing was that I wanted to use drawings and interpret them into paintings. Unlike brushes, firm and sharpened pastels can put highly saturated colours (fluorescents or incandescents) directly on to surface without many coats. This facilitates a free drawing style. It was like writing characters in free form, drawing but

closer to calligraphy for me. The marks from pastels conglomerate on the surface relatively smoothly, mingling with one another. The result from this drawing process permitted a quick inscription of scratches, smudges, and saturations (with turpentine).



Figure 2.33 *Untitled (Oil Pastel Study)* 2019, oil pastel on paper, 29.7 x 42cm

When I was 5 or 6 years old, I started to paint. I do not remember how old I was, only that I was small enough to go to bed early in the evening. Associated with this, I remember hearing loud laughing and jazz music issuing from my father's basement. He used to be an art collector because, in part, he wanted to be an artist, but he did not have any plastic skills to do so. To satisfy his passion, he would often invite artists, architects, calligraphers, painters, and musicians to his house. One day I went downstairs, only to witness that my father and friends were drunk. The room was smoke-filled. One of the artists found me hesitating to come inside and asked me

to bring in a bottle of soy sauce. I thought he wanted to eat something, but when I gave it to him, he pulled down his long hair, long enough to reach his hip, then tied it together like a brush and dipped his hair into the soy sauce and drew a dragon on the back cover of a big calendar sheet. He pulled a bold stroke first to create his initial composition, which was then followed by details. I often thought of that moment as if it contained a revelation. I think I learnt how to use brushes from him and write calligraphy in a traditional way; this might be a false perception, but it is nonetheless a perception that has stayed with me. Many painters appear to recite experiences drawn from their childhood which are invariably composed of a combination of memory and imagination. This thought process might come from a desire to have an image of a starting point or origin for one's creative practice.

Calligraphy directs an impulse to cohere visible signs with a gestural output that can be both read and seen. This is not at all a straightforward process but takes a seeming lifetime of practice because of the way it combines both exoteric and esoteric principles, which are beyond controlling the brush. The calligrapher is required to let go of the control that issues from the physical manifestation of the controlling the movement of the brush. Thus, calligraphy resides in its surrender to the pure space of becoming that is issued out of the central core of being. In fact, it is a switch from a static identification with the mark-making process to the process of becoming through which the calligraphic mark assumes a life independent of the body, of the maker, who has become a medium of aesthetic otherness: a process in which sign and gesture find a new level of unity that is beyond any rational design. Rather than a design, it is closer to a distribution of energy that links interiority with the outside and functions as a dynamic that undoes binary oppositions, that presents the coming-to-be of a space of difference which speaks and shows in the same instance. That is why it might be understood as a form that penetrates the void with force.

Given that I cannot claim to be a calligrapher but am rather a practitioner who has been influenced by calligraphy, I would describe my mark-making as having an eruptive quality which disturbs the organisation of the space as predetermined by the design of a composition. I would describe the process of the painting as waiting for passages of interruption that break out of the union of silence and stillness. This is both a physical action (making a mark) but also a process of *being-with* the release of forces captured by the zone of immanence that has accrued within the opening process. It amounts to the surrendering of will and the setting in place of a different temporality which might amount to the fold of materiality and subjectivity that pushes aside will.

Such a passage can be described as a loss of authorship because the forces of exterritoriality assume dominance. At this point, it might be read that I am in danger of losing control and a certain tension comes to the fore, which disturbs the trajectory of the painting process. Nevertheless, this is the heart of when the painting finds resolution.

Once inside of painting, mark making can proceed, so a brush dipped in pigments embraces the surface without much by way of anticipation. So, we can imagine brilliant pink saturating the surface in order to create the ground. It is as if such a gesture has a voice, but this is a voice which cannot be possessed as such, so let us claim that this is a private language that occupies an unknowable space in which voices are submerged. And this voice is, in a way, written like calligraphy with marks.

Extract from my journal, 2019

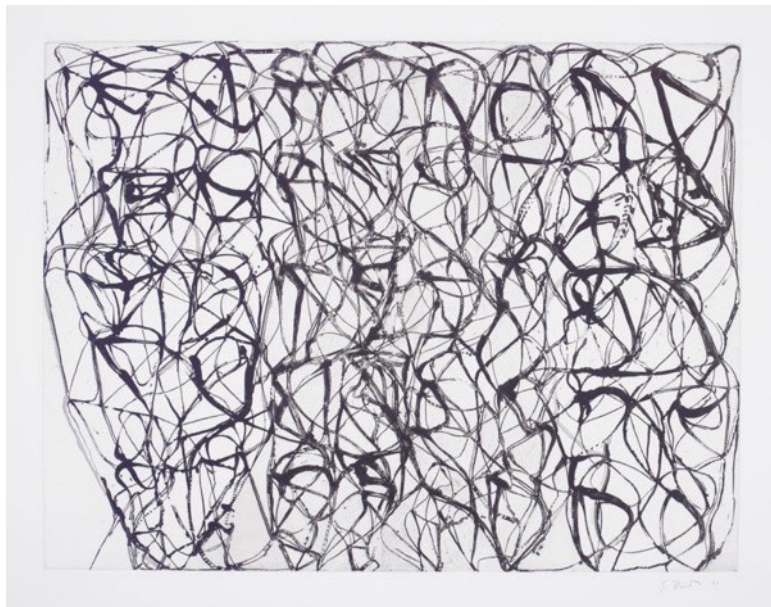


Figure 2.34 Brice Marden, *Cold Mountain Series, Zen (Studies 1 – 6)* 1992 © ARS, NY and DACS 2022

In the Zen series by American artist Brice Marden (1938 –) on the theme of the Cold Mountain (1988 – 1991), there is a distinct influence of Chinese calligraphy on his line drawing, which is in marked contrast to his monochromatic painting (Fig 2.34). The question being, is this a form of cultural hybridity or a distinct invention of a meeting point between Eastern pictorial inscriptive space and Western Modernist space? Obviously, Marden is not a calligrapher, so the marks that he makes have no signifying content, but they do retain the look of calligraphy. This leads me to ask, what is his gesture? It cannot be the case that he is simply simulating a different cultural surface as an exotic mode of signposting. In a way, it is outside of both Modernist (in its formalist manifestation) and Eastern Asian forms; it explores the elsewhere of both genres of

mark-making as each touches upon the other. This mutation of forms is built upon the uncertainty of the restrictive codes that generate cultural identity. I am interested in this push and pull of cross-cultural identity; though stylistically I do not identify with Marden, nonetheless I find his engagement with Eastern visual space to be of interest because of the tensions with which it engages. I believe that his approach is calculated in advance of the appearance that he generates and, as such, has a highly refined and cognitive quality. This is not a criticism but rather an acknowledgement of the difference in approach.



