‘The Un-limiting Conditions’: An Investigation into the Roles of Intuitive and Rational Thought in the Construction of Abstract Painting.

An exegesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; and, any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.

Robin A. Kingston

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Introduction

This project has addressed the use of intuitive and rational thought in the construction of contemporary abstract painting and more particularly my painting practice. I am an abstract painter. My artwork is not an abstraction derived from realism or the figurative. It arises from another vocabulary of making an artwork, and from an inner impulse I name intuition rising from a subjective response. I also use a formal visual vocabulary. Its use corresponds with rational thought in my work and incorporates elements including line, colour, scale, form, rhythm, interval, touch, gesture and surface that are components of content expressing order, complexity and sensibility. The construction of the artwork is a contemplative[1] process, which aims to enable viewers to become aware of their own looking through a vocabulary associated with the making of the work. This vocabulary is diverse and includes issues such as the choice of materials and their inherent qualities, the support and structure of visual forms and strategies of application including chance, risk, play and forgetting.

After completing art school in Australia, my art education intensified when I travelled overseas for the first time at nineteen. It was a revelation. There was the realisation that it was essential to spend a considerable period of time in a place that afforded me contact with significant contemporary and historical artworks. New York was and still is that destination;[2] I have lived in New York for ten years and make annual trips. Australian art, both historical and contemporary, is not the major source informing my painting. My experience has given me a unique understanding of the development of contemporary abstraction through developments in New York, which were influenced by the migration of artists such as Mondrian and De Kooning from Europe. The city also has been an important hub for contemporary art and the opportunity to see major collections and to learn directly from them has, for me, been vital. My practice has been informed from first hand experience of art works - standing in front of them, walking through the site of display, experiencing the scale, presence and nuances of the work. The chance to see work for myself, rather than it

[1] I define contemplation as a mental state where one looks and thinks deeply about something or considers with ongoing attention.
[2] Since 2002 I have coordinated and led the RMIT, New York Study Tour, which provides the opportunity for an annual three-week visit to refresh the connection and make further discoveries.

being filtered through other secondary sources has been of prime importance, allowing the experience of the work to enter into my consciousness and memory, quickly and at other times slowly. The actual experience of the artwork becomes immersive for the viewer and this experiential nature of painting has come to constitute important content in my painting.

Such direct experience is difficult to convey through photography as I was reminded when viewing the Brice Marden retrospective.[3] Photographs in the catalogue of his early body of painting, present the work as monochromatic, with smooth surfaces. The work does not translate well in documentation and, indeed, is completely misrepresented. On viewing the actual paintings they are haptic[4] and sensuous, displaying evidence of the decisions, physical and mental, used in constructing them. They are heavily worked, paint is applied and manoeuvred and scraped with a spatula. He uses encaustic, a technique where paint is mixed with warm wax and applied to the surface in a liquid state with brushes and spatulas. Each section of the painting is multi-layered, every layer a different hue, so the overall colour is hard to name and the surfaces have a spatial and expansive quality. There is the sense of a 'hovering' surface and a permeable quality that one is drawn into. None of these qualities can be adequately translated through photography.

My investigation is primarily about issues of painting and more particularly contemporary abstract painting. This research project is a practice-led, trial and error method, based on action and 'doing'. There are many streams of abstraction but my practice is not derived from imagery in the external world, but rather the nature of the work and content arises through the construction of the painting. It is a mutable, continuous unfolding – a relationship between hand, eye, mind and the inherent properties of the materials I choose to employ. My painting is a continuation of Western painting and, more specifically, geometric and gestural abstraction, where structures that are common to those canons such as the grid, or striped sequences, are overlayed with personal manipulations of the formal and ephemeral elements of painting. Examples include the choice of colour combinations, the use of a regulated

[3] "Plane Image: A Brice Marden Retrospective." Museum of Modern Art in New York. Viewed December 2006.
[4] Haptic – based on a sense of touch.

grid whose structure breaks down to form another and the use of touch and interval that is made unique through my construction.

This exegesis will trace the origins of my art practice, and how my development is reflected in my use of intuitive and rational thought currently. I will investigate my use of the properties of materials and how I use process to generate imagery. The explanation will not follow the timeline of the visual project, as my research did not develop in a straightforward manner where one development led to the next, and was not used again. My practice folds back on itself as I use and reuse strategies, imagery and structures. Intuition and rational thought were investigated temporally and spatially through painting directly on the wall. This research proved to be important to the project as incorporating and responding to the site of display allowed for a gradual fragmentation of the structure and imagery in the works on paper and stretchers. The state of awareness when painting directly onto a site, such as a wall, calls for attentiveness and a responsiveness that is heightened and magnified as one is *in* the painting, not outside of it. This issue will be elaborated in Chapter Four: Painting the Space.

Coincidence and a mental state of openness and awareness are akin to intuition within my methodology. There is a pathway. It is unmapped and not predetermined. Much happens through chance and using a sense of "noticing" that facilitates ideas and their development towards a resolved state. Intuition also involves trial and error, judgement and a conscious recognition of what it occurring. I trust my intuition and believe it to be a valuable source of imagery/thought originating from a place of 'not knowing' or play. I define intuition as a state of awareness to the responses that are possible in the process of painting a work of art. This state of awareness is one of being in the moment.

The forms I use become symbols in un-nameable worlds where paint is used to construct structures that may be stable and at other times float and shift. These forms are not symbolic of anything directly from the world of appearances but are symbolic of emotions, states of mind, places of rumination and images of thought itself and its sequences.

My work seeks to create a place in which to contemplate, one of actual experience. This place is an unstable space, where elements visually shift and move, like experience itself, which for me personally is made up of momentary stabilisations that build to a whole. This is a constructed space, which provides sensory, transitory and expansive content.

For me, the making of artwork is akin to a journey of discovery. It is not a linear trajectory, rather it can be a confluence of rather haphazard events, sometimes logical and sequential, and at other times relationships are accidental, tangential and tenuous. It is a process that employs complexity and multiplicity. Rather than critiquing or deconstructing the canon of painting I seek to contribute to its existing and evolving vocabulary by using the strategies and structures familiar within twentieth century abstraction and overlaying them with a personal vocabulary.

My understanding of my practice occurs at a different time from the action of making the paintings, as when they are new, I often cannot see or understand what is there. This is revealed to me over time and after much contemplation. It is not an exact science, far from it. The process of understanding can be at times grasping at fleeting, unstable thoughts and trusting them, using my intuition. The verbal language based explanation is a structure that sits parallel to my visual practice and this exegesis emerges from what I equate to rational thought. The explanation is complex as it involves an analysis of the structures, strategies and processes that occur during the paintings' manufacture. The painting and its context are the material presence that directs thoughts and sensations to content relating to the experiential, psychological and emotional conditions of humanness. During the paintings' manufacture, verbal language plays no part, and the meaning of the work arises out of the processes themselves, through a relationship between the materials and myself. This is a directly experiential relationship. Therefore I suggest that the verbal language is inadequate if one is seeking equivalents to the experiential nature of the visual artwork. The verbal explanation is once removed, like a Chinese whisper. This exegesis however will contextualise my practice in relation to other artists who use a practice-led process as means to reveal content. I will be using "case study" quotations by them to clarify similar strands and issues in my own practice.

Throughout the exegesis, examples of my visual research will be used to explain the use of pictorial structures generated in my investigation of what I named at the commencement of this project 'binary relationships' including intuitive and rational thought, the body/mind relationship and the object/illusory nature of painting in the construction of contemporary abstract painting.

Life may be viewed as a series of serendipitous events. Situations, circumstances and ideas often coalesce without any conscious effort on my part. Serendipity may be defined as the ability to make meaningful discoveries accidentally. My initial contribution is an awareness and openness to noticing, a conduit or filter where disparate information is processed to make sense of it. It is not a straightforward operation, but rather one that is has an indirect structure. Tacita Dean in an insightful introduction to an exhibition she curated stated,

> *My route has not been linear and obedient to the rules of that creed but has sprouted new shoots from various points along the way and gone off in diverse and conflicting directions, leaving me many paths to follow and some I refused to go down. I have shown no fidelity to the true unconscious process: some of my decisions have been associative, while others feel they have been very formally arrived at…. Yet I am happy to see how coherent the fruits of such a process can be. Nothing is more frightening than not knowing where you are going, but then again nothing can be more satisfying than finding you've arrived somewhere without any clear idea of the route.*[5]

This description of Dean's curatorial process mirrors my painting process.

The First chapter of this exegesis will examine the nature of my practice and how imagery is generated within it. It will examine how process and materials are used. I will identify other artists whose work has informed my own and examine my relationship to drawing and painting and the kinds of marks and forms I use. During the project there has been a shift in my understanding and use of drawing and

[5] An Aside. Tacita Dean. Hayward Gallery Publishing, London. 2005. p. 4.

painting. I elaborate on why and how this shift developed and my relationship to this issue at the completion of the project.

The Second chapter will investigate my interpretation of intuition and rational thought and what part these structures of thought play in my artwork. I will explore some background into intuition and rational thought by examining the writings of some of the members of the Object-Relations movement and other writers who address issues relating to intuition. This chapter will also explore the work of artists who use intuition and rational thought in their practice.

Chapter Three explains the personal methods used in the construction of my painting. I will explore issues of repetition and serialisation in visual art as they pertain to my practice and my relationship to the use of the body through the performative, walking and play.

The section on play elaborates on an important issue in my practice as it incorporates and realises many strands and issues in my process of making art. It is tied to what I call 'not knowing' and creates the conditions for the state of attentiveness that is linked to intuitive and rational thought. Play also allows for a condition of openness where creative leaps are possible to advance the work to a state that could not be envisioned previously. I examine how play is different to experimentation in my practice, how I use it differently than the Surrealists as well as demonstrating how it enables other issues in my practice.

I acknowledge the legacy of Malevich, Kandinsky, Klee and Mondrian and other artists who sought another level of awareness in painting by incorporating pure sensation, through the materiality of painting. Pure sensation is a mingling of a person's inner experience, progressing from the material properties of painting to content that could be called visionary and not relating to the outward appearances of the world. These are not the only artists in the twentieth century whose work aims to depict another level of awareness, but are the primary artists acknowledged by the mainstream of art history in the twentieth century.

Most of the artists whose work has informed mine, work with structure, colour, repetition, Minimalist strategies and those arising through Abstract Expressionism. These movements are seminal influences on my practice and it is the combination of them that still guide me. The relationship between the intuitive and rational is interwoven and inseparable in my working process. There has been the realisation during this research project that the intuitive is linked to the subjective and that my use of rational thinking is concurrent with the use of formal elements of visual art. The use of the formal visual language allows me to make decisions, which appear to be straightforward and logical, and yet create unexpected outcomes.

As Sol LeWitt wrote in his "Sentences on Conceptual Art",

1. *Rational judgements repeat rational judgments.*
2. *Irrational judgements lead to new experience.*
3. *Formal art is essentially rational.*
4. *Irrational thoughts should be followed absolutely and logically.*[6]

If I replace the term "irrational" with the term "intuitive" here these sentences accurately express my process.

[6] Sol LeWitt. Sentences on Conceptual Art. Alicia Legg. ed. Sol LeWitt: The Museum of Modern Art. Museum of Modern Art. New York. 1997. p.168. First published in *0-9.* New York 1969. and *Art-Language.* May 1969. England.

Chapter One: The Nature of My Practice

This chapter has five sections that outline and elaborate on the characteristics of my practice including my relationship to painting and drawing and the kinds of marks, forms and structures I use to create an abstract visual language. It also explains the signification of process and the importance of materials as vehicles for content within my practice.

"Beginnings"

I grew up in the country on a farm, a place that was, and still is, contained and isolated within its boundaries from the rest of the world. This place has had a profound effect on my thinking. Although physically it is attached to and immersed in the world, when I cross the ramp to the property, it becomes for me a place of contemplation. It is a very beautiful site, as well as productive, with fertile river flats bordered by rounded hills and long views down a valley culminating in a low range of rocky hills. The rest of the world can be viewed at a distance and seems unimportant when I am on the farm, and isolation turns my thoughts to reflection and contemplation. When thoughts turn inward an awareness of the relationship of the self to the environment is heightened. There is an enhanced awareness of the physical body in relation to the natural characteristics of that particular place. There is a strong correlation between my state of mind on the property and the state in which I make art. Both situations have the shared experience of immersion and reflexivity. It can be likened to sitting on the top of a hill, looking, where one is both observing and part of the environment. It is at once active and contemplative, singular and part of an expansive, complex situation.

The genesis of my work originates in New York where I initially studied at the New York Studio School. The school has an illustrious history with a direct lineage to artists such as the Abstract Expressionists. Artists who knew Pollock, Giacometti, Mondrian, Guston and others of that period, taught me. Anecdotes became 'living

and real history' as one could sense the connection to artists of that calibre. The school had a program of a lively series of talks with a diverse range of leading writers, artists, critics and philosophers. Because New York draws to it a high level of discourse, it was easy to access public talks or panel discussions on pertinent issues. There were many to choose from each night of the week and it is the same today.[1] Nineteen eighty to nineteen ninety was an exciting period to live in New York with its vast museum collections and major exhibitions that allowed for an in depth study of major artists and movements. The contemporary art world was vast and varied. There was much to learn, and that is why I prolonged my stay.

The eighties was a boom time for art with money generating an expansion of the art market and an influx of artists to New York. It was a time of change, as younger artists such as Julian Schnabel, Jeff Koons, Eric Fischl gained critical attention. Artists brought commercial aspects of production to the fore-front of their practice. Previously, most artists did not attain prominence until they reached their late forties or fifties. There was a return to figurative painting in a movement called New Expressionism, largely influenced by a major retrospective of the influential American artist Philip Guston at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1980[2]. His paintings retain their legacy from Abstract Expressionism, employing gritty, painterly brushstrokes but depicting common, every day objects and an interest in philosophy and the human condition. Guston's painting still informs my practice, as it depicts an artist's relationship to his immediate surroundings and through the depiction of these, touches philosophical, psychological and painterly issues. It is a direct and thoughtful approach.

There was a group of abstract artists in the eighties whose work was of interest, such as Jake Berthot, Porfirio DiDonna, Brice Marden, Bill Jensen, Myron Stout and Harvey Quaytman. These artists seriously looked to the history of painting, which they incorporated in their own work with a view to extending its vocabulary.

[1] For example during my last visit in 2006 I attended a panel discussion on issues relating to Brice Marden's Retrospective by Garry Garrels, the curator; Richard Schiff and John Yau and at the Guggenheim Museum heard Laurie Anderson speak about her working methods.
[2] Viewed 1980.

Generally these artists share interests in a philosophical and poetic content, in painterly surfaces and an intellectual rigor and the work, which develops from studio practice and its processes. Art movements and artists who have informed my practice are numerous, but the major source has been abstraction, especially through my relationship to the twentieth century American abstraction, and to European abstraction in American collections. What follows is not a historical account, but an incomplete list of artists, whose work has been of importance, so as to situate my practice.

For me, the twentieth century American abstraction relevant to my painting starts with the work of artists whose work has its beginnings in the landscape, not in a realistic depiction of it, but as a motif to express emotional, symbolic content. These include Albert Pinkham Ryder (1847-1917) whose small, glowing, moody 'landscapes' are at once visionary and ethereal and filled with material matter of clotted and heavily glazed paint. His paintings are perceptual and derive from the external world, but create another internal reality for the viewer. The value of Ryder's work to my practice is the psychological content conveyed through the use of perception, the physicality of paint and the emotive, light filled atmosphere it creates.

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Albert Pinkham Ryder. *Moonlight Marine.*
1970s or 1980s. Oil and possibly wax on wood.
29 x 30 cm.

Milton Avery's (1885–1965) spare, scumbled seascapes, often viewed as if from a lofty height create awkward, filmy, abstract fields. Although he painted in oil paint on stretchers, the paintings have a thin, washy, gestural quality similar to watercolour. The ground of the support is evident in the final work and these unpainted spaces play

a large part in the content. His paintings are made of simple, painterly structures and systems that convey subtle and complex content. Like Pinkham Ryder, Avery's work is perceptually based. It is experiential in the construction and in the viewing.

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Milton Avery. *Onrushing Wave.* Detail. 1958.
Oil canvas. 137 x 183 cm.

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Charles Burchfield. *Winter Moonlight.*
1951. Watercolour on paper. 109 x 84 cm.

Charles Burchfield's (1893-1967) drawing-like paintings, full of expressive mark making, culminated in works where one can feel the atmospheric qualities of landscape such as the effect of the wind, sparkling little stars in the night sky and the impending darkness and gloom of dusk. The sketchy, stark, drawing-like quality of his paintings conveys psychological content and that of immersion in the landscape. Viewing Burchfield's works brings to mind walking in the country – that of being attentive to the moment, actively looking, and of one being a small part of something much larger.

The intimate, highly worked abstractions of Myron Stout[3], whose work speaks of a poetic resonance and the memory and personal encounter with the external world, draw inspiration from Mondrian for an understanding of abstraction. To this Stout added colour and syncopation. He used varied structures and colours and the paintings were worked on for long periods of time, with minor almost invisible adjustments to

[3] "Myron Stout." Retrospective. Whitney Museum of American Art. Viewed 1980.

placement and colour. Consequently, the works have painterly surfaces and there is an obsessive quality and a tension built into the work through the time invested and processes used in their creation.

[Copyright Material Omitted]

Myron Stout. Untitled. 1950. Oil on canvasboard. 46 x 36 cm.

[Copyright Material Omitted]

Myron Stout. Untitled. 1950. Oil on canvasboard. 46 x 36 cm.

In relation to my practice the colour, intensity and the painterly qualities inherent in Stout's work are of importance. Initially the work appears simple and uncomplicated. However, as the work draws the viewer in to examine the processes, surfaces, and adjustments, the repetition of painterly actions become integral to the content in the paintings.

Overview of my Practice

Like the artists outlined in the previous section, I classify myself as a painter who makes works on paper that are both working drawings and paintings. I also paint in oil paint on supports using stretchers made from linen. I make objects that take the form of paintings. By painting and making works on paper and stretchers using various materials such as watercolour, gouache and oil on linen I am continuing a long tradition within the canon of painting and more especially abstract painting. I acknowledge this history, study and borrow from it in technical and conceptual terms and I also use and reuse strategies and repertoire from my own practice. In this way I consider myself to be part of the continuum of painting and especially abstraction.

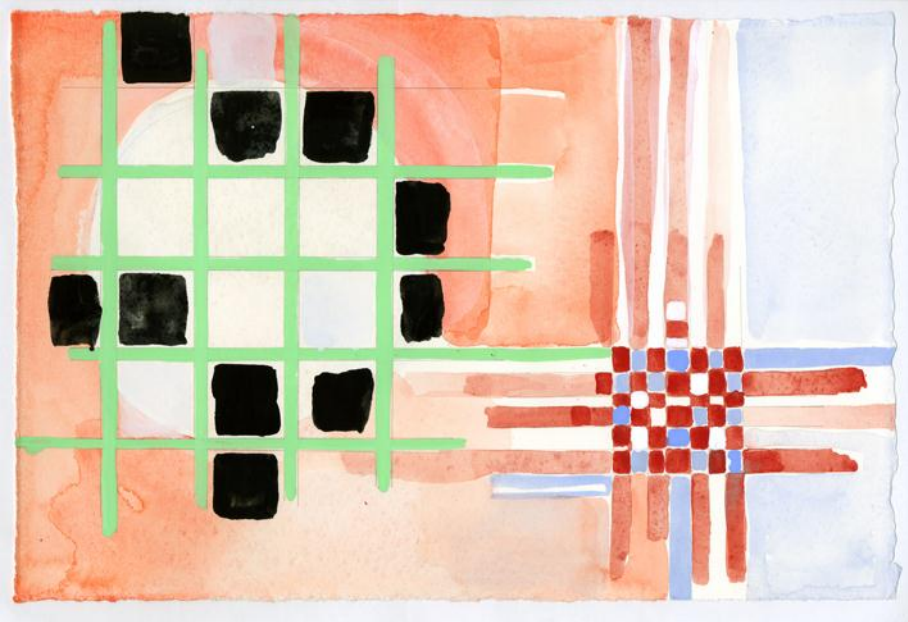
In this project, I have begun to explore the application of painting and movement in the site of the gallery and how a more traditional view of painting can be expanded to include a relationship between the language of abstract painting and real space. I began this exploration in response to a longstanding interest in the relationship of the body to the artwork. Traditionally, this is an issue that relates more to the canon of sculpture where objects, and how one moves in relationship to them, predominates. The incorporation of the object nature of painting and how the body relates to it has been of consideration in my practice from the early nineteen seventies. The body in my practice begins with the relationship of my body to the artwork in terms of the scale of one to another. With smaller works the action involves movements of the wrist, and with larger works and especially those painted on the wall, the issue is where the work is situated on the wall and how the body is directly related to it. The artist's trace, incorporating bodily movements in direct engagement with materials and thoughts, can be interpreted and reconstructed by the viewer. Included in the works are issues of scale, and how the artist/viewer moves in relation to the artwork and how these issues may be used as content.

