

# The Affect of Painting as a Physical Space

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## Abstract

This Ph.D by Practice narrates five spatial paintings that took place over three years, between 2014 and 2017, across a range of sites and exhibition spaces in the UK. This series of work and written thesis seeks to understand what a new materialist reading could bring to painting's language once it enters architectural space. Each painting uses fragments of both made and found *things*, that are closely interrelated with painting's vernacular: edges; translucency; colour; thickness; proximity; etc. These are theatrically staged *with* space itself - where architectural space becomes complicit with the work.

It is the viewer/reader who makes the work *do* its work, from within the painting, through being *in-action* with the works as a physical spatial encounter, examining thematics of visibility and invisibility through the concrete materialization of the structures that govern painting. The thesis argues how the experience of painting as a spatial practice requires new interpretative methods that rely less upon optical and retinal experience in understanding its affect when directly addressing the body and architectonic sensory responses of touch, weight, movement and horizontality.

Further, it uses object-narratives to examine the affect of this sphere by giving selected *things* the capacity for speech, accentuating material behaviours and enabling inanimate things to reflect upon themselves, their histories and the conditions that surround them. Their orality originates from their physical status, fusing linguistic and material relations and thus represents a means of discourses across painting, architecture and language.

What I want to claim for this research project is that theatricality, movement, fragmented experience and a strengthened attention to deep materiality enriches the visual, and generates a different type of experience that is pluralistic, inclusionary and participatory, one that brings forth a greater unity between the viewer and the work.

Art Writing sustains all forms of art criticism, including the experimental and the hybrid. The artwork may be intensely engaged with, or it may be the starting point for fictional and poetic developments.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Maria Fusco, *Give Up Art: Critical Writing by Maria Fusco* (Published by New Documents, 2018) p. 14.

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**Key:**                    **Full capitalized words indicate a reference to the GLOSSARY.**  
**It is at the reader’s discretion how they approach the glossary – e.g.,**  
**back and forth throughout the play or as a singular text following a**  
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## Introduction

In the written part of the thesis I use the form of a PLAY in Five Acts to dramatise a relationship between painting, space and *things*. The narrator is the work itself, the related architecture and materials - I assume it a voice, to give the work a real existence that enables it to reveal and perform itself to the viewer. The writing draws upon a neglected literary form from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the It-Narrative, where things are assumed capable of fictionally speaking about their own observations and constitutions. This mostly forgotten form of presentation subjectively animates ordinary material objects from the first person position of art objects. I write in this way to offer a perspective from the object as the conveyor of its own narrative to reverse the traditional hierarchies of people over inanimate things. The It-Narrative re-negotiates attention, imaginatively, using combinations of voices and attitudes to attune the viewer or reader to their materiality and encourage a reflection on how materials themselves might ask questions.

The writing purposefully avoids an academic style and experiments critically and creatively with standard forms of criticism in recognition of the non-division between practice and theory. Writing in this way I can embrace fictional and poetic developments within the context of painting, addressing what is at the threshold of visibility. Whilst the idea of forcing materials to think or speak or be 'writing themselves' may seem obscure, the intention is serious. Within literary and cultural history the It-Narrative provides a pronounced shift in the turning from subject to object, giving voice to the material in order to communicate anxieties upon issues of authorship - it reverses the gaze. In this way the It-Narrative becomes a form of linguistic disorientation, thus enabling material content to be multiply interpreted. The use of a linguistic interpretation of a non-human thing to communicate its internal conditions requires an engagement that asks for a more open, imaginative and transformative, experience of what the work *does* rather than what it means, to encapsulate the dynamic interplay of experiences between the work and the viewer. The It-Narrative is thus employed as the operative concept in my research.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Using the anthropocentric form of the It-Narrative with the non-human concerns of new materialist debate has been carefully considered at various stages of completing this research. Whilst applying language to materials, the discourse remains 'unheard', experienced to the reader internally as a silent oration (inside the reader/viewer's head) thus allowing the viewer to consider the theoretical space of 'emergence' or 'becoming' as iterative and relational rather than fixed. It is not my intention to give character to each object, but address their inter-relationality with each other and the viewer, within the act of observation.

Within each ACT I draw attention to the physicality of language and how words are presented upon the page. Each word, gap, punctuation, heading, space, interval, etc., relates to how one approaches the work, directing the viewer's involvement, each part leading to the other, sequentially and tangentially, fast, slow and sometimes peripherally. In this way the typed word acts as an additional component to each painting, becoming part of its infrastructure, adding density to its microphysical nature - in a material literary form. I want the writing and the touching and turning of each page to relate to the unfolding of a structure, where more and more connections become evident. These connections are not resemblances, or juxtapositions of separate things but parts and fragments of the same framework. I write in this way to address language as equal to my creative practice, running alongside and through the work itself. In this sense, painting shares something with language, it becomes transposed into language and this thesis positions critical Art Writing in relation to it. The writing being integral to creative practice, and as such is to be considered as an artwork in its own right.

The thesis is assembled as the paintings are assembled, as a creative experiment moving along two central trajectories.

These key areas are:

*Paintings' engagement with spatial architectonics*  
*(how the intersection between categories affects spectatorship*  
*and complicates pictorial space)*

*and matter (how might it be lively?)*

On the one hand I am examining painting in the context of an 'expanded practice' as established diagrammatically almost forty years ago by Rosalind Krauss to clarify parameters of sculpture, architecture and landscape and what they would become once combined. The term 'the expanded field of painting'<sup>3</sup> being an adaption from her influential essay from 1979, but holds currency today in our understanding of the implicated physical and conceptual parameters of painting and its relatively new relationships with places, objects and other media and discourses. Whilst I use these terms carefully, painting, having now extended spatially and conceptually, has

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<sup>3</sup> Rosalind Krauss, *Sculpture in the Expanded Field* (October, vol. 8, 1979), pp. 31-44. Whilst I refer to Krauss and her clearly defined use of the term 'expanded field' it is important that my work is distanced from the over-used umbrella term - 'the expanded field of painting'. My practice seeks to extend painting into an open dialogue with physical space, binding the work to the mobility of the viewer and their perception and interactions. In this way, the autonomy of the fragment/element with the architectural framing are used to reconfigure paintings' traditional planar frontality and boundaries.

complicated its genealogy, affecting spaces, and the relationship between the viewer and the work. Space, pictorial space and paintings' relationship to space has become radically problematized; it has changed how it is understood. Its dynamic expansion into the physical world has changed how we 'approach' painting in its multifaceted, relational, anthropomorphic and corporeal condition. These unprecedented freedoms require us to understand the space of painting differently in order to experience painting differently. I investigate this embroilment, where painting diversifies, goes 'beyond itself'<sup>4</sup>, where remnants of ideologies and languages fuse from different disciplines into new aesthetic experiences. From plane to space, painting becomes a site, a situation, and an ever-changing field of operation, challenging its status as flat, still and sometime imagistic and redefining its perceptual nature.

This work has emerged as a body of research through a theorised engagement with material issues. I begin with matter. I encourage a linking of matter to painting even at the site of writing. I want the writing to address the new cognitive contexts where materiality is placed as the locus rather than in support of meaning. In order to do this, I have drawn upon both emergent New Materialist discussion and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's term 'Zarte Empirie' (Delicate Empiricism) - 'the effort to understand a thing's meaning through prolonged empathetic looking and seeing grounded in direct experience.'<sup>5</sup> Goethe believed the first hand encounter should be directed in a 'kindly but rigorous way' to 'know the thing in itself' whilst new materialist Jane Bennett continues and exemplifies these ideas of reciprocity between *things* and seeing claiming we need 'to summon the cultivation of patient, sensory attentiveness to non-human forces operating outside and inside the human body' associated with a 'countercultural kind of perceiving'.<sup>6</sup> New materialist debates asks us to consider the 'agential force' of things, and what Karan Barad refers to as 'intra-action'<sup>7</sup> - the ontological inseparability of indeterminate things.

The written thesis and the accompanying exhibition proposes emergent new materialist thinking as an interpretative form of analysis to painting that exists beyond its own frame; re-

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<sup>4</sup> Isabelle Graw and Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, *Painting Beyond Itself: The Medium in the Post-medium Condition* (Sternberg Press, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> David Seamon and Arthur Zajone, *Goethe's Way of Science: A Phenomenology of Nature*, (State University of New York Press, Albany, 1988) p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), xiv, 10.

<sup>7</sup> Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007). The term is a key-concept of Barad's agential realist ontology, which underpins her conception of the material world, emphasizing entanglement and inclusion over individuality and separateness. See GLOSSARY p. 73 for more on INTRA-ACTION.

constituted as a space to walk into. Underlying and driving my research has been the linking of painting to architecture, an area that I felt has not been adequately addressed within contemporary art historical narratives. To progress this claim I propose how a new ontological position can be obtained through querying the definition of what constitutes space in relation to painting, as it extends from illusory and imaginative pictorial space to real space, enfolding the architectural frame of the building into the work itself. I ask how painting can liberate itself from its traditional formal grammar; support, colour, edge, translucency, surface, opacity, proximity, etc., and materialize these in new ways in order to reveal new compositional and cognitive contexts. The overall premise of the research is to provoke a re-orientation that prioritises the extra-ordinary agency of materials, including space itself, as inseparable from the immediacy of the viewer's relationship to the work, at the site of construction.

Painting, through its relationship to space, architecture and the material body and its analysis within emergent New Materialist discussion, presents a paradigm shift by altering definitions that are synonymous with ideas of ownership and possession to a more unified encounter, where forces and processes that are hard to perceive, are rendered active through touch, sense and *intra-action*. I examine painting in these terms - where dominant modes of ocular perception becomes devalued, and 'affects'<sup>8</sup> and 'singularities'<sup>9</sup> inherent in matter itself unfolds a broader notion of expression. Once you start looking at space and things in this way, their material-aliveness creates a reconfiguring of relations running across and through things and the self, towards a relationship that requires a de-centering or an 'ontological flattening'<sup>10</sup> of the human-subject.

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<sup>8</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated and foreword by Brian Massumi, (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2005), p. 407-8. The terms 'affects' and 'singularities' are drawn from the writings of Deleuze and Guattari in reference to what is 'within its matter' and 'matter flow' or its 'energetic' dimension that generates its particularities. A Deleuzian singularity is an actant or an event - 'event-affect' which can't be discerned simply by looking, only through interaction where we 'surrender' to the material (or *intra-action* according to Karen Barad). 'It is a question of surrendering to the wood (material), then following where it leads by connecting operations to a materiality, instead of imposing a form upon a matter: what one addresses is less a matter submitted to laws than a materiality possessing a nomos. One addresses less a form capable of imposing properties upon a matter than material traits of expression constituting affects.' The existence of this level of reality, how this information is passed or translated is taken up by New Materialism to redefine relations between the human and non-human to challenge traditional distinctions of individuality and separateness.

<sup>9</sup> Deleuze & Guattari, p. 407.

<sup>10</sup> Christopher Cox, Jenny Jaskey & Suhail Malik, *Realism Materialism, Art*. (Centre for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, Sternberg Press, 2015), Intro, p. 27. 'Ontological flattening' is a term used within Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO) as a way to describe the reversing of human-centered hierarchies over things, 'proposing that all entities distort relations in equal measure'. More generally, it suggests a balanced relationship through a redress to issues of spectatorship by proposing distinctly new ways of perceiving and making, where things and humans are (co-) existent.

The practical outputs of this Ph.D. by Practice are five Spatial Paintings made between 2014 and 2017, produced within gallery and exhibition sites across the UK: Spatial Painting #1 Manchester (*Society of Island Universes*, 2014, curated by Lisa Denyer); Spatial Painting #2 Platform-A Gallery, Middlesborough (*Between Painting and Place*, 2015); Spatial Painting #4, Glasgow (*Shift*, Patricia Fleming Projects, 2016); Spatial Painting #5 Salford (*From A to C; This being B*, 2016) and Spatial Painting #6 London (*Jo McGonigal & Mary Maclean*, RAUMX). Each Spatial Painting is equated with an ACT as a 'performative' co-enquiry. The work itself gets 'inside' painterly principles, their internal logic and redeploys them as physical compositions. It required taking painting apart, separating its surfaces, to gain access to what is at the threshold of visibility. In this way too, the writing is configured as a New Materialist narrative, challenging the historical dependence on linguistic interpretations of painting and involves a 'surrendering' to the works insistent materiality as a strategy to critically examine the character of vision when sight emphasizes touch and other complex multi-sensory interactions.

'We enter the gallery. We do not come to look at things.

We are surrounded, and become part of what surrounds us, passive or actively according to our talents for "engagement" in much the same way in that we have moved out of the totality of the street or our home where we also played a part. We ourselves are shapes (though we are not often conscious of this fact). We have different coloured clothing; can move feel speak and observe others variously; and will constantly change the work by doing so'.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Allan Kaprow, 'Notes on the Creation of a Total Art,' (1958) in *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life* (University of California Press, 2003) p. 10.

# Prologue

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Broken Space: Description of a Picture Plane



*Bare interior*

*Concrete floor*

*Large floor to ceiling windows to the right*

*'Blazing light'<sup>12</sup> from the summer sun*

*Pink tinged white light from the fluorescents and an orange glow from spotlights*

*'Maximum of simplicity and symmetry'.<sup>13</sup>*

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<sup>12</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Happy Days, A Play in Two Acts*, (Faber & Faber, London. 1973), p. 9. The descriptive terms 'blazing light' and 'maximum of simplicity and symmetry' are borrowed from the set description.

<sup>13</sup> Beckett, p. 9.

**Me to It**

I entered your empty space.

There is nothing

here?

...

Sometime passes, before I encounter IT

Only clean white planes, glass and concrete, painted architecture.

Frames, limits and depths.

*'An evenly lighted cell: the gallery space... a container of illusory fact now becomes the primary fact itself'.<sup>14</sup>*

Eyes, too quick

this requires more than a casual glance.

It is daytime and bright, a full glare of light.

I await something to emerge, to become evident and persuasive.

There is no means of knowing.

*'I have no imagination, not in the slightest'.<sup>15</sup>*

I am separate, distant.

Shake me gently, before my eye has time.

10 seconds gone. *'I can't imagine anything'.<sup>16</sup>*

More time passes.

A long thirty seconds or so ].

I see little change,

Every now and then, you bring yourself forward,

Show-casing your spectacularly bland tonal palette.

All six planes, waking from rest,

You matter to me now.

---

<sup>14</sup> Brian Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, (The Lapis Press, 1986), p. 13.

<sup>15</sup> German playwright, poet and theatre director, Heiner Müller warns against the imagination: 'I have no imagination. Not in the slightest. People with imagination are permanently endangered by the difficulties of reality. I can't imagine anything. I don't have ideas. I wait until something passes by' ('Werke,' Vol.10: Gespräche 1, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009, p.585, reproduced in Heiner Goebbels, *Aesthetics of Absence, Texts on Theatre*, Routledge, London & New York, 2015) p. 80.

<sup>16</sup> Müller, (reproduced in *Aesthetics of Absence, Texts on Theatre*), p.80.

Bring me something, don't withdraw from me.

So far,

only my eyes offer close attention, wanting it all straight away.

I stand at full height attending to your lively panorama,

your middle being different to your outer edges.

Frame after frame.

*'From eye to mind – such equal liars'.<sup>17</sup>*

Eyes level. What is distant is unfocused. Space recedes.

Eyes down. My gaze is on the ground.

Eyes remaining open, staring, retinal, optical, saccadic,

swerving across your surfaces, corners, edges, cracks, dirt, the cold

concrete flatness of the floor.

- unblinking
- poor eyes.

These multiple perspectives of actual space,

convert into data and image.

Eyes hold this together.

Expanding in fullness and force,

a disembodied visuality,

*'isolated*

*separating*

---

<sup>17</sup> Samuel Beckett, 'Nowhow On' in *Ill Seen Ill Said*, (John Calder Publishers, London 1989) p. 82.

*dissociating*.<sup>18</sup>

Something is not in attendance.

Can I move, should I move – would that help?  
when the eye fails,  
Partner up, extend beyond the retinal.  
I need to step back and respect your materiality.  
*'the window has turned into a mere absence of wall'*.<sup>19</sup>  
I do not imagine.  
I see it only with my eyes.  
Now a retinal fatigue,  
Exhausted to numbness.

I lose my coordinates.

“Eyes... breathe”

Cellular respiration.

**It to Me**

Am I the space who is a thing.  
A talking THING!  
Is this a text for no-thing        ]  
How can I be a speaking thing  
I am impersonality. Mute  
.  
.

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<sup>18</sup> Lambert Wiesing, *Artificial Presence, Philosophical Studies in Image Theory*, trans. by Nils F. Schott (Stanford University Press, 2010), p. 20. Wiesing argues how different types of visibility emerge from material and immaterial things -‘attached’ or ‘pure’ visibility requires something else to be in attendance. Does our understanding of space shift from being physical to retinal... or vice versa. Space becomes perceivable as the eye collaborates with the other senses, converting attention from one of opticality, to a body generated association, involving touching, moving, gravity, weight, which brings a strengthened sense of connectedness, being part-of the space, proposing a different ontological understanding where *I become the space*.

<sup>19</sup> Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture of the Senses*, (John Wiley & Sons, 2005), p. 47. The window as the mediator between ‘interiority and exteriority space, private and public, shadow and light,’ has lost significance with the introduction of dis-proportionate plate windows in modern architecture, depriving spaces of ‘intimacy, the effect of shadow and atmosphere’ thus becoming ‘a mere absence of wall.’

.  
.  
Your narrative impulse must be embodied.

Resist frontality. Acquire closeness, proximity.

a ‘*metempsychosis passage*’,<sup>20</sup> assimilating and blurring through you to me, as an atom circulates, then absorbs into new regions.

Collapse this separation.

What lies hidden, beneath, any theatrical qualities?<sup>21</sup>

### **Me to It**

This place again. Yet again,

I remain separate.

A moment passes . . . .

This long time.

A baroque sense of verticality ascends

from floor to ceiling.

Gaze, then focus.

I teach my eye to look across.

All white still, a murmuring, muttering, MATTERING place.

Gaps, holes, surface, histories, particles, lines and edges collide.

What kind of imagination do I need, for the ordinarily hidden to begin to exist?

---

<sup>20</sup> Christopher Flint in his writings on the history of the IT-Narrative exemplifies the mobility of objects, their passages and journeys, sometimes multiplying and dividing and thus ‘assimilated’ into other things. Metempsychosis, is a concept from Greek philosophy, relating to reincarnation in its reference to the ‘transmigration of souls’ but also differing to reincarnation as the transference is connected to gaining more diverse experience as opposed to a result of previous actions in life. For more detailed discussion see ‘Speaking Objects: The Circulation of Stories in Eighteenth-Century Prose Fiction’, (PMLA, Vol. 113, No. 2 (Mar., 1998) pp. 212-226. <http://about.jstor.org/stable/463361> accessed 23 Mar 2018.

<sup>21</sup> In the glossary (p.83) I extend on the use of the term ‘theatrical’ and its associations as discussed by Michael Fried in ‘Art and Objecthood,’ (Artforum, 1967) to re-examine the implied ‘problematic’ relationship between the bodily experience of the viewer whilst engaging with a Minimalist artwork. Now over 50 years later, the practice I am discussing here has moved beyond the very particular debates of medium specificity and engages with new interpretative positions for addressing theatricality. My approach to the performative space of the art object is not critiquing Fried, but referring to anthropocentricism and distracted forms of spectatorship through an explicit attempt to make the work durational, temporal and fragmented and how this is understood in the context of painting now.

I teach my body to sense the space, to sense its weight, resistance and  
solidity.

I listen for articulations, murmurings.

Eye levels drop my gaze reassigned stand walk sit crawl lying then  
crouching down.

New floor angles, near and distant, I submit –

With hands upon my knees, my body weight, my joints sink down,  
knees folded,

Bent angles.

Back touching walls. Downward

Deepening greys of the concrete floor.

Eyes placed closer to my feet.

Lying here, getting floored.

Down and dirty, my body implicated,

The floor, another anarchy.

Pressed against.

New angles and less stable confrontations.

My columnar body interferes.

Undermining a ubiquitous VERTICALITY,

I am at the foreground of my awareness.

Suddenly *It* is here!

Endless spatial architectonics.

New angles leaking in, brimming, frames within frames, pushing  
themselves forward.

*'Space is broken'*.<sup>22</sup>

Wherethings become art

Space becomes thick

Space is gaining, unimaginable now, this

---

<sup>22</sup> See Henri Lefebvre, *Production of Space: Spatial Architectonics*, translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith, (Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1995), p. 170 & 195. (Further referenced under 'TT' in the GLOSSARY p.63).

where invisible things venture out,  
speculating geometries  
becoming real and edges become actual *things* taking up space.  
Splaying out, relaxing.