1. 27 September 2019 08:28pm



2. 27 September 2019 09:01pm



3. 6 October 2019 04:40pm



4. 18 October 2019 06:04pm



5. 18 October 2019 07:29pm



6. 21 October 2019 09:05pm



7. 25 October 2019 06:26pm



8. 1 November 2019 03:42pm



9. 8 November 2019 09:35pm

Figure 2.35 Record of Process and Observation on the painting *Closing Ceremony*

Record of Process and Observation (Fig 2.35)

1–2. 27 September 2019

I transcribed the oil-pastel drawings (Fig 2.33) onto a stretched canvas with a 13-ounce cotton duct on an aluminium frame. The size of the canvas is 180 x 190cm.

3–4. 6 – 18 October 2019

The idea of blocking and dividing sections was not planned. Two different colours, red and green, occupied the surface as ground colours. Even though I claim to control accidents and pursue unexpected effects in various ways, my painting results often follow a similar pattern. In this painting, I used the basecoat, the first dripping coat in which the paint and pigment bleed into the woven cotton from top to bottom, contributing to a breathing area and some unpredicted events.

5. 18 October 2019

Most of the time, I am in the middle of things, somewhere between system and chaos. Mondrian can be seen as a systematic painter, whereas Pollock might align more closely with chaos, but this is a superficial polarity because both painters aspired to enter a higher dimension of abstraction.

By being in the middle of such dualities, I stay flexible rather than rigid. I like the idea that my paintings are alert to movement in all directions at the same time. Another way of being in the middle pertains to my identity as a Korean artist painting in the West. I draw equally from both without having the aim of being a synthesiser of the two.

Extract from my journal, 2019

I imagined a calligrapher putting a brush on the surface. One mark sits on the surface, and I put down other marks; I spread the marks from the right to the left side of the canvas.

6–9. 21 October – 8 November 2019

The painting was structured through the application of masking tape and divided into three sections on the painting's top and bottom. This happened with a geometrically structured intention; I applied thick oil pastels in the middle to give extra body to the surface. The resistance of oil paint, followed by the point of a pastel, pulls and pushes colour leaving behind powdery pigment. This tension between a smudged area and a drawn line amplifies the

saturation of colour within the painting. The vertical sense of directionality within the painting balances the busyness and emptiness of the composition.