I look backward to my older works and forward to making new structures and relationships when constructing my language of abstraction. It is something fluid and ever changing. One of the characteristics of my practice is the use and re-use of a my

visual vocabulary, strategies, processes and issues. This can be likened to sampling or clipping in music where a melody may be used in one part of the structure and later broken down into its elements. Those elements may be reused and restructured into another form that has echoes of the former melody, and are recognisable as such, but have been transformed into something new.

The working process itself is and becomes part of the content of my paintings. At times it is formal and analytical and at other times intuitive. My work is process oriented rather than conceptual in its origin. The content arises through process and its trajectory is cyclical and folds back on itself. Initially, I work with a strategy that I call "not knowing", choosing a range of materials and an abstract language. It is a vocabulary of marks, structures and colours, familiar in the language of twentieth century abstraction, grids, lines, intervals, gestural mark making and blocks of colour. Though there is a strong relationship to issues common to the history of abstraction, there is a highly subjective aspect to the painting I aim to create. The paintings are a personal record– every mark is a unique response to the painting's ongoing construction. The act of noticing and contemplation are crucial. These activities attend to an attentive state of mind where complex relationships pertaining to the work are discerned and addressed.

On one level, my paintings are unstable and subjective. They shift and move on viewing, and invite the viewer to examine them closely. The work may be scrutinised at various distances and viewpoints, according to the manner in which it is constructed. There is the view from across the room, the view of the work in situ. It does not reveal the same content as when the work is viewed from a close distance. At a distance the work is seen in relation to its site and to any other works displayed at the same time. The scale, the materials and how the work is presented are all issues of content. Examined close up the work the work presents different issues, in the type of materials used, their inherent qualities, the actual mark making, what kinds of marks and how the materials behave. The details are important. I want the works to have a shifting and layered quality that does not settle or become definitive.



Robin Kingston. *Untitled red/green.* 2005. Graphite,watercolour, gouache on paper. 29 x 19.5 cm. Irregular dimensions.

I intend my abstract language to be full of paradox and ambiguity. Through this body of research I have become aware that I use a formal visual language as a form of rational thought. For example, I use a formal visual language, within the instructions to myself, to construct the works. I may decide to use 'a green grid', as in *Untitled red/green* above, as a starting point for all other decisions that come later. I can verbalise the green grid as an instruction and it is straightforward and simple. I even have an idea of what it may look like as I begin, and make conscious choices including its placement on the surface, the scale, what shade of green and how much of the surface it will cover. The manner in which the painterly marks are made from moment to moment and how I use materials I cannot visualise, except through the act of construction, by 'doing'. The results may be anti formal[1], or contingent where the qualities of the materials contribute to meanings, such as the watery pooling of paint, the drips and runs, its viscosity in its opaqueness and transparency. There may also be evidence of layering and what strategy is used to completion, and what is abandoned.

[1] I consider anti formal issues as those that are not associated with a formal visual language. They include subtle, elusive content in the work including the emotive and psychological interpretations of materials, processes and images.

I am interested in pictorial structures that are familiar and look 'easy', as though anyone could make them, though I anticipate that after consideration the viewer realises it is much more complicated than it looks. The apparent simplicity of structure in the stripes, grids and other forms, could be construed as meaning that it is of no consequence as to who constructs them. Attention to material presence and visual incident is important. Painting is time consuming and currently many commercially successful artists have assistants to construct their works. Given the simple forms I use it would seem obvious to do that also, however touch, trace and decision-making are important issues in my work. I alone can make it. It must be *my* touch, *my* decisions, as it is through me, a unique sensibility is imbued into the painting. The sense of the haptic and the handmade is transmitted through my trace and is part of the meaning.

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Polly Apfelbaum's studio. Fabric, dyed and cut
on a workbench. Manhattan. December 2004.

The artist's touch and their personal imprint or trace built into the work is of importance to other contemporary abstract artists such as the American contemporary abstract artist Polly Apfelbaum. She stains and dyes each section of fabric, using the French brand Sennelier dyes, before she cuts them out. She calls this part of the process 'drawing' and says,

> *I love drawing, but then I think, how am I going to cut that? I couldn't let somebody else do it. In cutting, I get to know each detail. And then I can know the next step, because the rules change, during and after.* [2]

[2] Ann Wilson Lloyd. Polly Apfelbaum Review. "Seamstress of 'Splats' and 7,000 Asterisks". *The New York Times.* May 11, 2003. http://www.nytimes.com

In contrast Sol Le Witt, whose work is constructed using a process in direct contrast to my own, demonstrates how the use of rational thought or the formal visual language can lead to unexpected outcomes. The work is not constructed by the artist's hand. His work is made up from repeated elements, which are conveyed to assistants who construct his work as instructions that also become straightforward titles. His work also appears 'easy' as he uses familiar geometric shapes or lines and explores their permutations.

Instructions such as *"Wall Drawing #46: Vertical lines, not straight, not touching, covering the wall evenly."*[3] seem banal, yet viewing the work is a transformative experience. Thousands of short and long graphite, pencil lines evenly and finely covering the entire wall from floor to ceiling make for a shimmering pearlescent light grey film when viewed from a distance. It is part of the wall and subtle. When viewed in close, the hand of the makers is present so that the haptic frailty undermines the conceptual overtones of the piece. The marks demand close inspection and it is as though the individual trace of the makers brings an element of the subjective and human touch to the work. LeWitt's works only require a wall of a particular dimension, and are as such not site specific. Many of his works float in the space freely, and are bordered by white wall rather than traversing the entire space to the corners of the space.

LeWitt has written succinctly on his ideas on art as he was unhappy with the art criticism of the day. He formulated his ideas in the late sixties in two manifestoes: Paragraphs on Conceptual Art (1967) and Sentences on Conceptual Art (1969). [4] He stated that, "In conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the

[3] (1970. Graphite on wall.) Recreated at Dia:Beacon, U.S.A. Viewed December, 2006.

[4] Printed in Sol LeWitt: The Museum of Modern Art. Alicia Legg. ed. New York. 1978. pp. 166 –169. Also in Sol LeWitt: A Retrospective. Gary Garrels, ed. Yale University Press. U.S.A. 2000. pp. 369 – 372. First printed in *Artforum.5* no.10. pp. 79 – 83. June 1967. New York. and *0-9* 1969. New York. and *Art-Language* 1, no1. May 1969. England. pp. 11-13.

work" and "that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand, so execution becomes a perfunctory affair." [5]

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Sol LeWitt. *Wall Drawing #51,* 1951. Blue Snap Lines.

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Sol LeWitt. *Wall Drawing #358,*1981. crayon white and black pencil grid on the wall.

LeWitt's statement of his working process is the antithesis of my own, where the idea emerges through the execution of the artwork. Although LeWitt states that the execution is not important to the work, this statement was made early in his career when he believed this to be true. He thought anyone could make his work through a set of instructions. The maker was not important. Later, he had reassessed the input of those manufacturing the work as he realised it was through their skill in interpretation, individual touch or trace the artwork was bought to life and some did it better than others. His work, as I have stated, belies his matter-of-fact statement in that it conveys thought and touch made visible. It may not be LeWitt's touch, but that is of no matter.

Another work titled, *Wall Drawing # 123: Copied lines. The first drafter draws a not straight vertical line as long as possible. The second drafter draws a line next to the first one, trying to copy it. The third drafter does the same, as do as many drafters as possible. Then the first drafter, followed by the others, copies the last drawn line until both ends of the wall are reached.* [6] On inspection it looked as though a ladder had not been used as most of the lines had a relationship to the floor and were as high as an individual could reach, depending on their height. Each line revealed the varying pressure of application that had been used, and some were thicker in width than others indicating a different graphite tool had been used to construct the work. A residue of the time and movement of construction could be read through the marks which was subjective and interpretive, as the drafters responded to the work of the previous

[5] Sol Le Witt. Paragraphs on Conceptual Art. Sol LeWitt: The Museum of Modern Art. Alicia Legg. ed. New York. 1979. p. 166. And Sol LeWitt: A Retrospective. Garry Garrels. ed. Yale University Press. U.S.A. 2000. p. 369.

[6] 1972. Graphite on wall. Recreated at Dia:Beacon, U.S.A. Viewed December, 2006.

drafters. Some lines were not completely vertical anymore as they responded to the line before and the interval was not regular. Other lines were not at tall as others. The work seemed to threaten at various points to completely unravel. It became evident that although the instructions were clear, during construction elements emerged that were open to interpretation, and individuality.

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Execution of *Wall Drawing #123*. Recreated at the Addison Gallery of American Art. 1991.

Of the exhibition at Dia:Beacon in 2006, Lynne Cooke wrote,

> *….his drawings can never be exactly replicated, for each new instantiation, each iteration, is a new interpretation, as is a new performance of a musical score. In #123, for example, differences in lengths of the individual lines reflect different heights and hence different reaches among the ten or so draftspersons involved in its execution, each of whom contributed at least one line: aptitude, physical stamina, and mental concentration also impact on the final effect. Sometimes the instructions that determine a wall drawing are quite strict, sometimes they are provisional, offering a certain leeway in interpretation."*[7]

[7] Lynne Cooke. Sol LeWitt: Drawing Series…… September 16, 2006 – September 2007. Dia:Beacon. Riggio Galleries. 2006. (n.p.)

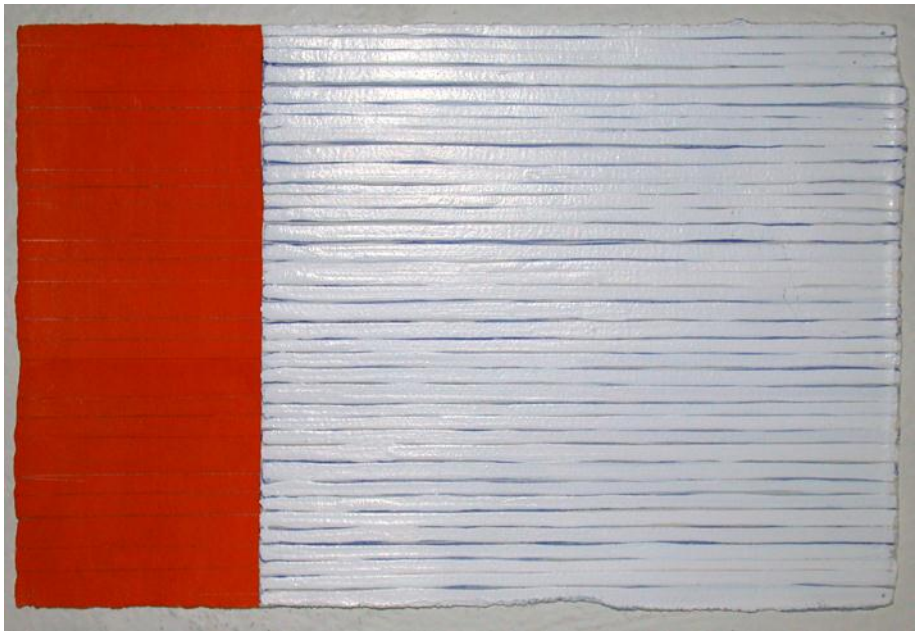
Drawing: The Trace from the Mind to the Hand

Avis Newman in an interview with Catherine De Zegher, says in relation to drawing,

> *I have always understood drawing to be, in essence, the materialization of a continually mutable process, the movements, rhythms, and partially comprehended ruminations of the mind: the operations of thought. Drawing by its nature suggests an intimacy of engagement where the eye of the beholder, tracing and following the hand of the drawer is forever caught in the space of action and event. Where one thing leads to another, whether as the registration of fragmented moments or played out in a finely articulated game of delineation.*[1]

Over the period of candidacy there has been a shift in my practice. Previously works on paper were considered studies and drawings for the paintings on stretchers using oil paint. Earlier I was making objects – paintings on stretchers, using oil paint and linen. The work was highly structured and planned through a series of studies, usually works on paper. They were then made into resolved works on stretchers using oil paint. The whole surface was covered from edge to edge using thin layers of paint built up in layers. There was no depth of field in these paintings and they used a minimum of visible brush strokes. There was no figure ground relationship and the picture plane became undifferentiated and surface of the works was tight, skin like, with little or no pictorial or illusory space.

[1] Catherine de Zegher. ed. The Stage of Drawing: Gesture and Act. In Conversation: Avis Newman/Catherine de Zegher. Tate Publishing with The Drawing Center. New York. 2003. p. 67.

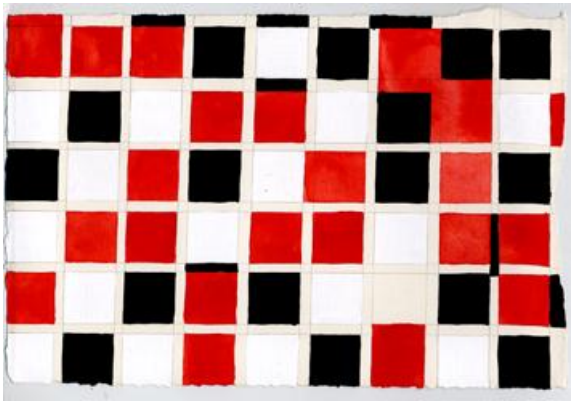


Robin Kingston. *Untitled Drawing.* 2000. Graphite, watercolour, gouache on paper. 29 x 19 cm. Dimensions irregular.

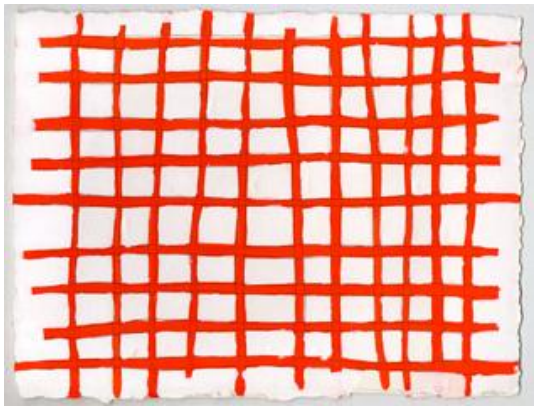
I was using soft brushes and a commercial medium called 'Liquin', which gave the oil paint a flat, plastic like finish. The work was drawn up by hand from the studies, making equivalent intervals and structures. They were not copied exactly, but the paintings were so much like the original that the result and the outcomes were known before I made the work. I found this process did not hold my interest, as there was little to discover and the construction of the work was laborious. The medium and the surface were bought to the foreground so that the terms of the content was the colour, depth of stretcher, scale, the skin like quality of the paint and its application. There were mostly geometric forms such as lines, grids, stripes, or more organic forms such as wavy lines or arabesques that made shapes when they were filled with paint. The geometric forms made early in the project were usually straight lines made with the use of rulers that when repeated, could be filled with colour to create either lines or stripes depending on the interval. Sometimes they were ruled, but in others there were hand made lines. These were pattern like or decorative on first viewing, until the viewer engaged with the visual physicality, painterly qualities and interval relationships through the works. The paintings encouraged viewing in the same way as text is read in the West,[2] as there was repetition and play with similarities and differences within colour, form, structure, line, interval. The colour was limited, but

[2] From left to right and from top to bottom.

high chroma - white, orange, cornflower blue, black, grey (mixed from opposite colours) deep cadmium red, vermilion. The juxtaposition of colour, such as red, grey, black and white, created works that prioritised colour as a primary source of content. The grids were both hand drawn and ruled. The grids were either 'filled' with colour like a checker board, or at other times delineated, like a form of graph paper.



Robin Kingston. *Untitled.red/black grid.* 2002. Graphite,watercolour, gouache on paper. 19 x 29 cm.



Robin Kingston. *Untitled.orange grid/ white ground* 2002. Graphite, gouache on paper. 19.5 x 15 cm.

Concurrently, running parallel to this practice, I was making a large body of works on paper made, I thought, primarily as studies for works on stretchers. Using graphite, watercolour and gouache, these works were on various kinds of paper. Gradually there was recognition that the qualities within these paper works were where the most valuable work lay. The delicate, almost fugitive nature of the materials, the subtle nuances within the meaning provided by the paper and the torn irregular edge and the flexibility of the materials themselves provided a rich structure with which to explore very subtle content.

> *How do we choose our specific material, our means of communication? "Accidentally." Something speaks to us, a sound, a touch, a hardness or softness, it catches us and asks us to be formed. We are finding our language, and as we go along we learn to obey their rules and their limits. We have to obey, and adjust to those demands. Ideas flow from it to us and though we feel to be the creator we are involved in a dialogue with our medium. The more subtly we are tuned to our medium, the more inventive our actions will become. Not listening to it ends in*

> *failure…..What I am trying to get across is that material is a means of communication. That listening to it, not dominating it, makes us truly active, that is: to be active, be passive. The finer we are tuned to it, the closer we come to art.*[3]

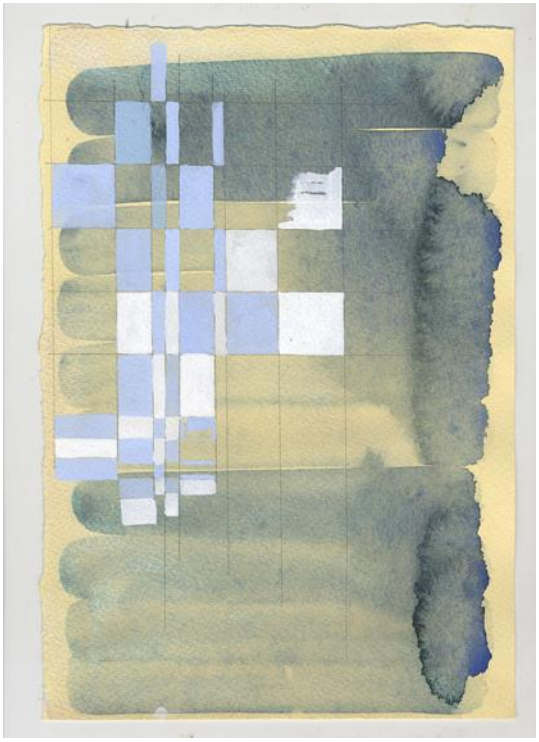
The relationship between painting and drawing is paramount within my practice, as the works on paper may affect the works on linen and stretchers and vice versa. In the works on paper, especially the later works, floating structures inhabit the space within the paper and the deckled or torn edges are crucial. In the paintings, where there is an acknowledgement of the sharp edge of the stretcher and the 'objectness' of the structure which encourages the outcome to be a constructed space and composition.

In my work, the finished piece is formed by the ambiguity or fusion of diverse component elements….they become intertwined and meshed. There is often evidence of what came before and the support itself becomes an integral part of the finished work. The nature of each surface affects what comes later and how the marks sit on top of, or merge with the layers below. Paper has a different quality and physical presence to canvas or linen. Paper choice is crucial to me - it's weight, how it absorbs water and whether it will warp. The works on paper from a distance can give no indication of what the viewer may find on closer inspection.