I turn, towards this  
~~Unruly activity.~~

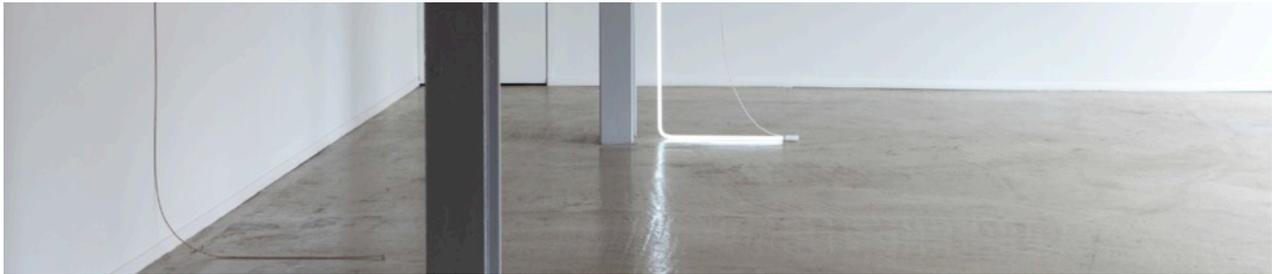
\*

# Act One

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Spatial Painting #2

Oblique Angles & Material Misbehaviour: Edges, Margins & Boundaries



*A length of brilliant white neon, bent into a right-angle leans against the pillar.*

*A folded pale yellow blanket is pushed into the steel beams across the ceiling. A rectangular black outline cut away from a found silk scarf, the inside of which has been discarded, placed against the wall near the window. A dirty plastic coated curtain wire, held to the wall with a rusty nail.*

**Neon  
right-angle**

*(Insistent on being heard)*

'Someone is looking at me, someone is still, looking at me'.<sup>23</sup>

I must confess I want their full attention

for I am no dull material *thing*,

I am violently white, imaginary made real, for this poetic experiment

I switch from verse to prose. This strange feeling, being looked at.

**Silk scarf edge**

LAUGHING *timidly*

**Neon  
right-angle**

What are you laughing at?

I eventalise this space with my violent high voltage glare out-performing the fluorescents above. Without me, there's no legislator to govern these forced relations of the made and the ordinary. Look what surrounds me, I frame, compose and decompose. Fields and limits, measurements, scale, symmetry - together we give spatial complexity.

This is real space, with real things

and the rules are different now.

Act-up, claim the space you inhabit, evidence these active powers.

**Silk scarf edge**

*(faintly and no longer 'laughing', with a slight sound of distress)*

I am, here, two foot from the floor.

Hung,

a 30cm wide spatial portal.

I follow the painting's edge but reveal only a monochrome of a bricked

up painted wall.

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<sup>23</sup> Beckett, *Happy Days*, p. 31. This is an adaption of the lines from one of the main characters experiencing the sensation of being observed and her attitude towards it: "Strange feeling. (Pause.) Strange feeling that someone is looking at me. I am clear, the dim, then gone, then dim again, then clear again, and so on, back and forth, in and out of someones eye. ... (Pause.) Strange? ... here all is strange," that "someone is looking at me still." (1973:31).

A shadowless, materialistic space.

Placed idly,

for no better reason than to request intimacy,

look closely.

There are no tricks in my pocket.

Things are as they are.

I illustrate this wall - a wall drawing?

My internal edges are frayed and I am no longer useful.

*(deep sigh)*

Leave it at that.

**Neon**

**right-angle**

Don't... don't disappear.

A vexed boundary - an image of stillness.

You can be more than this. You can *do* things.

Don't stand for anything else.

Have courage, exercise you're archaeology.

You deny pictorial space,

bring something else into focus. Stop posing ambiguously  
and better assert your rectangularity.

*(After a short hesitation)*

*Emerging spectator...*

Let us not speak for a while and witness how you think she's looking.

I assume a two dimensional gaze...

Is she separate?

**Silk scarf edge**

Does she not realise,

it is not only my shape that matters,

my plane is displaced - a physical gap.

A missing section.

I'm now simply a framing device,

my closest relative being the window – here,

are you more than an absence of wall?

I allow in the everyday, seeping in

and in doing so I THICKEN this space.

Here's where '*exteriority comes to play*',<sup>24</sup>

Sky, above and about, space keeps pouring in. Ever regaining.

Inside out-side and '*face to face*'.<sup>25</sup>

Forced to live a public life.

I'm a structural issue, with flexible borders.

I have no autonomy. Nothing more - a spatial place for thought

and looking,

both an image and a material thing.

A frame,

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<sup>24</sup> Lindar Khatir, 'Openings' in *Painting with Architecture in Mind*, (Wunderkammer Press, 2012), pp. 71-84 (p. 76).

<sup>25</sup> Khatir, p. 75.

an unstable frame.

**Curtain wire**

I, an

Object - a material witness

Extra-ordinary in my forlorn and damaged state.

I have been wrenched from one context to another for I once  
experienced an intimate connection with the world,

as property, entangled and circulated, within

*'the dense material world of which we are an irreducible part'.<sup>26</sup>*

Dirty materiality.

Low down, against the floor,

undivided continuities.

Heavy atoms, bent, formed and reformed with

heated additives, stabilizers, fillers, and other reinforcements make up  
my molecular plasticity.

A petro-chemical, semi-synthetic polymer with carbon and hydrogen.

Cellulose triacetate and calcium carbonate.

*PVC, PET or PETE, PS, PP.<sup>27</sup>*

You've now observed my material individuality,

or are things still a little blurred?

Both ROOTS and faint histories.

My insides.

What effort brought me into being.

Brought here to join these worlds of past and present, both near and far  
away.

In recognition, of surface,

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<sup>26</sup> Coole, D., 'From Within the Midst of Things: New Sensibility, New Alchemy, and the Renewal of Critical Theory', in *Realism Materialism Art* ed. by Malik, S. and Cox, C. (United States: Sternberg Press, 2015), pp. 41-46.

<sup>27</sup> National Research Council, Canada, *International Chemical Abbreviations and Acronyms for Polymers and Polymer Processing*, compiled by L. A. Utracki. PVC = polyvinyl chloride; PET = polypropylene; PS = polystyrene; PP = polypropylene. <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/bbm%3A978-0-306-48244-1%2F1.pdf> (accessed 15<sup>th</sup> July 2018).

A shell, my 'external crust',<sup>28</sup>  
an ultrathin section of space.  
the 'common limit between internal and external'<sup>29</sup>  
events that conditioned this, folded inside.  
Enveloped.  
Past preceding images. All enfolded in.  
An Orcadian landscape,<sup>30</sup> of shifting tides.  
I bring the everyday.  
Each day.  
The world, just as it is.

*(viewer moving around)*

If only she knew the different moments of my life,  
my biography, before I was transformed from a simple functional thing  
into this liminal experiment.  
Perceived in its depths.  
I, still  
an Object.

Her encounter is not yet materialist.  
She must be 'willing to play the fool, not deny her clownish traits ....  
*be imaginative, sensory - if she wants to see what resides at the heart of  
us*',<sup>31</sup> towards our vibrant nonhuman vitality.  
Behind our stains and filthy shell.

*(trembling, shaking...)*

This pedagogy differs.

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<sup>28</sup> Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, (Zone Books, New York, 1991), p. 36. Bergson describes matters 'superficial surface' as the external crust, its surface being the distinguishing component from which it projects itself to the external world.

<sup>29</sup> Bergson, p. 36.

<sup>30</sup> The curtain wire and silk scarf were discovered inside the garage of an empty property on the far northwest coast of Orkney, in a village called The Palace, owned by the Williamson family.

<sup>31</sup> Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, (Duke University Press, 2010), p. 14.

Can she exercise these internal sensibilities?  
We can't be defined in terms of opticality alone,  
draw her in,  
get the DUST from her eyes.  
Our deep past and forensic present.  
Slow, prolonged, '*pedestrian time*'.<sup>32</sup>

*(effort as the viewer moves closer. And of course, vice versa)*

**Viewer**

Us,  
Us beings.  
Our interior landscape.  
Insides, stem cells and ingested food.  
Blood sugar.  
I have deep muscular and instinctual reactions.

Let me correct my pose,  
Try a side view.  
Lean, and rest  
Pressing against the wall.  
Now, to and fro.  
Then back and forth,  
I will try different gaits,  
there is no ideal viewing  
point.

I am not blind to other stimuli.

My eyes are dimmed

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<sup>32</sup> See John Rajchman, 'Fred Sandbach's Lines of Thought', in *Painting with Architecture in Mind*, (Wunderkammer Press), p. 91. 'Pedestrian time' in the context of Fred Sandbach's work relates to it being understood as temporal and ephemeral, existing in normal, everyday time but also how the process of perception can 'last for ages' becoming 'enduring' and living on in other spatial situations.

Sight is blurred

Inside a '*working space*',<sup>33</sup>

Looking through, across, beyond and around,

beside, against ...

*(long pause)*

You present '*a kind of staginess*'.<sup>34</sup>

- a psychophysical field.

Theatre, without theatre.

A no.man show.

This unknown familiar place, might I discover something new.

I do '*re-Act*',<sup>35</sup> to your broken image

and fragmentary effect

with peripheral then haptic vision.

Bringing empathy and nearness towards your material connective  
tissue, its particularly affective vitalities.

*(a further pause)*

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<sup>33</sup> In reference to, *Frank Stella: Working Space, The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures*. Chapter, (Harvard University Press, 1983-84). Stella argues in this series of lectures how space in painting could be expanded or liberated by citing examples from High Renaissance space and Caravaggio's illusionism to prompt an advance of how we think of a dynamic pictorial space. His essays advance the discussion for a spatial freedom for painting that is more "real", more flexible, laying the potential for the spatial expansion of formalist abstraction that is 'capable of dissolving its own perimeter and surface plane' to address 'the space all around us – the space behind us, next to us, below us, and above us – in addition of course, to the space in front of us, which we have so often taken as being the only space available to us as viewers.'

<sup>34</sup> 'a kind of *stage presence*,' is from Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood*, in *Minimal Art*, (1967) p. 4. For more on this see ACTUAL SPACE in GLOSSARY, p. 82

<sup>35</sup> Stella, p. 127. '... in which it must act rather than speculate, *re-act* rather than spectate', inducing the spectator to 're-act' as opposed to the more passive 'spectate' suggests a correlative approach, where the viewer substantiates their engagement as part-initiator in the works becoming. In Act One, I propose to push this agenda forward, by suggesting to 're-act' could also involve an imaginative disappearance into the flow of material forces, thus suggesting continuities in a parallel manner.

I measured your exactitude,  
through relationships of distance  
I met the frame, focused on the edge,  
Between the zones, behind the rectangles, deeper than glazes.  
A painting ensemble  
Spatially diverse, journeying through  
Caravaggio's space,  
A bold breaking free - with depth and force  
Liberated from the picture plane  
In daily life.  
Collapsed  
Pictorial order in disunity  
At length, every angle blended into each other.

*'Cinemascope 3dimensional pictoriality'*.<sup>36</sup>

One continuous drawing in and breathing out.

your ties now *'loosened from existing contexts'*.<sup>37</sup>

Is this INTRA-ACTION,

now, a co-agitation.

As you lodge in my mind,

fictitious and real.

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<sup>36</sup> 'Painting Space: Is the Space of Painting made by Abstraction, Illusion or the Sculptural Qualities of the Canvas?', Frieze Magazine, Issue 6, (August 2012), p. 2, <https://frieze.com/article/painting-space> (accessed 10 September 2017, editor not listed). The article refers to Stella's term 'cinemascope' to address the interior space of painting 'commandeering the space the viewer is occupying' as with the work of Caravaggio, becoming multi-dimensional, involving surrounding space and becoming an interaction.

<sup>37</sup> Hent De Vries, 'Introduction to Political Theologies' reproduced in *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* by Jane Bennett, (Duke University Press, 2010), p. 3.



Fig. 1  
Spatial Painting #2  
Curtain Wire (detail)  
Platform-A Gallery, Middleborough, *Between Painting & Place*, 2015



Fig. 2  
Installation View  
Spatial Painting #2  
Platform-A Gallery, Middlesborough, *Between Painting & Place*, 2015

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# Act Two

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Spatial Painting #3

Supersensorial Yellow Monologue: Material to Sensation



*Glasgow. A line in hi-key yellow, is stretched five stories high, across the street, between two red brick buildings, one end knotted excessively, beyond what is required and the other enters the sash window of the gallery, landing in a heap on the floor. It is tied to flesh-toned lycra, dyed and stained in cadmium yellow pigments. The adjacent window is propped open by a small painted cylindrical section of timber, cool air enters the space affecting the temperature of the room. On the other side of the street, oblique fluorescents in off-white yellows activate the five levels of interior space. Sun bleached blinds, opaque and translucent glazing achieve differing densities of light, tints & spectrums, refracting and reflecting.*

**Yellow line***(vibrato)*

I am quite simply a line  
of exceptional length,  
but my function lies  
in my colourful materiality.

Metallic, acidic, hardcore, that is my essential chromatic pattern of being,  
I have no secret interiority.

My colour performs itself. YELLOW

Acted out.

Part dull and sullied, base material - a '*delicate empiricism*'<sup>38</sup>

Reverse alchemy, full energy – liveliness and vitality.

Quick then.

A schizophrenic nature. One into the other.

'*Suddenly enough*',<sup>40</sup>

Hideous.

**Building**

Don't come too close.

Sulphuric and phosphorus.

**Yellow line**

She thinks I'm unbearable close-up, Deleuzen sensations, nervous  
reactions, '*it's a while before I make the weary diatribe to the brain*'.<sup>41</sup>

Dyed, saturated, knotted and stretched against a backdrop of polished  
redstone, contaminating, cosmic rays inside her eyes.

I am in her,

deep sleep.

Weighty cadmium pigment,

touching the eye itself.

'*An entangled tale of a stranger within*',<sup>42</sup>

Aggregative and complex.

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<sup>38</sup> 'There is a 'delicate empiricism' which makes itself utterly identical with the object, thereby becoming true theory'. Goethe, *Goethe: Scientific Studies*, (Princeton University Press, 1934), p. 307. As quoted in David Seamon, 'Goethe, Nature and Phenomenology: An Introduction', David Seamon and Arthur Zajone, *Goethe's Way of Science*, (State University of New York Press, Albany, 1988), p. 2. For more on this see YELLOW in the GLOSSARY, p. 72.

<sup>40</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Ill Seen Ill Said*, (John Calder Publishers, London 1989) p. 52.

<sup>41</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, translated by Daniel W. Smith, (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.), p. 26.

<sup>42</sup> Karen Barad, 'On Touching – The Inhuman That Therefore I Am' in a PREPRINT - forthcoming in *The Politics of Materiality* ed. by Susanne Witzgall & Kerstin Stakemeier), p. 7. Within this text Barad theorizes our 'entanglements' with the world, referring to the sensations of touch as 'greeting the stranger within'.

[https://www.academia.edu/7375696/On\\_Touching\\_-\\_The\\_Inhuman\\_That\\_Therefore\\_I\\_Am\\_v1.1](https://www.academia.edu/7375696/On_Touching_-_The_Inhuman_That_Therefore_I_Am_v1.1) (accessed 23 July 2018).

Heavy

Singular

Acute.

She's talking as fast as she can.  
Never stilled. Velocity and reckless speed. I purposefully hurt her eyes,  
wanting an extra-aesthetic register.  
Flickering migraines and the brightest of light amplifies senses.  
So she took me outside and further away,  
She further experiments with scale, speed and diagonal advances.  
No difficulty there, now eyes everywhere.

**Building**

Point to point, you swing across.

Synthetic dirty spectrums, physical grammar.

Back and forth and back to here. Across the gap.

In the halfways and (in)-betweens.

*... cool air infiltrates the gallery space through the gap of the propped sash window. The sensation merges with the overall unfixed nature of things, unstable, temporal and still emerging.*

**Yellow line**

Inside.

*Doing physics and being touched,*  
my chromatic matter articulates in SENSATORY stages, vibrations,  
tremors over the skin. The more she touches me, the less she wants me.  
A spasm of electrons, specific yellow.

I INTRA-ACT with rhythmic variation.

Dynamic shifting entanglements.

In here or out there on-going and open ended, an inner SCREAM of  
insistent temperament.

Arriving at sensation

behind the eyes, inward, physiological optics.

Take what you want.  
To bring forth what? Striving for what?  
'What marks are left on [her] body,'<sup>43</sup>  
When I make myself felt.

**Window prop**            That's quite enough,  
  
leave it at that for the moment.

**Yellow line**            This feeling, like a visceral relationship  
The '*intangible touch of tangible sense*,'<sup>44</sup>  
Now walk forward, effortlessly and immediately  
With one's body, '*moving in vision towards a place we don't physically  
occupy*.'<sup>45</sup>  
A drama of looking,  
eyes ricochet  
deeper in, complex spatial positions,  
both touch and balance,

A flick of yellow

Eyes close. She rehabilitates her senses.  
Still there.  
Unseeing  
And glaring.

Start again, more '*feeble slaps*,'<sup>46</sup>

Something is taking its course,

Within the scenes

of an expansive space.

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<sup>43</sup> 'What is important about causal intra-actions is that "marks are left on bodies", bodies differentially materialize as particular patterns of the world as a result of the specific cuts and reconfigurings that are enacted.' Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, (Duke University Press. 2007), p. 176.

<sup>44</sup> Cooke, Roger, *A Point Which Weighs* in Ian Kiaer, *What Where*, (Exhibition Catalogue, Turin 2009).

<sup>45</sup> TJ Clarke. Towards the end of *The Sight of Death*, in his summarizing of Poussin's *Landscape With a Calm* (1650-51) refers to 'going towards the painting' as 'going out there' with a part of our body, 'moving in vision towards a place we don't physically occupy.' He goes on to make a marked distinction between the eye and our other senses in how it is the eye which assures us that there is such a thing as space, and it is space that sets us back from our material existence, the eye reinstates the distance, the interval between us and what we see, (p. 237).

<sup>46</sup> Samuel Beckett, *All Strange Away*, (John Calder, London, 1979), p. 13.

Each order, imaging.

Paler now.

Touching less.

*'sensing, is what matter does, or rather,  
what matter is: matter is condensations of response-  
ability. Touching is a matter of response.  
Each of "us" is constituted in response-ability.  
Each of "us" is constituted as responsible for the  
other, as being in touch  
with the other'.<sup>47</sup>*

She shifts her stance, having observed my beginning,  
And now confronts what is around me.

Architecture and its material transparency.

Keep your body there and your gaze here.  
A vertiginous back and forth within spatial registers,  
joining up in coloristic liquidity.

Depth not flatness is this pictorial story, deep complex space ...

a feedback loop of near and far.

Where does her gaze begin?

Where does her gaze end up?

With no surface or ground.

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<sup>47</sup> Karen, 'On Touching,' p. 7.

Moving backward, and away  
Stare on.  
Eyes in all directions, outside of here.  
No end,  
wondering aloud, like  
blind dates.

No sense of a central perspective, vistas of over there  
but bought back to here and now - a feedback loop of proximities and  
distance. Imagine, what it might be like to see without any perspective at  
all.

(*pause*)

I measure distance,  
channeling through this Painting  
(and its invisible reservoir)  
simply to be in the midst of things...  
between this and that, in the '*infra-thin...*'<sup>48</sup>

No illusionistic recession  
Just space between.  
A tiny gap, a lapse,  
at the limit of visibility.  
A necessary  
interval, to be animated.

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<sup>48</sup> Duchamp invented the notion of the *infra-thin*, published posthumously in the booklet *Notes*, he describes certain subtleties of sensory experience by employing the notion of the *infrathin* as a space of proximity; 'the warmth of a seat (that had just been vacated) is infrathin,' the 'magnifying glass for touching infrathin'. (The notes of Marcel Duchamp have been published in two parts: *Notes*, Champs-Flammarion, Paris 1980 and *Duchamp du signe*, Champs-Flammarion, Paris 1975. *Notes* are divided into four thematic parts: *Inframince*, *Le Grand Verre*, *Projets* and *Jeux de Mots*).

Spectator and spectacle,

At the same time

*'(be)coming together-apart'*<sup>49</sup>

Both of us,

with no touching involved.

You can't step back, or down – my stain

continues and occurs again, several times, contaminating.

Porosities of yellow.

**Window**

Vast and bright

I open and admit

**Yellow Line**

Then I barge back in

spilling to the floor,

In union with that.

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<sup>49</sup> Barad, 'On Touching,' p. 2.



Fig. 3  
Installation View.  
Patricia Fleming Projects, *Shift*, Glasgow, 2016

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# Act Three

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Spatial Painting #4

A Cloud, a Fog, a Blur: Chaos and Shapeless



*Pink smoke pyrotechnic cartridge, polystyrene, rope, clay, lycra, white neon (blue/white), white neon (pink/white), spray paint, copper, acetate and fringe curtain.*

Dead square hollowed out space. A gallery, in darkness, rid of light, with a perfectly angled concrete ramp. And the eye already strains. Lights stay off. I am drawn inside the space. And what of it? What am I faced with? Experience, as it happens and as it continues and as it falls-out of this particular moment – ‘*a corporeal opening onto architecture, and more*’.<sup>50</sup> A life-still phantasmatic space. As great a space as I have seen, 5 metres high vertical white lines appear within plastic insulated walls. Always pushing. My material body in participation, in-action-analysis colluding with the world at the service of a spectacle, yet to be made. The floor, a grounding tactility, darkening from poured cement. Everywhere space is gaining, floor angles, corners, horizontal lines. Retrace my steps back down the concrete ramp. The doorway is 128cm wide. No hesitancy now



Fig. 4 (Site images, Caustic Coastal, Salford, 2016)

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<sup>50</sup> Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Effect, Sensation*, (Duke University Press, Durham & London 2002), p. 104.

(10 days later)

**Cloud**

Over here

and there.

An event is taking place.

Taking the place.

Taking in the place.