2.8 Studio Seven: Material Understanding



Figure 2.36 *Her Window* 2020, oil pastel on canvas, 150 x 120cm

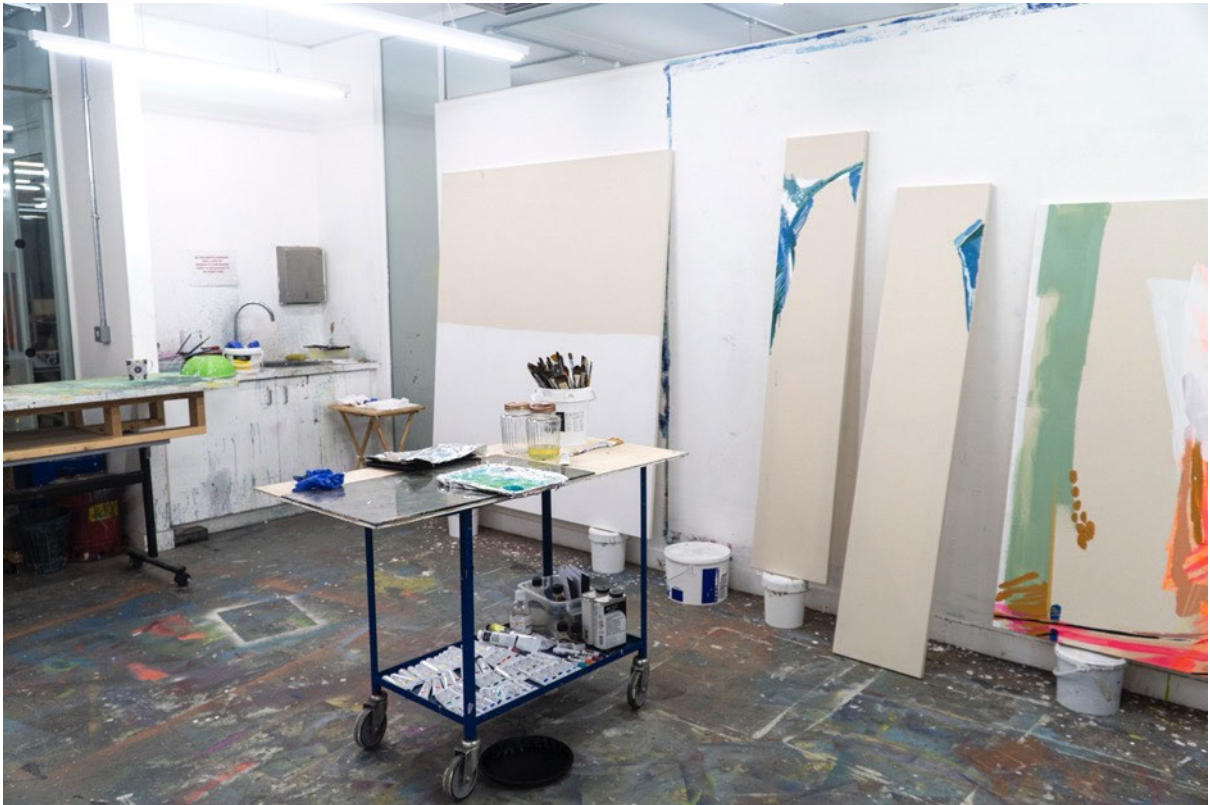


Figure 2.37 Studio Seven, artist residency: Elephant Lab residency, London



Figure 2.38 Installation view, Elephant Lab residency, London

Basic Information About the Work

Title: *Her Window*

Year produced: 2020

Medium: Oil on canvas

Dimensions: 150 x 120cm

Location: Elephant Lab residency, 21 Evesham St, London

Date of occupancy: 6 January 2020 – 31 January 2020



Figure 2.39 Winsor and Newton Lab at Elephant Lab residency

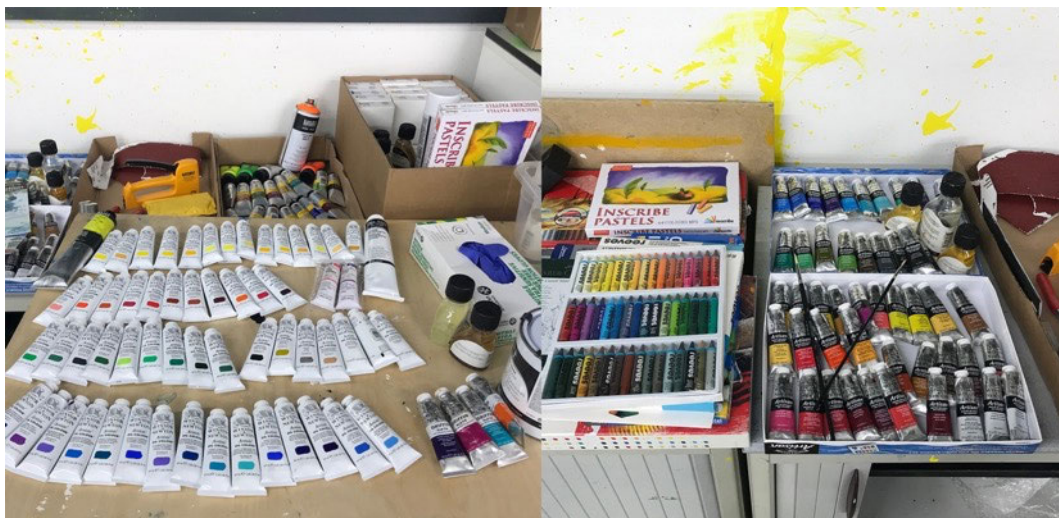


Figure 2.40 Materials provided by Elephant Lab residency

The Context

In January 2020, just before the Covid 19 started, I had a chance to be in London as part of an artist residency program, Elephant Lab (Fig 2.37). The residency was based in the Colart Building, where Winsor and Newton's art material lab and chemists were present. When I arrived at the studio, 118 different oil paint tubes (Fig 2.40) were available from the manufacturers Winsor and Newton, and I immediately realised that these various colour ranges would change my colour palettes as even the same colour of oil paint from different companies could be slightly different. Before starting the big canvases, I made six drawings (Fig 2.41). It was my first-time using marker pens as a medium. This experience later became a foundation of my drawing series during lockdown (see Appendix, pp.117–119).

When I applied for this residency, my goal was to understand materials better and employ a new technique in collaboration with the Winsor and Newton chemists. My initial proposal for this residency position was to experiment with the oil medium's fluidity and texture. Oil paint can be versatile in terms of its flow depending on the volumes of oil mediums, but it is hard to control textured quantity. I wanted to create concentrated thin lines of texture like icing on muffins or "Happy Birthday" messages on a cake. Mark, the chemist from the lab, advised me to mix Liquin and oil and put them in different sizes of syringes. The measurement size (1ml, 3ml, 5ml, 7ml) pulled out different thicknesses and volumes. At first, due to the wrong percentages of oil and Liquin, several attempts failed. Incorrect ratio mixtures either dripped or took a while to dry. With constant adjustment of the ratio, I found the right proportion.



Figure 2.41 Sketchbook from Elephant Lab residency 2020, marker pen on paper, 21 x 14.8cm



1. 20 January 2020 12:44 pm



2. 20 January 2020 02:11 pm



3. 20 January 2020 04:01 pm



4. 21 January 2020 06:07 pm



5. 22 January 2020 11:56 am



6. 22 January 2020 04:04 pm



7. 23 January 2020 06:35 pm



8. 23 January 2020 07:15 pm



9. 27 January 2020 04:29 pm

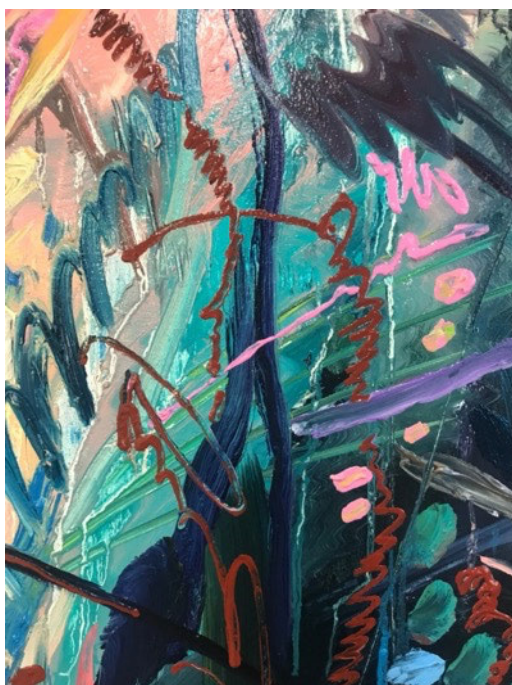
Figure 2.42 Record of Process and Observation on the painting *Her Window*

Record of Process and Observation (Fig 2.42)

1–2. 20 January 2020

I stretched 9 ounces of cotton fabric over aluminium stretchers measuring 120 x 150cm. To have a firm ground for the experiment, “material understanding”, I applied five coats of Liquitex white gesso. This painting was one of five paintings made in the residency. This became an important painting as, from this moment onwards, the application of new techniques became possible thanks to the experiments on this painting. The first image in the grid shows drips from the canvas, representing how my first attempt using the Liquin failed.

3. 20 January 2020



The chemist passed by the studio and recommended using more Liquin. Fifty per cent of Liquin and fifty per cent of oil paint sit on the surface nicely, and the amount of brown oil paint from the 5ml syringe was easy to control (Fig 2.43).

4–6. 21 – 22 January 2020

The lines created by the 3ml/5ml syringes enabled depth and texture on the surface.

Figure 2.43 Detail of the surface of *Her Window*

7–8. 23 January 2020

In the painting *Sweet-toned Voice*, I attempted to observe how a depth of texture was created on the surface with different sizes of syringes (Fig 2.44). Checking out the different textures that oil paints and oils pastels created in this painting gave me the confidence to go forward with this technique. Until this point, there was no direction on the painting; all marks were part of the experiment. The textural lines sitting on the surface were extreme. Deleting, scraping off, and covering the paint were my only choices at this stage.