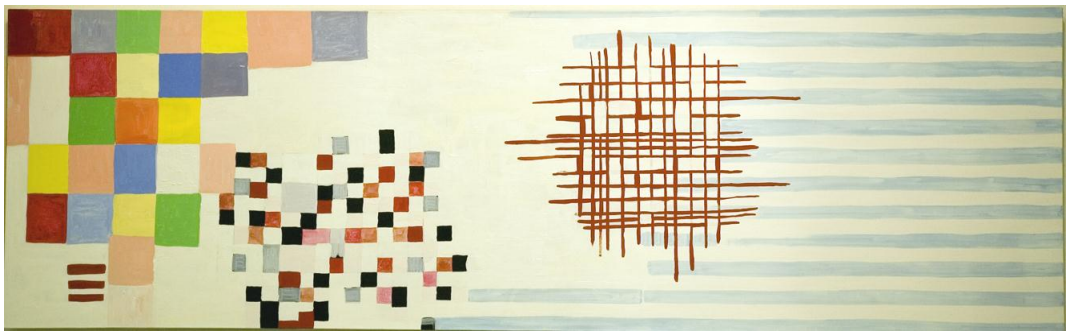
> *… In a drawing, the page keeps open the gaps between the marks. It refuses closure and is an active participant in conjunction with the mark, part of a negotiated reality of void and presence. The white space of the page disperses the notion of the body as substance. Unlike the body of the canvas, with a unified surface and pure materiality, it does not function as a mirror back: It is not "I am body" looking at another body, but its body is phantasmic and intangible. I understand the page to be a mobile space*

[3] Anni Albers. "Material as Metaphor." in Selected Writings on Design. February 25, 1982. From Eva Hesse Drawing. ed. Catherine De Zegher. The Drawing Center and Yale University Press. New York. 2006. p.59.

in the physical presence of its weightless surface and as such it is a place of time and movement. The drawing draws you in."[4]



Robin Kingston. *Untitled February*, 2007.
Graphite, gouache, watercolour on paper. 28 x 19 cm.



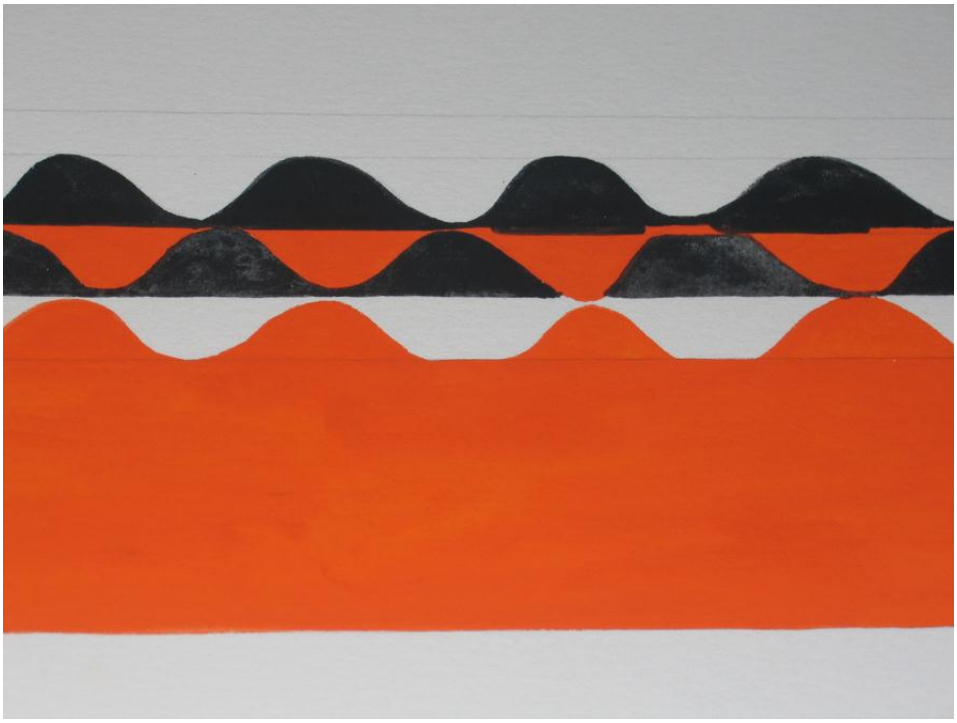
Robin Kingston. *Untitled. Large Horizontal Painting*. 2006. Oil on linen. 70 x 228 cm.

As this project progressed I realised there was no hierarchy between paintings on stretched canvases and those on paper. They were of equal importance. At the end of this project I call all the works on paper 'paintings' as they are works in themselves and not 'studies' for paintings or 'major works'. I now see no difference in worth

[4] Catherine de Zegher. ed. The Stage of Drawing: Gesture and Act. Tate Publishers and The Drawing Center. New York. 2003. p. 233.

between what I consider painting and drawing. Works on linen, paper, or on the wall can be major works. All are experiential and have their inherent issues.

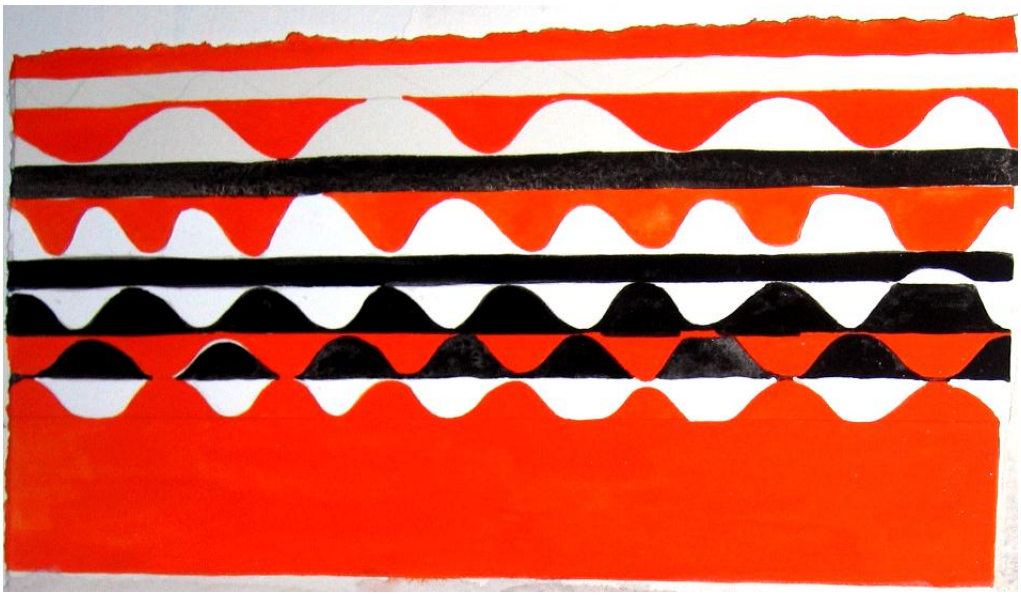
Painting on stretched canvas within my practice can be more mechanical, less flowing, open and authentic. This is because of the extended process involved with the construction of works on stretchers. The nature of the stretcher means it has to be constructed, rather than a piece of paper that can be torn immediately or a wall or the site of a gallery that is already in place, ready to be responded to. The stretcher is a constructed object bounded by edges, whereas paper is pliable and the site of an interior architectural space has certain characteristics that can be worked with, ignored, or overridden.



Robin Kingston. Early stage of drawing. Detail. November, 2005.
Graphite, gouache, watercolour on paper. 56 x 76 cm.

The components of drawing are the basis for all of my work, whether on a wall, a stretcher or on paper. The process begins with mark making, and those marks build to structures. (see example above) At commencement, I use a fine pencil, where a ruler may be used to set up a structure or strategy. Loose geometric structures, grids, straight lines and ones that are hand made with aqueous materials such as paints and inks as well as with graphite and pastel are laid down. Sometimes they are loopy,

undulating lines, where others are made in relationship to the first, so a structure is made and then filled with colour, an example of this is illustrated below.



Robin Kingston. Final Stage of drawing. 2005. Detail. Graphite, watercolour, gouache on paper. 56 x 76 cm. Irregular dimensions.

The act of drawing is connected to an act of thought. The physical and manual acts are the material incarnation of mental processes that can be sensations. The work is built through a series of these mental processes and the corresponding physical actions, which generate ideas and sensations and these can be experienced as content in the finished work. These acts of drawing include gentle marks using a very fine propelling pencil, brushed, painterly marks, broad, or narrow, quick or slow and those that are watery and others opaque. Some are geometric, highly coloured and painted with no hand visible. The marks provide visual information that leads to content that is emotional and psychological though indeterminate, yet the works are able to be experienced on a physical/material level. The marks, colours and formal relationships provide a tangible, physical presence for deeper levels of poetic and emotional content that exist within the paintings.

Robin Kingston. *Untitled. Nagy #1*. Detail. January/February, 2007. graphite, gouache, watercolour on paper. 56 x 76 cm.

The nature of the materials used allows for a state of flux, where the work can be worked in both an additive and subtractive method. At times the marks and structures are added to, with other marks and structures, and at other times areas of the work and structures are erased, discarded and worked over to eliminate them. They may not be visible in the final work, but often they become embedded into the work where faint ghosts of their presence may be discernable. Erasure does not return the work to a prior state, but moreover it contributes to a new one. My approach allows for a work where the associations are open and therefore so is the outcome. I believe this allows for a state of indeterminacy where connections are unstable and "between" those connections the content emerges.

Interpreting works involves comparing and contrasting structures, surfaces, papers, edges, internal structures, colours, paint application, relationships of colours and forms to one another and to the space, shapes, forms and the use of touch. These elements direct the response inwards to subjective experiences that may arise from

within the viewer. These experiences relate to emotional and psychic content where the viewer's attentiveness may be heightened through viewing the inventiveness and subtlety of the manipulation of non objective forms of picture making.

The basic materials of art making appear to have limitations, but it is through use of these materials my work has been extended, increasing my visual vocabulary. The materials are easily transportable and therefore can be moved readily and are the basic materials for making two dimensional artwork. Through limitation, the variations inherent within the materials are explored and extended, so rather than using another material it becomes about extending the limits to find a new expression with the material. Through the limitation a familiarity is built, so there is repetition of experimentation with the aim of extending the medium to find new forms.

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Agnes Martin. *Wood.* 1964. Ink on paper. 27.7 x 27.7 cm.

The simplicity of means out of which complexity arises for me has visual antecedents, including Agnes Martin. On first glance, Martin, uses a reductive visual vocabulary to create works that induce the viewer to examine the work closely. Watercolour, acrylic, paper and graphite are some of the materials used to create grids and linear works. She rules lines using rulers and pencils and also with pencil point along string stretched tightly across the surface of the work. Kathryn A. Tuma in describing Martin's works suggests,[5]

> *Martin inscribes a tremulous instability and profound non-mechanicity in her hand - an acute fragility that informs the tracings that skim the textured surface of her canvases and sheets. Martin drags her pencil across those surfaces, irregularities of treatment and handling spontaneously occur. Lines fluctuate irregularly in measure, as they*

[5] Exhibited in 3 X Abstraction. 2005. The Drawing Centre. New York.

> *sometimes touch the bounding edge of the grid, and sometimes not….Or, within the schema of the grid, a given line will, on closer inspection, reveal itself as disrupted or broken, as one discovers that the previously perceived continuity was but an illusion, the mind having been diligently working to fill the gaps. Elsewhere lines waver in subtly imperfect parallelisms,….where the uneven pressure of Martin's hand renders some lines crisp and defined, others ghostly and blurred, as the color of the lines appears to bleed into the bands in between. Never inert to the eye, Martin's grid is less a proposition about fixity and logic than about the unstable imperfections that arise from the sensuous and immediate response of the hand to the grain of canvas surface. Our eye follows suit.*[6]

The simple structures in Martin's drawings and paintings create expansive visual fields that hover in front of the picture plane. Viewing her work has been of importance in developing an awareness of how, within my own practice, the slightest fluctuation of pressure in materials, even a pencil, can create great difference within works. The rhythmical, repetitive nature of Martin's work belie the viewing conditions she creates, where the viewer is drawn in to examine the most minute detail, right down to the warp and weft of the canvas and how ground is applied. The sheer materiality is a hook to engage the viewer. The paradox of the effect, compared to the physicality of the materials and processes makes for a surprising transformation. The effect of the work is ephemeral; it experientially opens out in front of the picture plane and provides a place for deep contemplation where time seems suspended.[7] The effect can be explained if we imagine the image on the canvas appearing to hover above the actual surface of the painting and thus creating an unfocussed, tonal field that is not anchored and which floats in the space between the work and the viewer.

I believe that her paintings are impossible to understand in reproduction as their subtleties are negated. They need to be experienced, where it becomes evident the

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[6] Kathryn A. Tuma. Enhancing Stillness: The Art of Agnes Martin. In 3 x Abstraction: New Methods of Drawing by Hilma af Klint, Emma Kunz and Agnes Martin. Catherine De Zegher and Hendel Teicher. Editors. Yale University Press. 2005. p.56.

[7] It is not unlike the effect of looking at the Tantric Drawings, viewed at the Drawing Center in 2004.

content in the paintings is different when viewed from a distance, and when examined closely. They demand a close level of inspection where the warp and weft of the canvas plays a large part, with very subtle, simple interventions using graphite, inks and a watered down acrylic.

Martin's practice appears to be so straightforward in manufacture, using a basic range of materials, and elemental structures. She makes it seem that art making can be a series of straightforward decisions from which complex works can evolve. The fact she used pencil on canvas and thin washes of acrylic to create works that evoke such complex readings is challenging, when considered in light of the Abstract Expressionist gestural mark making whose content I also read as emotional. She suggested every act of making an artwork was self expression and this is interesting in light of my interest in the legacy of Abstract Expressionism where the use of overt, grand gestures is in direct contrast stylistically with Martin's paintings, where there are small, subtle differences between ruled lines that through their nature, magnify differences.

> *Drawing is strongly tactile, both in the way it is made and the way it is seen….The lines of a drawing record the pressure of the fingers of the pencil that made it, the speed and ease of the marks, and their impatience, control, or anxiety.*[8]

The order which Martin's system of art making offers also contrasts with that of Abstract Expressionism, where a seemingly chaotic, gestural methodology was used and out of which, eventually, an order may seem to emerge or coalesce. This system of making was still subjective (a trait common to both ways of working) but made personal through the form of self-expression Martin uses - which is that to make an artwork, to make a mark, is self-expressive. It is enough though because we all have a unique trace or touch.

Elkins could be speaking about viewing an Agnes Martin painting, drawing or my own, in the following passage. He talks about looking at a particular drawing and how

[8] James Elkins. The Object Stares Back. A Harvest Book. New York. 1997. pp. 226 – 227.

his mind is occupied with a mixture of thoughts, both of the making and of the looking – very subtle thoughts he refers to as remembering the drawing's 'feeling', the place where the musculature and mind meet. He suggests that artists have an intimate reservoir of knowledge in relation to the making of art that they carry when they look at it.

> *An artist at home with gesture, will want to move a hand over the drawing, repeating the gentleness of the marks that made it, reliving the drag of the brush, or the push of the pencil. The drawing has become its bodily response, and the body moves in blind obedience to what it senses on the page.*[9]

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

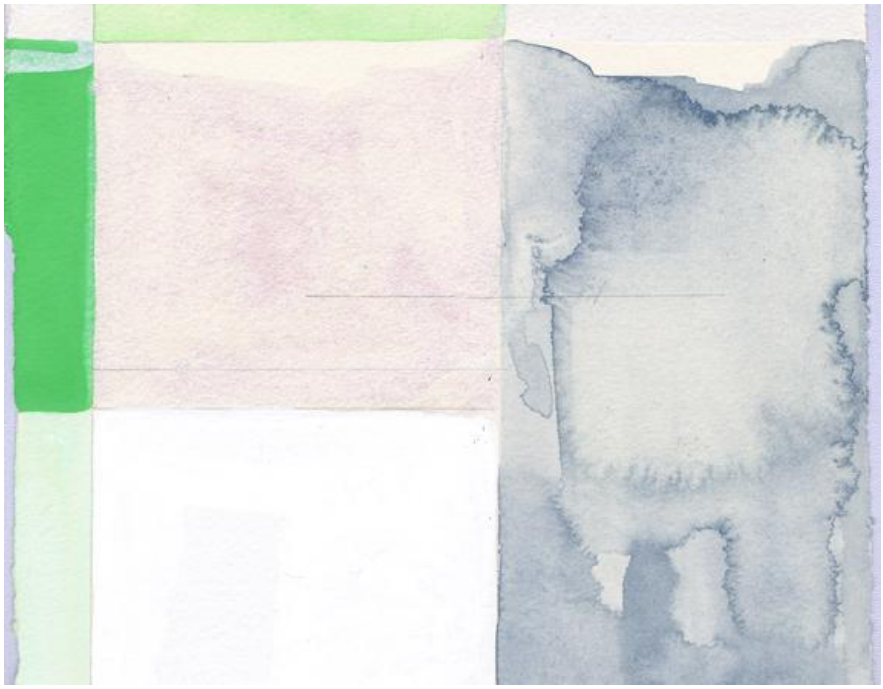
Agnes Martin. *Untitled.* 1963. Red Ink on Paper. 21 x 21 cm.

In the next section I will expand on the relationship in my work between the artist, materials and the gestures of art making. Each artist has an individual interpretation of the materials and processes they use. The artwork is the meeting place of those physical and mental processes. It is not a binary system but one that is intertwined and holistic.

[9] Ibid. p. 227.

Materials, Marks and Forms: the signification of process

When observed individually, the kinds of marks and forms I use are a selection of structures and systems that could be called simple in form, as they are not easy to name or define and are not descriptive of the external world. Some are doodle like, or resemble organic or arabesque forms. Others are geometric stripes and grids. Their meanings however are open and are full of possibility, and as such, they constitute signifiers in the language of abstraction and can be understood as such by those familiar with the history of Western abstraction. In making grids, lines, intervals and arabesques, I am not however borrowing from or critiquing the history of Western abstraction. At the time of manufacture the structures and forms arise from the body's actions, touch and the material properties of the supports and paints used. The marks have the capability of suggesting many simultaneous allusions. The sequence of thoughts and actions that the artist made during the construction of the work may be grasped. It is complex, as some of the sequences are revealed and others may be covered by layers of paint or physical actions such as flooding the surface with water so the sequence of actions becomes veiled or obscured. Many of the forms are recurrent, and the vocabulary is always changing and expanding. Doodle like marks and curvilinear rhythms are built by repetition while other forms are structured into grids and parallel lines. The minutiae of the marks could be thought of as a kind of painterly expressionism. When closely observed they are constructed from many gestures and the surfaces shift and change and are uneven in application. There is a gestural quality that includes schematic marking and a textuality built in the repetition where the work may be read from left to right as with text and language. The work includes formal properties of the visual language as well as anti formal properties or even formless qualities creating a tension between the structures. For example, there may be a grid over which there is a watery flow, not contained by the formal structure, or a Perlex glimmer that subverts the order of the grid.



Robin Kingston. *untitled. watery green grid.* 2005. Detail. Graphite, gouache, watercolour on paper. 19 x 19 cm.

The poetic is contained within the works – made evident in the changeability of marks, structures and pressures and evidence of the changing flows of thought patterns typical of structure and strategy within the painting. The qualities that I strive for in the works are those of delicacy, sensuality, ambiguity and introspection. They are about sensation and are subtle and quiet in their detail. The works seek to have a vulnerable quality where their fragility is apparent, and through this quality there may be an opening for the viewer to enter into a fuller experience of them. However the works are paradoxical and complicated. The overall structure and sections of colour in individual works may be bold and simple in their gestalt[1], but they are complex in detail and subtlety. The work is imbedded in what may be called lyrical expressionism[2] and held together by the choice of geometric structures, a language of forms framing the visual in my vocabulary. The choice of forms and structures utilises the methodology of chance and play and the performative as I will discuss later, and I use a specific range of materials[3]. There is a sensual quality and an

[1] Gestalt - a set of visual elements considered as a whole, overall shape or configuration and is more than the sum of its parts.