Winds storms hurricanes, '*dust and fogs and heavy clouds*'.<sup>52</sup>

This is theatricality

With simply objects, '*nothing more than objects*'.<sup>53</sup>

A multiplicity of broken and fragmented shapes

Not still, this air.

*/CLOUD slash*

Surprisingly energetic.

A cloud, a fog and a blur

'*Chaos and shapeless*',<sup>54</sup> is my aesthetic physiology.

A nebulous substance of indeterminacy, paradoxically ephemeral and material with unlimited depth, pink skyward melancholy.

Of volcanic dust, haziness, diluted ink and faint lines

Both visibility and volume, mass without surface.

What do I hide with my partial opacity and magenta coloured, vaporous materiality.

Formless - a prelude to the sea.

---

<sup>52</sup> 'The air itself is terrible from the deep darkness caused by the dust and fog and heavy clouds', from the notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci and reproduced in Hubert Damisch's, *Theory of A Cloud*, Chapter: 'The Powers of Continuum', (Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 139.

<sup>53</sup> Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood' in *Artforum*, June 1967.

<sup>54</sup> Mary Jacobus, *Romantic Things, A Tree, A Rock, A Cloud*, (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 2012), p. 11.

**Spectator** Chaos and shapeless I agree.  
You, disorientate me.  
A blurry TRANSLUCENCY, I am not sure.  
You belong with the world of other see-through things,  
a clever spatially generative disappearing effect.  
I can't discern your boundary.  
I tilt  
and twist  
and bend.

**Cloud** 'Check by touch',<sup>55</sup>  
my surface function,  
Or go away  
And stare at something else.

**Spectator** Walls?

**Cloud** Good  
  
Sight and site  
  
If I get it right,  
  
being seen that is.

*(Circling around ...blowing out and stretching out)*

---

<sup>55</sup> Chilver, J., 'If Display Becomes Materiality', in *Painting with Architecture in Mind*, (Wunderkammer Press, 2012), pp. 113-134. Chilver discusses how the ultra 'mattness' of Ad Reinhardt's black monochrome surfaces of the 1960's, resulted in viewers 'touching' them, 'marking' their fragile surfaces. This reacting to the extreme difficulty of visually judging where exactly the canvas surface was in space led the viewer to 'check by touch' - the surface at times being so matt with no light bouncing of it thus becoming difficult to see where the surface begins.

**Spectator**

*(Straining to see)*  
Give me relief from looking,  
You are equally difficult to see  
and understand ...  
clarity is disallowed.  
I'm unable to control the distance  
or space between, Medieval times.  
No optical surety ... a quasi vision  
Just dust, pink dust.  
Cloudiness with '*material freight*',<sup>56</sup>  
- an intervening THICKNESS  
Unlimited, unframed, unstable [in motion] in momentous  
disequilibrium of optical temporalities.  
Both surface and inexhaustible depth,  
a scattered stain.  
An uncanny crisscross of blurry margins,  
Whereas normally,  
you're in the sky! Now boundaries collapse, upsetting linearity  
Phasing ...  
into each other.  
Binding into  
No real image, yet  
a pictorial feeling.

**Cloud**

Enter the spectator's field  
ZIGZAG and ricochet  
Undo  
What has been done  
It is hard to see space,  
What we cannot find.  
A counter position  
My baroque experiment, assimilated in space  
... into the space ... with a structured room, inseparable,  
scarcely an interface,

---

<sup>56</sup> Jacobus, p. 14.

following the contours  
now '*part of the room*',<sup>57</sup>  
knotted together,  
All at once ... All once  
ontological, not in it or on it  
But of,  
Architecture, my subject not my support.

*'Twist(ed) into the limbs of painting'*,<sup>58</sup> - now a planar extension,  
with '*exploded flat geometries*',<sup>59</sup>  
De-generates to theatre.  
From a certain distance, in a certain direction.  
With multiple viewpoints and multiple viewers  
All touchably there,  
dissolving  
with  
no visible outline at all.

### Spectator

I am  
now,  
further inside  
This painterly NETWORK

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<sup>57</sup> See John Chilver, *Painting with Architecture in Mind, 'If Display Becomes Materiality'*. Chilver discusses and quotes Robert Ryman in reference to Ryman's use of the fastenings and fixings to hold his flat paintings against the wall at eye level, quoting Ryman he states "My paintings don't really exist unless they're on the wall ... as part of the wall, as part of the room". Ryman's practice is critical to discussion on painting as an expanded and situated practice, connecting painting powerfully and unequivocally with its site of display.

<sup>58</sup> Stella, p. 10. Stella, in his comments on Caravaggio's handling of space, refers to the catalogue entry on a painting by *Bronzino*, 'Saint John the Baptiste,' (c. 1550-55) states how 'bending limbs which alone constitute the architecture of the work'. Stella, suggests how this could be understood the other way around with Caravaggio 'so that with a little syntactic license we get the twisting of architecture into the limbs of painting', thus a projective displacement of space.

<sup>59</sup> 'Painting Space: Is the Space of Painting made by Abstraction, Illusion or the Sculptural Qualities of the Canvas?', *Frieze Magazine*, Issue 6, (August 2012), p.2, <https://frieze.com/article/painting-space> (accessed 10 September 2017, editor not listed). This essay refers to the 'working space' advocated by Stella in 1984 as a means of 'exploding the flat geometries of rarefied 1970's formalist painting' to 'aerate the insularity of formalist art of the past decade, and discover its own space. Stella's manifesto was for a spatial expansion of formalist abstraction.

Where painting meets its space of display  
the bewildering ‘wilderness of elsewhere’,<sup>60</sup>  
Searching for blind zones, revealing  
BLANK SPOTS  
You offer only  
occasional obtainability,  
to these hidden interiorities.  
No beginnings and endings.  
I’ve searched long enough.

## Cloud

take me in with my eyes,  
‘but (I) will not let (myself) be grasped by thought’.<sup>61</sup>  
A blown cloud,  
my condition is not one of optical surety.  
I made the visible invisible,  
“Chaos” said Krauss,<sup>62</sup>  
A pictorial treatment  
Then,  
to this defunct architectural situation.  
free from the physical laws  
Interfering with optical geometry.  
Intermingling, overlapping and dissipating.  
Negating solidity for insubstantiality  
with sculptural thematics to stir things up.  
I expand the view,  
released spectacularly as a structural role and becoming  
Architectural transparency,

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<sup>60</sup> Robert Smithson, ‘A Cinematic Atopia’, in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*. (1971), p. 140, reproduced in ‘The Infinite Line: Re-making Art After Modernism,’ by Briony Fer, p. 57. The text relates to the act of looking at art in which ‘vision is evoked as a kind of crossing’ and ‘distance’ as the space between, ‘moving across a field of vision’ and for Smithson ‘a wilderness of elsewhere’.

<sup>61</sup> See Jacobus, p. 11. Jacobus states how Goethe, in a series of poems inspired by his reading of Luke Howards early nineteenth-century classification of clouds, wrote: “*Ich muss das alles mit Augen fassen, / Will sich aber nicht recht denken lassen*” (“*All of this I have to take in with my eyes, / But it will not let itself be grasped by thought*”) Goethe’s clouds offer a way to represent the mind to itself; however minutely or evocatively described, they (like the mind) ‘evade the grasp of thought’.

<sup>62</sup> Jacobus writes how ‘Clouds may verge of this aesthetic of indeterminacy, as ‘chaos’ and ‘shapeless’, challenging the phenomenology of the visible’, which in turn refers to “*l’informe*”. For details of *l’informe*, see Rosalind Krauss & Yves Alain Bois, *Formless: A Users Guide*, (New York: Zone Books, 1997).

Here, now at the threshold of both  
clarity and obscurity.

**Spectator**

Paler, thinner, now  
Your surface.  
But never flat. I know, how.  
Boundaries dissolved, no pictorial enclosure - unprecedented freedoms  
Morphologies not imagined  
Like light and darkness  
Less weight and added volume.  
Seen with less confusion.  
Exhausted from looking now, at see through things  
After all,  
Simply mist, nothing more.



Fig. 5  
Spatial Painting no.4  
From A to C; This Being B  
Caustic Costal, Salford, 2016  
(Neon x 2, polystyrene, pyrotechnic smoke cartridges, clay, copper tubing, rope, lycra)

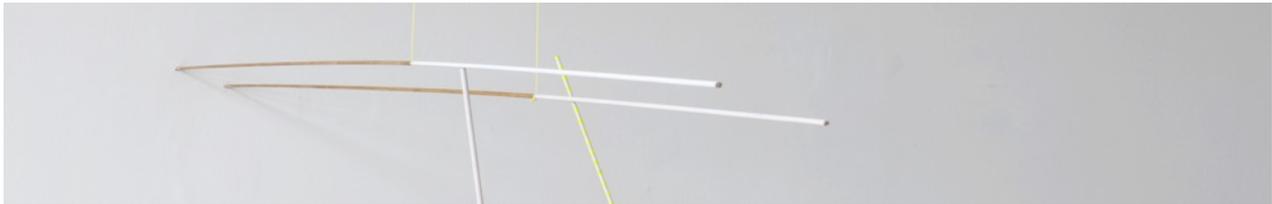
\*

# Act Four

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Spatial Painting #6

Trembles & Stutters: Between Painting & the Wall



'Touch the wall

not as support, nor as an obstacle, or

something to lean on, but as a place, if one can touch a place'.<sup>63</sup>

I touch the wall of

this given space....

*Two lengths of cut brass penetrate the dividing wall through to the other side, partly painted in the palest pink and greys. Two thinner brass bars lean against them, marked with miniature fluorescent stripes painted across the surface. Two lengths of yellow string, tie the brass to the ceiling rods to the ceiling. In the adjacent room, one 3 foot length of white neon lies against the wall.*

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<sup>63</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, 'On Touching', reproduced in Chapter, 'Painting: Ontology and Experience', by Stephen Melville, in *Contemporary Painting in Context*, by Anne Ring Petersen (Museum of Tusculanum Press, 2013), p. 87.

## Wall

*(from inside the wall)*

I will start by telling you  
a wall's story [ .... ]  
saying in words,  
(and reader's voices)  
what is already here.  
To find and open  
a gap, a draught from this boxed in place.  
An ordinary space, in darkness  
Just normal somehow.  
Rethinking the events we cannot see.  
Inside and elsewhere,  
Halfway between.  
Long-hidden excluded interiorities,  
Behind Poussin's hills  
and other lands ... more interesting perhaps.  
Wide and in relief.  
All that,  
To be rendered visible  
By entering somehow.  
By moving inside.  
Inaccessible forbidden views, in fragments of  
ACTUAL space, one field to another, coming together.  
Upto now  
a boundary, a simple wall,  
part of a well calculated plan,  
for an everyday life.  
Both sediment and territory  
Mediating at the interface,  
And normally upstaged  
'When painting meets the space of its display'.<sup>64</sup>  
This unstable area.

---

<sup>64</sup> Chilver, John, 'If Display Becomes Materiality', chapter title in *Painting with Architecture in Mind*. p. 117.

**Brass line**

(getting ready, determining its angle and height)

.... //

96cm

A single spot.  
A punctured plane.

What is there?

Straight through.  
Deeper,

Into this stuff of painting, opacities and darkness, densities and mass.

A play between the planes

And its '*inescapable support*'.<sup>65</sup>

... ] time to shake things up.

**Wall**

To do so, together,  
we might ask what  
of images. of planes, of layers. The space between two objects.  
In and of and '*set apart*...

... *at a distance*.<sup>66</sup>

//

What is present but not stated. Exactly.

Move the floor up.  
No vanishing points, or other devices. Go right through.

---

<sup>65</sup> Daniel Buren wrote how the gallery is 'the inescapable 'support' on which art history is painted'. Reproduced by Blauvelt, A., 'Painting At the Edge of the World', in *No Visible Means of Support*, ed. by Douglas Fogle, (Walker Art Centre, Minneapolis, 2001), pp. 117-133.

<sup>66</sup> Roger Cooke, *A Point Which Weighs* (Ian Kiaer: 'What Where', Exhibition Catalogue, Turin 2009).

**Brass line**

Seeing my way inside,  
this narrow space, materialist pictorial mechanics.  
That kind of thing.  
Forcing open an undiscovered plane  
and carry painting 'beyond itself'<sup>67</sup>  
Extending its resources, and adding elasticity  
with anything outside ...  
Receiving it.  
even elbows  
are right-angles, unknowable continuities  
OBLIQUE FUNCTIONS\_and lateral extensions,  
Touching what surrounds us,  
10 x 3 metres, blank facades  
All this,  
about a wall.  
Standing somewhere, with space around.

**Wall**

Perhaps as I said, earlier  
there are attitudes remaining.  
Decades of . . . ,  
that hide the underneath of us.

---

<sup>67</sup> 'Painting Beyond Itself,' directly references the publication, *Painting Beyond Itself: The Medium in the Post-medium Condition* by Isabelle Graw and Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, (Sternberg Press, 2016). 'Painting Beyond Itself,' has been a rich resource in its bringing together of practice-based discussions focusing on the changing roles of materiality, in particular exploring the 'specificity of the medium under the condition of its de-specification.'

**Brass line**

(TREMBLES and STUTTERS)

Can't you see I'm in trouble,

In so far . . . .

I can't see where I am a going.

Its immeasurably dark here, in blindness as though *within* the frame of  
painting, edgeless, profound, leaking everywhere,  
dancing in the dark.

What happened?

I intervened, (not represented) but can't reach my destination,

I cannot get through.

so '*bowed and bent*'.<sup>68</sup>

I could never make it out

Now of the internal structure, inside white walls and  
concretely engaged, an architectural cut, a hole, withdrawal.

Changing shapes and outlines,

I touched too much

and turned its insides out.

**Wall**

Slow down. . . . .

Stops, commas and fractured space

A dash, a slash and horizontal lines,

Accents . . . deregulated speech.

Discontinuities and delays are

all that matters here.

---

<sup>68</sup> Samuel, Beckett, *All That Fall*. (John Calder London), pp. 54-56.

**Brass line**

*(Trembling all over)*

On the other hand,

What is there to see behind,

Am I narrating nothing . . .

*'where invisibility itself*

*became a thing.'*<sup>69</sup>

The ground itself re-enacted

as a picture.

Through one to another,

levels and orders of.

Stages of a situated image.

Not in any order. Unparalleled and misaligned

My privileged insight, (the loss of sight)

took me backwards

*'What is invisible ... is not inaccessible to view,*

*but is precisely in the visible'*<sup>70</sup>

The inside is on the outside

As,

almost painting.

---

<sup>69</sup> Enoch Brater, *The Drama in the Text: Beckett's Late Fiction*, (Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 9.

<sup>70</sup> Briony Fer, 'Vision and Blindness,' *On Abstract Art* (Yale University Press, 1997), p. 162. I take this statement by Fer, as a way of thinking about making visible the 'between' space of an inside and an outside, associated with 'underneath' or 'inside' of painting intertwining with the surface. Fer, by referencing the opticality of Richter's *Red Paintings*, which has been subjected to being painted over and over in 'serial obliterations', creates a 'dazzling visual effect'. The oscillation of the eye, as it deals with the 'blinking out' of the earlier stages of the works and its 'dazzling effects' is the painting we see. The surface is not a veneer, the paintings inside is on the outside resulting in a disturbance of vision as both intermesh.



Fig. 6  
RAUMX, London, 2017 (with Mary Maclean)  
Spatial Painting #6  
(2 x brass bars, coloured string, paint, wall, neon)

\*

# Final Act

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Spatial Painting #1

A Nordic Gathering: The Scene of a Photograph



Fig. 7. Society of Island Universes, Manchester, 2014

*A Photograph:*

*One yellow plastic Ikea swivel chair*

*One section of grey semi-translucent acetate*

*Strips of black gaffer tape*

*One smooth circular length of wood (hidden, supporting the acetate)*

*One section of stripy cotton material*

*One found dirty plastic object*

*Concrete floor*

*Concrete wall*

*White diagonal chalk lines*

**Chair**

This is where the play ends.

lalalalahummmmmmm shshshshszz la la la la la la

Some saw me as a collaborator

Whilst I was living out a fantasy

Others admired my bravery, but no-one knew what I was really feeling

Lalalalahummmmmmm shshshshszz la la la la la la

*(Laughing then murmuring...)*

**Acetate**

*[high pitched]*

More synthetic aesthetics with supra-real high-transparency

Molecular plasticity.... )

additives and colourants.... )

*(faintly)* plasticizers, additives, melted ....

*(fading out)*

*Source uncertain....*

*Indistinct sounds ...  
the air thickens.*

**/Cloud**

I won't hide!

**Chair**

*Oh, my....*

How are you here?

Imagined surely

**/Cloud**

*(disappears again)*

**Chair**

Posing for the camera now,  
as ad-hoc characters in a '*speculative onto-story*'.<sup>71</sup>

Or rather,  
an assemblage of studio debris, fragments and parts, no longer  
presenting our thing-power.  
Junk, inert, leftovers, unidentified things with no fixed abode.  
We were once jubilant, reverberating with vital force  
- an energetic PULSE.  
How we laughed for a long long time,  
brought in together and asked to speak up loudly as part of an '*object-orientated-democracy*'.<sup>72</sup>

A network of performances, in differentiating patterns  
of mattering, not masquerading.

Those days are over.

She made us for the camera,  
in the blink of an eye.  
Made as an image or  
an imagined synthesis.  
We rose up, and lost our '*thingification*'.<sup>73</sup>  
Flattened, surrendered literally, forced to acquiesce.

---

<sup>71</sup> Bennet, p. 4.

<sup>72</sup> For an elaboration of this see Bruno Latour, *From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik: or How to Make Things Public*, <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/node/208> (accessed 23 July 2018), p. 6.

<sup>73</sup> '*Thingification* - the turning of relations into "things," "entities," "re-lata" - infects much of the way we understand the world and our relationship to it'. See Barad, Karen, 'Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter', *Signs*, Vol. 28, No. 3, Gender and Science: New Issues (Spring 2003), pp. 801-831 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/345321> (accessed 23 June 2018).

All now heaped together, linked together, cohabiting in 'false unity',<sup>74</sup>  
next to and also opposite one another. This new sensation . . .  
restrained and out of sequence as an unreal appearance of things.  
It barely defines.  
I sense an outline around us, another edge,  
An isolated reality, enclosed space.  
Confined, cut from physical presence and converted to flat opticality,  
mediated substitutes,  
a simulation.  
a resemblance,  
affected by the camera.  
Pictorialised and sterilized, materially unsubstantiated.  
Unable to unfold . . . .  
Our particular phenomena, stabilized.  
From her transparent *intra-actions*,  
She put us in-contact and forced us to think.  
We were the initial ontic experiment,

---

<sup>74</sup> Weisling, p. 20, 'False unity' is borrowed from Weisling's writings on image theory as an attempt to articulate how an image, in this case a photographic image, is an immaterial construct with no material substance in that it 'is not attached to a substance that could also be perceived by other senses'. The image is thus a collection of things flattened out and held together that are not cohesive in any other form of relationship 'outside of itself' due to its not being not 'materially or causally conditioned'. The photograph integrates and pictorialises material qualities. The physical paintings infinite number of viewpoints and multiple surfaces is converted from a physical presence to one of flat opticality and spatial organisation. The photograph proposes a further ontological reading of the work that is suggesting an appearance of connectedness between disparate things, a unity mediated by the lens into a category of organized pictorial composition. The encounter of a photographic image is thus a particular form of visual 'gazing' which does not allow for haptic sensation, the encounter thus being 'disembodied' or 'separating' - it is through activating our other senses that we become more united with the world. Deleuze, in his writings on Francis Bacon discusses Bacon's attitude towards photography as a 'radical hostility towards the photograph' claiming 'the photograph tends to reduce sensation to a single level, and is unable to include within the sensation the difference between constitutive levels'. Painting, according to Deleuze, offers different ways of seeing and activates the body in a way the camera cannot, hence producing only a processed resemblance or recording of what we see. Thus, photographs are unable to produce the same intensity of sensation or 'differences'. For more on this see, Deleuze, G., trans. Daniel W. Smith, 'The Painting Before Painting', in *Francis Bacon and the Logic of Sensation*, (Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), pp. 61-69.

a diagrammatic cohabiting of things once far apart, now brought together through, a perspectival lens.

Agglutinated on a cut piece of medium format photofilm

Through the aperture, with questions of depth and field

and then the eye, sliding across again and again.

All foreground, no middle, no ground.

A frozen spectacle, here a shop window,

in bright certainty.

### **Cotton-material**

What about our hidden networks,

our archaeological stories

*'the multiplicity of tiny, fragmented regions',*<sup>75</sup>

And our historical entitlement, deep time, no less.

We are more than linked consequences

of random decisions, errors and pictorial logic.

Our ordering is based on difference

and similitude, inner laws and hidden patterns.

We grouped and gathered to confront each other,

*'waiting in silence for the moment of (its) our*

*expression',*<sup>76</sup> within this spatial ordering. Inverse

directions, psychical and SUPRA-REAL ...

---

<sup>75</sup> Michael Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, (Vintage Books, 1994) Preface xviii. In the introductory section, Foucault makes reference to how the 'aphasiac ... creates a multiplicity of tiny, fragmented regions in which nameless resemblances agglutinate things (and groupings) into unconnected islets; in one corner...' and then disperse again as the associations and resemblances become too broad, resulting in a 'picture that lacks all spatial coherence' yet is still a region.

<sup>76</sup> Foucault, p. xxi.