Figure 2.44 *Sweet-toned Voice* 2020, oil and oil pastels on canvas, 30.5 x 40.6cm

9. 27 January 2020

Balancing out the densities, inscriptions, and intensities was the key to resolving the painting at this stage. I realised that the excessive mark-making from the syringes could not replace the ordinary marks by brush.

2.9 Studio Eight: Chance



Figure 2.45 *The Lost Language* 2021, oil on canvas, 150 x 120cm



Figure 2.46 Studio Eight, Home Studio, Glasgow

Basic Information About the Work

Title: *The Lost Language*

Year produced: 2021

Medium: Oil and oil pastel on canvas

Dimensions: 150 x 120cm

Location: Home Studio, 134 Renfrew Street, Glasgow

Date of occupancy: 15 November 2020 – 6 July 2022

The Context

The work *The Lost Language* (Fig 2.45) is an extension of the study of *Drawings from Isolation #200* (Appendix), sketchbook study (Fig 2.42), and small painting series, *The Lost Language of X* (Fig 2.47). Transition was inevitable. Everything was progressed by new attempts at the emendation of previous rough drafts. After six months of no oil canvas paintings because of working from home, it became necessary for me to set up a home studio where I could work with oils. Scaled-down paintings (12 x 12cm) were necessary to accommodate my practice in a small living room.