[2] Lyrical expressionism – a term used when referring to art that suggests poetic or emotional content through its colour and the use of the haptic.

[3] Graphite, watercolour, gouache on paper; graphite, watercolour, gouache and acrylic on the wall; graphite and oil on linen.

ambiguity contained within the mark making and the gestural quality of the works that is recoverable by the viewer in the form of emotional and intellectual content.

Each mark has its own genesis that contributes to the manufacture of the artwork. The impulse and the process are bound together. This is reiterated by the artist Cy Twombly who speaking about his work stated,

> *In painting it is the forming of the image; the compulsive action of becoming; the direct and indirect pressures brought to a climax in the acute act of forming…..Since most painting then defines the image, it is therefore to a great extent illustrating the idea or feeling content…..Each line now is the actual experience with its own innate history. It does not illustrate – it is the sensation of its own realization. The imagery is one of the private or separate indulgencies rather than an abstract totality of visual perception.*
>
> *This is very difficult to describe, but it is an involvement in essence (no matter how private) into a synthesis of feeling, intellect etc. occurring without separation in the impulse of action.*
>
> *The idea of falling into obscurities or subjective nihilism is absurd – such ideas can only be held by a lack of reference or experience.*[4]

[4] Kirk Varnedoe. Cy Twombly: A Retrospective. Harrry N. Abrams, Inc. "Newy Scialoja, Gastone Novelli, Pierre Alechinsky, Achille Perilli, Cy Twombly." L'Eserienza Moderna, no 2. (August – September 1957), p. 32.

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Cy Twombly. *School of Athens.* 1961. Oil, house paint,
crayon and pencil on canvas. 190 x 200 cm.

In Twombly's painting there is communication through a language of direct expression. In his exhibition[5], titled "Bacchus", Twombly created a work that used the entire space of the gallery. It was made up of four large canvases. Their surfaces were covered with a thin wash of yellow ochre ground. Onto this ground Twombly painted large, gestural, red, coiled lines, some dense, some open, leaving the ground visible at the top and bottom of each canvas. The reds were complicated as they were applied over and under, scraped and wiped. They appeared fluorescent, but on close inspection no fluorescent paint had been used. The startling combinations of vermilions and reds, created a red iridescence that pervaded the atmosphere of the room and when coupled with the huge gestures, created a heightened, powerful experience. The works appeared to have been made for the room in which they were exhibited. This was bought into focus by the scale of the canvases to the walls, and the floor being exactly the same colour as the ground of the paintings, so the red marks seemed to lift and float. It was visually as though the paintings were an outpouring of emotion.

Richard Tuttle is an artist whose thinking and artwork has informed my work over many decades. His work draws on poetic and philosophical ideas. He makes artwork out of ephemeral, basic materials and the work appears insubstantial, having no particular style and or kind of object. The work seems disarmingly simple, almost slapdash, as though they are spontaneous acts that are very close to retaining the

[5] Gagosian Gallery, New York. Viewed December 2006.

quality of drawing or studies for more major works. As with many artists I admire, they are very subtle works and the materials used and the processes applied to them carry much of the content. He uses a vast range of materials including bubble wrap, styro foam, string, plyboard, to paint, wire, electric lights, fabric, contact like material and cardboard. He likes to stretch the parameters of what is considered art and art making materials.

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Richard Tuttle. *20 Pearls* (14)
Acrylic on museum board and foam board.
51 x 28.5 x 1.9 cm.

Richard Tuttle. Work at Brent Sikkema Gallery. NY. 2003. Chrome tape over small boxes.

Marcia Tucker, a curator and museum director in New York who championed Tuttle in the seventies when his work caused much controversy, speaks about Tuttle making work that is 'antiheroic'.[6] His work has a vulnerability, intimacy and an unassuming presence that museum directors and the public, could not then accept. Nevertheless, he has influenced a younger group of artists including Jessica Stockholder and Polly Apfelbaum, both artists whose work has informed mine. Madeleine Grynsztejn, the curator of Tuttle's 2005 retrospective[7] observed,

[6] Paul Gardner. "Odd Man In" ARTnews. April 2004. pp. 102-105. http://www.speronewestwater.com/cgibin/iowa/articles/record.html?record=250 (n.p.)
[7] The Art of Richard Tuttle. The Whitney Museum of American Art. Viewed December, 2005.

.....to a new generation, Tuttle is an inspiration rather than a style book. He lets them trust in the durable visibility of physically slight things.[8]

In Tuttle's work I am interested in how simple, almost trivial materials used in basic ways can say so much. Tuttle has an extensive vocabulary with no stylistic continuum in his practice. He makes art from the folding of paper, the crumpling of fabric cut into a shape and hung on the wall, shadows falling onto the wall from a slender narrow bent wire or a shaped piece of ply board with one painted edge, casually leaning between the floor and the wall; or little drawings that appeared to be from a tiny ring bound notepad, with coloured pencil grids on them, placed low near the skirting board, so at first there appears to be nothing in the gallery - until one notices.

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Detail of an installation view of the 1992 exhibition Richard Tuttle.
Mary Boone Gallery New York, showing works from the series
Fiction Fish, 1999.

Artworks such as these affected my thinking. I was drawn to them. They made me look hard, and surprised me. They had lasting resonance. He used objects that were so physically slight they were barely there and certainly did not conform to the grandiose physical nature of the art of the time, such as the massive works of Richard Serra and the large expressionist paintings of Julian Schnabel. His work did however relate to the site in which they were displayed and seemed responsive to it no matter the scale of individual elements contained in them. For me, Tuttle's work expanded the cannon of painting and worked between sculpture, installation practice and

[8] Paul Gardner. "Odd Man In." ARTnews. April 2004. pp. 102-105. http://www.speronewestwater.com/cgibin/iowa/articles/record.html?record=250. (n.p.)

painting. His works are playful and serious and beg the viewer to ask questions of their expectations of artwork. The work displays a delicate relationship to the space in which they are shown, how the materials are used, the sensitivity to touch, colour and placement. It is as though the material presents itself, and therefore can be used.[9]

In his 2004/5 exhibition[10] he explored what he thought 'drawing' can be. There were clusters or what Tuttle called "Villages" and the more I tried to understand the exhibition, the more it unravelled. It was playful and like jazz - a theme extended, repeated, inverted, broken down and so on. The works were on the wall, floor, in frames, out of frames, on the frames, painted directly on the wall, objects operating from the floor to the wall and spatially – in the gallery across the road. There were cross cultural references and reminders of oriental patterning and calligraphy as well as to Western art including high and low culture. The exhibition was playful, joyful and asked many questions. It resisted closure and remained open, unresolved and tenuous.

[9] I visited Tuttle's exhibition at the Drawing Center in December 2004 for a second time and observed a small open rectangular structure made from kindling chips (the kind sold at every Korean corner store in Manhattan) that had not been in the gallery on my last visit. It was placed on the floor by the skirting boards, near the front door. I overheard a conversation between gallery staff about the sudden appearance of this structure. They were wondering whether it 'should be there' and wondered where it had come from, and whether they should remove it. One attendant told the other that Tuttle had been in the basement making the structure during the week and had spoken to the Director. The other sniffed, "Nobody tells us anything." I tell this anecdote as an example of Tuttle asking us to notice and question. He presents us with a fluid, changeable presentation over time within the gallery.

[10] "Richard Tuttle: It's a Room for 3 People." The Drawing Center, New York. December 2004 – January 2005. Viewed December 2004.

Painting as Drawing: The Paint as a finely tuned antenna for the body/hand of the artist

In my practice, the surface of the support is of importance as the work begins in the substructure of the surface. With a painting on a stretcher there is the choice of very finely woven, smooth, Belgian linen and the layers of rabbit skin glue making a hard, impervious surface. The glue ground is laid down methodically, sanded smooth until finally ready for the image itself. The work's genesis has begun far earlier than the painting of the image. The surface preparation, though somewhat tedious, I liken to dancer getting to know the stage on which they are to perform. Every inch is covered and known. It is practice and rehearsal for the actual performance.

When I am involved with the construction of a painting, there is an intermingling of the physical properties of the material and support and of the idea. At that time there is no sense of what the outcome means.

> *A painting is made of paint-of fluids and stone- and paint has its own logic, and its own meanings…….To an artist, a picture is both a sum of ideas and a blurry memory of "pushing paint," breathing fumes, dripping oils and wiping brushes, smearing and diluting and mixing. Bleary preverbal thoughts are intermixed with the nameable concepts, figures and forms that are being represented. The material memories are not usually part of what is said about a picture, and that is a fault in interpretation because every painting captures a certain resistance of paint, a prodding gesture of the brush, a speed and insistence in the face of mindless matter: and it does so at the same moment, in the same thought, as it captures the expression of a face.*[1]

Painting has a formidable history and there is much to be conveyed using the medium of contemporary abstraction. It is an area that is rich and still full of possibility both in the canon of painting alone, or in the form of a hybrid where painting is combined with other areas such as installation practice or sculpture. In his book "What Painting

[1] James Elkins. What Painting Is. Routledge. New York. London. 2000. pp. 2,3.

Is.", John Elkins discusses painting – the act of painting and the kinds of thought that are embedded in the painting itself. He suggests that paint is a cast made of the painter's movements, a portrait of the painters' body and thoughts and although paint is water and stone it is also liquid thought. [2]

> *It is no wonder that painters can be so entranced by paint. Substances occupy the mind profoundly, tethering moods to thoughts, tangling stray feelings with the movements of the body, engaging the full capacity of response and concentrating it on unpromising lumps of paint and colour. There is no meaning that cannot seem to flow from the paint itself. From the spectator's standpoint, looking at the finished paintings, marks can become eloquent records of the painter's body, and through that body come undependable but powerful ideas about the painter's feelings and moods. Paint incites emotions and other wordless experiences. That is why painting is a fine art: not merely because it gives us trees and faces and lovely things to see, but because paint is a finely tuned antenna, reacting to every unnoticed movement of the painter's hand, fixing the faintest shadow of a thought in colour and texture.* [3]

My response to the qualities and properties of the materials I am using and the fact of the paintings privileging the qualities of the 'hand made', is of importance in my work. The manner in which paintings are constructed is partly a response to the quality of 'spectacle' occurring in art making at the beginning of the twenty first century. Here I am referring to the elaborate technology in artworks displayed in major galleries and museums. The theatricality of the artworks competes with commercial media such as movies and video games. My work is the antithesis of this manner of working, requiring basic art making materials and incorporating what Jonathan Lasker calls 'supporting the human hand'. He suggests one of the intentions in making his paintings is to "support the position of the human hand, and thus the integrity of the human identity." [4]

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[2] John Elkins. What Painting Is. Routledge. New York and London. 2000. p. 5.
[3] Ibid. pp. 192 – 193.
[4] Johnathan Lasker 1977 - 2003. Richter Verlag. Dusseldorf. 2003. p. 44.

Paint bears the physical record to the expression of the human hand. It conforms to the trail of the brush being driven by the impulse of the psyche. In no other art medium is creation more permanently and intimately bound to the movements of the human body. Nowhere is the human more empowered to have a direct and immediate affect on the image of his world.

We are all, at present more divided, less empowered, and certainly far less connected to the effects of our world than we should be. It is for this reason that I am deeply involved with the textures of a medium capable of universalizing so much lost intimacy. [5]

Merleau–Ponty wrote,

The painter takes his body with him. Indeed we cannot imagine how a 'mind' could paint. It is by lending his body to the world that the artist changes the world back into paintings. To understand these transubstantiations the body as a chunk of space or a bundle of functions but that body which is an intertwining of vision and movement.[6]

Painting is an act of transformation of inert matter of pigment and binders combined with a medium such as water or turpentine. "Seen from its positive side painting is about the magic of transforming physical matter into a semblance." [7] Paint is simply inert pigments mixed with binders and applied to surfaces and through this act, by the actions of the artist's body and mind something actual and real is materialized. This 'semblance' Elkins refers to means something tangible, actual and visible, able to be conveyed to the viewer. It can take many forms which uncover philosophical and material content relating to the kinds of marks, colours and surfaces constructed by the artist.

[5] Lasker, op. cit. p. 44.
[6] The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting. ed. Galen A. Johnson. Northwestern University Press. Evanston, Illinois. 1993. p. 123-124.
[7] Jonathan Lasker in Jonathan Lasker. 1977 - 2003. Richter Verlag. Dusseldorf. 2003. p. 41.

Robin Kingston. *Drawing.* 2006. Graphite, gouache, watercolour, on paper.
19.2 x 28.5 cm.

The transformation of the physical material is one part of what a painting means. The application of the marks and the construction of the work is able to be understood as content and can also be visual information that leads to the feeling and emotion that resonates in the works. For example, as this project progressed I began to favour working on paper and directly onto the wall to the exclusion of works on stretchers and linen using oil paint. I found the comparative rigidity and lack of flexibility and the time involved with planning, and then painting the works on stretchers prohibitive. I began to value and be drawn to the most direct and basic art materials, ones that are often dismissed as ones used at a formative stage of art making such as in drawing and not stable enough over time to be used in major works. For example, watercolour if placed in bright light will fade so will change over time if not cared for properly. Equipment such as pencil-graphite, watercolour, gouache and paper are basic materials and I have found them to be the most direct manner to convey pictures of what my thoughts look like. As I stated previously, I now see no differentiation between what I consider painting and drawing. My paintings are drawings and vice versa. I am interested in the paradox and absurdity apparent to me in the works painted directly on the wall. I use watercolour, gouache and pencil that are normally only used for preparatory studies where slight incidents and fluctuation would be apparent. Usually when enlarging the scale of artwork one increases the size of the equipment accordingly. However I do not, preferring to use the same paints, brushes, palettes and containers that I use when working on paper.

I have discovered that this intensifies the haptic quality of the final painting and the tools preserves a link between the intimate action of working on small works on paper and transfers these qualities to the wall. The immersion in the activity and the action of each gesture that is made in the construction of the work is evident and the paint and the actions becomes part of the surface of the wall itself. The experience is to become one with the activity, and to reveal an inner, introspective self that is only made visible through the act of painting.

As suggested earlier, within this body of work I have emphasised the 'hand made' quality and the imperfect as opposed to traces left by machine and industrial manufacture. The slippage and accident, the gesture, the facture[8], the trace of the hand and the body as the work is made, is left visible. The trace of my movements and decisions are there to be discovered.

Robin Kingston. *Untitled. Nagy #1.* 2007. Detail. Graphite, watercolour, gouache on paper. 59.5 x 84 cm.

[8] Facture – literally the manufactured surface made through the construction of a painting.

The issue of the content revealed by materials is of importance within my practice. The work is made with sensitivity to chosen materials and responding to their properties. I test and learn those properties by experimentation and direct contact rather than reading about how to use them. It is a negotiation with those materials, working on them and they work on me. The properties of materials - whether they are waterproof or can be altered, painted over, or bleed, is gained through familiarity with them. Particular brands of colours behave differently so there is specificity to the choices I make. One example is a Linel brand gouache, *Velvet Black* that produces a dense, matt, highly pigmented black that has the effect of optically creating a void when painted onto paper, and it is a black that behaves differently to any other. The void is produced by the matt surface, which absorbs the light and the paint has a velvet like surface as its name implies.

> *Painting is alchemy." Elkins says, "Its materials are worked without knowledge of their properties, by blind experiment, by the feel of the paint. A painter knows what to do by the tug of the brush as it pulls through a mixture of oils, and by the look of the colored slurries on the palette…..Artists become expert in distinguishing between degrees of gloss and wetness-and they do so without knowing how they do it or how chemicals create their effects.*[9]

Painting is a mingling of inner bodily sensations and the physical expansiveness and limitations of each material that coalesce to make meaning within the work. Each kind of paint has its own properties whether it is oil, acrylic, watercolour or gouache. I attempt to discover and reveal the characteristics of each substance and surface. The matt quality of the gouache, the gentle sparkle of the Perlex, a powdery substance that has many different particle sizes and interference properties, only discovered on closer inspection and not visible from a distance; the transparency of watercolour; and the actual surface of the support itself, such as paper, 'cotton duck' canvas, Belgian linen, or the wall of an architectural space, influence the final outcome through incorporating their inherent properties. Paper has many different properties, depending on its varied weights, colours and whether it has a cut or a deckle edge; hot

[9] James Elkins. What Painting Is. Routledge. London and New York. 1999. p. 9.

press (smooth) or cold press (rough) or in its many forms of transparency. Even how much size is present in the paper affects its properties of absorption. Some papers buckle or curl when aqueous paints are applied and they cannot be further used, and others can withstand this treatment and remain flat, even after being flooded with water.

The properties of Perlex, a powder in its original form, are complex and varied in effect. In the beginning it was for me the gentle sparkle discovered on close inspection of works in the important "Drawing Now: Eight Propositions" exhibition.[10] I appreciated the element of surprise and delight the material offered. (I had no idea what it was, but realised it was far more subtle than regular glitter which was brash by comparison.) I became interested in the manner in which the material invited the viewer to move their body in front of the work in an effort to see the delicate sparkle. It was a subtle glint, barely visible, but so important to the content of the work. It was a lovely surprise and I wanted to emulate the fascination I had experienced with these works, in my own making.

As I said earlier, the qualities of materials is revealed through their use. I try to be sensitive to those properties and the recognition can happen quickly, or slowly in the working process. Sometimes the material will not do what I thought it could, and it is abandoned until I am ready to use it again. When I begin to use a material, for example, a colour I have never used but am drawn to, or a type of paper such as transparent papers, I have an idea in my mind as to what kind of effects, or what the properties might be. This idea is not from experience, just a presumption that it will behave in the manner I envisage. I am often wrong, as I am trying to make the material do things it cannot do. As I am not empathetic to it, the result is not satisfactory. It is by letting go or forgetting this experience and allowing time to intervene that, when I eventually take it up again, I am willing to allow it to lead me through my experimentation. The intervening passage of time can be long, where in the mean-time, without having touched the material, I have become attuned to its particular qualities and I can use with more sensitively. I have learned to trust that

[10] Viewed at the Museum of Modern Art, December 2002.

time lag and attribute it to an intuitive sense. It happens without pushing, or consciously willing it to happen. It is part of the process.

The artist Bernard Frize also speaks about his working process, the use of materials and noticing how their properties begin to define what you can do with them. He develops techniques for those materials that are adaptable according to the circumstances. He suggests seeing chance as luck and how the time within which one has to paint, rather than being a hindrance becomes an opportunity. For example he had a job and worked only at weekends and this could be seen as a restriction. He was using tins of enamel paint that had formed a dried paint skin on the top, which he had to cut off. To 'get rid of them' he placed them on another canvas as he was making another painting. Slowly, he realised that instead of it being "nothing" the work was literally completing itself.

> *I was amazed to see my drawing being completed when l was merely laying down paint. I was developing techniques that were adaptable according the circumstances". He continues, " Why not use chance as luck? It has always been clear to me that I had to use the quality of the paint, the function of the tools (the kind of brushes, the grain of the canvas, etc) as materials that defined paths to follow. Each gesture became specific, each solution particular.*[11]

He suggests that his working method is between improvisation and system – a kind of informal system, in which he can change his mind. The direct engagement with materials produces a specific response from him as the artist, which in turn can be reconstructed by the viewer. Friz's relationship to his working method is the same as my own as evidenced by my explanation of my practice throughout this exegesis.

The small scale, intimate paintings of the American artist Thomas Nozkowski are a fine example of the malleability and transformation of paint to a rich painting experience. They are not stylistically similar, except in the broad sense of being abstract. He has a breathtakingly diverse vocabulary that he suggests is taken from

[11] David Ryan. Talking Painting: Dialogues with Twelve Contemporary Abstract Painters. Routledge. London and New York. 2003. Bernard Frize in conversation with David Ryan. p. 93.

elements in the real world and his life, though the vestiges of those sources are not directly evident in the final work. He spends years resolving his paintings and the works display evidence of the layers of the time invested and paint accumulations. As with my own work, the trajectory of Nozkowski's painting dictates the final form of the work. The work arises out of the painting itself. The works are at once serious and playful, cartoon like and display accumulations of images from external things such as Persian carpets, books and magazines. They are open and poetic and at the same time are quite specific as the forms and spaces in his work transform through viewing. His drawings and paintings reward the viewer who gives them close attention.