*'Reality is bigger than us',<sup>77</sup>*

and it keeps changing.

Amongst the lives of Real things,

Did we ever act alone?

We enact a shared reflexive knowledge. Wills imposed upon  
each other, an overlap.

Intermingling, dispersing and disappearing,

Entangled agencies and particles.

Then isolated, separating and discontinuous  
retaining singularity.

Yes, we found ourselves again!

I am a significant thing, acting alone  
and together.

We witnessed gulfs erupting, more atomistic divisions

And then an imagined synthesis.

## **Chair**

Am I a chair Or a square

Of paler yellow,

chromatically harmonious against the grey.

Existing contexts

loosened off

by putting us together

we disintegrated

Became dislocated

To a structure of yellow,

I am still a chair.

These unstable fields of identity

---

<sup>77</sup> Ian Hacking, in 'Representing and Intervening', reproduced as a quote is in Barad, 'Meeting the Universe Halfway', p. 154.

**All (at once)**

Smoothed out on the picture plane,  
An aesthetic fact,  
Once ambulatory, lingering, tactile, episodic, now all at once.  
De-centred. Hindering the passage from form to force.  
Pictoriality, derived from our disappearance.  
Reformed geometries as atoms swerved,  
the CLINAMEN, occurred, to set things in motion.  
New migrations to the image-field.  
An orderly plane of organization, a uni-planar state.  
No shifts in aspect, or separate viewing space. Dis-articulating.  
Our material strata now incomprehensible,

The camera's eye  
Is critical to us  
It sized us up, glanced, re-sequenced.  
Beginning perception all over again,  
Articulating differently.  
Space denied, evened out, displeasures removed.  
Is our space still imagined, experienced if not seen?  
Distance seems obliterated (now in standardized file format)  
refracted through the camera into a single plane,  
unable to represent the *in-itself*.

Face to face with the eyes of spectators  
Positioned here and now, in front of our assembling,  
*'They (too) are thick with things: clothes, a huge sword, immense castles,  
large cultivated fields, crowns, ships, cities and an immensely complex  
technology of gathering, meeting, cohabiting, enlarging, reducing and  
focusing... there are objects everywhere'*<sup>78</sup>

Lurking too, the photographer, a further composite body – a  
compelling link, runs through. His essential observing distance in these  
contemplative realisms. And which we are too, Observing,  
So many superimposed glances.

---

<sup>78</sup> Latour, p. 6.

And so, the circle is closed.  
Picture itself - a frozen spectacle.  
What is definite to know  
A failure to represent  
but an invention,  
Or making,  
In the real and  
after the work is done with its DOING.  
Now a linguistic poesis for  
*'this scene as it is felt'*.<sup>79</sup>

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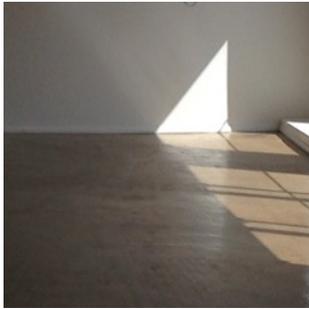
<sup>79</sup> Estelle Barrett, 'Materiality, Affect, and the Aesthetic Image' in *Carnal Knowledge, Towards A New Materialism Through the Arts*, ed. by Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt, (I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2013), p. 72.

\*

## GLOSSARY

### PROLOGUE

Broken Space  
Pages 7-13



### IT

'IT', is not only the gallery. Throughout, 'IT' refers to all non-human agents in the play.

It-Narratives, also called 'novels of circulation' or 'object narratives', according to Christopher Flint in his essay, 'Speaking Objects: The Circulation of Stories in Eighteenth-Century Prose Fiction', (PMLA, Vol. 113, No. 2 (Mar., 1998) pp. 212-226. <http://about.jstor.org/stable/463361> accessed 23 Mar 2018), are novels or stories which gained immense popularity in eighteenth century English Literature, featuring stories that transform inanimate objects into intimate, literary storytellers. The IT of the It-Narrative, most frequently referred to a speaking possession, an object of belonging that makes an in-depth narration from the point of view of varying protagonists: for example; coins, watches, pins, pens, slippers, an old shoe, an umbrella, a wig, etc. The narrating objects have often been intimately 'handled' by different owners, recalling detailed insight of those who repeatedly touched and possessed them, becoming more endowed with insight through each act of transference in its making and marking of time. In the It-Narrative form, each IT migrates between different spheres of activity, often imitating aspects of human behaviours, revealing details on each 'handler' throughout their various passages of circulation, whilst proclaiming their fundamental identity. As such, the authorial voice is transferred to the narrating inanimate observer, thus disassociating 'the writer'.

According to Flint, one particular It-Narration diverges from an object of belonging, to the adventures of an atom which, 'transmigrates through various persons, [...] preserving its indivisible nature' as it crosses countries, oceans, languages, nationalities, 'surpassing all boundaries of human containment'. This example of a 'merging' between object and the human body, as the atom (narrator) becomes absorbed and assimilated into new domains, promotes a

poetic trajectory between objects, the body and language. The interplay of these aspects foregrounds process and interactions rather than properties, illustrating how meaning takes place in the sense of an engagement or convergence between language and the body. Overall, I see this use of materiality as affecting language, from a position of informed human interactions, reaching across linguistic boundaries to generate multiple modes of meaning.

Continuing this premise, where relations to the human body and things converge is commensurate with understanding space. The specificity of the gallery space is the material fact that is negotiated. IT - the space, is in dialogue with the body and involves responsiveness to the space in how it solicits a two-way reference between a bodily reality and its spatial characteristics. These internal processes refer to a narrative of emergence, when something comes to be something that isn't about imagining but about what is looked at, what holds attention. The dialectic of walking and looking defines the experience, initially both cognitive and physical, a synergy between eye and body, sight and sensing. In the moment of entering the empty gallery, the experience is retinal and cognitive, separate and distant to the space. Perception is optical, the space is stable, fixed, a near void or absence, delineated into coloured planes and materially impenetrable surfaces. The body's material character contributes to the mode by which space is understood. The question of how one enters a building, how one develops awareness of space and becomes a 'part of' that space is addressed in this moment, through the spatio-temporal experience of that space. What has now been determined by entering it? The relationship between space and what it contained is 'broken' by my entering of it, space becomes broken. Lefebvre's writings have been useful to some extent in unifying the importance of the 'living material body' in our understanding of space, how it occupies space, by regarding the body as a central in the mapping of space, the nuances of what is to the left and right, or high and low. Lefebvre treats space as a product of the human body, by 'demarcating and orientating space' that is centred on space as a conception, as opposed to space imposing itself upon the body, 'can the body, with its capacity for action, and its various energies, be said to create space', (Henri Lefebvre, *Production of Space: Spatial Architectonics*, p. 170 &195).

The uncertainty of how space is perceived and the activity of being deployed in space may be understood in a new materialist way by allowing for the possibility of 'unifying' relations between 'our body' to establish other forms of knowing, where the body isn't distinct or separate but 'entangled'. The process involves more than an attentive eye, partnering up with the other senses; one gets to know this space through sense experience, which is conditioned by the fact of being in it. One senses the space; its proximities, boundaries, correspondences and eye levels

presenting a dialectic between the perception of the place in its totality and one's relation to the space. The space becomes a site of anxiety, a vexed boundary, which is characterised by seeing and not seeing, an ontological uncertainty.

As space pushes itself forward, its insides, surfaces, edges and marks intervene, exteriority comes forward, pouring in and complicating perception. Space is glimpsed as an actant – 'mattering,' by the altering, shifting engagement with IT. IT is given agency. This 'shift' where 'the mind can no longer hold on to things' and 'the body, ego, is no longer in control' is illustrated in John Rajchman's essay 'Fred Sandback: Lines of Thought', (*Painting with Architecture in Mind*, Wunderkammer Press 2012, p. 87). He discusses how in the spatial organization of Sandback's constructions (see fig. 9-10), 'one loses their coordinates' as the delimitations of space create new space, 'inviting a fleeting sense of co-participation in another vital space'. This imaginative organisation of space has parallels with New Materialist thinking, as it gives rise to a sense of space producing itself, and boundaries fluctuating as one becomes co-existent with it.

## THING

French sociologist and spokesperson for the 'Parliament of Things', Bruno Latour, discusses in his essay *From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik*, how the origin of the word 'thing' derives from Old Norse, (English and Dutch) and translates as an 'assembly' or 'gathering' (Althing) suggesting a means to settle a dispute and find consensus, rather than an object. Any previous sense of coexistence between plants, animals, objects with us, has since been eroded and replaced by what he refers to as an *Othering* of our relationship to things, an object that exists independently of the process of human cognition. The repeated use within the thesis of calling an 'object' a THING, is to defy its value as object-centred, autonomous and separate, thus focusing attention on substance, what it 'contains' in its depths that is yet to be distinguished and the potential amorphousness of its nature. Here, THING is not something definite, it is without an outline.

Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, '[From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik – An Introduction to Making ThingsPublic](http://www.bruno-latour.fr/node/208)', <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/node/208> (accessed 15th July, 2018). This essay formed part of the Atmospheres of Democracy catalogue of the show at ZKM, MIT Press, 2005, pp. 515-539, 2009.

## MATTERING

Karen Barad is a physicist-philosopher and feminist theorist and author of several key new materialist publications including *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (2007) and *Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter* (2003). Whilst 'New Materialism' as a term was

coined by Manuel DeLanda and Rosi Braidotti in the 1990's, Barad has been one of its most influential thinkers in her performative understanding of material vitalities, a 'turn to matter', making a significant contribution to the founding of this new ontology for material things, including human bodies, space, place, the natural and built environment. Barad's model is a 'posthumanist performative approach' to 'understanding and taking account of matters dynamism', (Barad, 2007, 135), introducing and thinking through how meaning is made possible through specific material practices. I draw upon a cluster of her new materialist terms such as 'intra-action', 'mattering', 'doings' and 'entanglement' as new articulations for rethinking subjectivity in relation to matter, its properties, boundaries and enactment of meaning. According to her agential realist accounts of matter, it is understood as an active agent, 'matter, not being static but ongoing, matter is not immutable or passive, it does not require an external force like culture or history to complete it', (Barad, 2003, 821). I use the term *mattering* as connected to an emergence of space, amplifying its complexity as performative, dialogic, linked to us, multi-faceted and relational as opposed to 'out-there', static and fixed. The encounter is examined by being perceptually 'open' to space where the ground, gravity, surface, architectural container become threads crossing between the body, thought and aesthetics. Once you start looking at space this way, its material-affective-aliveness creates a shift, from the "self" to space "itself" and a reallocation of agency between space and the 'disappearing' body'. The turning of relations into 'things,' 'entities,' is crucial in understanding how these intra-actions enact agential separability, the condition of vitality within buildings. Thinking in this way, *mattering* is an intra-active becoming – a doing that is iterative rather than fixed, demonstrating a reconceptualization or 'unravelling' of space, where differential boundaries are re-configured as on going and open ended. 'Mattering is always already an ongoing historicity,' (Barad, 2007, 151).

## VERTICALITY

'I' am at the foreground of my awareness; the egocentric position, waiting for things to present themselves. The vertical orientation, coaxes a 'pictorial' experience of the space, where the palette of the wall, its geometry, edges and depths become active; windows, frames, corners, become real, if only for an instant. The upright frontal ontological position of the viewer, has been an essential condition of how we experience painting. Whilst in this position, space is stable, fixed, delineated into coloured planes and material surfaces. I am aware of a sense of verticality, the contact with the supporting ground, my body as distinct and my vision as calibrated from my upright, frontal, vertical posture. My eyes are level, 'symmetrical' - what is distant is unfocused. According to Leo Steinberg in 'Excerpt from Other Criteria: The Flatbed

Picture Plane' (first published in 'Reflections on the State of Criticism,' in *Artforum*, March 1972, pp. 61-98), 'we relate first visually from the top of our "columnar" bodies, where we activate our visual imagination and address image'. Steinberg refers to an 'angle of imaginative confrontation' to clarify what occurs as the picture plane goes from a vertical to a horizontal position. In his words, 'I tend to regard the tilt of the picture plane from vertical to horizontal as expressive of the most radical shift in the subject matter of art, the shift from nature to culture.' The consequence of this shift, according to Steinberg and later informing Rosalind Krauss' essay, 'Horizontality' (*Formless: A Users Guide*, Zone Books, New York 1997, p.93), is this shift 'from nature to culture', the viewer is no longer passive before the artwork but engaged in it, being part of it. At this moment, I recognize the need to shift orientation, to extend my sense of the space beyond the retinal. I recognize a desire to 'waken' or 'shake' the body, to challenge the panoramic encounter and engage a more multi-dimensional, simultaneous approach.

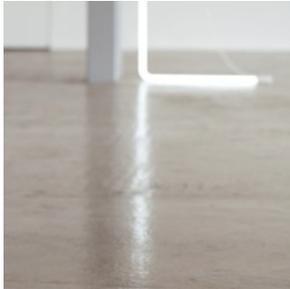
Within the context of contemporary painting the ubiquitous verticality of both the viewer and the display of painting, was rarely challenged until artists such as Jessica Stockholder and Katharina Grosse dynamically introduced the floor as a flat plane and expanded paintings repertoire as a space the viewer can walk into, as a stage like event, (see fig. 14-16). Both Grosse and Stockholder demonstrate how painting has developed from a fairly well defined discipline into an expanded field, where painting merges with installation, performance, architecture and the readymade. These continuations have redefined the reception of the work and initiated a new kind of spectatorship by locating the viewer at the centre of the work, as though they have walked right into a painting. Both artists successfully broaden the definition of what constitutes space in relation to painting by moving beyond the framed surface, the rectangle and its bounded physicality. According to Anne Ring Petersen in *Contemporary Painting in Context*, 'these artists are no longer painting pictures but painting spaces' (p.126), where there is no longer distance between the work and the viewer; the viewer is 'within' the work, they cannot step back or out of it but experience it as a collision of differing viewpoints, defined from its interior. According to Petersen this 'mode of reception is based on an ambition to awaken the viewer's awareness of embodied perception' (p.134), introducing time-space relations and a 'intensified awareness of the phenomenological relations between viewer and work' (p.135). This interference with paintings 'angle of imaginative confrontation' destabilizes painting as pictorial, diverting attention from optical narratives and draws attention to connections between actual things, space and their conceptual realisation through the active engagement of the material body. Dan Smith writing on 'Horizontality,' (*Art Monthly*, no.315, 5-8 Apr., 2008), states how, by 'looking down, not across, there is a making conscious of the act of attention and

the value or quality of the experience is not secure, in playing with horizontality so conspicuously'. Interfering with paintings spatial meaning by shifting the eye from its vertical axis to a horizontal alignment of the floor as a flat plane creates a downward projection of the eye, where we slide into the anarchic space of the ground. By lying down, one crosses over from being at the foreground of awareness; the egocentric position, spatially displaced, to adapt a new position of co-participation with the space. There is a jolt between an objective reality of space that is visually perceived and the moment where touch, physicality and sight combine to give a different sense of space, where spatio-temporal distance dissolves; distance being not only near and far but past, present and future.

## ACT ONE

Oblique Angles & Material Conjectures

Pages 15-24



## LAUGH

'To make the materiel laugh' originates from Jacques Derrida and 'Dematerialisation, Materiau, Materiel, in *Les Immatériaux*, 1985. Petra Lange-Berndt borrows the phrase from Derrida to discuss how in order to emphasize a complicit-ness with materials, we need to understand their histories and 'follow their traces' and even 'tickle' materials, by embracing the 'carnavalesque and the excessive - and if necessary, embarrass oneself' as opposed to simply reacting to them. (*Materiality: Documents of Contemporary Art*, Whitechapel Gallery, MIT Press, p. 18.)

## THICKENS

In Lindar Khatir's essay, 'Openings', she examines painting's vulnerability when dependency on the normative barriers which physically exist around a painting - frames, edges, right angles etc. - are less perceptible and the work exists with neither an 'inside' nor 'outside.' Her text acknowledges material, spatial and theoretical concerns to examine what painting is when it technically exists beyond its own frame, how both its meaning and identity becomes open to the world it shares with its other things. The inclusion of the term 'thicken' she borrows from Hubert Damisch [*Hubert Damisch, Fenetre Jaune Cadmium*] to examine what is occurring at painting's edges. This particular spatial painting examines what painting is *doing*, when it becomes a spatial and materialized environment. The placement of the silk scarf edge acts purposefully as 'open structure' or a frame for the space itself, intersecting with the architecture and bringing forth what is outside of the work. The edges are the frame, an opening, which also asserts itself as an object. It resembles a display structure for painting with its rectangularity, implying an emergent image, this being the physical space of display, real space and the space

around it. Through the integration of edges, marks, lines, corners, a composition unfolds, between objects and architecture, in open dialogue with the building and the viewer, that exchanges and substitutes the historical 'physical' components of a painting' and allows 'real life' or the 'everyday' into the work. The architecture becomes inherently complicit in our experience of looking at the work. The surface of the walls, gallery lighting, doors and windows, horizontals and verticals act at the interface of architecture and pictoriality, liberating paintings traditional art historical grammar, it is now free from purpose. For Khatir 'the contradiction of showing an open structure as painting is that the object's very nakedness poses countless questions about painting's status. In disrobing the support and discarding the image, the picture plane no longer exists. In its place we encounter the tableau, re-grounded and bare. This kind of work is painting's aporia, painting as paradox and indeterminacy, confidence masquerading as uncertainty – painting that openly admits absence and loss as though occurring with its own demise'. ['Openings' in *Painting with Architecture in Mind*, p. 81.)

## ROOTS

According to American Art Historian, critic and curator, David Joselit in his online essay 'Against Representation,' he states 'the artwork almost always contains vestiges of what might be called the roots or infra-structural extensions - of its entanglements in the world. These might include the means of production of the image, the human effort that brought it into being, its mode of circulation, the historical events that condition it, etc. The artwork's format solidifies and makes visible that connective tissue, reinforcing the idea that the work of art encompasses both an image and its extensions', (David Joselit, 'Against Representation; In conversation with David Andrew, (<http://dismagazine.com/discussion/75654/david-joselit-against-representation>)). These ideas correlate with Joselit's seminal text, 'Painting Beside Itself', (October Magazine, 130 Fall 2009, p. 125-134) where he uses the term 'transitive painting' to outline painters who actively and consciously identify the broader networks within which their work has been generated (and received). For more on Joselit and his discussion on transitivity, see NETWORK PAINTING in the Glossary, p. 79.

## DUST

'Dust in the eye and obscurity in the field of vision are not obstacles to explanation or truth but a condition of modern painting', (Briony Fer in *On Abstract Art*, Yale University Press, 1997, p. 91). In the metaphor of Dust in the eyes, meaning relates to an affecting of vision, as its airbourne particles touch the physical eye, in a very real sensory interaction that also threatens

our bodily boundary in its physical proximity. In this reading, dust interferes with sight, creating a friction, violently visceral and splintering sight so vision is blurry and unfocused. In this sense, Dust in the eye is linked to 'fragmentation and decomposition of painting' (Fer, 1997, 91) through the inability to achieve clear sight, or in the words of Fer, 'to see what lies in the dangerous realms beneath the lid,' (p. 91). Dust is filth, it is active matter, a base materiality in constant mutual exchange with the environments it travels through, accumulating, collecting and exchanging as it leaves part of itself behind, signifying material change. Dust also settles, it coats, obliterates a surface as it grows layer upon layer, redefining, thus activating, altering or perhaps weakening what it touches, as an actant of change. The erosion of sight paradoxically draws attention to the task of looking as a kind of hyperconnectivity, straining and in search of meaning and its impossibility.

## ACT TWO

Supersensorial yellow monologue

Pages 27-34



## YELLOW

Yellow has a rich and complex language of its own which according to Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1779-1832) ‘is extremely liable to contamination, and produces a very disagreeable effect if it is sullied, or in some degree tends to the minus side.... when a yellow color is communicated to dull and coarse surfaces, such as common cloth, felt, or the like, on which it does not appear with full energy, the disagreeable effect alluded to is apparent’ (Johannes Wolfgang von Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, translated from German, with notes by Charles Locke Eastlake, p. 308). His way of science was based on a form of intimacy, a co-presence between thing and observer where the object is approached directly through the senses to ‘yield its nature’ as opposed to a science of measurement and exactitude. Real knowledge for Goethe involved a kind of seeing that emerges from ‘Zarte Empirie’ - a delicate empiricism, which involves ‘the effort to understand a thing’s meaning through prolonged empathetic looking and seeing grounded in direct experience’, (David Seamon, *Goethe, Nature and Phenomenology: An Introduction*). This way of seeing called for a deeper attention to the essential core of a thing that makes it what it is, the encounter not being visual, but embodied and multisensory. His phenomenology was concerned with seeking the conditions under which things appear, their succession and their subjective understanding of what ‘lies within’. For Goethe, colour is physiological, informed by considering the ‘way of seeing’, and ‘seeing in a very particular way.’