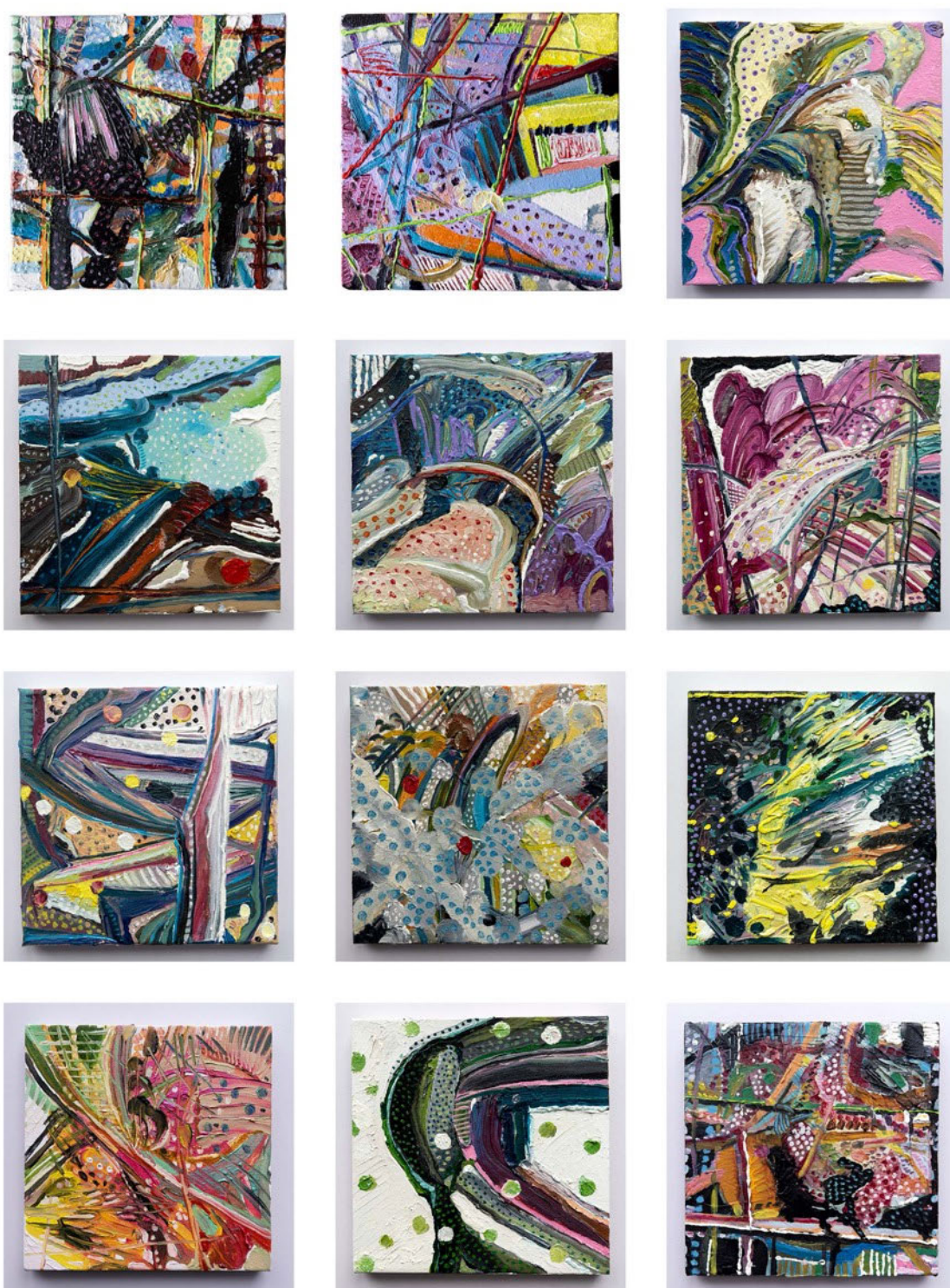


Figure 2.47 *The Lost Language of X* series 2021, oil on canvas, 20 x 20cm

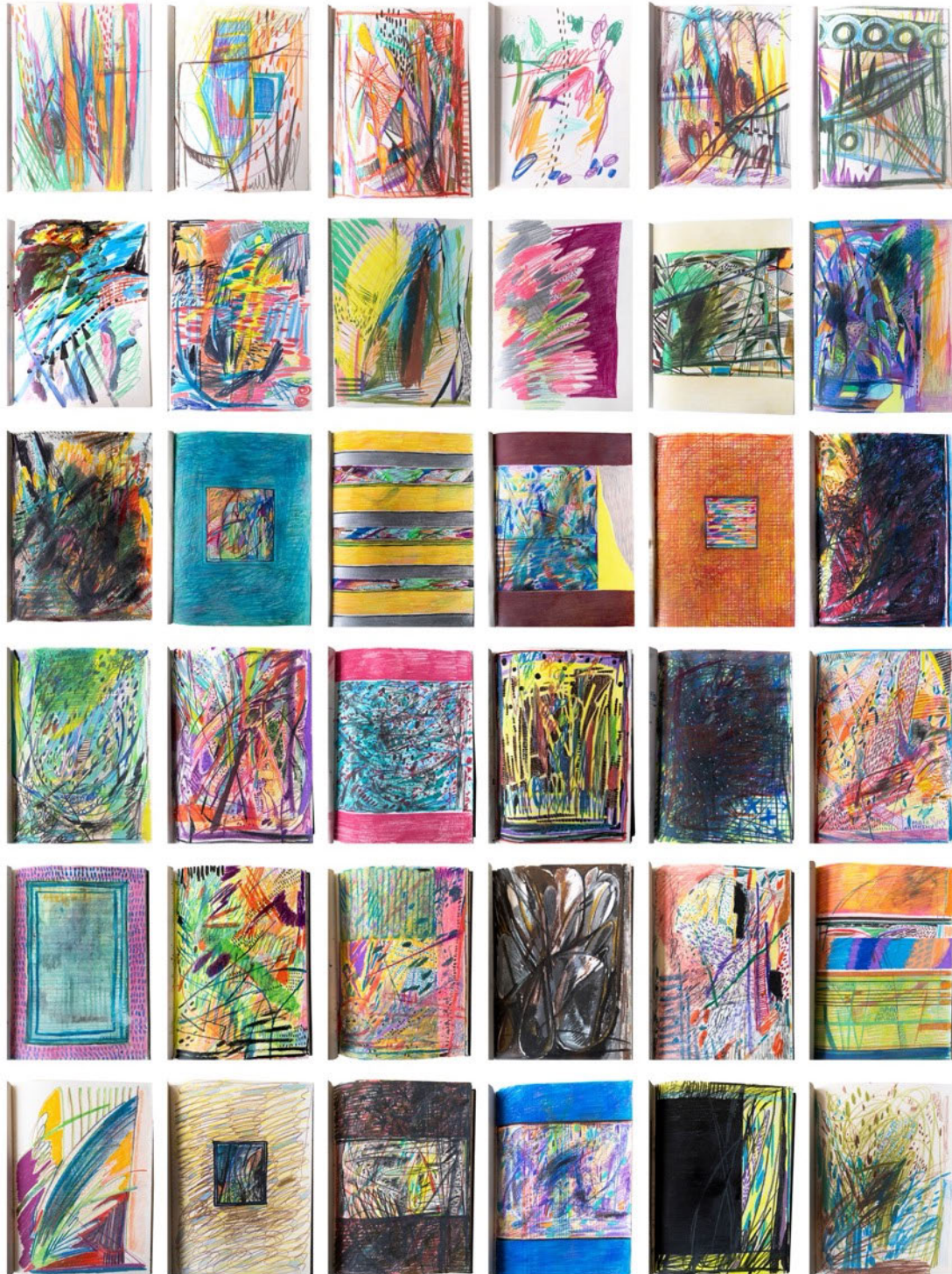


Figure 2.48 *Untitled (Sketchbook)* 2020, 29.5 x 20.5cm

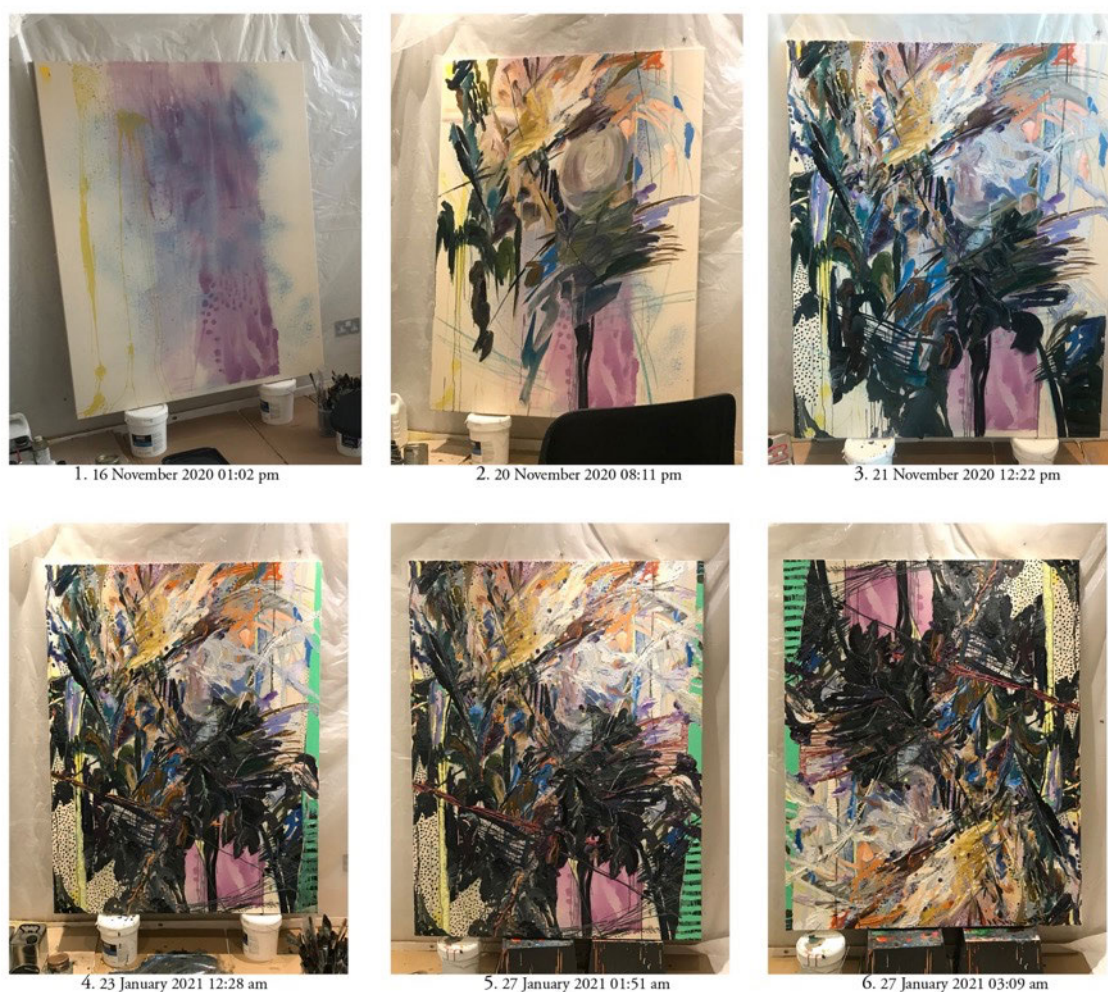


Figure 2.49 Record of Process and Observation on the painting *The Lost Language*

Record of Process and Observation (Fig 2.49)

1. 16 November 2020

One of the things I learnt about from the paper drawings with marker was the light saturation and smudge effects that the water-based material could create. The cotton fabric was not heavily coated with gesso as I only applied two coats of transparent gesso to see how acrylic smeared into the fabric and reduced the saturation.