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Thomas Nozkowski. *Untitled (7-8)* 1992.
Oil on canvasboard. 41 x 51 cm.

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Thomas Nozkowski. *Untitled (8-27)* 2002.
Oil on linen on panel. 56 x 71 cm.

During this project, viewing his work[12] encouraged me to diversify the range of mark making and colour in my practice. Previous to this time, I had been working with known outcomes and was finding them unsatisfactory and Nozkowski's paintings offered rich brushwork, thick and aqueous paint, layering, colour, both high key and complex, mixtures of tertiary colour and the freedom to allow difference within a single work, and between works. Although his paintings and drawings within the current New York art scene are idiosyncratic, they carry on a long history of American painting and more particularly abstraction arising from artists I have outlined at the beginning of this chapter - artists such as Arthur Dove, Stuart Davis, Myron Stout and the modest, yet important still lives and landscapes of the Italian painter Georges Morandi.

[12] *Thomas Nozkowski – New Paintings.* Max Protetch Gallery. New York. Viewed December, 2003. *Arturo Herrera, Jac Lerner, Thomas Nozkowski.* Sikkema Jenkins. New York. Viewed December, 2004.

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Thomas Nozkowski. *Untitled (8-45)* 2003. oil on linen on panel.
56 x 72 cm.

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Thomas Nozkowski. *Untitled.* (8 – 56) 2004.
Oil on linen on panel. 56 x 71 cm.

In this chapter I have discussed the origins of my art practice and presented an overview of its nature, including the importance of the specificity of the properties of the materials used and how they contributed to the paintings' development and the overall content. I have also addressed the shift in my understanding of the relationship between drawing and painting in my practice and the desire to expand the form and content of the work produced during the time of this research.

In the next chapter I will investigate intuitive and rational thought and their part in the manufacture of my artwork. I will also situate my relationship to intuitive and rational thought within a broader visual and intellectual context by examining pertinent writings and visual art that incorporate them.

Chapter Two: The Attentive Mind Game

Intuition and Conscious Thought

This chapter investigates intuitive and rational or conscious thought and their part in the processes used in the manufacture of my paintings. It also outlines how I began to incorporate these strategies of thinking into my process and contextualises them in light of broader intellectual thinking, and visual artists who use them.

I understand intuition to be a pre-verbal source of thought that arises from the mind and creates action through the body. It is a mode of thinking, and of knowing myself in relation to the world, that is deeper than my everyday thoughts. It belongs to the realm of the senses and is part of the process of creation in my practice. It operates as an awareness or attentiveness that is present when I am painting and is tangible and is more than a "hunch". It is skilful inner form of knowledge that operates as an awareness that, through manufacture and contemplation, is built upon towards resolution of the work of art. Intuition and conscious thought do not operate as a binary structure within my practice and I separate intuition here only to explain how I define it.

Making art is an act of enquiry and for me personally this process unfolds during manufacture. It is a process of negotiation. Rather than illustrating a specific idea I choose a sequence of images to begin the process without knowing what the outcome will be. There is the knowledge I will produce a work on paper, or on the wall, but the content is not predetermined before commencement. The process and the manufacture are of greater value to me than the arrival at the product of art making and it is a matter of trust that I can negotiate the process to an outcome. Here intuition is useful, as it is a perception or sense that enables me to make choices that I have not discovered before and this entails the letting go of expectations. It allows me to negotiate the space of creativity that can be risky, unsettling and transformational.
Conscious or rational thought within my process operates through the use of a formal, visual language. This formal language is a matrix and a springboard to content that is

intuitive, emotional and shifting and much harder to explain authoritatively. Rational thought is a form of knowledge that may be learned and incorporates reasoning and language. It also involves making choices, which, can be articulated and employing particular strategies whether formal or informal.

Intuition can be dismissed as a pure 'hunch' or reacting emotively to thoughts and situations. It is complex, subtle and hard to explain in scientific terms, however it is a valuable form of knowledge and a strategy for making art, if one produces the conditions to allow it to operate.

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Tantra Drawing. *Untitled.* 1995. Udaïpur. Gouache, watercolour, and tempera on paper. 31 x 24.7 cm.

In some Eastern thought, rational and intuitive thought are inseparable. Intuition is given credence as a valid form of knowledge and wisdom. For example, in Tantric art, the essence of the works is that they are an aid to and provide a focus for building a permanent intuition, which is an understanding of an inner vision leading to a higher consciousness. The Tantric drawings I am referring to here are those by anonymous artists from the north-eastern Indian state of Rajasthan. The drawings are intended to serve as meditation aides for the followers of the Tantric school of Hinduism. They were originally taken from illuminated manuscripts and they retain the small size and paper base, characteristic of their source. They are passed down through copying and interpretation, which becomes a form of active meditation. There is an understanding that through building an inner awareness, a person can reflect on their relationship to the cosmos or larger forces of nature outside the body. Tantric art takes both figurative and abstract form and provides a mediary – a place between the viewer and thought, or a place for the viewer to change their phenomenological experience. It is in the abstract form that Tantric art bears a close resemblance to certain 20th century abstract artists such as Hilma af Klint, Paul Klee, Mondrian, Agnes Martin and

Ellsworth Kelly. The experience their artworks offer to the viewer is similar to that of Tantra drawings. Paul Klee for example, wanted to use his art to transcend the particular in order to express the universal and was interested in contrasting forces. He tried to depict 'spatial energy through the concept of polarity': "A concept is not thinkable without its opposite – every concept has its opposite more or less in the manner of thesis-antithesis."[1]

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Hilma af Klint. *Group. Series SUW. Swan no 17.*
October 1914 – March 1915. Oil on canvas. 155 x 152 cm.

[1.] Ajit Mookerjee. The Tantric Way. Thames and Hudson. London. 1977. p. 90.

Another artist who made works that were intended to lead the viewer to other stages of awareness was the idiosyncratic Swedish artist Hilma af Klint (1862–1944). She made work that aimed to attain a level,

> *....beyond those known from two-dimensional illusionism and three-dimensional reality, through glimpses of the fourth-dimensional reality in which the understanding of space would increase and illusory perceptions disappear.*[2]

[2] Catherine De Zegher. 3 x Abstraction: New Methods of Drawing. Yale University Press. New Haven. 2005. p. 16. From Gurli Linden. *I describe the Way and Meanwhile I Am Proceeding along It. A Short Introduction on Method and Intention in Hilma af Klint's work from an Esoteric Perspective.* Rosengardens Forlag. Oaxen. Sweden. 1998. pp. 12-14.

In 1916, her path to making abstract works was through her interest in theosophy[3] and 'invisible forces' and in visually depicting her relationship to the "unknowable" she believed existed. She thought her art could act as a pathway towards transcendence, and painted geometry as generic shapes organised into visual systems that were to her and her followers, filled with meaning and represented invisible forces. The theosophical meaning inherent in her art and her path to it via ritual and automatic drawing is not what initially drew me to af Klint's painting. When I first viewed the small watercolours[2] and her oil paintings, there was a resonance or energy that was elusive, mysterious and inexplicable. They made an impression then, and one that continues today, that goes far beyond the material and visual information the paintings present. How the work was manufactured, the scale, the materials used, the tactility and the simplicity and complexity of the images invite the viewer to engage with the work in an experience that is transformative. The translucency and vibrancy of watercolour and her use of colour provide a contemplative experience. Until recently, in 2005[3] she has been largely overlooked by the mainstream history of Western painting[4], though she was making abstract painting that closely parallels and at a similar time to the research of Malevich whose work also provided a manifestation and a visualisation of another dimension, not of the external world. She worked in artistic isolation, so did not know of Malevich's achievements though she was aware of philosophical issues of her time [5].

> *Af Klint met Rudolph Steiner in 1908 when he passed through Stockholm on a lecture tour. At that time, Steiner led the German branch of the*

[3] Theosophy means divine wisdom, and in 1875 Helena Blavatsky founded the Theosophical Society in New York which taught an amalgamation of Western occult beliefs, Hindu and Buddhist teachings mixed with a pseudo-scientific account of evolution.
[2] *Secret Pictures by Hilma af Klint.* PS1, New York. Viewed in 1989.
[3] Hilma af Klint was included in *3 x Abstraction*. Shown at The Drawing Center. New York. 2005.
[4] Af Klint instructed that her work was not be shown until twenty years after her death (in 1944). This may have contributed to her work not being known.
[5] Rontgen's discovery of X-rays in 1895; the use of telegraphy that made use of electromagnetic waves in 1900; Albert Einstein's theory of relativity; Rudolph Steiner's concept of life as balance between opposing forces that could be conveyed through forms and colours.

Theosophical Society, prior to which he had worked at the Goethe Archive in Weimar, where he edited Goethe's scientific writings.[6]

However her work does not sit easily within the critical writings or the art history of the twentieth century as it involves a quest of the mind that seeks to depict another dimension of experience beyond matter. In his essay for the exhibition "The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985" in Los Angeles in 1986, Maurice Tuchman suggests that there was a distinct reluctance on the part of influential writers and critics in mid twentieth century America, including Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg to write about abstraction as a transformative experience. Rather, they addressed issues of abstraction in the visual arts through aesthetic issues and formal content rather than through esoteric and emotional content where the language is imprecise. The language and concepts used to describe paintings incorporating alternative belief systems did not have the required rigour when compared to that used when elaborating on the purely aesthetic content which came to embody the twentieth century view of abstraction influenced by the curatorial stance taken by director of the Museum of Modern Art, Alfred Barr. He graphically charted his view of the trajectory of modern art in his writings and, 'encouraged a wave of formalist criticism dominating studies of modern art and influencing the popular view of modern art.'[7]

[6] Catherine De Zegher. ed. 3 x Abstraction: New Methods of Drawing. Yale University Press. New Haven. 2005. p. 97. Steiner's editorial work on Goethe's writings appeared in vols. 114 – 17 of *Deutsche National Litteratur,* Joseph Kürschner. ed. Union Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft. 1884 – 96. Af Klint visited Steiner again in 1920 in Donach outside Basel, in Switzerland.

[7] Maurice Tuchman et al. The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985. Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Abbeville Press Publishers. New York, London, Paris. 1986. p.18.

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Hilma af Klint. From *The Blue Books, No.5,* 1908.
Watercolour on paper. 17 x 23 x 1.5 cm.

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Hilma af Klint. *Parcifal Series, Group 2, Section 4: The Convolute of the Physical Plane, Outwards*.
November, 1916. Watercolour on paper. 17 x 17 cm.

Some contemporary abstract artists suggest they use intuition in the process of making artwork. The contemporary American painter Jonathon Lasker speaks of his way of arriving at his paintings in 'an intuitive manner.'

> *I believe in the intuitive process. The imaginative mind is precious and very important. I just realize that there is a pretty deep split in our lives between that which is conscious and unconscious. It is a very important split: it is where existence and transcendence almost touch. And I think it is quite interesting to pursue that meeting point.* [8]

[8] Jonathan Lasker: Paintings, Drawings. Studies. Richter Verlag. Dusseldorf. 2003. p.14.

Jessica Stockholder is an American artist whose work incorporates real objects and spaces she constructs into artworks by painting across their surfaces. She talks about the kinds of choices she makes in the process and her state of mind as she makes her work. There is a sense of detachment that she illustrates that I can relate to, where she suggests she is involved in the actual materials themselves, including the inherent properties of each material, and how they relate to each other visually and practically, and how the work relates to the site in which it is displayed. The result is far more complicated than she reveals, as there is a poetic, theatrical quality to her work. Although she is using objects that are practical and have a use in the external world including bungee straps, buckets, old furniture, buckets, park benches, balls of yarn and oranges, they are transformed into dynamic, complex, colourful environments.

> *.... I choose materials in many ways, both rational, predetermined and by chance, and some might say 'intuitively'. Though that word 'intuitive' is often used to imply lack of thought, I think it points to a kind of thinking difficult to define. On some level it seems right to say that I could choose any material and what matters to me is how the abstract making of fiction I'm involved with meets the real materials in the world.... How a narrative does or doesn't emerge isn't something I suffer over. I watch it happen while I focus on bringing together the parts and constructing something light and airy that floats apart.*[9]

[9] David Ryan. Talking Painting: Dialogues with Twelve Contemporary Abstract Painters. Routledge. London and New York. 2000. p. 240.

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Work by Jessica Stockholder at Gorney, Bravin + Lee.
New York. December 2003.

In her response to abstraction and how she views the term, Stockholder says,

> *I see abstraction as being equivalent to fiction, in that it's bound up with the impulse to create another world. Abstraction and illusion share a remove from matter. I experience abstraction and my work as parallel to, or perhaps as a metaphor for, the mind….*[10]

I posit the notion that intuition and rational thought should not be viewed as separate, opposites or a binary system. They are inseparable and are only viewed as opposing when there are boundaries imposed or when we use a linear form of expression such as speech or writing.

The Taoist sage Lao Tzu said, "all opposites arise simultaneously and mutually."[11] There is usually a line that defines opposites while at the same time unifies them. For example a line that defines a convex figure, at the same time makes the concave figure. They are inseparable. One cannot exist without the other. This example can be used to describe the relationship between intuitive and rational thought. They arise together, rely on each other for definition and are inseparable. They are seamless; they operate without any conscious action of directing thought to one or the other.

> *Boundaries instead* of *being a product of reality, there for all to feel and touch and measure, were finally seen as a product of the way we map and edit reality.*[12]

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[10] Ryan. op. cit. p. 237.
[11] Ken Wilber. No Boundary: Eastern and Western Approaches to Personal Growth. New Science Library. Shambhala Publications.Inc. Boston. 1979. p. 25.
[12] Ken Wilber. No Boundary: Eastern and Western Approaches to Personal Growth. New Science Library. Shambhala Publications.Inc. Boston. 1979. p 38.

In this way the separation of intuition and rational thought is an artificial construction used to explain and measure binary situations, conditions and thought, thus one area can be separated from another or can be framed and made visible by the other. In the beginning of this project, I thought the two areas of rational and intuitive thought could be separated and formed a binary structure of opposites, and could be explained and justified. As this project draws to a close I no longer believe this to be true though I acknowledge one can create an arbitrary difference or boundary in verbal language and visual processes by explaining the rational equating to formal issues and the intuitive to a resonant awareness that includes an emotional reading that is an integral part of the content. The two forms of thought are more intertwined and complex than a simple binary structure. They operate together seamlessly and it is not a matter of consciously shutting one off to allow the other to operate. There is no hierarchy in my practice where one takes precedence over the other. What I have discovered is that I can only define the conditions and circumstances I establish that allow them to operate together as it is the function of my artwork to manifest intuition and rational thought and bring them together as a whole in a relational interplay.

Robin Kingston. *Bell's Hill*, 1982.
Oil pastel on paper. 30.1 x 22.5 cm.

Detail of drawing at left. Examples of drawing using a Zen method.

There are several sources that allowed me to access non-rational methodologies as a manner of manifesting imagery. They are offered here, not to establish a dualism between intuitive and rational thought, but rather to explain and to understand why I use them as strategies for making art.

I was taught representational drawing when attending art school in Australia[13], using a traditional academic method that incorporated perspective. When studying in America, a lecturer who used a Zen[14] method for observational drawing encouraged me to try it. Through experimentation, I discovered a methodology that allowed me to access a deeper involvement in the creative process I had thought missing by working in an academic method. The difference was that perspectival drawing uses an overriding construct to organise spatial construction of a motif on the support. It is a Western device for ordering a representation of space, starting with the construct and fitting the perception of what one is observing to it. The Zen method I was encouraged to explore, uses perception and is more attuned to being aware of what you are actually observing, in the moment, using both central and peripheral vision and working on the support using a "not knowing" attitude, where equivalent marks to

[13] In Canberra ,1971 – 1975 part of East Sydney Technical College. (Now Canberra School of Art)
[14] "Characteristic of Zen – and, in a sense, charactertistic indeed of the oriental mind in general – is the attempt to understand and experience the things of this world, whether it be animate or inanimate, from *within:* to let oneself be seized and taken by them instead of trying to comprehend them, as we in the west do, from a point of view external to them. Thus to a degree unparalleled in any other form of art, Zen art requires of the beholder tranquil and patient absorption, a pure and composed hearkening to that inaudible utterance, which yet subsumes in itself all things, and which points to the absolute *Nothingness* lying beyond all form and colour." Jeremy Lewison. Brice Marden: Prints 1961 – 1991: A Catalogue Raisonne. Tate Gallery.1992. London. p. 51. from Helmut Brinker, *Zen in the Art of Painting.* trans. George Campbell. 1987. p.1.

what is being observed are placed on a support such as paper or canvas. The sensation of what kind of mark to draw originates within the body and does not arise from conscious observation. One is looking, but placing the gaze in an unfocussed manner, just in the space, in front of the eyes. It is about looking and being aware, in the moment, and having no focal point when observing the subject. Rather it is about looking inward to the self, whilst looking outwards. After a period of time during the drawing process, one looks at the marks and the motif begins to emerge from the marks. The completion of the work is making the motif visible and equivalent to the seen experience. In effect it is the symbiosis of the seen, the drawn and the observer and a response between them that allows the drawing emerge. I found my experience of looking and perception in these drawings closely matched my reality. The academic method seemed to originate within rational thought and the Zen method was an intuitive one. The latter method enabled my experience of seeing to be made visible, almost like chaos out of which emerged an order.

Robin Kingston. *Window.* September 1981. Oil pastel on paper. 25.5 x 25cm.

After a period of study using this 'Zen' method, I began to adapt it into my working processes and rejected much of the discipline. I became concerned with the fact that drawings made by my peers looked similar and the lecturer wanted compliance to a particular look. It became just another perceptual exercise and another construct with

its own set of rules and I believed making art to be about much more, so I took what was useful and moved on.

> *When I say that every visible is invisible, that perception is imperception, that consciousness has a "punctum caecum," that to see is always to see more than one sees – this must not be understood in the sense of a contradiction – it must not be imagined that I add to the visible…a nonvisible….One has to understand that it is visibility itself that involves a non-visibility.*[15]

The experience of making an artwork for me involves making an invisible experience visible through employing intuitive and rational thought and an attentiveness that allows one to interpret the process. It is making the experience manifest through the use of the materials and processes of art making which in turn allows the viewer to experience it too. Seeing and being in the moment incorporates a holistic experience, one that cannot be divided into a binary system. Experience already incorporates elements that can be interpreted by the senses and they do not necessarily relate to visibility. I can also relate "non-visibility" to the Zen drawing method, where one does not draw what one knows, but rather draws the experience of what one sees.

Marion Milner, a psychoanalyst working during the first half of the twentieth century discovered that working in an alternative and what could be called intuitive method to make art work was beneficial. Her practice was aligned with the Object-Relations School when she became interested in learning to paint. She was not an artist and had attempted to learn in the traditional method through the use of technical books about painting, but was not happy with the result. Milner discovered that producing a drawing in an entirely different way from that which she had been taught, yielded more satisfactory results in that it allowed her to depict what she perceived as a much truer experience of what she had herself observed. Of this experience she said it was, "a way of letting the hand and eye do exactly what pleased them without any

[15] Maurice Merleau-Ponty. The Visible and the Invisible. Northwestern University Press. Evanston. 1968. p. 247. Also cited by Robert Hobbs in Mark Lombardi: Global Networks. ICI Publishers. New York. 2003. p 48.

conscious working to a preconceived intention."[16] The harder she tried to render objects, to represent distance, solidity, grouping of objects and light and shade the more unsuccessful she felt the work was. When she tried to draw she felt there was some unknown force interfering. She called this her 'imaginative mind' and when she let this imaginative mind have free rein, she found the result of that work more satisfying. She decided that,

> *It was as if one's mind could want to express the feelings that come from the sense of touch and muscular movement rather than from the sense of sight. In fact it was almost as if one might not want to be concerned in drawing with those facts of detachment and separation that are introduced when an observing eye is perched on a sketching stool with all the attendant facts of a single - view - point and fixed- eye -level and horizontal lines that vanish. It seemed one might want some kind of relation to objects in which one was much more mixed up with them than that.* [17]

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Marion Milner. *Summer Morning.*
Charcoal and wash (purple and blue and black)
13.5 x 10 cm. (No date given.)