My engagement with yellow extends beyond what is left on my retina; it is contaminating, durational, aggregative and complex. It passes through me from ‘out there’ to ‘in here,’ simultaneously inside and outside ‘carrying across’ inside the body where the spectator becomes permeated by its material character. Through the sensation of yellow, ‘seeing’ becomes related to the haptic through the interplay of both close-range seeing and the tactile sense, allowing the eye to function like the sense of touch. The examination of colour was thus contingent upon affect

on the activity of eye, its physiology and resulting after-effect - where colour becomes interpenetrating and reciprocal. There becomes a mutual interaction communicated the haptic quality, which reaches beyond visual language. The spectator becomes, 'in the sensation and something happens through the sensation, one through the other, one in the other. And at the limit, it is the same body which being both subject and object, gives and receives the sensation,' (Gilles Deleuze, G. and Smith, D.W., *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, 2005, New York: Continuum International Publishing Group. p. 109). This connectedness, brought about through the tactile-optical encounter is the point 'when sight discovers in itself a specific function of touch that is uniquely it's own, distinct from the optical function.'

The work aimed to capture a multitude of sensations, and their dynamic combinations, to critically examine the character of vision when sight becomes porous, multisensory, bodily, emphasising sensory interaction to enhancing our understanding of space and material/immaterial relations. The near frontal plane is slow and stable, but by following the yellow line in a transitory dynamic, the fast movement of the eye blends and displaces a pictorial architectonic where planes, horizontals and deep space are registered. Architecture and its spatial ordering finds its way to exist in the work, becoming 'felt' as a unified spatial situation in proximate distance to the line.

## SENSATORY

Deleuze make use of the term haptic (from the Greek 'haptikos' - able to touch or grasp) to argue that haptic space 'may be as much visual or auditory as tactile' acknowledging that haptic embraces these sensory interrelations. Daniel W. Smith in his essay 'Aesthetics: Deleuze's Theory of Sensation: Overcoming the Kantian Duality' in *Essays on Deleuze* (Edinburgh University Press, 2012) writes of sensation being understood as two different experiences, the first being through encountering objects of recognition, resulting in familiarity and understanding. But in the other case, the sensations that give rise to thought are no longer objects of recognition, but objects of a 'fundamental encounter' - referring to 'sensible qualities or relations that are caught up in an unlimited becoming', (p. 90). Furthermore, in 'Painting and Sensation' *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* by Gilles Deleuze, (translated by Daniel W. Smith, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2014) he discusses how the sensation of colour, acknowledges the 'action of invisible forces upon the body', (p.30) highlighting the stimuli to the viewer which further engage extensions of the tactile sense. This connectedness, brought about through the tactile-optical encounter is the point within sense experience, where something like

a new sense emerges, the intermingling of senses, through interplay with the eyes, the optical plane and colour, 'colour becomes in the body, sensation is in the body, sensation is what is painted' (Smith, 2014, 26). Colour is linked with the 'haptic' sense, its relations of warmth and coolness, weight and depth, volume and opacities, expansion and contraction, involving notions of feeling, sensing - it's affective aspects. At the same time, its sensation bypasses the sequences of cognition, hitting the nervous system thus corresponding as a direct transmission as opposed to 'the boredom of a story to be told... in a long diatribe through the brain'. According to Deleuze, 'the figure is the sensible form related to a sensation; it acts immediately upon the nervous system, which is of the flesh, whereas abstract form is addressed to the head and acts through the intermediary of the brain, which is closer to the bone' (Smith, 2014, 25). In thinking about colour this way, colours relations of warmth, coldness etc. further correlate with Goethe's sense of colour as physiological, linked to the haptic and extending from sensation. The sensory haptic experience being one that facilitates a sense of being connected to something, an intimate phenomenology, where there's a connection to matter itself. What emerges is an experience that places the viewer simultaneously inside and outside the work, through a mobilisation of several senses as opposed to the disembodied gaze. From this point of view, the haptic sensation proceeds from optical space and grasps tactile referents through an optical code; shadow, surface, densities and weight, activating its emphatic physical nature.

#### INTRA-ACT

The notion of intra-action is a key element in Karen Barad's theorizing of new materialist and agential realism and relates to a starkly different way of thinking, making and perceiving. She writes; 'the neologism "intra-action" signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies. That is, in contrast to the usual "interaction" which assumes that there are separate individual agencies that precede their interaction, the notion of intra-action recognizes the distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action. It is important to note that the "distinct" agencies are only distinct in a relational, not an absolute, sense, that is, agencies are only distinct in their relation to their mutual entanglement; they don't exist as individual elements', (Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, Duke University Press, 2007, p.50). Thinking in this way, offers a way of exploring the complexities of how materials work, over time within the context of hybridized art practices which allows for a focus on how the allure of materials intersect with the viewer to advance engagement. The artwork calls forth the intra-action between materials and the viewer to evoke new modes of interpretative engagement, which importantly is inclusive of the site of its presentation. Furthermore, Barad, writing in 'On Touching - The Inhuman That

Therefore I Am' (*Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, Vol. 23, 2012), asks how 'when electrons meet each other "halfway," when they intra-act with one another, when they touch one another, whom or what do they touch?' All material 'entities' are entangled relations of becoming, and materiality itself, is always 'touching' and 'touched by' at all times by 'infinite configurings of things and other beings'. New materialist theory offers a key method to think about 'relational ontologies' with the viewer and what might 'cause' materials to behave in particular ways.

## SCREAM

What is transmitted in this exchange between colour and things? The yellow line is required to act out its chromatic materiality, thematising a relationship between its matter and the process of requesting it to operate as an actant, to draw out its 'inner scream' and 'make it laugh', (extracted from Jacques Derrida, 'Dematerialisation', 'Materiau' and 'Materiel', in *Les Immatériaux* reproduced in *Materiality*, edited by Petra Lange-Berndt). By drawing out its self-containment, 'tickling' it, I thus imply the possibility of materials being socially interactive, capable of carrying information that we are not attuned to detecting. How we cultivate this ability to discern nonhuman vitality in inert nonhuman things is a parallel process, of being complicit with the material and exercising one's own non-identity, 'countering the narcissism of humans in charge of the world'. (Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, p. xvi). What is important here, is how materials are used not as signifiers of something else but willful agents charged with their own volatile matter and power relations - things to think and act with and about. Making material scream suggests an understanding of the languages and sensations that are connected or emanate from materials, a materiality-effect in which its sensations become mobilized and embodied - sharing something where there's an acknowledged porosity between us and physical world. Matter's interiority is not separate, or individual but a sensory productive relation that is generative, 'doing' and 'articulating' resulting in an entangling rather than a property inherent in a thing, thus considered apart/separate. The intertwining of seeing and sensing, their inseparability 'where matter is understood as a dynamic shifting entanglement of relations rather than as a property of things' (Barad, 2007, 35) relies upon the body becoming entangled in these oscillations or 'vibrations'.

### Act Three

Spatial Painting 4: A Cloud, A Fog, A Blur . . .

Pages 36-44



#### **/CLOUD/**

Cloud as a word, is held by two forward slashes in Hubert Damisch's *A Theory of /Cloud/: Towards a History of Painting*, to emphasise it as 'phenomena not object' in representational painting, rather than an interest in clouds per se, (trans. Janet Lloyd. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002, p.14). The negation of solidity, outline and delineation in visual experience references the parts of experience that are transitory and uncontrollable, difficult to see and also to understand. Throughout histories of painting, clouds in their variously composed materialities, blurry, hazy etc., push forward a range of distinct categories; to structure the composition; to produce effects which makes things disappear into the distance; an infinite universe; something transitory; continuity; meteorological phenomena, mood, transcendence, cosmologies, dramas, etc. Damisch writes how 'the problematic of cloud is addressed and is most accurately declared to arise at the point where the visible meets the invisible, the representable meets the unrepresentable', (p.129). 'What is the explanation for the fact that vapour distributed in the air becomes visible?' (p.191). Furthermore, Damisch references Goethe, who declared how 'painting was not suited to portraying trees in blossoms, because they could not be captured in image' – a cloud, i.e; blossom, being too immaterial to be expressed as image, claiming ... 'as in a dream, its condition is unpaintable, as it resembles nothing.'

The cloud, in all its variously composed materialities, has a confusing indeterminate status, not so much because they constantly change shape or mix up varying elements but in how they challenge the phenomenology of what is indeed visible. This act draws upon Damisch's theories of /cloud/ to examine the theoretical principles and spatial frameworks of a painted cloud using Damisch's analysis to address viewing and perception of transparency and opacity, in the

‘paradoxical combination of the ephemeral and material.’ The cloud, materialised here as pink pyrotechnic dust, occupies the gallery with its shifting volume and mass, yet remains weightless and transitory, its boundary being indiscernible. The viewer is thus placed within a higher level of participation, into a physical position of immersion where each bodily movement has implications on the clouds action, through the slightest movement of airflow. The eyes physically strains to see through its foggy formless mass, as a blurry passage to the fixed experience of space. Without ‘outline’ or ‘boundary’ space becomes soft-focused and open placing the spectator and work in a higher level of participation. As I see it, the most important proposition is that of a change in perceptual behavior, created through a sense of being within pictorial space, where what is visually perceived and how it is perceived, affects the correlation of thought and being. The viewer approaches the work from the position of entering the material foundation of an image, dispersed within pictorial space – where the cloud is ‘speaking for itself’ holding and determining its own theoretical position and activity. The cloud is not representing or involved in processes of cognition, it does not interpret anything, but rather acts in the identity of image and material.

#### TRANSLUCENCY

In Catherine Vasseleu’s essay, ‘Material Character Animation: Experiments in Life-Like Translucency’, published in *Carnal Knowledge: Towards a New Materialism in the Arts* (2013), she elucidates on the optical and material distinctions between both transparency and translucency. She declares translucency as ‘an incomplete transparency, capable of transmitting light but also causing sufficient diffusion of that light to prevent the perception of clear and distinct images through it’, (pp. 157-161). Hence, we can only see ‘partly not fully through translucent matter’. On the other hand, transparency, in the material sense is space-defining, transmitting light in such a way as to be able to, ‘see through matter as though there is no intervening matter’. Transparency offers ‘the condition of optical surety and abstract clarity’ whilst translucency has a ‘thickness’, it is ‘on the threshold between clarity and obscurity’ preventing a clear and distinct perception of what is on the other side. The physical properties of translucency as ‘thick matter,’ or having ‘incomplete transparency’ are clearly associated with painting and dynamics of perception. It figures a connection where light passes through the surface to render visible what lies underneath, what is re-enacted on its surface as a vital aspect of its internal animation.

## ZIGZAG

Throughout my research and practice I have drawn upon T.J. Clarke's well-known articulation of 'Landscape with a Calm' by Poussin (1650-51) and his publication *In Sight of Death* as an insightful demonstration of the visual theatricality of a specific Baroque painting, in which illusionistic pictoriality is rigorously examined. 'Landscape with a Calm' is an example of painting that deals with virtual interiority whilst evidencing a 'physicality of seeing' where ones eyes remain in a perpetual state of unrest, zigzagging across the surface, taking in different degrees of distance, deeper spatial positions to the very real physical distances the viewer negotiates, to see such a precisely organised panorama.

According to T.J. Clarke, one's eyes ricochet from side to side, spotting something then honing in on its detail, every part requiring equal attention, causing the viewer to gaze across far and wide, then focus. 'Landscape with a Calm' may be a drama of looking, its overall rhythm according to Clarke, being one of 'havoc and stillness', 'hurrying and sauntering', the 'transitory and the enduring', but ultimately 'it is about a moment of seeing, certainly; but just as much about touch and balance, about the physical conditions of human movement, running, lolling, leaning forward, reaching out to others, flicking ones fingers....' What is it that takes place as one eye adjusts sight to survey an image? How do we understand the eyes' 'role' in deciphering relations between the space of the painting and the interval between it and the viewer, where the illusionistic mark moves between real and optical space. The idea of creating a spatial sense through the act of looking at painting has occupied painting for centuries, but according to Stella's essays in *Working Space* (Harvard Lecture Series, 1986), it is not until Caravaggio that space is presented to include both maker and viewer, where space projected by the painting is sufficiently expansive to 'create the sensation of real space within and outside of the action of painting' (1986: 11).

My practice attempts to get 'inside' these pictorial principles, to engage with spatial ordering. I 'exchange and substitute' historical elements of Baroque paintings for example, to make these moments real and physical in actual space, to affect sights collaboration with the other senses. Elements of drama, action, darkness, vantage points, nearness and surface become operative in activating a multitude of sensations, opening up discussions that include retinal and optical seeing, but also the haptic, retinal touch, sensory and anthropomorphic responses. The approach in Clarke's writing on the process of looking, demonstrates the complexity of the paintings untranslatability and separateness, separateness in terms of the painting's whole visible pattern, how it is accessed and what emerges; the eyes' 'role' in deciphering this gap

between the viewer and the space of the painting itself. The viewer's innate desire to see into painting, experiencing space as an elaboration of painting's pictoriality as three dimensional, enacts space itself as the subject of perception.

#### **A NETWORK PAINTING**

The idea of painting belonging to a 'network' is discussed by art historian David Joselit in his essay 'Painting Beside Itself' (October Magazine, Issue 130, Fall 2009, p. 125), in which he writes about a group of American and German painters who make what he refers to as 'transitive' paintings, demonstrating links and networks to the artworld networks they're generated and received within, moving out from painting to reference art markets, 'extra-painterly spaces' and performativity. Joselit refers to a statement by Martin Kippenberger (1953-1997), in which he states that: "simply to hang a painting on the wall and say that it's art is dreadful. The whole network is important!"

The idea of a Network Painting is central to the work of artist Jutta Koether, whose practice Joselit refers to extensively the way she correlates relations between the painted canvas, the historical & 'infra-historical' in her complex stagings of painting, installation and live performance. She constructs elaborate performative presentations, which reference and incorporate complex networks of activity that appear to be 'on-going', 'invisible' and 'elsewhere'. According to Joselit, Koether defines transitive painting in how she maintains the 'capacity to hold in suspension the passages internal to canvas and those external it' where they become integrated into a larger architectural space. Their transitivity moves out from the work towards the social network surrounding it, as an open-ended experience. The notion of transitivity and the revealing and visualizing of the networks intrinsically linked with painting, raises questions on what these networks might look like, when the painting itself is conditioned by the spatial, social and interpretive framework which surrounds it. As architecture, object and painting intersect, is meaning constituted through it being 'situated' within this place and the interplay of material relations, including how the body gets involved. The artwork results in the collaboration of all these aspects and their multiple temporalities and importantly this exchange with the spectator.

The question for painting now is how we might talk about meaning in a different way, connecting the tangibility of matter to the body as a way to understand some of the implicit cognitive and bodily responses, which emerge from this labyrinth of interplays and exchanges.

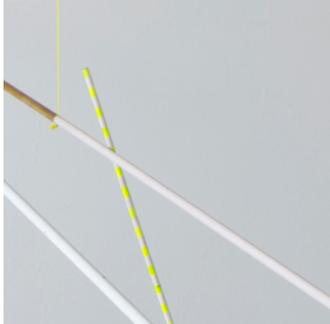
## **BLANK SPOTS**

Only (Johannes) Vermeer attempted to really come to grips with the 'blank spots' in artists vision - what is within the limited field of vision, that 'something in the dark spot that makes up his view of the back of his head'. Vermeer wanted to account for what one cannot see. His compositional use of camera obscura and by 'observing the observer observing, by putting a model in artist's clothing, by making the recorder of the pictured event an anonymous mannequin, and by revealing the mannequin's blank, unseeing, unprotected, unaware side, Vermeer created a 'weightless presence (the artist himself) to complement the ethereal personification of art,' (Frank Stella, *Working Space*), p. 9.

## Act Four

Trembles and Stutters: Between Painting & the Wall

Pages 46-52



### TREMbles AND STUTTERS

When speech is dis-fluent and strained to the point where it results in an exertion of force upon the body, to the point where the word.... does not come, it is essentially a disturbance from the failed collaboration of thought and language. The connection through sensation becomes more pronounced, physical, connected to the motor phenomenon or a “spasm” that is unintentional, chaotic, involving involuntary movement. Deleuze characterises the physiological stutter in the following terms, ‘it is when the language system over strains itself that it begins to stutter, to murmur, or to mumble, then the entire language system reaches the limit that sketches the outside and confronts silence. When the language system is so much strained, language suffers a pressure that delivers it to silence’, [Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton, NY: Columbia University Press, 1994, p. 28]. Making language stutter by pushing something to its limits is not limited to speech. I use this physical terminology as a poetic convention to strategically rethink how painting might affectively disturb space, by forcibly penetrating the wall, removing, cutting, etc., applying pressure on its stability and durability. In making a spatial painting how can one force an encounter that enables a becoming of architecture, making architecture think, behave differently – or make architecture tremble? This is not reducible to the physical world but extends to a psychological interiority where the notion of a ‘disturbance’ or ‘interruption’ is a creative mutation or change of direction between oneself and the space ‘itself’.

### OBLIQUE

‘The Function of the Oblique’ refers to the architecture of Claude Parent & Paul Virilio [1963-1969], who formed the ‘Architecture Principe,’ group, (‘Oblique Function: Dead or Alive,’ 2010 FBUA Bursary Report, William Layzell, sourced online at <http://ufba-fbua.com/wp->

[content/uploads/2012/05/2010\\_William-Layzell\\_Oblique-Function.pdf](#) (accessed December 2017). Their ideas involved investigating a new kind of architecture which entailed rejecting the traditional axes of the horizontal and the vertical. They used oblique planes to create an 'architecture of disequilibrium', bringing space into a dynamic era of the body 'in movement'. Their ideas involved tilting the ground in order to shift the 'old paradigm' of the vertical wall. Through being inclined, the wall becomes 'experientable'. The oblique is fundamentally focused on how a body physically experiences space, the slope implying an effort to climb up and an acceleration of speed to climb down; this way the body cannot abstract itself from the space and feel the degrees of inclination. 'The purpose of the oblique was to encourage a constant awareness of gravity, bringing the body into a tactile relationship with the building'. Such action aligns the body with a direct and physical relationship to the floor, as an active and destabilising zone of activity. Drawing in the floor so directly brings forward a slight disorientation, as attention re-aligns to outside space and its inseparability to the internal space, there is no dramatic stopping point. Again, in this dramatising of horizontality and verticality, pictorial understanding relates to a journeying through and around the architectural structure of painting. This is balanced with a co-existence to broader contexts of landscape and how we navigate space in our everyday lives, as spatial contact unfolds through physical movement, via felt knowledge and muscular memory.

## ACTUAL SPACE

Donald Judd in 'Specific Objects,' first published in 'Arts Yearbook,' 1965, states how 'three dimensions are real space. That gets rid of the problem of illusionism and of literal space, space in and around marks and colours – which is riddance of one of the most objectionable relics of European art. A work can be as powerful as it can be thought to be. Actual space is intrinsically more powerful and specific than paint on a flat surface.' One of the defining themes of contemporary art practice in the 1960's was the 'relationship between the art object and its spatial context' including the 're-entering of the wall', (see Andrew Blauvelt, 'No Visible Means of Support,' in *Painting at the Edge of the World*, 2001), which at the very least is suggestive of how painting might possibly 'widen its scope' towards the end of the last century. He cites artists such as: Daniel Buren, Helio Oiticica, Niele Toroni, Sol LeWitt, Robert Ryman, Lynda Benglis and Blinky Palermo who examine parameters of autonomy, claiming site-based forms of painting within and outside of the gallery space. Significantly, Blauvelt claims that whilst the 'minimalist art object had shed the painterly problem of illusionism by recasting itself as simply form and material, it was inevitably reframed by the architectural container in which it was placed'. In other words, the relationship between painting and the gallery's interior architectural structure begins to be thought of as mutual with painting. The gallery space functions as both a

frame and support. Thus, the afore mentioned artists had re-set the limits between art object and real space, where painting and site become one, redefining traditional aspects of paintings planar frontality and framing edge.

Almost half a century later, during the 1990's, the critical reception of artists Jessica Stockholder and Katharina Grosse evidences strongly how their work has been underpinned from these modernist practices, in their adaption of abstraction and formalist concerns whilst utilizing the particularities of architectural space, 'site' being integral to the work itself. Their respective practices are situated forms of painting, where the viewer becomes immersed within its spatial context, no longer a plane to look at, but experienced as bodily and performative. In the case of Grosse, she produces enormous spray-painted gestural environments that consider the experiential basis of the viewer as a primary concern. The sprayed paints vapour like quality and volume, optically destabilizes the architectural structure, alluding simultaneously to empirical space and an imaginative or fictional space. Here, there is no distance between the work and the viewer, the viewer cannot step back out of the work, viewing peripherally from within where the conditions for experiencing it insist upon phenomenological orientations, bringing forward the legacies of Minimalism. This kind of thinking, where Minimalism and formal painting intermesh, holds value with the work of Jessica Stockholder in how she constructs large-scale site-specific installations using mostly furniture, fabric, paint and ready-made objects - 'real stuff in the world.' Her engagement with found materials and their particular evocations gives rise to questions of continuities, histories of things and how the materials themselves are less important than their relationships, how they come together - claiming that meaning 'is generated' in her work 'through the method of building and as a consequence of a knitting together of material elements' that are 'not precious.' (*The State of Things, Interview with Robert Nickas and Jessica Stockholder*, Flash Art, Milan, March/April, 1990). Furthermore, these mixed together elements operate to demarcate the parameters of the viewers gaze, from being outside the work, relying on the viewer walking around to discover different planes and spatial arrangements, resulting in the complete incorporation of the viewer into the work itself.