I sometimes think that painting has a hidden relationship to gambling, in that chance is part of the fabric of the painting. It is not clear where chance installs itself, whether it is at the very origin of the painting or towards its completion. In this sense, it has the reality of a virtual element floating within the midst of the material marks. After putting a fresh raw cotton duct into stretchers, I apply

transparent gesso to the surface of a canvas. This indicates to me the inaugural act of painting because the canvas starts to have a breath resonance that opens out the mutuality of the body with the painting. Both start to breathe together. This indicates space before any conceptual ideation can begin. Gambling is a gesture of becoming, like throwing all the elements to the wind, and thus it signifies exposure to the outside.

Extract from my journal, 2021

2. 20 November 2020

Even without the preconceived composition, the whole process was automated; I remembered listening to “The Great Women Artists Podcast with Katy Hessel”, in which the painter Tracy Emin said, “Painting behaves itself”. I was working on the canvas while listening to her talk, and I felt the painting was indeed behaving itself, transforming/becoming another.

3. 21 November 2020

The actual temporality of the painting gives rise to feelings of both pleasure and dissatisfaction. There is no single emotional economy or mood which can be established in painting because each mood can be modulated by quite contradictory alterations in emotional colouring. This can give rise to the feeling that the painting can be a setting or the sense that it stands against me as much as it stands for me. The implication of this is that there is no stable subject position within the work of art and that it is constantly in the process of modulation. Subject and object are entangled together within this process, and it is why painting can never result in a completely stable outcome. I let the painting behave autonomously. I let the painting be guided by the process of becoming.

4–5. 23 – 27 January 2021

Throughout 2020 – 2021 during the lockdown, I inhabited a domestic environment in isolation. I moved around the living room with my body, and all my encounters consisted of either landscape from a window or growing plants in living rooms. Working in this context, the final outcomes of the paintings became evident very quickly; all I had to do was finalise the marks guided by my intuition.

Conclusions

To embark upon a PhD by practice is to enter a labyrinth of paradoxes. Firstly, there is the question of double authorship, in that as an artist's work is produced, it simultaneously becomes subject to a commentary on this authorship which results in two separate subject positions. Secondly, painting assumes a position of ontological enquiry by opening out the Deleuzian concept of becoming. In this sense, a painting is an object that is not bounded by stable definitions that might secure its place within the representation. There can be no clarity of explanation where these two opposing viewpoints occur, resulting in a synthesis of viewpoints. Notably, in my own painting practice, I understand the working of the image in relationship to the conceptual destination of the Image. This relationship is a form of non-knowledge as opposed to the achievement of knowledge through arrival at a definite endpoint. For me, it is not enough to simply open out such conflicts but rather to set about a process of attending to them whilst recording a process of *being-with* such differences. The writing I produce alongside my painting does not assume a single viewpoint. It does not provide an overview of "standing apart" from the painting but rather offers a multiplicity of engagements allowing for the co-extensivity of painting and writing. This, in turn, implicates a relationship to the fragment. As a result of this approach, commentaries on my painting process might be embedded within descriptions of the spaces in which the work was made; descriptions of the spaces within paintings (their compositional structures); descriptions of colour, mark-making, and techniques of application. This approach leads to a body of writing that links being in work, viewing the work, discovering new frameworks and contexts and *being-with* the work all of which contribute to a research experience of abstraction and spatiality in painting. In returning to the idea of *being-with*, a work of art opens out a sense of multiple *spacings* within the subject, the work, and the perceiving world within the play of difference.

I shall first re-introduce my three research aims which are as follows:

1. To critically analyse *being-with*, establishing a framework for considering a way of understanding painting practice and to explore the possibility of painting practice in relation to the idea of *spacing* leading to the concept of becoming.
2. To consider how the concept of the fragment appears and emerges in both painting and writing.
3. To understand *being-with* as a co-existence within a cyclical relationship between painting, reading, and writing.

I will examine to what extent these aims have been met and, in doing so, will explicate my contributions to knowledge. The body of research contributes to both practice-led research (as a method that incorporates the idea of *being-with* and *spacing*) and artist's paintings (that are presented, practised and pursued within *being-with*) with a particular focus on the painting process and fragmentary writing.

My original intention was to understand how I think (further, how artists think) during practice. I was initially drawn to the concept of not-knowing and the notion of uncertainty, but that seems no longer relevant nor appealing to me as there was a limit to the extent to which I could elaborate my own practice in relation to these ideas. My act of painting was a continuous process of inhabiting spaces, embodying invisibility, gestures, and fragmentary thoughts: disjointed, excessive, and interrupted. Such processes led me to understand the multiplicity between the conjunction of the visual image and cognitive awareness within the *being-with*. Nancy introduced the idea of *being-with* in a different context: that of the human condition. Nancy argues that human beings are fundamentally social creatures who exist in a state of constant *being-with* others. He contends that the human condition is characterized by a sense of *being-with* others, both in terms of physical proximity and in terms of a shared understanding of the world. However, I have argued that its co-extensivity as a “multiplicity of the totality of being” (Nancy, 2000, p.38) comprehends the transformative nature of the painting process. The different factors that come into play within my understanding of the painting practice – for example, materials, emotion, memory, intuition, and fragmented thoughts – are examined in this exploration of the concept of *being-with*.

Moreover, the idea of *spacing* which Nancy regenerates and focuses on the “present of presence” has enabled me to encompass space-time in the process of painting. *Spacing* refers to the idea that space is not simply a background or container for objects but is an active and constitutive aspect of our experience and understanding of the world. Nancy argues that space is not something that exists independently of things or bodies but is rather something that is created and sustained through their mutual relationship. In this sense, space is not something that can be objectively mapped or measured but is always already a part of our subjective experience of the world. He also refers to *spacing* as the way in which things and bodies relate to one another and to the world around them, and how they create meaning and significance through their interactions with each other. Therefore, *spacing* is a mode of circulation which disseminates in directions of space –

time; intervals of material, surroundings, and being, even though we cannot arrive at direct meaning. Through this exploration, I have applied *being-with* and *spacing* as a vehicle to encompass and locate me: being “in”, “with”, “from”, and “around” painting. My exploration contributes an in-depth analysis of *being-with* and *spacing* in relation to painting process; it opens out a way of understanding that all reside within an unmarked zone before the process of defined signification can occur.