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Marion Milner. *Summer Beeches.*
Charcoal. 11.5 x 10 cm. (No date given.)

Milner describes the lack of separation between her and what she is trying to depict – a fusing of the inner and outer vision where when she drew the objects in a nonsensical made up way that defied an objective logic; the objects appeared more real than when using a construct (such as perspective or rules of depiction) to draw them. She drew objects using a non-perspectival code or method of construction. Her work was for the most part observing the world, and was figurative.

Another writer, D.W. Winnicott's writing is informed by Object-Relations theory and although his work is not directly about the artistic creative process, creativity is central to his writings. He writes about an intermediary, transitional space between

[16] Marion Milner. On Not Being Able to Paint. Heinemann Editions. 2nd Ed. London. 1971. p. xvii.
[17] Ibid. p.10.

subjectivity and objectivity where the inner reality and the outer world contribute to experience. This experience of the mingling of subjective and objective response to painting can be found as Peter Fuller writes about his experience of viewing Cézanne's painting. He suggests,

> *....his work poses a new kind of relationship between the observer and the observed : it is with Cézanne that we begin to be made aware that what I see depends upon where I am and when. He shows us a landscape in a state of change and becoming, from the point of view of an observer who is himself no longer assumed to be frozen and motionless in time and space.....Cézanne mingled a subjective with an objective conception of space, but of course he did so playfully and in an explorative rather than a dogmatically decreed fashion.*[18]

Adrian Stokes, a contemporary of the theorists of the Object-Relations school, was also an artist. He recognised the spectator's ability to unconsciously identify with the artist in a manner that involves a psychic resonance or 'parallel amalgam'.[20] Stokes directs his understanding of this state though the materiality of art's intrinsic formal language and names it 'oceanic feeling' and the experience of 'envelopment'.[21] He also is willing to recognise "the importance of feelings and mergence and fusion in aesthetic experience."[22] It is a state of unison between the observer and the observed. It can also be likened to the state of feeling at one with or having empathy with an artwork. The feeling is one of enmeshment rather than detachment, where space and time dissolve and blur so the viewer may feel suspended within the work itself. It is not a blank space, but a place that may be vague or even evasive and tangential. The experience involves a paradox, because it appears to be blank, empty or elusive, but can produce an emotional experience that can envelop the observer.

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[18] Peter Fuller. Art and Psychoanalysis. Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative. London. 1980. p. 154.
[20] Stephen James Newton. Painting, Psycholanalysis and Spirituality. Cambridge University Press. p.11. Original citation, The Critical Writings of Adrian Stokes Volume III. 1955–67. Thames and Hudson. London. 1978. p.149.
[21] Ibid. p.11. Original citation, The Critical Writings of Adrian Stokes. Volume lll. 1955-67. Thames and Hudson. London. 1978. p. 271.
[22] Peter Fuller. Art and Psychoanalysis. Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative. London. 1980. p.157.

Malevich and Mondrian were both striving for a dimension that was beyond the visual replication of the world around them. They were attempting to find a higher state of human consciousness through their artwork. They wanted to provide visual pathway to that place through their art. Through the construction of contemplative images they sought equilibrium, a resonance and a dimension that went beyond matter, of that "empty space where nothing is perceived but sensation".[23] The Russian avant-garde[24] used the word objectless-ness relating to the objectless perception and mental discipline in the practice of the Eastern mystics.

[23] Catherine De Zegher. 3 x Abstraction. Yale University Press. New York. 2005. p. 34. Original citation Charlotte Douglas. Beyond Reason: Malevich, Mariushin, and their Circles. in *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890 – 1985.* pp.190-191.

[24] The Russian avante-garde in this instance refers to the Suprematists including Malevich, I. Kliun and L. Popova who tried to depict another state they believed existed, they called the fourth dimension.

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Tantra Drawing. *Untitled.* 1997. Jaïpur.
Gouache, watercolour, and tempera on paper.
32.7 x 24.8 cm.

This mental discipline is also evident in Tantra drawings. Here the art works provide a space for 'active looking', where intuition is a vital way of thinking and the result of concentrated intellectual effort.[25] Approximately A4 in size, they are painted on previously used pieces of paper that could have been receipts so were stained and yellowed with use. The images can be read abstractly as geometric shapes such as circles, triangles, lines and stripes of various colours. The works are passed down through history by the copying of earlier examples of the form. Many of them look like the work of the Russian Suprematists and artists including Richard Tuttle and Agnes Martin and Hilma af Klint. They are made up of simple forms and structures and if one has the knowledge, they may be read as signs to enlightenment or another plane of understanding. I view them for the intervals, forms and colours and the intense state of looking and contemplation they produce for the viewer. The delicacy of touch, the sensitivity to the paper and the gouache and watercolour, the colour relationships, and intervals, all is revealed in the perception of these images. The act of seeing and sensing is an important relationship between the image and the viewer. Their abstract content is about sensation and contemplation between myself and the work and transformation of thought to another level.

[25] "Field of Color: Tantra Drawings from India." Viewed at the Drawing Center. New York. December 2004.

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Tantra Drawing. *Untitled.* 1990. Bikaner. Gouache, watercolour, tempera on paper. 26.3 x 37.5 cm.

The resonance found in the Tantra drawings, Mondrian's paintings and other art that interests me, can be thought of in relation to an issue Eva Hesse spoke about in relation to her work. Her art is a marriage of formal principals of the visual language with something else that is much harder to explain. The 'non-logical self'[26] is a term she used when referring to subject matter of another order that she thought lay under the formal visual logic in her sculptures. She was 'invoking the dimension of the something else….'[27] The formal principles were those known to be readable as art, but she was far more interested in an 'underlying inarticulacy'.[28]

> *The formal principals, Hesse wrote, are understandable and understood. It is the unknown quantity from which and where I want to go. As a thing, an object, it accedes into its non-logical self. It is something, it is nothing.*[29]

It is this 'non logical self' or 'the something else' that I am particularly interested in when looking at Mondrian. It is an energy that the viewer perceives that does not relate to the visual information on the surface of the paintings. Mondrian's work, when seen in a reproduction appears to be hard, cold and mathematical. The experience of his work through photography is not unlike that I referred to when speaking of Brice Marden's work at the beginning of this exegesis. It is impossible to understand Mondrian through reproductions. When his art works are viewed first hand they are painterly, intuitive and rhythmical. The facture or the surface constructed by the act of Mondrian actually applying paint has a very distinct quality and presence. There is a haptic quality, made by the painter's hand and the facture of

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[26] Briony Fer. On Abstract Art. Yale University Press. U.S.A. 1997. p.112. Quoted in Lucy Lippard. *Eva Hesse.* New York University Press. 1976. p.131.
[27] Ibid. p. 118.
[28] Ibid. p. 118.
[29] Briony Fer. On Abstract Art. Yale University Press. U.S.A. 1997. p. 112. Quoted in Lucy Lippard. *Eva Hesse.* New York University Press. 1976.

the painting, which creates an energy that holds the gaze of the viewer. There are changes in paint application and colour and also to the density of impasto, evidence of underpainting and changes of width and in the articulation of the lines.

> *However within and behind these aspects (the black grid lines and the coloured shapes, elements of the painting that are considered as basically articulate, conscious form) are the inevitable scratched and striations of painterly gesture: the delicately interlocking films of superimposed paint layers of impasto: the depiction of the process in terms of erasure, over-painting, and the general struggle involved in the transformation from beginnings to resolutions, all embedded within the materiality and texture of the work.*[30]

The writer Anton Ehrenzweig named this content 'inarticulate form'[31] and he linked it to abstract art. He saw this aspect of form as carrying art's essential emotional value and power. 'Inarticulate form' does not refer to the deliberately controlled aspects of painting, but rather the accidental vagaries of material facture such as variations of surface, remnants of underpainting, erasures, lumps of paint, breaks in the surface skin of the paint and bleeds. Many of these aspects cannot be directly controlled, as they are remnants of more intuitive painterly process.

As artists work with materials, they become more skilled in an understanding of them, therefore can orchestrate or manipulate their effects more subtly. This manipulation can lead to stilted areas of the painting, as the original forms, being intuitively based, are difficult to copy and have them maintain integrity. This is particularly true when copying an image from a drawing to a painting. The drawing's final form is discovered or found in the process of manufacture and has particular qualities that are difficult to reproduce as they have come about in a creative manner. It is advantageous not to look, or copy the drawing directly when making the painting that

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[30] Stephen James Newton. Painting, Psychoanalysis and Spirituality. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge. 2001. p. 24.
[31] Ibid. p. 25. Original citation. Anton Ehrenzweig. The Psycho-Analysis of Artistic Vision and Hearing: An Introduction to a Theory of Unconscious Perception. Routledge and Kegan Paul. London. 1953. p. 272.

derives from an existing drawing. It is a matter of recreating the experience again, rather than recreating the drawing exactly. It only serves to inform the painting, and is one stage of understanding in the process. When copied directly by looking at the drawing while painting, the final work often has little resonance and is stilted and forced.

Intuition requires an active state of awareness or attentiveness between oneself and the artwork, one that can be likened to the relationship between the analyst and their patient. The psychoanalyst W. R. Bion talks about intuition, a sense he describes thus,

> *…….it is a special kind of attentiveness, paradoxically exercised in a wakeful, dreamlike state. It is akin to the aesthetic sense, being sensitive to nuances, shifts, harmonies, tensions in with that is communicated. He suggests that that the analyst's intuition, if it is used, is turned towards reading the patient's presence and allows for a shifting and responding not necessarily to what the patient is saying, but more responding to the presence and non verbal messages read by the analysts inner space. He says it takes a form of being open and not knowing and ability to hold oneself in a state of waiting until a pattern emerges. It is a state of not forcing an order, but being open to the possibility of one appearing and beginning to use it when it does."*[32]

The experience Bion relates sounds as though it is not unlike the experience of making an artwork for some artists. For me personally, it requires a state of 'openness' and a suspension of closure. The nuances and subtleties of the work including the colour and structural relationships, the nature of the surface of the support to the painterly qualities of the materials, the complexity of the strategies employed are all taken into consideration, not always at a conscious level of awareness. It is an awareness or attentiveness that I call an intuitive state where not only the formal appearances and relationships of the artwork area are taken into

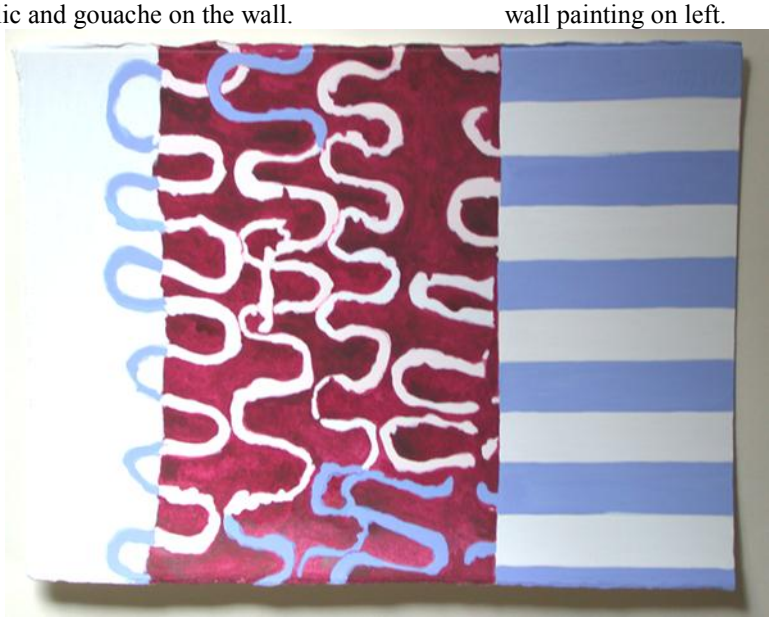
[32] The Vitality of Objects. ed. Joseph Scalia. Continuum. London. 2002. Essay by Arne Jemstedt. Idiom, Intution and Unconscious Intellegence: Thoughts on Some Aspects of the Writings of Christopher Bollas. p. 39. Original citation W. R. Bion. "Attention and Interpretation: Seven Servants." Aronson. New York. 1977. p. 70.

consideration. I am suggesting that there are other layers of meaning operating within the consideration and manufacture of my work. I have learned to orchestrate this situation within this period of research after experimenting with what I perceived as being more rational processes, and my discontent with the results. The decision was made to allow for a more open and fragmented manner of working in the hope of producing more tenuous, and fragile results. I explored this issue in my research by examining whether I could separate rational and intuitive thought in my process of creating artwork through the method outlined below.

In 2001- 2003, I made acetates from original drawings and used an overhead projector to translate them directly onto my studio wall. The graphite drawing was then painted, using acrylic and gouache. A digital camera was used to document the wall drawing, and from these photographs some were chosen to print. From the print acetates were made and used as templates for individual works on paper or on stretchers. The acetates were then copied either by tracing the image or by using the overhead projector. It was, in effect, a section of a work, a template I had already created, where the composition, and colour was known and the choice became how to translate the work - what type of paint, how many layers and what quality of surface. I worked this way for a number of months, where the outcome was known, working with images from previous experimentation and exploration. I discovered that working in this manner was restrictive and ultimately unfulfilling as the elements I had come to value such as play, risk and discovery were missing. The works may be considered relatively successful, but for me lacked subtlety, poetry, and fluidity of thought and became too much an exercise in copying. I discovered that as a procedure and process for making art this method was not useful to me, but in terms of research it was a direct exploration of rational thought and what occurred if I attempted to arbitrarily separate and favour it over intuition.

Robin Kingston. *Detail of painting directly on studio wall.* February 2002.
Graphite, acrylic and gouache on the wall.

Robin Kingston. Untitled. Oil on linen. 2002. 35.5 x 25 cm. Image taken from wall painting on left.



Robin Kingston. *Untitled Drawing*. 2002. Graphite, gouache on paper.
30 x 20 cm. Image taken from previous wall paintings.

As this project developed, in an attempt to understand my relationship to intuitive thought, I tried to produce more open ended, or loose connections within the work by favouring strategies such as 'not knowing', play, fragmentation and differencing visual structures. The recognition that this shift was necessary occurred as a result of painting I experienced during the period of candidature including the work of Thomas Nozkowski, Agnes Martin, Sol LeWitt and Richard Tuttle where there was an appreciation of the way in which part of the content of the work was 'thought made visible'. There is an attentiveness and responsiveness manifest within the work that could be understood as such, and the works employ a delicacy of touch and a response

to the materials used. The results are inventive and poetic and outcomes arise out of the process of the manufacture.

Another factor contributing to the loosening of the imagery and my approach to the use of material occurred during the process of working directly onto the wall in my studio. It is linked to my understanding of intuition and the poetic content in my work. The ambient light from the window reflected onto the wall produced elusive effects that were made from daylight through its old glass. These transitory effects were only discovered through documentation of the site and as this project draws to a conclusion there is the realisation they were influential in the development of subsequent paintings. The material of light, glass and painted wall produced shadows and fleeting moments of light that suggested other content – like that of the fold Deleuze speaks of [35] where space and time speak of the soul. The light, pearly chiaroscuro effects collapse into a multiplicity of meanings where there is an envelopment that could refer to the immaterial. The physical material of paint and the surface it interacts with becomes a connection to vibrations both micro and macro, and what may be called a 'mental landscape' in the soul or in the mind that includes immaterial folds. [36]

Using the Baroque fold in drapery as an example Deleuze suggests,

> "The fold,….. *invents the infinite work or process. The problem is not how to finish a fold, but how to continue it, to have it go through the ceiling, how to bring it to infinity. It is not only because the fold affects all materials that it thus becomes expressive matter, with different scales, speeds and different vectors (mountains and waters, papers fabrics, living tissues, the brain), but especially because it determines and materializes Form. It produces a form of expression, a* Gestaltung*, the genetic element or infinite line of inflection, the curve with a unique variable."*[37]

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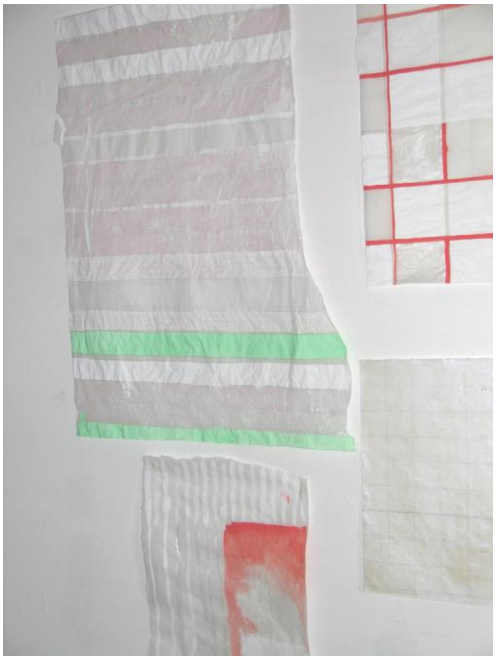
[35] Gilles Deleuze. The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque. University of Minnesota Press. Minneapolis and London. 1993.
[36] Deleuze. Ibid. p. 35.
[37] Deleuze. op. cit. pp. 34, 35.

Robin Kingston. Daylight falling on the studio wall. 2001.

After noticing these elusive light effects on the wall paintings, I began to choose structures that were familiar in my practice, including sequences of geometric forms such curving arabesques, grids, stripes, lines and freely placed them on the same support, in conjunction with flowing, fluid swathes of translucent watercolour and gouache, watered down until the pigment separated into grainy clumps. I began this process by experimenting and painting on different types of paper such as tissue, tracing and other more transparent papers such as rice paper. These papers emulated the elusive translucent light reflected on my studio wall from the window. The aim was to subvert the rigid structure of the earlier works, where the image sat on top of the picture plane like a skin, and there was no illusory space depicted in the work. This early work was more matter of fact. It is not illusory and does not provide a space for the imagination. By using transparent papers where the surface was indeterminate and shifting, it allowed a more open space literally and psychologically, to exist with in the work. It is analogous with a space that folds back on itself, where the material or actual provides a passage to the immaterial.



Robin Kingston. Studio installation 2004. Graphite, watercolour, gouache on various. transparent papers.

Robin Kingston. Watercolour and gouache on tissue paper. Detail. 2004. 36 x 23 cm.

This work was transitional, however it was important in that it allowed a development to occur within my practice, from a more rigid, closed composition, to one that shifts, is more elusive and complex. The structures of work and even my thinking began to unravel, or to be more open and allowed for a fragmentary series of complexities to exist on one support. It is a multi-dimensional space. To me, it allows for a space of contemplation that is an indeterminate state of mind, where there is no hierarchy in how the work is to be viewed. No structure or image takes precedence over another in the interpretation of the work. There is the freedom to construct a series of relationships that may be momentary, or last longer. The spaces or relationships may be stable simultaneously or sequentially shift and move as one focuses one or another, or many. It is a complex structure and the attentiveness required is the equivalent to intuition.

Bion speaks of how the experience of what occurs between the analyst and patient is real enough, but that it can sound unconvincing when trying to make it clear to another person. The translation into language muddies the experience.

> *The matters with which we (as psychoanalysts) are real beyond question but have to be described in terms that from their nature introduce distortion.* [38]

There are parallels with Bion's statement in relation to my practice of referring to or describing individual qualities in artworks that are quite specific in terms of paint. When I use verbal language these qualities seem broad and non-specific when I am trying to explain or contextualise them. It is a matter of how to talk about the intuitive without it becoming spiritual or mystical – something one can grasp, or explain although it comes from a place where language is inadequate. The actual experience of the work is important.