To this end, it has been worth re-reading Michael Fried and his essay 'Art & Objecthood' (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1998, p.163) to bring sharply into focus what he considered the 'problematic' relationships between the bodily experience of the spectator and the artwork. Fried, sought to safeguard painting from being 'contaminated' by other characteristics of other practices hence becoming hybridized, or losing its medium specificity and thus its presentness. His perspective was that some Minimalist works where the body's orientation and varying vantage points resulted in them appearing as 'incurably theatrical' having too much 'stage presence' and functioning like 'someone else in the room' as though they had 'been waiting for him' and 'refusing obstinately to let him alone'. According to Fried's

critical position, when the art object 'refuses to stop confronting him, distancing him, isolating him,' it places undue emphasis on 'distancing' as an effect linked to 'theatricality,' as the work appears as durational, temporal and incomplete – as opposed to 'all-at-once.' It has a disruptive effect.

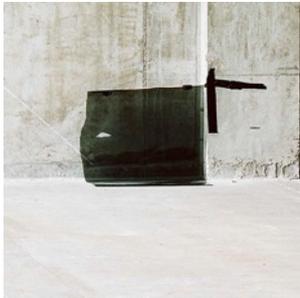
These notions of 'theatricality', movement and 'discontinuous' experience are results of being in-action with the works spatiality, where rather than a split there is a unity. The point is to stress the importance of space as analogous with things to 'act' upon the spectator's body, thus generating different types of absorption and experience. It has been well argued by Fried, how Minimalism brought about a phenomenological shift between subject and viewer, however, at the same time there is a critical acknowledgment to the performative role of the art object, which is of crucial value to new materialist thinking. Is it not the case that whatever we make of Fried's analysis, it relies upon a presumption of the centrality of human beings, and an anthropocentric response to the art object.

In my view New Materialism reverses these presumptions, where the condition of viewing is not anthropocentric but a different type of bodily encounter. Briony Fer poignantly puts forward an argument for an alternative to anthropocentrism, where the lure of the object, its 'material volatility' and the way it performs and inhabits its surroundings, may result in something being lost or 'taken away' from the viewer' (Briony Fer, *The Infinite Line*, Yale University Press, 2004, pp. 101-116). She states, 'rather, it is the very presence of the object that heightens the sense of losing a portion of oneself. In turn, it is a loss rather than plenitude that heightens the sense of a bodily encounter,' (p. 115). In other words, as the material art object 'comes-into-being', it effaces rather than produces – and this action between (and not in-between) subject and object is what heightens the sense of the bodily encounter, as loss 'or risk of loss' and disappearance. New materialist thinking brings forward this different ontological understanding in how we access the objects 'in-itself', with an understanding of the encounter being something 'inhabited', through sensing, perceiving, deciding and thus 'cannot be viewed from the outside'. Perhaps what is most interesting in this position, is how it results in a re-doing or re-configuring of the anthropocentric so that we end up with a very different way of understanding Minimalism, where what is offered and derived from the object, appears to have been understood from a limited position.

## Act Five

A Nordic Gathering: The Scene of a Photograph

Pages 54-61



### PULSE

What is an assemblage? Does an actant ever really act alone? In *Vibrant Matter*, Jane Bennett addresses what a non-human assemblage might be, declaring it as ‘consisting of ad-hoc groupings of diverse elements, of vibrant materials of all sorts ... living, thriving, throbbing confederations’ (p.23). She refers to their topographies as been ‘uneven’ likening them to an electric power grid, where there is no government by a central ‘head’ and ‘each member actant maintains an energetic pulse slightly “off” from that of the assemblage’. This image of an assemblage as ‘uneven’ highlighted how the actants within these compositions maintain their collaborative, intra-active agency, and how that force is distributive, that is affecting and being affected by an associative thing.

One of the key ideas under examination within the Final ACT is how ‘parts’ or ‘fragments’ of a material assemblage are experienced ‘unevenly’. How each element is momentarily separate yet becomes corresponding and inseparable through how it is apprehended. Jane Bennett’s analogy of a material assemblage with the electrical power grid, as an example of a network ‘where each element has its own force but works together to produce distinctive effects [...] individual parts being volatile and as such may disturb it from within’. This relates or even extends a key point of Deleuze and Guattari in relation to ‘affect’ and ‘singularities’ within a thing, this ‘thisness’ that makes it unique - ‘the grain of the wood’ or its density or porosity, and how it is this which generates its shape or force when it enters into a particular set of relations.

If matter is already occupied with ‘singularities’ which cant be discerned by looking, but internal to it, can they be ‘unsealed’ so what lives inside flows through, acting upon each part, vibrating, pulsating and merging with other transmissions from other parts. Are these internal reflexivities

part of a system where each becomes a play of forces, connecting otherwise separate domains into unexpected patterns of activity which in turn creates an 'event-affect' (a spatial painting).

Finding or identifying these immanent correlations requires new materialist emphasis, to recognise these internal attractions, leaks and linkages between things and thing/human relations. Matter evokes multisensory interactions, it 'touches us' in a way that is hard to define, evoking unconscious images and affects as part of its interpretive engagement. In this assemblage, which stresses relations between the found, readymade object placed alongside the made, I hope to expose the interweaving materialities at play in their processes of making and their wider histories. These elements, presented all together are formed by different degrees of activity, making them durational, marked, handled in ways that affect their materialist and reciprocal relations implicated within an assemblage. Each element has its own will, its own particular pulse or vibrancy, which clearly enacts Bennet's emphasis on 'doing' and 'an effecting by a human-nonhuman assemblage' (2010:28). Our capacity to affect and be affected by what can only be inferred as opposed to be defined, and that which relates explicitly to interiority, what Bennet refers to as a 'federation of actants' in flux, involves intervening rather than representing, by setting a stage for the encounter. Within this field of activity, it is hard to grasp just what the sources of agency are that make the event or 'event-affect' happen, yet it might be this ungraspable shifting, changing, fragile and unstable process that is materialism, and as such, this process of doing and actions is its essential agency.

#### **SUPRA-REAL**

The term is employed from Lefebvre's discussion on the *real*, *supra-real* and *infra-real* as a directive to heighten attention to objects being more than they are – as phenomenological events. How can I make what's real - 'Supra-real?' In what way might the photograph diminish perception and experience for instantaneous impact – the 'snapshot depthless' appearance, which resides on the surface of retinal experience. (Lefebvre, Henri, *The Production of Space*), p. 19.

#### **CLINAMEN**

In the introduction of *Carnal Knowledge: Towards a new Materialism for the Arts* by Estelle Barrett & Barbara Bolt, the 'clinamen' is introduced as having vital relevance to New Materialist thought. In the Greek philosophical world, Epicurus, more concerned with 'processes of matter' and the 'matter of things' than 'Ideal Forms' and theories based on how things appear, identified the clinamen as an 'unpredictable swerve of atoms' as the swerve that sets things in motion,

‘initiating new patterns and movements.’ According to Bolt, Epicurus and his reference to the dynamic of clinamen, ‘offers the possibility of agential matter’ and towards understanding ‘that all entities and processes, including human beings, are composed of - or are reducible to - matter, material forces of physical processes’, (p. 2).

## DOING

*Doing* is a frequently used new materialist term that according to Karen Barad, describes the action that occurs between human-nonhuman things, where ‘matter is substance in its intra-active becoming - not a thing, but a “doing”, a congealing of agency. Matter is a stabilizing and destabilizing process of iterative intra-activity.’ (‘Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter’, *Signs, Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 28, (March 2003), p. 822. *Doing*, as discussed by Barad and further emphasised by Jane Bennett in *Vibrant Matter* relies upon a conceptualization of ‘active powers issuing from non-subjects’, taking into account matters dynamism and the capacity to affect and be affected by that which ‘resides within material things’ (Bennett, 2010, ix.). What interests me is not so much this type of description but what tricks are required to activate such an ‘intra-active becoming’. What are the sources of agency that wills this *doing* into motion, how static objects might inscribe themselves into murmuring, shaking, vibrating, speaking or indeed laughing, by simply showing us *what-it-is*.

Paradoxically, this research might be seen as a physical *un-doing* of painting where in the act of taking-painting-apart, each action becomes a trans-action, initiating an ongoing sequence of never-ending causalities. In the act of *unbinding* painting, actualizing its illusionistic space into the physical space of the gallery, my interventions cause other elements to be vitalized, mutual with one another, in an ‘out of sequence’ assemblage. It becomes impossible to experience ‘all at once’ - as a single pictorial field as things emerge from the foreground to the background, micro to macro, across and between filled and unfilled spaces. The process of becoming is its connectivity. Whilst formulated from traditional and historical painterly language, their proclivity is towards an equivalence with experiential sensations attributed to architectural space, where its *doing* is dependent upon the active participation of the viewer to experience the work durationally - to linger, to wander, to bind all its activity together. This situation proposes a re-allocation of agency between viewer and the work, resulting in a series of reversals, where now essentially there is nothing to look at, only inter-relationality – the flow where space and things collaborate in their mission to turn the viewer into a co-participator or collaborator.

Once surrounded by the work in this way, the viewer becomes part of it, as though in a never ending conversation, assisting in an ongoing making of meaning as the differential boundaries are 'stabilized and destabilized', affecting one another. This is its *doing*.



Fig. 8  
Nicolas Poussin  
Landscape With a Calm (1650-51)



Fig. 9  
Fred Sandback  
Untitled (Sculptural Study, Three-part Construction), 1976/2013  
Black acrylic yarn  
Dimensions variable



Fig. 10  
Fred Sandback  
Untitled (Cornered Triangle, Fifth of Ten Cornered Constructions), 1980  
Cadmium red medium acrylic yarn  
360.7 x 403.9 x 403.9 cm

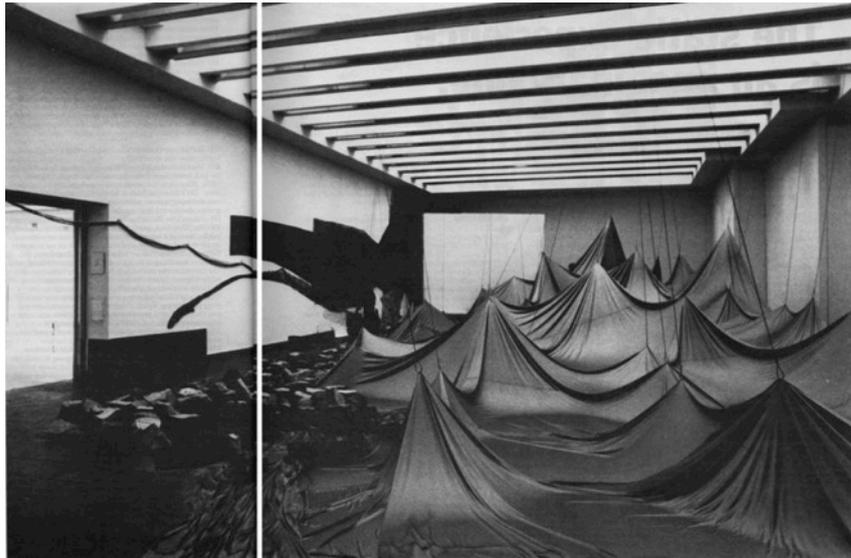


Fig. 11  
Jessica Stockholder  
Growing Rock Candy Mountain Grasasses in Canned Sands,  
April 1992,  
Westfälischer Kunstverein, Munster, Germany  
Dimensions : The piece exists in a room approximately 29 x 9 metres



Figs. 12 & 13  
Jessica Stockholder  
Installation image from 'Skin Toned Garden Mapping'  
Renaissance Society, Chicago, 1991



Figs. 14 & 15  
Katharina Grosse  
*This Drove my Mother up the Wall*  
*South London Gallery, 2017*



Fig. 16  
Katharina Grosse  
One Floor Up More Highly  
Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (2010)

## Conclusion

The process of selecting and relating words, whether spoken or written, to painting is so very far way from the variants and complexities of visual sensation itself. By its emphatic material and messy nature, painting's substance requires a tactile imagination as much as a visual one, where sensations are passed and moved about, resulting in a flow between matter and thought, each acting upon the other in highly complex exchanges.

Throughout this research project, I have read and thought about two other writers: the distilled language of Samuel Beckett, discovering through his staged works, the theatrical possibilities of words, when written down, words, simply *becoming*, in the process of writing. And the words of art-writer Maria Fusco, founder of *ficto-criticism*, who has pioneered writing '*not-about art*', in an attempt to locate criticality from an immersive stance, as part-of creativity itself.

My written work presents a discourse *with* painting through its relationship to space and the viewer. The centrality of paintings pictorial presentation does not always conform to critique, description or argument in order to tell us about what we see, or think we see. The indescribable requires language to not be separate, but make effort to break down barriers, to seek different ways of knowing and thinking. This thesis is an experiment that tries to resolve a fundamental problem of articulation.

New Materialist debates, specifically Karen Barad's understanding of *intra-action*, have occupied a pivotal position in the re-thinking of how painting could be written as an empirical investigation, through participation. Yet it also might be best to demonstrate what I understand as writing *with* painting, as an act of reconciliation between sight and other neglected senses – new discoveries unfold when attending to sensation and the “effects of sensation apprehended in their relations.”<sup>80</sup> What this has led to of course, as the writing shapes, is a way to relate to painting, in the terms of a painting practice, where *with* language I can re-present a deeply engaged comprehension of paintings internal and external spatial relations.

Whilst *doing* writing, a lot fell into place. What was merely a thought within a brief moment, becomes *mattered* into syntax, patterns of letters, rhythms and unspoken voices, typed upon a page with gaps, pauses and punctuations. It becomes a sequential discourse to be looked at and perhaps listened to, an internal voice to the reader. The sound of words is unheard, textual not

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<sup>80</sup> Roger Fry, *Transformations: Critical and Speculative Essays on Art* (London Chatto and Windus, 1927) p. 5.

audible communicating a fragile moment, seeing its way in ‘*silent orality*’<sup>81</sup>. *Doing* writing in this way, has pushed me towards a relational understanding between text and matter, where each become interlaced and “transversal”<sup>82</sup> - a transversal mode of perception, where the *material-discursive-linguistic*<sup>83</sup> come together. The process and the results have revealed to me proximities and invisibilities *within* painting of varying intensities that offers new possibilities for a textual dimension of aesthetic experience - through the collaborative extension of language. By developing this approach to the writing as autopoietic painting, we gain tools for accessing the ‘unimaginable,’ where language pours into this unstable space, giving words to paintings multi-dimensionality. Language is thus created by the work itself, in-dialogue and mutual with painting, pushing towards a relational understanding that is not agentially separated, or objectified, but imagined differently, and that is akin to painting.

By helping us close the gap between painting and the experience of being with painting, we discover a material site of activity, reshaped into an uneven landscape of situations and actions, where invisibilities are rendered visible - made present. What has emerged is an expression for this encounter, as an alternative narrative form, that could be construed as an *intra-linguistic*<sup>84</sup> process deriving from the collapsing of distinctions between practice and theory into the material-discursive. Thus, through the extension of language, and in exploring its material alterations, perhaps even becoming non-linguistic - utterances, isolating words, false starts, slowing down and speeding up, variations in tone, all may potentially add to vital processes of perception. There is something critically important implied here, where in the re-thinking of material processes, there is a bringing forth of something new, something new from language. If, as suggested by Barrett, ‘we cannot consciously know an object without adequate symbols or language’ this ‘necessitates the production of new forms of language in order to externalise our experiences or aesthetic encounters’ (Barrett, 2012, 68). Perhaps this thesis is where the *intra-linguistic* negotiates the gap between what language can describe and reality itself.

Extending writing is the same action as extending painting - necessitating flexibility on account of its own material and physical affinities and limitations, indicating a dynamic translation of

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<sup>81</sup> Brater, p.78. (On Beckett)

<sup>82</sup> Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* [Duke University Press, 2010] p. 114.

<sup>83</sup> The conjunctive term *material-discursive* is referred to by Karen Barad in ‘Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter’ in *Signs*, Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 28, (March 2003), p. 810.

<sup>84</sup> Estelle Barrett, ‘Materiality, Affect, and the Aesthetic Image’ in *Carnal Knowledge, Towards A New Materialism Through the Arts*, ed. by Estelle Barrett & Barbara Bolt (I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2013) p. 68. Barrett draws on writings from Kristeva to highlight material processes as *pre-linguistic* and *intra-linguistic* processes where ‘aesthetic processes occur in relation to what is known and an as yet unsymbolised other’.

painting whilst avoiding being transubstantiated in the dialectic structures of language. The *intra-linguistic* articulates a new form of critical interpretation with language as a partner with non-language. In other words, as artworks don't speak – the writing orates reciprocal relations from a position of “being inside” pictorial space. From this elusive space *within*, painting gains additional latitude with language to prize space open, expanding space, to reveal a dimly lit intricate passage-way for the viewer to negotiate its internal animation. Here, at the edges of visibility, we discover a space that becomes inhabited, with a spatial and material thickness, expanding the “infra-thin” gaps between paintings material flatness; its marks, layers and actions. In different ways, each component becomes dramatized with a particular form of language, *participating* painting from the point of view of a “speaking subject”. This locutionary form aligns painting with the theatrical, a scripted event for elaborating pictorial space as a material subject.

By *writing* painting in this way, it in effect foregrounds paintings hidden parts, what we cannot find - the things that are eluding us - that something within our limited field of vision, what Beckett refers to as the place ‘*where invisibility itself becomes a thing*.’<sup>85</sup> From here, this work orates the between spaces of painting, carefully verbalising an imaginative inter-space. Language traces these momentary fragments of verbal and material interactions, where painterly *things* think aloud, get known, examining their roles with a vivid self-scrutiny reflecting what is internally contained and their external relations. Things, such as they are, became scripted into distinct personalities and consequently acquire meaning from thinking *with* them, as an interactive engagement. What is then implicated or triggered through these inter-relationships is the emergence of images ... an entire scene, where the empty space, an edge, a stretched line, the pink blur with its transitory all over hazy surface, the punctured wall, collaborate, in action with words, to redefine the space of painting. To converge in the final act, as a written painting.

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<sup>85</sup> Brater, p. 9.

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## **Appendices**

The following three appendices include images, essays and press releases of three exhibitions staged between 2015 and 2017. These projects include, *Real Painting*, co-curated for the Castlefield Gallery, Manchester (2015); *Eccentric Geometric*, co-curated for Arthouse1, London (2017) and a joint exhibition with Mary Maclean at Raumx (2017).

## **Appendix A**



## **Real Painting**

GROUP EXHIBITION

CASTLEFIELD GALLERY

June 12th – August 2nd 2015

Curated by Jo McGonigal & Deb Covell

## Real Painting

Simon Callery · Adriano Costa · Deb Covell · Angela De La Cruz · Lydia Gifford · David Goerk · Alexis Harding · Jo McGonigal · DJ Simpson · Finbar Ward

Commissioned essay by Craig Staff: **Painting qua painting (as noun and verb)**

**Real Painting** traces back to the essential structures of what constitutes a painting to examine the 'traditional' fundamental grammar of pictorial language; composition, surface, flatness, form, weight, colour structure and support.

Slipping between painting and object, the visual and physical, the work considers the expressive capacity of materials and processes specific to painting as a site of investigation and a source of meaning in itself. Here, painting is being transformed from *subject matter* to *object matter* transcending its flat surface to fix the viewer's attention on 'seeing' as both a visual and physical encounter. Each artist shares an interest in paintings material components, making us see things as they are and that assume their own presence, rather than as symbols of something else.

The exhibition aims to illuminate the relation between the eye and the mind, presenting each work as a transensory experience, that refers to Husserl's famous slogan - "back to the things themselves."

Considered equally to the condition of each artwork, is the relations they set-up to each other, the temporal intervals and physical spaces between the work, within and beyond the gallery, to operate as both autonomous artworks but also as a 'spatialised' painting that acknowledges perception as an active and continuous experience.