To write about painting with all of these encounters, the fragment testifies to both completion and incompleteness. The fragment serves to open the room for embodiment and evocation of *being-with*, which, in turn, is a way of understanding how the painting process has proceeded. Certain factors impacted upon my paintings: I attended various artist residencies in different locations, which had the effect of changing the settings, sizes, and tones of colours and allowed me to encounter and incorporate diverse perspectives from the painting process: failure, visibility and invisibility, memory, alloverness, identity, mark-making, calligraphy, material understanding, and chance. My critical exploration of the painting process contributes to an in-depth analysis of a self-reflective study on painting. Although the body of the painting itself is not knowledge, it is a presentation of knowledge. Documented processes of painting and my digital journal within the different locations, with different themes and thoughts, provide a record of the studio process as a means of creating new relations of knowledge to painting.

Becoming is a mode of transformation of the actual and the present according to virtual forces, forces that emerge from in, with, and within, meeting forces that surround and enmesh things, events, and processes. During the process of painting, I intend to account for an event or happening. In particular, the reality of the image on the canvas transmuted into a presentation, in which complex encounters are generated from judgement (failure), different cultural points, memory, identity, and historical painting relations. Things become, and this transforms the surface of action in ways which are unpredictable or irreversible. I have attempted to look at how change occurs: that is, how difference elaborates itself.

As part of my painting-writing strategy, reading with and walking with the thoughts within Clarice Lispector’s book *Água Viva* and Cy Twombly’s calligraphical works *have* been fundamental to the development of my research. Painting practice is like collecting unexpected

fragmentary inscriptions either on text or surface; these discoveries have enabled me to pass between painting-writing-reading as a circular relationship.

Following on from my research and references, new research ideas arise and raise questions in relation to my identity as a South Korean painter and a female artist for future research. Firstly, being an Eastern Asian painter who lives and works in the UK has raised the importance of what cultural influences have impacted me and how these multicultural aspects structure my practice. This might also expand on how my main inspiration, calligraphy, can be examined in depth not just in Asian culture but including different styles: for example, Islamic calligraphy (Arabic calligraphy, Ottoman and Persian calligraphy). Secondly, although the author Lispector and the idea of fragment have further been researched through *l'écriture féminine* which has been explained as a writing style rather than feminist discourse, touching upon related scholars, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva have been beyond the scope of my research. *L'écriture féminine* needs to be explored to push forward the interpretation of cultural structures and conventions to reconceptualise current thinking about gender study and feminist discourse. This new research idea might be examined in an investigation of the painter Agnes Martin. Martin states “work is self-expression. We must not think of self-expression as something we may do or something we may not do. Self-expression is inevitable” (Katz, 2010, p.93). Although Martin never acknowledged her sexuality in her interviews or statements, her sexuality implicitly responded in her “inevitable” self-expression as a response of her work. In terms of a process of making, as part of looking at artwork as a process of *being-with*, applying a more complex taxonomy and terminology to sexuality and gender nonconformity could be productive to understanding a way of contextualizing artists’ multiplicity and personal politics in the artwork.

This research has begun with practice, by way of open-ended daily practice of painting. This research presents a departure for understanding painting rather than an arrival. Lispector wrote on her last page in *Água Viva*: “What I am writing you is a ‘this’. It won’t stop: it goes on.” As such, my painting practice goes on and my research on *being-with* painting process will not stop.

Glossary of Terms

Affect, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari

The term “affect” refers to a pre-linguistic, bodily sensation or feeling. Affect is often contrasted with emotion, which is a more conscious, cognitive response to a particular situation or stimulus.

Affect can be thought of as the raw, unprocessed feeling that precedes conscious awareness or interpretation. It is the immediate bodily response to a stimulus, which is then shaped and given meaning through social and cultural contexts. In the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, affect is a key concept in their theory of becoming. They argue that affect is a primary force that drives the process of becoming, which is the process of constant transformation and creation of new forms of life. Affect, in this context, is seen as a non-representational force that creates new connections and intensities between individuals and their environment.

Becoming, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari

Gilles Deleuze’s concept of “becoming” is a central theme in his philosophy, particularly in his collaboration with Félix Guattari on the book *A Thousand Plateaus*. Becoming is a process of transformation and change, which involves moving beyond established identities and fixed forms to embrace new possibilities and potentials. Deleuze and Guattari argue that becoming is not about imitation or assimilation, but rather about creating new connections and intensities. It involves breaking down binary oppositions and hierarchies and engaging in a process of continuous experimentation and creation.

Being-with (Mitsein), Jean-Luc Nancy

Nancy privileges the idea of *being-with* (Mitsein) in ways that do not subordinate it to the idea of the subject or being. The sense of being can take place either within us or between us. *Being-with* is anterior to any presence and serves as the co-originality of sense. For Nancy “we” is the sense of sense, the opening that is both in us and between us forming, in turn, the possibility of saying “we” and “I” that forms the basis of a community of sense without signification because in its circulating movement sense exceeds signification. Sense indicates the limit of signification because sense is related to itself and, as such, it is not open to appropriation.

Constellation, Walter Benjamin

Walter Benjamin provides a new method for understanding reading, writing, and thinking. His concept of constellation develops in various texts between 1920 and 1940. Constellation refers to the unique relationship that exists between seemingly unrelated historical events or objects.

Benjamin argues that historical objects and events are not simply isolated facts but are instead interconnected through a web of relationships. Benjamin believed that these relationships were often hidden or obscured by dominant historical narratives, but that by exploring the constellation of events and objects, one could gain a deeper understanding of the underlying historical forces at play.

Duration, Jacques Derrida, Henri Bergson

Duration is not about mechanical time. Time has a quality of intangibility and fleetingness, emitting its duration particles only in the passing or transformation of objects and events, thus erasing itself as such while it opens itself to movement and change.

Emptiness

The notion of emptiness is not about nothing or lacking. Rather than explain, I will borrow the idea of emptiness from John Cage. Cage stated “There is no such thing as an empty space or an empty time. There is always something to see, something to hear” (Cage, 2017, p.8).