When making an artwork there is an attentiveness and commitment that is from moment to moment. This may be likened to a state the psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls "flow". By this term he means "in the flow", describing a state in our experience of optimal fulfilment and engagement. He looks at the state that allows the individual to go beyond themselves, as part of something greater than their own conscious identity. Using his observations of students and drawing on his own experience he noticed,

> *.....that when they started painting, they almost fell into a trance. They didn't seem to notice anything, and they just moved as if they were possessed by something inside themselves……*[37]

He looked at other psychological studies of this state and realised they mainly looked at the state as a means to an end, rather than studying it as a motivation in itself. This state of trance or engagement that Csikszentmihalyi calls "flow" can itself be an incentive to carry out an activity as it induces a feeling of interest or enthusiasm that is engaging and may become the sole reason to do the activity rather than the outcome

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[38] Scalia. op. cit. p. 40. Originally published in W.R. Bion. Second Thoughts. Maresfield Reprints. London. 1967. p. 122.

[37] Elizabeth Debold. Flow with Soul: An interview with Dr Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. (n.p.) www.wei.org/j21/cziksz.asp?pf=1

it produces. This state is not specific to the creative arts, but people involved in the creative arts use it.

He asked people from various fields of endeavour to describe their experience when they are doing really well.

> *.....the interviews seemed in many important ways to focus on the same quality of the experience. For instance, the fact that you were completely immersed in what you are doing, that the concentration was very high, that you knew what you had to do moment by moment that you had very quick and precise feedback as to how well you were doing, and you felt that your abilities were stretched but not overwhelmed by the opportunities for action. In other words, the challenges were in balance with the skills. And when those conditions were present, you began to forget all the things that bothered you in everyday life, forget yourself as an entity separate from what was going on – you felt you were a part of something greater and you were just moving along with the logic of the activity.*
>
> *Everyone said it was like being carried by a current, spontaneous effortless like a flow. You also forget time and are not afraid of being out of control. It feels effortless and yet it's extremely dependent on concentration and skill. So it's a paradoxical kind of condition where you feel that you are on a knife edge, between anxiety on the one hand and boredom on the other. You're just operating on this fine line where you can barely do what needs to be done.*[38]

Within my practice this condition of 'flow' may be aligned with working intuitively.

[38] Debold. op. cit. (n.p.)

Csikszentmihalyi suggests that flow,

> *drives this human need for going beyond what we have. In creativity or optimal experience,.....that it is always a struggle, and the struggle has to do with essentially opening yourself up and yet delving deeply into yourself. Here are these two processes differentiation and integration - which have to go hand in hand for complexity to evolve.* [39]

Differentiation allows for a form of multi dimensional attention within my own practice that allows for many structures to operate within the work at one time. It is complex and refers to compositional, formal structures and those of individual motifs. Differentiation is not fixed and does not only occur on the surface of understanding but operates as an intuitive or subliminal scanning to allow a number of choices to operate at once during the making of the work. The action of differentiation offers a great number of possibilities and variations and in the case of my work, allows me to keep the work in a suspended, open form, where the closure or completion of individual works arises over time. An example of when I use differentiation is when I place works for viewing so I can evaluate and study them in a mental state I liken to being unfocussed, and thinking, while looking at the work. It is a contemplative state where images and configurations float in the form of visual thoughts. It allows for a multidimensional, complex, ambiguous, open-ended solution to each work. The open-ended solution merely means that each individual work is not the *only* solution, but rather one of a series that looks towards new and different formulations and also borrows from what has gone before. As the work evolves into new forms, these become integrated into my vocabulary. This is another example of Deleuze's fold where the work folds back on itself and is reused but with a different outcome. The process is infinite and variable. Its form is external and in the world, but suggests an immaterial, internal content. The work is made using attentiveness and intuition - a negotiation with time, sensitivity to materials and the moment.

[39] Debold. op. cit. (n.p.)

Chapter Three: Personal Methods

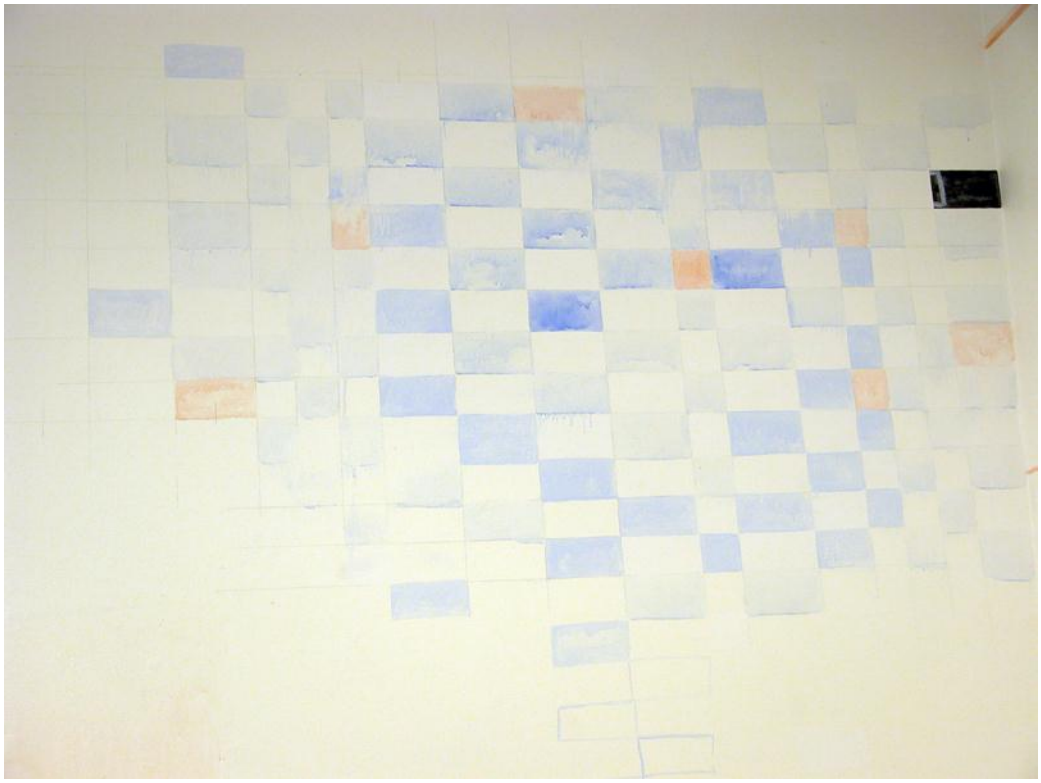
This chapter has three sections that explore personal methods I employ that allow for intuitive and rational thought to operate. "Serial/repetition" considers how these strategies provide an element of order to operate within my practice and how small variations can lead to a transformation of content and structure. "Play" considers an activity that is embedded in the material processes of my practice and how it enables intuitive thought. Play is a crucial strategy in my practice as it allows for the state of 'not knowing' and for me to take risks or creative leaps that may or may not succeed. I also explain the difference between the manner I use play and the Surrealist's use of play. Lastly I address the issue of the performative or in my practice incorporating physical movement of the wrist or of the whole body and how they are used to generate imagery and the trace in the artwork.

Repeat with variations: Serial/repetition

Seriality and repetition are used to instil a layer of order into my practice. These strategies may be aligned with rational or conscious thought. Intuition is also used, as particular strategies and forms suggest themselves due to the particular processes I favour to produce conditions to allowed intuition operate simultaneously.

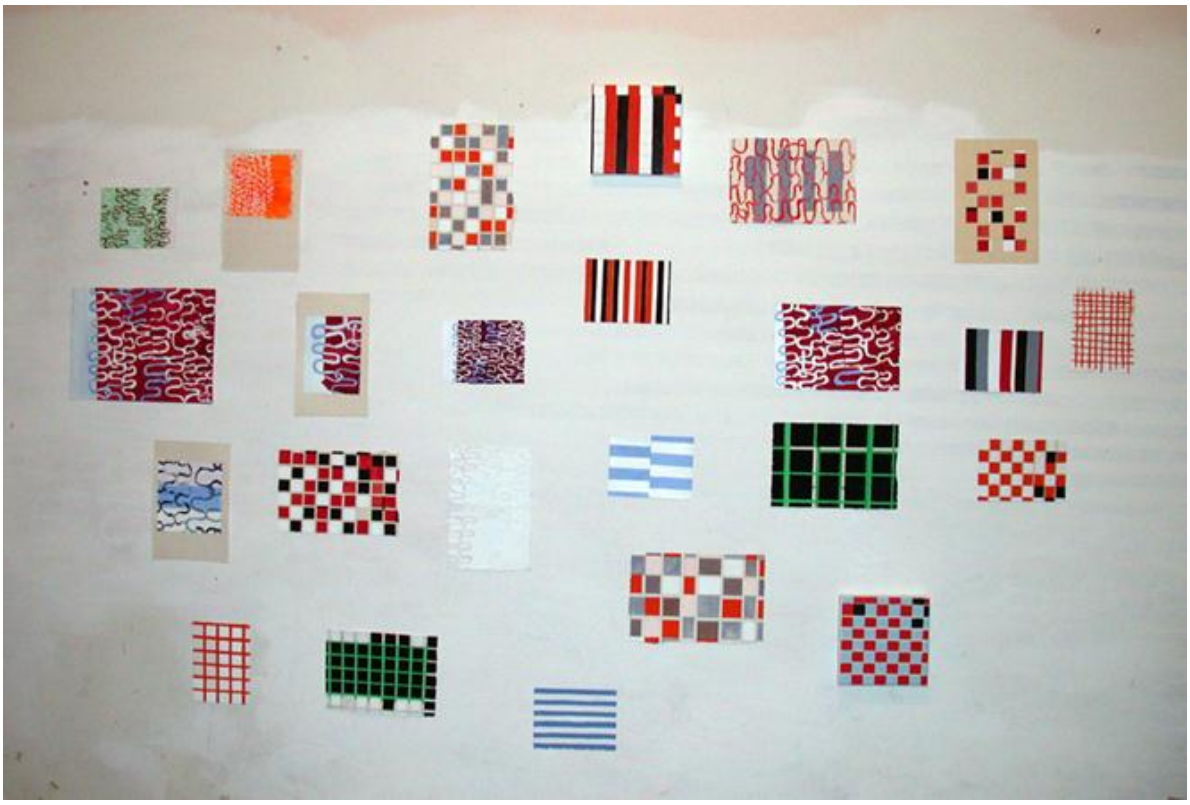
Repetition of structures, colours and forms are referenced to as I look back to older work and reuse the visual language found there in different ways in new works. It is akin to words or sentences being used over and over, but with a different emphasis each time that results in diverse and transformed images and consequently, meanings. An example of the transformation of an image through its reuse is illustrated below, where a blue and white grid is reused, but "loosened" by changing the support from paper to wall. The scale is enlarged and the action is moved from a wrist action to that of the body. In the work on paper gouache is applied in an opaque manner and on the wall, watercolour is used in thin transparencies. This latter work favours the aqueous quality of the paint with drips on the translucency of the white wall.

Robin Kingston. *Untitled. Tight blue Grid*. 2005.
Graphite, gouache, watercolour on paper. 33 x 25 cm.



Robin Kingston. *On the Wall. Wall painting.* 2006. Detail. Graphite, watercolour, gouache and acrylic on the wall. 2006. Dimensions specific to site.

Repetition is used as a compositional structures within work. It incorporates changes to colour, placement in the structure, scale and fragmentation as illustrated below, of the 'studio drawing' for an exhibition *Before and After.*[1]



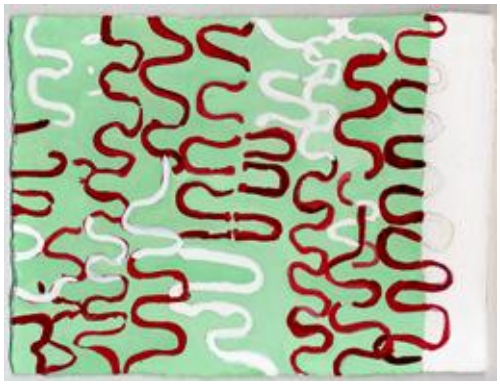
Robin Kingston. *Before and After*. Studio 'drawing', 2002. Graphite, watercolour, gouache on paper. Graphite, oil and gouache on canvas. Multiple parts, dimensions variable.

The 'overall work' *Before and After,* consisted of small, individual works where a particular internal structure is repeated at least once in another work on paper or canvas. The works were not completed sequentially and there was a time lapse between them. They were not initially intended to be shown together. Later, they were arranged in one large work, where the similarities and differences became apparent through comparing and contrasting them on the wall. This is also an example of a work taking a on a grander presence through the use of repetition, rather than that of a single work exhibited by itself. *Before and After* was shown on a 12 x 2

[1] *Before and After.* Arts Victoria. Melbourne. 2002. Graphite, watercolour, gouache on paper. Graphite, oil and on gouache canvas. Multiple paper works and oil on canvas works. Display - Dimensions variable to site.

meter wall and the decision was made to use small, intimate works, but show them in a manner that allowed the work to draw the viewer in to examine detail, but which was vibrant enough to be dominant in the site as people walked through the space.

Within my painting the use of geometric forms or what could be called a matrix, act as a framework, so that the other more gestural, emotive marks may exist between, or provide another structure in contrast. The geometric forms take many guises and include grids, linear and solid; stripes, lines intervals, colour, and other formal structures tied to repetition within my practice. Strategies and structures are used and reused as part of my extended and growing vocabulary in the use of subjective mark making mixed with repetition of geometric forms. Insignificant and slight marks, or structures when repeated become magnified in importance as it makes them more substantial than when used in isolation. Structures whether gestural, organic or geometric, when repeated, offer a known order and a process to follow during manufacture. The process can be adhered to, or not, and this produces different permutations such an open or closed seriality or repetition, fragmentation or an incomplete system where what is already apparent suggests what is left out. In this way, by interpreting an incomplete system, it may suggest what could have followed had the series been completed, or it may be the system is so vast it is impossible to complete it within one work. Serialisation and repetition as strategy resist completion and closure.



Robin Kingston. *Untitled. 2002.*
Graphite, gouache, watercolour on paper.
14.5 x 19.5 cm.

Robin Kingston. *Untitled. 2002.*
Graphite, gouache, watercolour on paper. 29 x 19 cm.

There are multiple possibilities in realising colour, scale, and mark making by employing simple changes and differences between works. Serialisation may take many forms, not purely geometric or mathematical. Serialisation can have a transformative quality as each time a form or sequence is repeated it may change or not be the same as the last time. Through use, serialisation may allow the forms to morph into another form or structure. In my practice, each work is made to be complete in itself, although there is a history of the works before and after, when, if displayed together or sequentially can be viewed for similarities or differences. If a viewer is familiar with an artist's practice, they bring to the current exhibition the knowledge of previous works and this may enhance the experience and understanding.

From the formative period of my art making, repetition has been used as a method of testing variations of an idea. When I was studying in the seventies, there was influence from Abstract Expressionism and Minimalism, both movements which utilise repetition as a strategy, though in different ways as I will explain. At that time, Lucy Lippard visited Australia bringing her idea that art made by women was substantially different from that made by men. Her ideas made me question the history of the canon of painting. Through examining so called 'women's work' I abandoned the stretcher and began to explore the properties of materials including latex and diaphanous cotton organza. Repetitious occupations such as sewing, and weaving were incorporated as strategies and structure. Repetition became part of the work, in the use of a subtle printed image onto the surface of the paintings before gestural mark making and watery flows were added. The elusive quality of the print was produced by making a lino etching, which by its nature is grainy. The image was hand printed onto the surface so it was faint and irregular opposed to the precision of traditional printmaking.

There is a sense of ritual in repetition. Something repeated may become a mantra, a meditation, and a way of becoming one with the process and the product of repetition. Lucy Lippard suggests that,

> *……the act itself may be known, safe but the result can be highly unexpected….Repetition can be a guard against vulnerability. Ritual and repetition are also ways of containing anger, and of fragmenting fearsome wholes.* [2]

[Copyright Material Omitted]

Kolo Moser. *Amsel.* Fabric Sample, 1910/11.
From the Wiener Werkstätte. Vienna.

Through repetition and serialisation and the use of familiar imagery within my practice, there is similarity and also difference. The forms and structures used are similar to those from a long history of abstract imagery that began before the twentieth century in Western culture. I have an interest in the ornamental[3] and decoration from many cultures. I am drawn to them through visual, formal means, rather than from an understanding of what they mean. I have broad interests in cultural material not necessarily from the canon of fine art. Pattern, decoration and the ornamental utilize repetition and serialisation. Through repetition ornamental structures may transform to another visual configuration. The structure contained within ornamentation is often not completely regular or symmetric as decoration or pattern may be. Ornament can be used to evoke a state of contemplation to attain another state of consciousness or reverie.[4] My own work has more in common with

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[2] Lucy Lippard. Eva Hesse. New York University Press. New York. 1976. p. 209.
[3] Ornament – the use of decorative elements for embellishment and the enhancement of visual appeal.
[4] "Ornament had always been accorded philosophical and symbolic significance as a means of giving visible form to the cosmos, infinity, universal relationships, principles of order and natural laws." Burghart Schmidt. *Die Wiederkehr des Ornaments?",* in Jacques Le Rider and Gérard Raulet. eds., *Verabschiedung der (Post-)Modern?: Eine interdisziplinäre Debatte*, transl. by Ruthard Stäblin and Gerhard Mahlberg. Tübingen. 1987. pp. 241 – 148.

ornamentation than pattern where elements, forms, colours and structures are repeated, but change and transform over the time of construction.

[Copyright Material Omitted]

Dagobert Peche[5]. Display of the Wiener-Werkstätte. Zurich Salesroom. 1917.

[Copyright Material Omitted]

Sonia Delaunay. Sketch for a fabric pattern. 1920's.

[Copyright Material Omitted]

Dagobert Peche. *Falte.* 1923. Fabric Design.

[Copyright Material Omitted]

Dagobert Peche. *Kardinal.* 1911/13.

I gain inspiration from the decorative and ornamental for colour combinations and emphasis, structures and the material properties contained within a diverse array of

[5] Dagobert Peche and the Wiener Werkstätte. Viewed at the Neue Galerie. New York. December 2002.

examples. I am drawn to the decorative arts, where repetition is used extensively including the work of Dagobert Peche, Josef Hoffmann and the Wiener-Werkstätte, the bold structures and colour found in Marimekko fabrics and porcelain from Sèvres, France, with its ornate, lavish gilding, rich colouring and spectacular, fanciful shapes decorating useful household objects used by royalty and the gentry. Sèvres [6] objects have a quality of absurdity as they are so elaborately decorated and the forms are elaborate and whimsical.

[Copyright Materials Omitted]

Sèvres Vase. Detail. Porcelain. 18th Century.

In my painting the structures also relate to simple orders, ones that may be used in maths or graphs such as lines and grids of varying intervals. The structures and forms are known, as the issue of originality is not an issue for me, as it is *my* touch, *my* decisions that will make it inherently different from the work of someone else. Therefore the structures I choose are familiar possibly even cross cultural, and have various associations that are accessible to the viewer. By using forms that are familiar,

[6] There are collections of Sèvres porcelains in The Frick Collection and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The Metropolitan has the largest collection outside of France.

there is a pathway formed between the new and the known. For me personally, there is safety in the known and it is a starting point for the works.

Structures are used for visual reasons, and other associations are implicit, but this does not determine the choice to use them. The forms are not made by looking directly at historical or mathematical examples, but arise through the manufacture of the work where slippage, accident, or an intuitive thought may play a part in an image's transformation into a new version. Boredom and playfulness sometimes play a part, so the works are responsive to thought patterns that despite my intentions may be erratic, fractured or disparate. Many of the decisions are made spontaneously in the studio and arise out of a symbiosis between the work and myself. The processes used may or may not be logical, and systems provide a matrix that gives them order. Echoes of Abstract Expressionism and Minimalism still pervade the work. Many of the artists that inform my practice share the use of high key colour, repetition, and serialisation of key structures and strategies.