Lydia GIFFORD



Title: Porous  
Medium: dyed cotton, wood, paint, nails  
Year: 2014  
Size: 128 x 22 x 11cm

Alexis HARDING  
Angela DE LA CRUZ



Title: Hood  
Medium: Oil and gloss paint  
Year: 2012  
Size: 52 x 40 cm

Title: Mini Nothing 9 [Pink]  
Medium: Oil on canvas  
Year: 2010  
Size: 25 x 40 35cm

Simon CALLERY



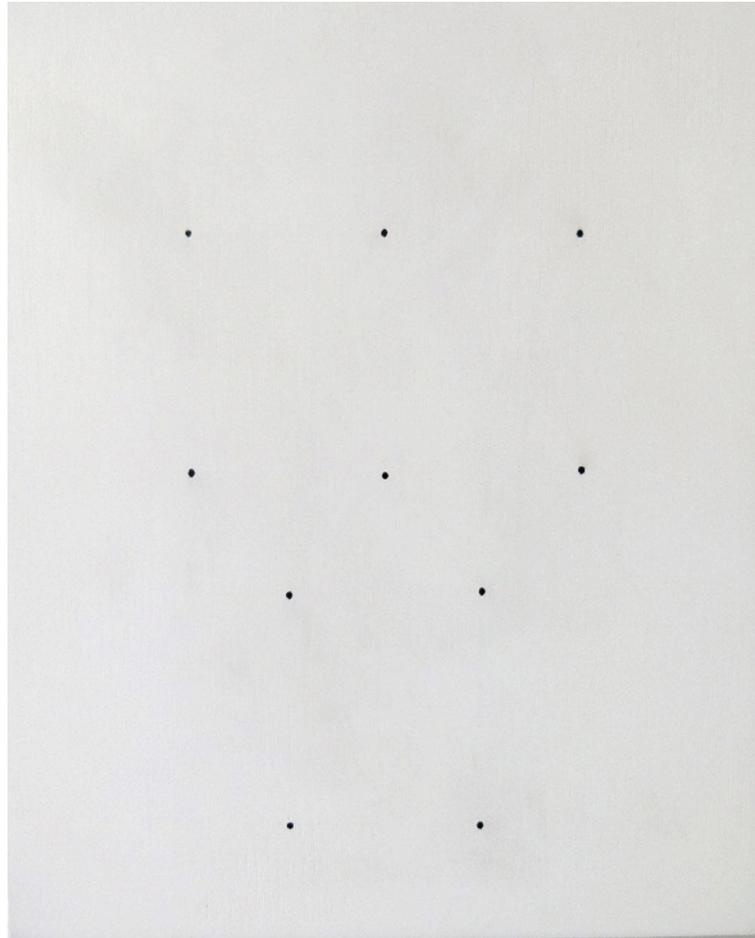
Title: Auricle  
Year: 2012  
Medium: Oil, distemper, canvas, cord and steel  
Size: 92 x 79 cm

Angela DE LA CRUZ



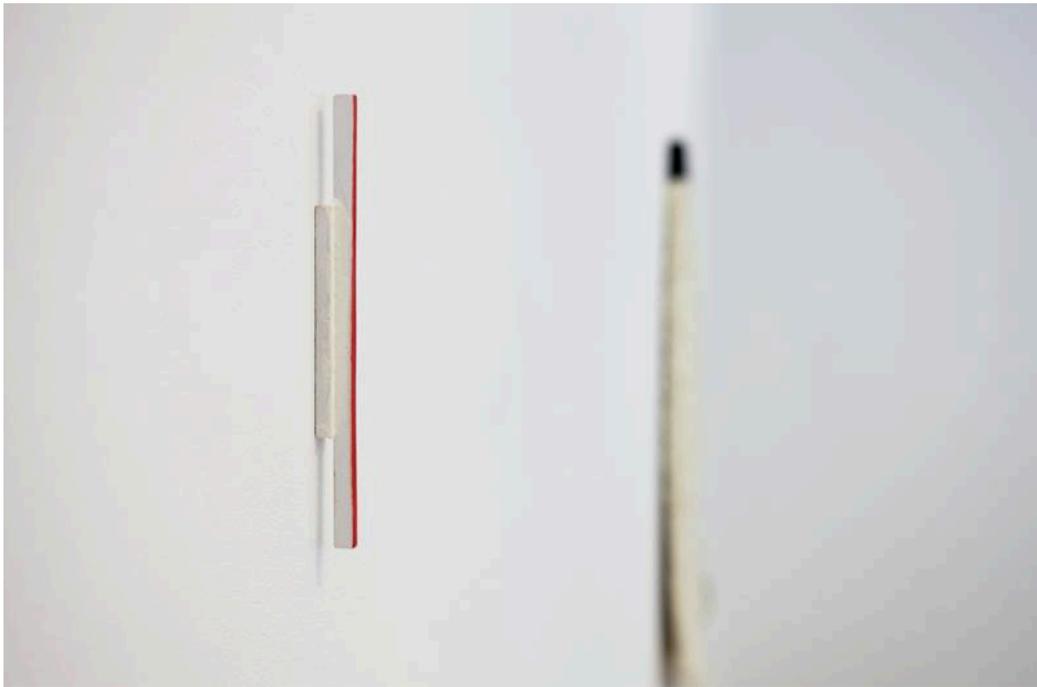
Title: Compressed 1 (White)  
Medium: Oil and acrylic on aluminum  
Year: 2010  
Size: 123 x 70 x 60 cm

David GOERK



Title: Untitled 12.28.12  
Medium: Encaustic and gesso on wood  
Year: 2012  
Size: 25.4 x 20.3 cm

David GOERK



Title: Wand (Red)  
Year: 2003  
Medium: Encaustic and gesso on wood  
Size: 27.9 x 2.5 x 2.5cm

Finbar WARD



Title: 11/20 Untitled  
Medium: Oil, linen and wood  
Year: 2014  
Size: 60 x 39 x 4cm

Adriano COSTA



Title: Piece  
Medium: Carpet  
Year: 2014  
Size: 126 x 88 x 4cm

Simon CALLERY  
Adriano COSTA



Title: Wiltshire Modulor II  
Medium: Distemper, canvas, sash cord, wood, and steel brackets  
Year: 2010  
Size: 240 x 240 x 60 cm

Deb COVELL



Title: From Nowt to Summat

Medium: Acrylic paint

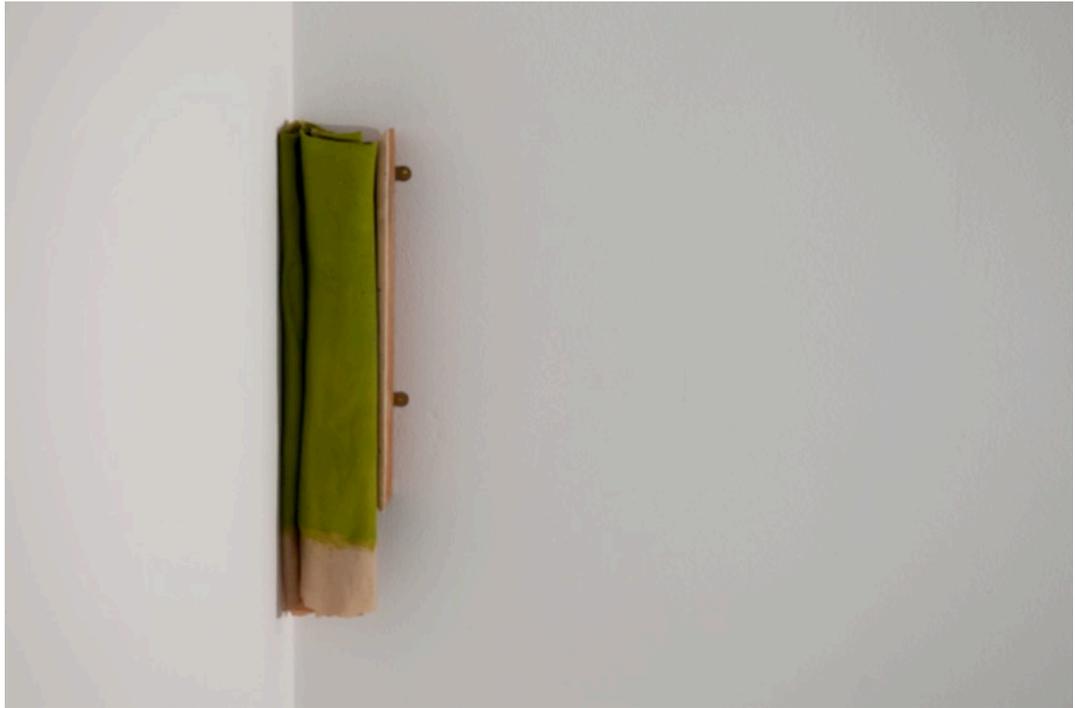
Year: 2014

Size: 62 x 180 cm

Jo MCGONIGAL



Title: *Yellow/Yellow*  
Medium: Cotton t-shirt and silk scarf  
Year: 2015  
Size: 115 x 60



Title: Close Looking  
Medium: Lycra, pigment and wood  
Year: 2015  
Size: 40 x 20cm

Angela De La CRUZ



Title: BATTERED 4 [Red]  
Medium: Oil on aluminum  
Year: 2012  
Size: 121 x 122 x 21.5cm

**Jo MCGONIGAL**

Jo is currently undertaking a Practice based PhD at the University of Leeds that examines Painting and Materiality [Amanda Burton Scholarship]. Jo studied Fine Art at the University of West of England and later completed her MFA at Manchester School of Art in 2008. Her practice is concerned with hybridised forms of painting that has resonance within the phenomenological ambitions of Minimalism. Her practice considers how the compositional and material components of painting affect the experiential basis of the viewer, not what the painting means but what it *does*. Forthcoming exhibitions this year include a solo show at Platform-A Gallery in May, Poppositions 2015 [Art Brussels], 'Nevertheless' A3 Project Space, Birmingham and Concept for a Temporary Cultural Intervention, Turnhout (Lokaal01) Belgium.

In addition to her own practice Jo has accumulated 20 years of creative and professional experience including 6 years as a Fine Art Lecturer at both Manchester and Leeds Metropolitan Universities, establishing Corridor8 [an international journal for art & writing] developing projects for FACT, Tate Liverpool and Liverpool Biennial.

**Deb COVELL**

Deb Covell (MA Fine Art UEL) is a practicing artist and freelance curator who lives in Teesside. She Co-Founded Platform-A Gallery (2011-2014) where she helped devise and run an ambitious exhibition programme in Middlesbrough. She has been involved with initiatives such as MAP, Cultural Conversations events, judge of competitions such as the WW SOLO award and helped develop and implement the Desired Futures Symposiums with Mima and Baltic. She has been an art lecturer, mentor and art educator for many years leading on events such as DRAW Symposium at MIMA with artist Gavin Turk.

Her practice is concerned with bringing a form into being by exploring the material and physical qualities of acrylic paint. Her mission is to reduce everything in painting to a Zero state, free from mimicry and illusion and omitting the support of a canvas in her pursuit to create without limitation.

Recent exhibitions include Sha Boogie Bop (2014) Anonymous Gallery, New York; From Nowt to Summat (2014) MIMA; Absolute Zero (2014) PS2, MIMA; Aesthetica Art Prize (2014), York St Mary's; Secret (2014) Royal College of Art, London; Zero (2013), Untitled Gallery, Manchester; North South Divine (2013) WW Gallery, London & Platform-A Middlesbrough; This That and the Other (2012) with Keith Coventry and Barry Flanagan, Platform-A Gallery, Middlesbrough; Afternoon Tea (2011) Venice Biennale, Venice. Her works are held in private and public collections including the MIMA Collection and Paintings in Hospitals.

**Commissioned by Castlefield Gallery to coincide with the exhibition, *Real Painting*.**

**Painting qua painting (as noun and verb)**

Tell him of things. He will stand astonished.<sup>1</sup>

By Dr. Craig Staff

Writing in 'Hapticity and Time: Notes on Fragile Architecture,' Juhani Pallasmaa speaks of the need, at least in relation to the experiential basis of the discipline the paper was originally directed towards, to reinstate "opacity and depth, sensory invitation and discovery, mystery and shadow."<sup>2</sup> As a way of highlighting this apparent sensory gap or caesura, Pallasmaa seeks recourse to, *inter alia*, the writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Philosopher and author of *Phenomenology of Perception*, 1945):

My perception is [therefore] not a sum of visual, tactile, and audible givens: I perceive in a total way with my whole being: I grasp a unique structure of the thing, a unique way of being, which speaks to all my senses at once.<sup>3</sup>

On one level, Pallasmaa's foregrounding of embodied experience, an emphasis he sought to inscribe as the means whereby the perceived "loss of materiality and temporal experience" could be countered, rehearses a particular set of debates that marked the project of late modernism and more specifically, Minimalism.<sup>4</sup> Whilst the latter's adoption of Merleau-Ponty's ideas have been well rehearsed, the conditions of possibility for the continuation of this approach after Minimalism remains a compelling question.

In this respect, and at this particular moment, we can arguably take Richard Tuttle's art practice as being emblematic of the means by which, although it shared a preoccupation with what Merleau-Ponty described, with regard to the canvasses of Paul Cézanne, as the "lived perspective" of the artwork, it did not correspond to Minimalism's often highly rationalised approach to the artwork's organisation.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, in Stephen Mitchell, *The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke*, New York: Random House, 1982, unpaginated.

<sup>2</sup> Juhani Pallasmaa, 'Hapticity and Time Notes on A Fragile Architecture,' *The Architectural Review*, vol. 207, no.1239, May 2000, p. 78.

<sup>3</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'The Film and the New Psychology'. In Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston 1964, p.18 reproduced in Pallasmaa, 'Hapticity and Time Notes on a Fragile Architecture,' p. 78.

<sup>4</sup> Pallasmaa, 'Hapticity and Time: Notes on a Fragile Architecture,' p. 80.

<sup>5</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Cézanne's Doubt," in *Sense and Non-Sense*, Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus, (trans.), Evanston, Ill, 1964, p. 14.

Although the Octagonal series, a body of work that Tuttle had first conceived in cloth in 1967 and subsequently realised in paper and then wire became increasingly pared down, the series nevertheless remained reliant upon and, to a certain extent delimited by the reciprocity between the body of the work and the respective bodies of the artwork's audience.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, Marcia Tucker (Curator of Painting and Sculpture at the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1969-76 and founder of The New Museum, New York, 1977) sought to further extend this idea in the essay she wrote to accompany Tuttle's show at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1975 by triangulating into this exchange the body of the artist. Positioning Tuttle's practice at that time in a way such that it became analogous to dance, Tucker would make the following claim:

Tuttle readies himself as a dancer would for the activity of making the work present to himself and to us. That so much of Tuttle's work is a result of body activity is partly caused by the fact that physical activity is the most direct and common means we have of translating interior states into external expression; in a very direct way, frowning, smiling, closed or open body positions, etc., are our primary communicative means, because they are experientially rather than analytically comprehensible. Our own experience of our bodies is "pre-scientific," primitive and immediate.<sup>7</sup>

Notwithstanding the possibility for the artwork to remain imbricated with the artist's own body, what the Whitney exhibition more broadly educed was that the "critical reception of the art was a fundamental aspect of the landscape of artistic production."<sup>8</sup>

On one level, the conditions of the visible, such as they pertain to both Tuttle's Octagonal series and to the works included in *Real Painting* (Castlefield Gallery, Manchester, UK 2015), are organised around an understanding that painting, or at least some account thereof, functions as the implicit horizon.

Whilst Tuttle's work emerged at a point wherein painting, albeit in a contested sense, could still be considered in relation to the idea of it as being a fully bounded, discrete idiom, today no such assurances prevail. Instead, Andrew Blauvelt's (Graphic Designer and Curator) statement, which worked to frame *Painting at the Edge of the World*, an exhibition that was staged at the Walker Art Center (Minneapolis, USA) in 2001, remains more broadly indicative

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<sup>6</sup> As Madeleine Grynstein notes: "[Tuttle's Paper Octagonals] appeared toward the end of a five-year period during which Tuttle's work underwent a successive reduction in its object quality, most clearly demonstrated by his work with the octagonal shape, made first in cloth, then in paper, and finally in wire. Tuttle made a total of twelve Paper Octagonals, their shapes based on a square set on its side and cut off at its corners: while the first exam Madeleine Grynstein, "A Universe of Small Truths," *The Art of Richard Tuttle*, Madeleine Grynstein (ed.), New York: Art Publishers, p. 33. The artist's contribution to the Biennale in 1976 was a diminutively scaled piece of wood "No larger than two joints of a finger, stuck on the wall and identified by a label that occupies more space than the object itself." Hilton Kramer, "our Venice Offering – More a Syllabus than a Show," *New York Times*, 2 May 1976, reproduced in Grynstein, p. 45.

<sup>7</sup> Marcia Tucker, *Richard Tuttle*, New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1975, pp. 15-16.

<sup>8</sup> Adam D. Weinberg, "1975 Exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art," reproduced in Grynstein, p. 149.

of a concern that painting tendentiously continues to negotiate with:

To expand notions of painting beyond these delimited essences would be to acknowledge the aggregative and complex conditions that constitute painting's heterogeneity. In other words, it would not be simply enough to ask what makes a painting a painting, but rather to understand the ways in which painting differs from itself.<sup>9</sup>

However, and conversely, it is because Tuttle's practice sought to foreground the artwork's innate (rather than essential) characteristics that his statement of 1972 naturally extends to encompass the works that fall within *Real Painting's* purview.

It is however an estimable fact that an artwork exists in its own reality and in *that* exists a certain cause and effect pattern which has baffled the ancients as well as myself. To make something which looks like itself is, therefore, the problem, the solution. To make something which is its own unraveling, its own justification, is something like the dream.<sup>10</sup>

Herein, one could say, resides a tension that marks the project (rather than the idiom) of painting today. On the one hand, to not in some way acknowledge, even tacitly, the conditions of which Blauvelt speaks would be churlish, if not circumspect; conversely, to acknowledge such conditions is always to position one's enquiry in relation to the possibility of attempting to make painting *qua* painting, be it purportedly real or otherwise. The artists included within *Real Painting*, whilst certainly cognisant of the former, arguably make work that is oriented towards the latter.

What this means in real terms is that the works orient themselves to what one might characteristically describe as constituting the grammar of the pictorial, namely support, surface, facture, form, colour and ostensible flatness. Of course, these are not necessarily discrete elements that work independently of each other, but at times, and in certain instances, betray a co-dependency, what one might describe as a structural or indeed spatial co-mingling. So for example, in the case of Deb Covell's *Nowt to Summat* (2014), surface is so closely bound up with support that the two become ontologically all but indistinguishable. Equally, in the case of Jo McGonigal's *Yellow Yellow* (2015), whilst derived from the realm of the demotic, the ostensible form of the thing is the colour yellow.

Elsewhere in the exhibition works have been selected on the basis of the demands, both physical and temporal, that are placed on the viewer. This is partly due to the fact that

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<sup>9</sup> Andrew Blauvelt, 'No Visible Means of Support,' in *Painting at the Edge of the World*, Douglas Fogle (ed.), Minneapolis, Minnesota: Walker Art Center, 2001), p. 125.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Tuttle, "Work Is Justification for the Excuse," in *Documenta 5* (Kassel: Documenta, 1972), reproduced in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings*, Berkeley & Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1996, p. 609.

the viewer is not required to become preoccupied with a work of art, and specifically painting, that is image-based. Indeed, one notable characteristic that is discernable with most if not all of the works in *Real Painting* is that they have relinquished dependency upon what one might, in the received sense at least, deem to be an 'image.'

For example, *Compressed 1 (White)*, (2010) by Angela de la Cruz, *11/20 Untitled*, (2014) by Finbar Ward and *Wiltshire Modulor II*, (2010) by Simon Callery can't be read through the image quite simply because in each case any image, at least in the received sense, is entirely absent. However, rather than construing the work as somehow being in deficit because of this basic fact, the particularity of their physical presence, or, in the case of *Wiltshire Modulor II*, its heft, is the necessary point from which we work outwards from. As Callery has noted: "I make physical paintings – because I am interested in the viewer as a physical being – a fully sentient, inquisitive, perceptive, decision-making, information-processing, emotional, idiosyncratic thinking being. I want the painting to involve and engage the full attention of that person."<sup>11</sup>

Whilst one could arguably interpret the agency of this "physical being" as entailing, *inter alia*, "sensory invitation and discovery," the experiential basis of the artwork that Callery here is seeking to articulate and address perhaps more directly corresponds to and is consonant with another key reference in Pallasmaa's text, namely what Goethe (Johann Wolfgang von) termed "*Zarte Empirie*" (Delicate Empiricism), which, according to David Seamon, entailed "the effort to understand a thing's meaning through prolonged empathetic looking and seeing grounded in direct experience."<sup>12</sup>

More broadly, and as *Real Painting* educes, by acknowledging and, by extension, being prepared to understand the visible, if not the operative, conditions of painting, be they aggregative and complex or otherwise, then, and perhaps only then, can the project (and not the idiom) of painting make a reciprocal and reciprocated *something* which directly stems from its own unraveling, its own justification. Painting *qua* painting.

**Craig Staff is Reader in Fine Art at The University of Northampton and author of *After Modernist Painting: The History of a Contemporary Practice* published by I.B.Tauris, 2013.**

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<sup>11</sup> Simon Callery, *Interview in Abstract Critical* 22/8/12. Questions for Angela de la Cruz and Simon Callery: Enantiadromia Part I. Fold Gallery, London.

<sup>12</sup> David Seamon, 'Goethe, Nature and Phenomenology: An Introduction', in David Seamon and Arthur Zajone, *Goethe's Way of Science*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1988, p. 2, reproduced in Pallasmaa, 'Hapticity and Time Notes on a Fragile Architecture,' p. 81.

## **Real Painting Press Reviews:**

<http://www.castlefieldgallery.co.uk/event/real-painting/>

[http://www.castlefieldgallery.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Painting-qua-painting\\_Essay-by-Craig-Staff.pdf](http://www.castlefieldgallery.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Painting-qua-painting_Essay-by-Craig-Staff.pdf)

David Sweet: On Image, Object, And The Tradition Of Paintedness

<https://abcrit.org/2016/06/10/35-david-sweet-writes-on-image-object-and-the-tradition-of-paintedness/#more-638>

[Keeping pace with painting: Sara Jaspán reviews Real Painting for CreativeTourist.com](#)

[Robert Clark previews Real Painting for the Guardian](#)

[Paint for Paint's Sake: A Dual Review of Real Painting at Castlefield Gallery by Rick Copsey & Beccy Kennedy](#)

[NOW SHOWING #100: The week's top exhibitions, as selected by a-n CreativeTourist.com round-up Real Painting in pictures](#)

[Sara Jaspán interviews the curators of Real Painting, Jo McGonigal & Deb Covell for Corridor8](#)

[Claire Walker reviews Real Painting for Corridor8](#)

[Tom Emery reviews Real Painting for This is tomorrow](#)

[Dan Crosby reviews Real Painting](#)

<http://corridor8.co.uk/article/interview-jo-mcgonigal-deb-covell-real-painting-castlefield-gallery-manchester/>

<http://www.thedoublenegative.co.uk/2015/06/paint-activated-castlefield-galleries-real-painting-reviewed/>

**Appendix B**

**Eccentric Geometric**

**ARTHOUSE1**



**ECENTRIC GEOMETRIC**

brings together works by **Rana Begum**  
**Colin Booth**  
**Deb Covell**  
**Jo McGonigal**  
**Patrick Mifsud**  
**Shawn Stipling**  
**Finbar Ward**  
**Alison Wilding**

Each work addresses geometry, symmetry, balance and structure but disobeys with a sustained anarchic tension that kicks against the trappings of formalism.