Fragmentary Demand, Jean-Luc Nancy

Nancy's understanding of “fragmentary demand” is rooted in his critique of totality or completeness. He argues that human existence is characterised by a fundamental lack or incompleteness, and desires or demands are always partial, contingent, and open-ended. According to Nancy, human beings constantly seek meaning, connection, and fulfilment. Still, these desires are never fully satisfied due to the inherent limitations of language, perception, understanding, and the limits of human subjectivity. In this sense, “fragmentary demand” reflects the idea that human beings constantly strive for meaning and satisfaction, but these efforts are always characterised by incompleteness, uncertainty, and openness to interpretation.

Intuition, Kant

Intuition differs from mediated knowledge rather it presents what is immediate. Kant describes space and time as pure intuitions because they exist a priori to cognition of the world. Intuition as a faculty possesses the principle of form and this in turn gives rise to its sensible character. In

Kant's notion of schematism, there is a presentation of concepts to intuitions in a manner that allows images to discover a relationship to concepts.

Paradox

"Paradox" is used when someone struggles to create clear feelings of intrigue or interest.

Paradoxical structure in any sense might make artists think deeper and harder to understand the real message within. Artists have been compelled to explore paradox as a contradiction, ambiguity, uncertainty, and truth.

Sense, Jean-Luc Nancy

Sense in Nancy precedes the separation between the intelligible and the sensible and as such is both before and in excess of signification. Sense is without substance, and it is born into presence so is the becoming of something. Sense is something that is always only coming and once it is presented then it disappears into nothingness. Sense is only sense when it comes to its limit.

Spacing, Jean-Luc Nancy

Spacing is not just a matter of physical distance, but rather it is a way of understanding the relationship between the work of art and its surroundings. The *spacing* between the work of art and its surroundings is never fixed or stable. It is always in flux, as the work of art interacts with its surroundings and is interpreted by different viewers in different contexts. In this way, the *spacing* between the work of art and its surroundings is an essential part of the work of art itself, and it is through this *spacing* that the work of art is able to communicate its meaning and significance to the viewer.

Surprise, Jean-Luc Nancy

The notion of surprise might be in turn understood as an awakening to something, the coming to be of a pattern of convergence, interruption, or abstraction. The surprise, according to Nancy, is nothing – but the leap into being wherein event and thought are "the same". Surprise is not only the connection between thought and being but also nothing and something in which a discord of being (its truth) and the present is staged in ways that constitute the event. If the surprise is a leap, then it is connected to the *spacing* of time but one which is anterior to all figures, a form of schematics which is the visibility of nothing as the condition for the possibility of the visibility of something.

Tansaekhwa (Dansaekhwa), the Korean Monochrome Movement

Tansaekhwa (Dansaekhwa) emerged in the 1960s and by late 1970 it had become the first Korean artistic movement. There is a space where paint is pulled, soaked, dragged, ripped, and manipulated; it isn't space for disruptions but rather meditation with neutral hues; materiality isn't drawn on the surface, it is rather drawn into the surface. As the name, "monochrome" suggests, most of the works are driven from a single colour, usually shades that are considered to represent the Korean nation: white, blue, red, and black.

Threshold, Jean-Luc Nancy

Threshold is related to painting in the sense that it seeks to capture the moment when a painting exists on the boundary between itself and the world around it. The threshold is the point where the painting both emerges from and merges back into its surroundings. For Nancy, the threshold is not a physical or objective thing; rather it is a subjective experience that is created through our interaction with the painting. As we approach a painting, we become aware of the threshold that separates the painting from the world. This threshold is what allows us to experience the painting as an object of aesthetic contemplation, rather than just another object in the world.

Appendix: *Drawings from Isolation* #200

The landscape thinks of itself in me, and I am it's consciousness.

Cézanne (Merleau-Ponty, 2007, p.91)

A landscape is always a landscape of time, and doubly so: it is a time of year (a season) and a time of day (morning, noon, or evening), as well as a kind of weather (un temps), rain or snow, sun, or mist. In the presentation of this time, which unfolds with every image, the present of representation can do nothing other than render infinitely sensible the passing of time, the fleeting instability of what is shown.

(Nancy, 2005b, p.61)



Figure A.1 *Drawings from Isolation* #200, 2020 Courtesy of Patricia Fleming Gallery. Photo: Keith Hunter.

Year produced: 24 March 2020 – 02 July 2020 (first lockdown in the UK)

Medium: marker pen (#287), watercolour, enamel on paper

Dimensions: 14.8 x 21cm

Location: Home Studio, 134 Renfrew Street, Glasgow



Figure A.2 *Drawings from Isolation*

During the first lockdown in the UK (24 March 2020 – 2 July 2020), I started to make a series of drawings. The form of these drawings is the chronological equivalent of a diary, offering a framework of numbers, days, and weather for sequencing a new everyday life. Especially during this period, I had limited access to art materials and a studio; these external factors forcefully arranged a new approach to my practice. I made a rule and wrote down the purpose of this project: finish two drawings (14.8 x 21cm) per day until it reaches 200 drawings. The true purpose of these drawings was not to get lost deep down inside of me; it was instead a method of reckoning what was going on outside and counting days. And I made sure that whatever aesthetic qualities each drawing might have

would not cause any emotional distress. With all the good and bad vibes, extreme domesticity and extreme solitude are conditions that have brought me emotionally closer and more sensitive to what our home is and what we have around us while the world storms outside. In this state, windows, the only portal from home, have offered me somewhere to situate myself and escape. Views out have filled the absence of colour of monotonous life and the rhythm of forms interacting with one another resonates with how I see the world amid a lack of changes.

The subject matter developed from two stories, a novel, and a personal account. I have been inspired by David Levitt's book *The Lost Language of Cranes* (1986). The source of impulse was not the novel's storyline, however, but an article by one of the characters from the book read at the library. A boy has to be in his cot every day, looking at a construction site from his tiny little window in his room. Then he starts to emulate cranes and create a language with the crane's movements. I felt like I had a similar situation to him and then recollected this scenery outside my window as a way of reading the uncertain world.

Along with this novel, one day at the beginning of the lockdown, my landlord came to visit and shared information about the life of one of the previous tenants. He said there was an elderly lady who lived alone in this flat, who did not have many visitors but always looked

happy. The landlord was wondering somehow and then asked the secret of her comfort; she said she considered cars passing through the horizontal highway outside her window as her friends. She didn't feel alone because there was landscape she could look at, and everything could potentially be her company.

Based upon this inspiration, I was able to finish 200 drawings and the collection was shown in my solo show at Patricia Fleming Gallery, Glasgow, in 2021 (Fig A.1). The works are shown in Practical Output 2017 – 2022.



Figure A.3 Photo from the window

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