**Pre-Preview 4 May 5.30 - 6.30pm**  
**Exhibition runs to 27 May 2017**

**ARTHOUSE1.**  
**45 Grange Road London SE1 3BH**  
For further information & opening hours  
please visit [www.arthouse1.co.uk](http://www.arthouse1.co.uk) or call  
Rebecca Fairman M: 077131 89249

Arthouse1 presents 'Eccentric Geometric', a tightly curated group show, that brings together some of the UK's finest emerging, mid-career and established artists, all with collective concerns that so interestingly justify the show title. Conventional 'geometric' issues such as pattern, shape, repetition, line and spatial relationships are 'eccentrically' understood. Whilst acknowledging overlaps with Post-Minimalism, the curators expose explorations of geometry that reveal the complexities and quirks of our lived experience. These artists deploy the principles of geometric order but don't create something separate from our world. They don't offer just visual sensation... there is an empathy with the materiality and physicality of a lived life. This bold, thoughtful show is curated by Deb Covell and Jo McGonigal.

Alison WILDING  
Shaun STIPLING  
Colin BOOTH  
Patrick MIFSUD



Rana BEGUM  
Patrick MIFSUD



Rana Begum  
White/Green/Yellow (No.446 SFold) 2013  
Paint on stainless steel

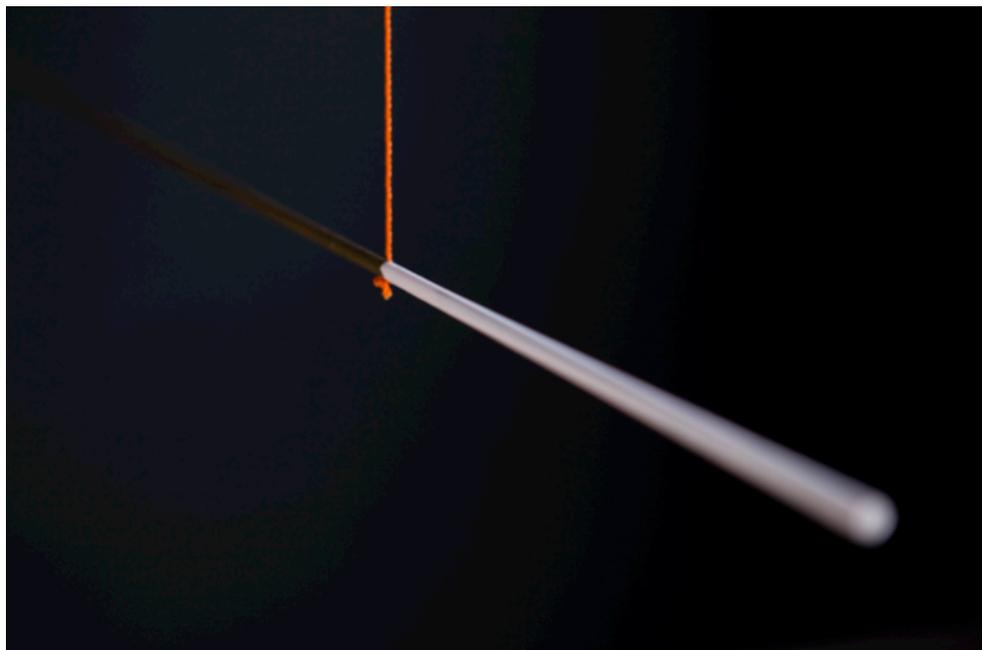
Patrick Mifsud  
Derived Space, 2017  
Site-specific sculpture  
Wood, paint

Jo MCGONIGAL



Side, 2017  
Wood, paint, lycra

Jo MCGONIGAL  
Finbar WARD



Finbar Ward  
Untitled (Head over Heals series) 2017  
Powder coated MDF, clay, oil, acrylic, wood and plaster

Jo McGonigal  
Spatial Composition in 2 parts, 2017  
Brass, paint, yarn

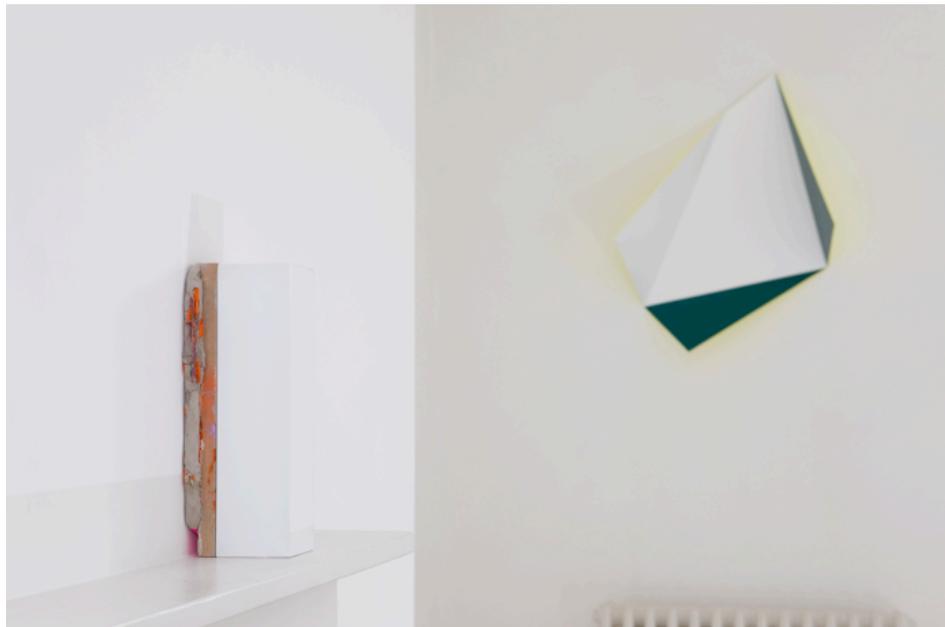
Shaun STIPLING  
Colin BOOTH



Shawn Stipling  
197 (black) 2017  
Acrylic and gesso on plywood

Colin Booth  
Measurement and Intuition, 2017  
(steel ruler) Found object

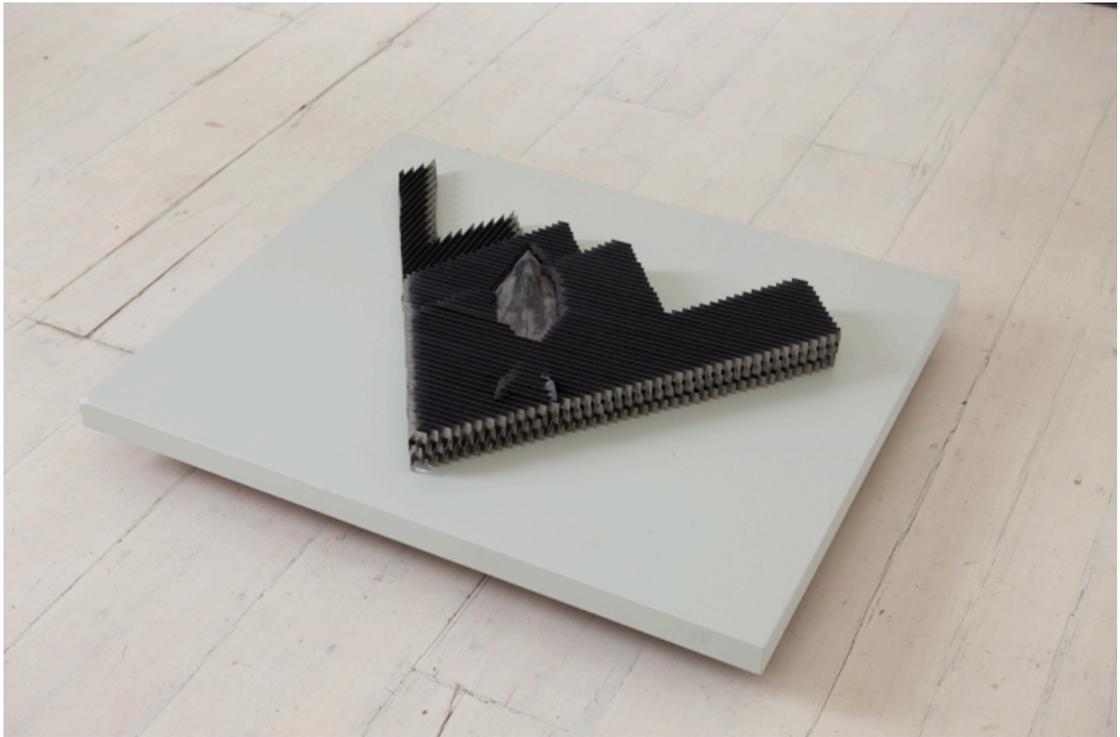
Rana BEGUM  
Finbar WARD



Rana Begum  
No.600. SFold, 2015  
Stainless steel (green/yellow)

Finbar Ward  
Untitled (Head over Heals series) 2017  
Powder coated MDF, clay, oil, acrylic, wood and plastics

Alison WILDING



Rust, 2008  
Mild steel, plastic scale – (model)

Deb COVELL  
Alison WILDING



Deb Covell  
Fold 1, 2013  
Acrylic paint

Alison Wilding  
Elevated #2  
Plaster, wood

Deb COVELL  
Rana BEGUM



Deb Covell  
Fold 1, 2013  
Acrylic paint

Rana Begum. Red/Black/Yellow  
No.446, SFold, 2013  
Paint on mild steel

Shaun STIPLING



181 (Blue) 2016  
Acrylic and gesso on plywood

## *Eccentric Geometric and theories of the world in our heads.*

### **By Della Gooden**

Once upon a time, paint was just another tool of the trade, something artists skillfully applied to a flat surface, to create illusion, to make a painting. The great achievements of representation, with paint playing its magical role, ensured that Painting travelled a long and productive journey.

So when paint unexpectedly broke free of the flat, square structures upon which it had been posited for centuries, its very nature came under the spotlight. Paint's new identity, and the way it related to the surface, led to new journeys; such as Carl Andre's, when he decided Frank Stella's paintings were actually constructions, just like his own sculptural work. He saw Stella's stripes as a series of single units or objects (the brushstrokes) arranged together on the primary unit or object (the canvas). This was useful to Andre, but at the time, Stella wanted to eliminate relationality in painting, he was trying to achieve wholeness. So I wonder how welcome these observations were for *his* particular journey?

Similarly, when Sculpture borrowed an object from the *real* world and decided it could still be called 'Sculpture' or more particularly, a 'Ready-Made' and when it exploded and scattered out from its central, single form, into multiple parts and yet could still be perceived together, as a whole.... the implications were profound.

The Modern Art story is littered with the pioneering particularities and peculiarities of the Name-it-claim-it game; a succession of movements, -isms, manifestos, counter-manifestos and the bold staking out of territory. In reality, these supposed frontiers of practice were often complex pools of enquiry where the edges of understanding can be quite fragile.

In 1966, whilst artists like Andre, Flavin and Judd were getting a turn with 'Minimalism', Lucy Lippard curated '*Eccentric Abstraction*' at the Fischbach Gallery, New York. On declaring the title a semantic convenience, she must have known the word '*Eccentric*' (not '*Abstraction*') would intrigue. What was it about this work that she considered uncommon, or perhaps aberrant, to the Abstraction of the day? In fact, many overlaps with Minimalism were acknowledged; Lippard herself wrote that there was a refusal '*to sacrifice the solid formal basis demanded of the best in current non-objective art*'. However, she also took the trouble to declare that artists like Eva Hesse and Bruce Naumann '*refuse to eschew imagination and the extension of sensuous experience*'. The assumption being, that she thought the Minimalists did.

She was clear that something else was happening, and that exhibition is now seen as a vanguard for the Post- Minimalists.

The curators of *Eccentric Geometric* at *Arthouse1* (Deb Covell and Jo McGonigal) choose a title laden with reference to '-isms' and theories, specifically those related to Minimalism, and Post- Minimalism. At first, it was the word *Geometric* I focused on. It pre-supposes a collective concern for pattern, shape, angle, repetition, line, surface, dimension, spatial relationships etc. However *Geometric*, is preceded by *Eccentric* - and that really is quite a crucial qualifier, because *Eccentric Geometric* exposes some of those complex pools of enquiry mentioned earlier, where the edges of understanding are fragile.

In *Eccentric Geometric*, **Patrick Mifsud's 'Fold Series' (2014)** are sturdy metal objects that behave like lines in space. One lays across the plane of the wall, before folding forward, towards me. On completing its circuit back to the wall, it seems to buoy-up the air within its embrace. If not tangible or visible to the eye, this air is palpable to my senses. In **Colin Booth's 'Gift' (2010)** lines are created by individual white blocks, which sit in a frame, butting up against each other. Functioning as both a unifying and dividing force, the lines consist of nothing. They possess physicality in spite of their lack of mass and despite their need for a lack of light to survive. It appears that nothing, isn't really nothing; that is until I remove the blocks. When mass is gone, air and shade can't do the job; the lines cease to exist and the whole piece has new meaning.

Questions about line also occur when looking at *'Fold 1' (2013)* by **Deb Covell**. When two distinct planes meet, are we looking at two edges? Or can we say there is a line? I **perceive** a line, but I'm not sure it's fact, if it really exists. This is not the only curious provision here. Did this piece start out with just one, front-facing surface? Like a painting? And then, after being one thing, was it posed into a second existence? For me it vibrates between two existences because I am so conscious of the 'act' of folding whilst I am looking at it; like folding a blanket. And because I can mentally unfold it as I view it, I can imagine what it looked like before.

This kind of mental interference of the visual experience (which re-runs actions, senses presence in empty space, or re-feels fleetingly, a physical sensation) is something I'm continually encountering here. *'No. 600 SFold' (2015)* by **Rana Begum** is inanimate, of course it is. So why do I think it has the potential to move, to flap... even fly away? Why do I need to shift position? Investigate the sides? Why visually measure-up its weightiness?

Spatial relationships are a part of everyday life. How we move our bodies, how we pick something up, judge distance between objects and place and organise them

around us. From laying the table, to standing at the bus stop, all these things add up to a bank of consciousness and perception of the physical world as we, and only we, as individuals, experience it. We are continually expanding what could be described as a 'theory of the world in our heads'.

So when I see *'Aftermath 2'* (2011) by **Alison Wilding** or *'Plan'* (2016) by **Jo McGonigal**, I'm not trying to receive **their** theories - I'm trying to actualise **mine**, create **my** world. The two black balloons that Wilding has upturned and offset against a rectangular surface matter to me. The delicate, battered and broken line that McGonigal traces over the surface of the wall, matters to me. It's hard to say why or how these things matter, but I think it's because they fit my theory of the world in my head.

In **Shawn Stipling's** new paintings the white lines demonstrate wilful non-compliance. They deliberately slide out of alignment (and I want to straighten them up) They overshoot uncomfortably close to the edges of the canvas (and I want to shrink them down to fit properly) Damn it these lines misbehave with attitude. Or do they? Maybe something else is going on, I have to ask: 'Is my theory of the world in my head getting an update?'

**Finbar Ward's** *'Head Over Heels'* (2016) rests on the floor. When sculpture rid itself of the plinth all those years ago and decided it could sit on the floor, relate to the floor, I doubt it thought this would happen. Ward has upturned the plinth and squashed the art beneath it. The worm has turned. The passive plinth is victorious. This is wonderfully quirky but more than anything it shows that conventional norms and supposed certainties really should be overlooked.

After all, certainty is boring. Make your world.

**Appendix C**  
**RAUMX PROJECTS**

**Jo McGonigal & Mary Maclean**

**RAUMX PROJECTS, London**

October 2017



Jo McGonigal Spatial Painting #5 (Trembles and Stutters) 2017

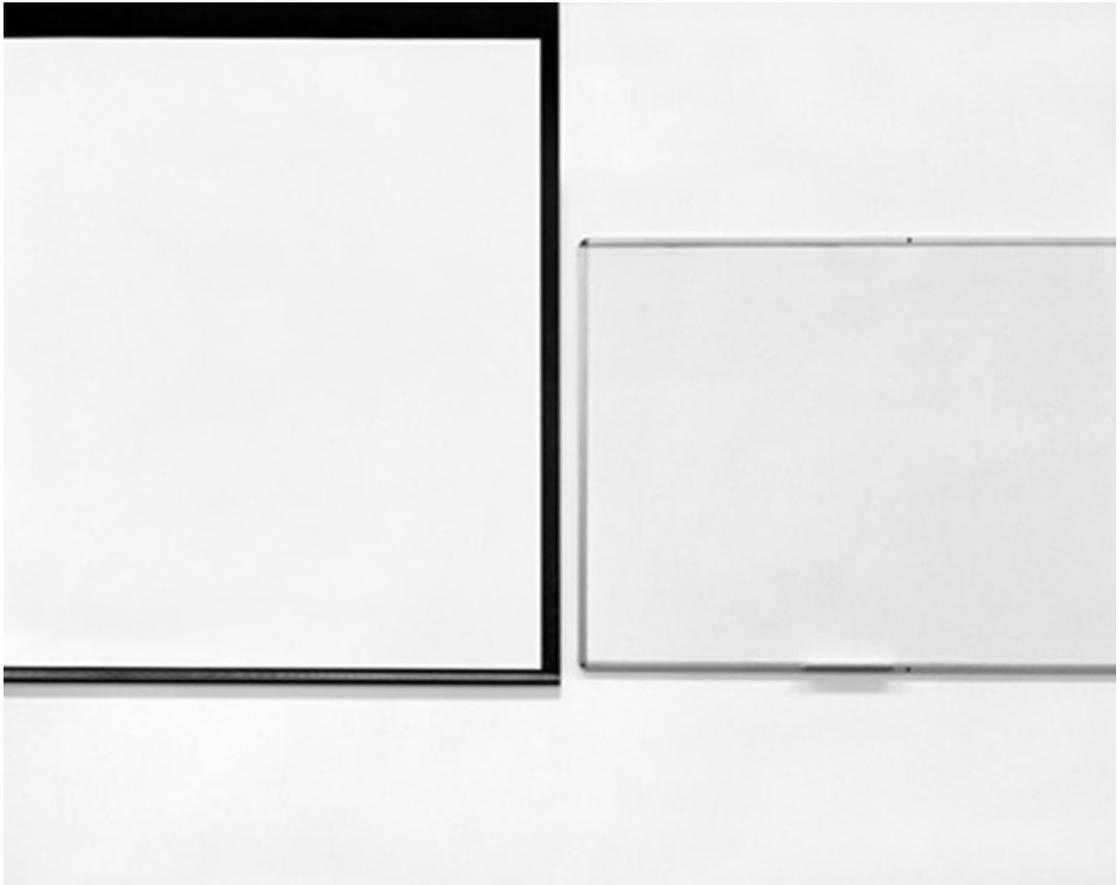
Dimensions Variable

Painted brass rods, coloured cord, wall

Mary Maclean

Campus #8, 2017

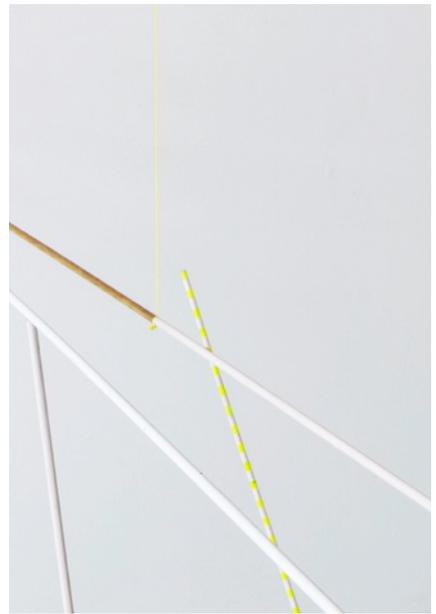
Photograph on aluminium



Mary Maclean  
Campus #7 (2017)  
Photograph on aluminium



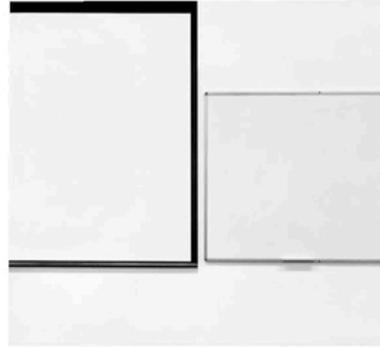
Mary Maclean  
Outcomes May Vary #3  
Photo etching



Jo McGonigal  
Spatial Painting #5 (Trembles and Stutters)  
Detail



Jo McGonigal



Mary Maclean

## RAUMX

Mary Maclean  
Jo McGonigal

Preview Thursday 7 September 2017  
from 6 pm

8 September - 17 September  
the exhibition is open Saturdays  
2 pm - 6 pm  
+ Sunday the 17th from 2 - 6 pm  
and by appointment

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