In the twentieth century artists have often constructed for themselves a private system of rules that are repeated and expanded. For example, in the artist James Siena's modestly sized, intensely intricate, automotive enamel on aluminium paintings Siena imposes rigorous instructions to himself that he carries to completion. Siena[7] says of this process,

> *I don't make marks. I make moves. The reality of abstraction is my primary point of engagement. When I make a painting, I respond to a set of parameters, like a visual algorithm. These structuring devices are subject to the fallibility of my hand, and my mind's ability to complete the work as planned. Using proven mathematical truths, as simple as* one plus one equals two, *I construct pictures that, I hope, are so beyond complex that even a baby can understand them. But like all artworks made by*

[7] Studio visit December 2005. Exhibition at Pace Wildenstein. New York. Viewed December 2005.

hand, they live or die by the essential capabilities of their aesthetic moves." [8]

[Copyrighted Materials Omitted]

James Siena. *Four Nesting Spirals,* 1999-2000, enamel on aluminium. 74 x 56 cm.

[Copyrighted Materials Omitted]

James Siena. *Three Combs (Boustrophedonic),* 2001. enamel on aluminium. 48.5 x 38.2 cm.

Like Sol LeWitt he also has a set of instructions followed to the letter, but by Siena himself, rather than by assistants. He works with both the conceptual and the procedural aspects of the process. The first is a mental construct and the second highly intuitive and the completion of the work relies on the hand and the mind working together. The work is made using tiny brushes and is very labour intensive and the time the work takes is built into the content. The work is mnemonic, complex and mesmerising to make and to view.

[8] Robert Hobbs. James Siena 1991 – 2001. Gorney Bravin + Lee and Daniel Weinberg Gallery. 2001.

> *Systems have other attractions too. A simple system may yield a complex field. Systems may seem logical but can be used to confound logic when extended to absurdity. Systems have no purpose outside of themselves: they engender purposeless, therefore aesthetic, mental processes.*[9]

It may often appear that there is a logical nature to the practice of repetition and serialisation, but this is not always the case, as the outcome may be quite unexpected and irrational as witnessed previously in the work of Sol LeWitt. There is a logical, rational quality to LeWitt's practice, but whose work when viewed is beautiful, expansive and often sensual which brings me to notice that there is a paradox in many of the artists from whom I draw stimulation, including Mondrian, Agnes Martin, Richard Tuttle, Sol LeWitt, Ellsworth Kelly, Hilma af Klint and Fred Sandback. In their practice there is the use of simple forms, colour and strategies of thought that belie the effect of the work produced. I realise it is artificial to group these artists together, as the issues in their work are so different, but for the purpose of looking at threads that have influenced my practice it is useful, as these artists are key within my understanding of making art. All use a broad spectrum of working processes through which their work is distilled and simplified to conclusion. The similarity for me is that the works elicit complex responses that operate on many levels – visual, intellectual and emotional. Each artist's work opens out into much more than the sum of the parts and invites close inspection and thought. In their work thought processes are readily discerned while engaging with the work by following the facture. The apparently simple quality of the visual language gives little indication of the pleasure and the complexity of response they elicit and because of the simple gestalt they can be recalled by the mapping or design of them, but this is only the framework for a much more complex reading. This does not explain the emotional, visual complexity and the range of effects they elicit. This paradox interests me also in that the forms are commonly used within the abstract language and each artist uses the vocabulary for different ends. It creates a visual and intellectual dialogue with the history of abstraction, contemporary abstraction and with individual works in an artist's oeuvre.

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[9] Alicia Legg. ed. Sol LeWitt:Museum of Modern Art. New York. 1978. Essay by Bernice Rose. "Sol LeWitt and Drawing." p. 34.

The results are at once serious and playful, simple and complex, intellectual and emotional, rational and intuitive.

LeWitt states,

> *When an artist uses a multiple modular method he usually chooses a simple and readily available form. The form itself is of very limited importance; it becomes the grammar for the total work. In fact, it is best that the basic unit be deliberately uninteresting so that it may more easily become an intrinsic part of the whole work. ....Using a simple form repeatedly narrows the field of the work and concentrates the intensity to the arrangement of the form. This arrangement becomes the end, while the form becomes the means.*

[Copyrighted Materials Omitted]

Sol LeWitt. Wall Drawing #696. 1992. Colour ink wash.
Collection Koninklijke Schouwburg. The Hague. Two views.

LeWitt's relationship to language is interesting. He writes clearly and succinctly on his ideas relating to art including the labels for the wall works,

> *...where the relationship of words to form and to process is unique. "If I do a wall drawing, I have to have the plan written on the wall or label because it aids the understanding of the idea. If I just had lines on the wall, no one would know that there are ten thousand lines within a certain space, so I have two kinds of form – the lines, and the explanation of the lines. Then there is the idea, which is always understated.*[10]

To this end, the labels contain information by which the work is explained and it gives the means by which the work multiplies and transforms itself as the same label

[10] Alicia Legg. ed. Sol LeWitt: Museum of Modern Art. New York. 1978. p. 24. In conversation with Lucy Lippard. 1971-72. From essay titled: "The Structures, the Structures and the Wall Drawings,The Structures and the Wall Drawings and the Books." by Lucy R. Lippard.

can be used endlessly. The works are repeated on many walls as the work is remade, producing many different drawings. The outcome may be different as they are reproduced in variable sites. The variations appear endless, and there no clear beginning or end to the series.

Within my practice, images are used repeatedly in different sites and the variations are endless also, however the titles of work are not descriptive of the actions taken or the thought behind their construction. LeWitt's work is conceptual in nature whereas my own arises from process, intuition, awareness and a responsiveness to materials and the site. There are two parts to LeWitt's process, the instructions which are conceptual in nature and secondly the actions of the assistants constructing the work. The process of my work relates to the experiential element in LeWitt's work, the one the assistants may go through as they construct it.[11] They respond to the conditions of the site and materials and their own labour when they are making the work.

Sol LeWitt and the other artist's practice above seem rational, logical and ordered when compared to artists such as Pollock, Marden, Twombly, in whose work there is a gestural and overt emotional quality. Their works appear impulsive and expressive. However, these artists also worked serially, working on drawings, studies and paintings where there are slight changes between works that are related.

My work combines both geometric and gestural approaches where the repetition of a structure may take precedence in the decision making in the beginning of a work – I usually start with a geometric structure whether it is a grid, or lines at varying intervals and then work in relation to this matrix to completion. The choice of what structure to use is made before the work begins and then the work becomes a record of the cumulative decisions used in its manufacture. The decision is usually an intuitive one, a vague notion of a direction to go – what colour, what structure, which surface. Sometimes it is choosing to work with a particular colour, or a tactile sense of

[11] For an enlightening account of the experience of working on one of Sol LeWitt's wall works, see that of David Schulman, in Sol LeWitt: The Museum of Modern Art New York. Alicia Legg . ed. 1978. p. 42. Originally published in First Person Singular – Bay No. 37. *The Art Gallery Magazine.* New York. April 1971. pp. 19 – 21. He was an artist employed by the Guggenheim Museum to execute a LeWitt drawing. Schulman gives a recount of his process and reactions.

how I want the paint to be presented. It is vague and the process is the method to completion. In this way it is a combination of the two ways of working and both intuitive and rational and a cumulative succession of those types of thinking working at the same time, rather than exclusively. It is a mixture of sentiment and the personal, mixed with the generic and geometric. The painting provides transitional space that evokes an inner world and reveals a metaphorical or poetic realm, the antithesis of Frank Stella's remark to interviewer Bruce Glaser where he stated concerning painting, "My painting is based on the fact that only what can be seen *is* there….What you see is what you see."[12] He suggests there is a deliberate matter-of-factness about the activity and the result. There is a combination of this kind of thinking within my work in the choice and use of the properties of the materials and structures apparent simplicity, but they are not used to those ends. The content is so much more. Stella said those words in 1964 where the ideas used in abstract art were influenced by Clement Greenberg's idea that art should only relate to itself within the boundaries of the work, and to nothing outside of it.[13] Within the current climate the issue of content is much broader and it is unthinkable that it can only pertain to formal issues.

Dance and music make use of repetition and serialisation as seen in the variations in the works of Mozart and Bach. Variations on a theme are also characteristic in the work of John Cage, Steve Reich, Philip Glass proponents of contemporary 'classical' music.[14] Their music shares an *all over* quality, where a small sample of music is built upon and there are many variations of that sample coalesce into a work that has an unfocussed quality that is immersive and mesmerising. The dance of Merce

[12] David Batchelor. Minimalism. Tate Publishing. London. 1997. p. 16. Stella actually said, "Any painting is an object and anyone who gets involved enough in this finally has to face up to the objectness of whatever it is that he is doing. ….He is making a thing….All I want anyone to get out of my paintings…is the fact that you can see the whole idea without any confusion….What you see is what you see." Bruce Glaser interview, "Questions to Stella and Judd." Broadcast on WBAI, New York, February 1964; subsequently edited by Lucy R. Lippard and published in *Art News.* September 1966. New York; reprinted in Gregory Battcock. ed. *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*. Dutton. New York. 1968. pp.148-164.

[13] Greenberg stated in his essay Modernist Painting that the conventions of painting were also the limiting conditions that allowed it to be defined as an artwork. If it did not pertain to those conventions it became an arbitrary object. He was attempting to define what made an art different to objects in the world. Jonathan Fineberg. Art Since 1940: Strategies of Being. Laurence King Publishing. London. 1995. p. 154. Original citation Clement Greenberg. "Modernist Painting" Arts Yearbook. no.4. 1961.

[14] I became familiar with this music while living in New York.

Cunningham, partner and collaborator with Glass, builds on repeated sequences and is a form of modern ballet that is simple and basic, though complicated through repetition. The work of these artists has much in common with visual art produced at the time and they knew each other and were influenced by ideas they shared. [15] Lucy Lippard, writing on the transformative nature of Sol LeWitt's practice, suggests issues used in his work were shared by other artists and those from other disciplines during the nineteen seventies. In contemporary art at the beginning of the twenty first century, those issues have become absorbed into the common vocabulary of abstraction.

> *As in musical composition, the transformative nature of LeWitt's art is not simply about generation, but also about continuous regeneration - the activity of permutation, rotation, mirroring, reversals and cross reversals, juxtaposition and superimposition. A vocabulary of shapes may be permuted to its finite limits within one medium, only to be resurrected in another through which new possibilities are revealed.*[16]

There are many examples of his work in public spaces such as lobbies in New York, so one can examine how he uses and reuses strategies and structures in different situations and how it changes meaning each time. It is like thought, ever changing and transforming.

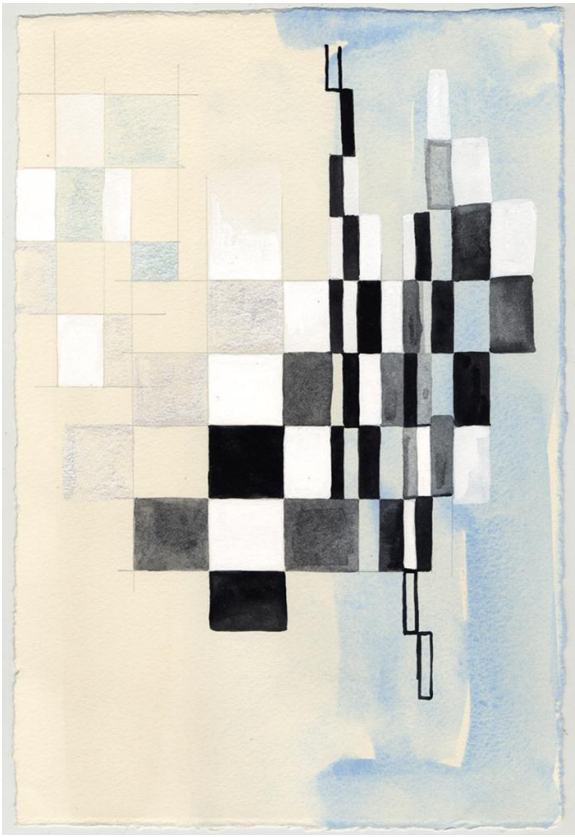
[15] Sol LeWitt created album covers for Cage's music, using his artwork.

[16] Alicia Legg. ed. Sol LeWitt: Museum of Modern Art. New York 1978. p. 25. Essay by Lucy Lippard. "The Structures, The Structures and the Wall Drawings, The Structures and The Wall Drawings and the Books."

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Sol LeWitt. *Wall Drawing #896,* 1999.
Lascaux acrylic paint. Lobby of Christie's, New York.

Transformations of imagery in my work arise through repeating a sequence, a colour, or a strategy. The change occurs through the process of construction, and is not exclusive to one work. The process is cumulative, through variation and transformation of basic sequences and colours. For example, the use of the optical grid, with receding intervals came about through the use of the stripe. A decision was made to make stripes in the opposite direction thereby constructing a grid using the colour like a checkerboard pattern. The opticality was discovered through a sense of play where the intervals between the stripes were halved and halved again as in the work below.



Robin Kingston. *Untitled.Trail off Grid # 5*. February 2007.
Graphite, watercolour, gouache on paper.
28.6 x 19.3 cm. irregular dimensions.

Many of the artists I am interested in use the grid[17] in one form or another. Some use it as a system that is preconceived before the work, as a mathematical structure, others use it as it emerges through the act of making the artwork, where the grid takes on a human dimension as in Marden's case, where he explains the grid,

> *....came out of the shape of the paper or the shape (it) define(s). There was always some sort of reference, very rarely arbitrary. But with the grids, I always thought drawing on the layers of graphite was the labour of the drawing. It's possessing it, making it yours. You start out with this rectangle and you make it yours by marking it over and over.*[18]

[17] Rosalind Krauss has written extensively on the grid. See particularly 'Grids." In The Originality of the Avante-Garde and Other Modernist Myths. MIT Press. Cambridge.1986. p. 8.
[18] Jeremy Lewison. Brice Marden Prints 1961 – 1991. Tate Gallery. London. 1992. p. 27. Originally quoted in 'Brice Marden: Interviewed by Saul Ostrow', *Bomb,* Winter. 1988. p. 34.

'Contingent', a work by Eva Hesse in "Some Recent American Art."[19] was a seminal artwork for me. The exhibition was a showcase for predominantly abstract contemporary art from the preceding decade and included the work of artists whose work explored site and context, modular systems and physical and temporal processes as ends in themselves. Brice Marden, Sol LeWitt, Agnes Martin, Lynda Benglis, Robert Ryman, Robert Irwin and Richard Serra were some of the artists included. Hesse's work was of particular importance to me because it incorporated repetition as a strategy. Her piece was made of fibreglass and latex that hung from the ceiling in the viewer's space and consisted of eight repeated panels that swayed and moved as one walked past them. The colour was visceral and body like, could not be named as painting or sculpture and opened possibilities within my own practice for breaking down the barriers between the canons. The use of the inherent properties of the materials, so they became content was also of interest. For example, the pink translucency of the fibreglass and the skin like limpness of the latex stretched between the two pieces of fibreglass which made up each unit, allowed the units to hang free, or to touch the floor. It is a work that has a presence in the real space of the viewer and relates to the sense of touch. For example, her work speaks of an interiority, and corporeality unlike her peers, but incorporates elements of repetition and seriality common to them. Hesse's work throughout her practice makes use of repetition in the units or segments that make one element and between multiple elements in the works and how they are displayed. She uses the repetition to balance the qualities of emotion and corporeality and to keep it in order and was interested in the absurdity that serial repetition offered. She was a friend and peer of LeWitt. Their ideas were similar, but led to different ends. She was influenced by the work of the Abstract Expressionists in the emotional quality that their work expressed, as evidenced by her earlier paintings and drawings. There is a hand made quality in her work, of the materials and decisions she has made in response to them. Hesse tested out the segments in her work and about 'Contingent' she wrote, "piece in many parts. Each in itself is a complete statement, together am not certain of how it will be." So to Hesse there is a

[19] Viewed 1973 at The Art Gallery of New South Wales. An exhibition generated by the 'International Program of The Museum of Modern Art.

flexibility about whether the units are complete in themselves or could be combined to make a serial artwork. She then writes in her diary,

> *……then more others. Will they hang the same way? Will try a continuous flowing one. Try some random closely spaced…today, another step,…..They will all be different…..Be different each time? Why not?* [20]

The use of repetition and serialisation gives my work forms that allow for an open-ended structure. It is related to game playing as there is similarity and difference where configurations of colour, structure, form, line, interval, mark making and other elements have many permutations. They change and evolve and new forms are discovered with each configuration.

[20] Catherine De Zegher. ed. Eva Hesse Drawing. The Drawing Center. New York. 2006. Essay by Briony Fer. p. 291. from Hesse Notes, Hesse Papers. Allen Memorial Art Museum. Oberlin College. Ohio.

Play

> *Play is a voluntary activity or occupation executed within certain fixed limits of time and place according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy and the consciousness that is 'different' from 'ordinary' life.*[1]

Initial decisions on how to begin or the direction the work is to follow arise though the act of drawing and aspects of what I call 'play'. Play is a word chosen because of its connotations. In reality, the process is a serious one, but the word permits me to deceive myself. This strategy allows for a freedom and openness to let the process begin to reveal itself. It allows me to create a relationship with materials and surface that is interactive. It silences the paralysing effect of predetermining the final result, and allows for an unexpected outcome. It is an excuse to approach the work in manner so as to reach a place where impulses arise through the body and are made manifest in the works. These impulses are an intuitive sense until they are made visible and are tied to the attentiveness as discussed in Chapter Two. Within the work there are a series of strategies that are repeated, rhythms that are followed and occasionally ruptured, for example, grids may be ordered or lose the order and become random in structure. Consideration and assessment follow as to whether what has been revealed warrants further rational or formal developmental processes. I bring the issue of play into my understanding of intuition, because play is as a pathway to access it. It is one of the conditions I employ in my practice to allow intuition to operate. Intuition and play are synonymous within my methodology. Play allows for responsiveness to conditions and allows me to make unexpected decisions in the manufacture of the artwork.

The use of "play" in my practice is different than "to experiment". To experiment as I define it is to test an idea, material or structure using controlled conditions to discover something new or to try a new procedure or idea to see what may happen. It would appear that to play and to experiment are similar, but I view the activities as

[1] Johan Huizinga. Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture. Beacon. Boston. 1955. p. 28.

distinct from one another as they involve different conclusions. To experiment with ideas, materials and structures, infers that it is a conscious or rational activity in the choosing of strategies, procedures and ideas. I experiment or test new materials to understand their properties. The activity of experimentation has a tentative quality and is limited in its outcome. For example, when experimenting with or testing a material I have no expectation of making an artwork. I am familiarising myself and testing the material's properties so that I may incorporate the result of my experiment at another time in making an artwork. Experimentation in my practice is not a creative activity and moreover it is related to addressing technical issues in painting. Technical proficiency is not enough to make meaningful art, as it is an end in itself. It requires 'something else' to transform materials into a meaningful art experience. That 'something else' is hard to quantify, but it is evident when it is not present in a work. "Play" for me, is a state that already involves an inherent knowledge about materials, structures and ideas and has more variables than experimentation. It also incorporates what Csikszentmihalyi defines as 'flow' where the participant is carried in a spontaneous and effortless manner by the activity.[2] The experience is not a tentative one as with experimentation but rather incorporates a knowledgeable confidence. In both experiment and play I am 'doing it to find out', but the activity has a different outcome when a state of play is employed. Play involves a complex set of variables incorporating materials, structures, forms and ideas and employs a different mental state or an openness where I remain attentive to the possibilities during the process. Play is also used as a strategy to make artwork where there are leaps as I explain later.

One of the first main characteristics of play is a state of freedom. The second characteristic is that it is at a remove from 'ordinary life'. The fact that play is "only pretending", does not preclude it from being undertaken with the utmost seriousness. Play can be, and frequently is serious and becomes totally absorbing for the participant. The contrast between play and seriousness is fluid and the two states complement each other. Play is also limitlessness and "contains its own course and meaning". [3]

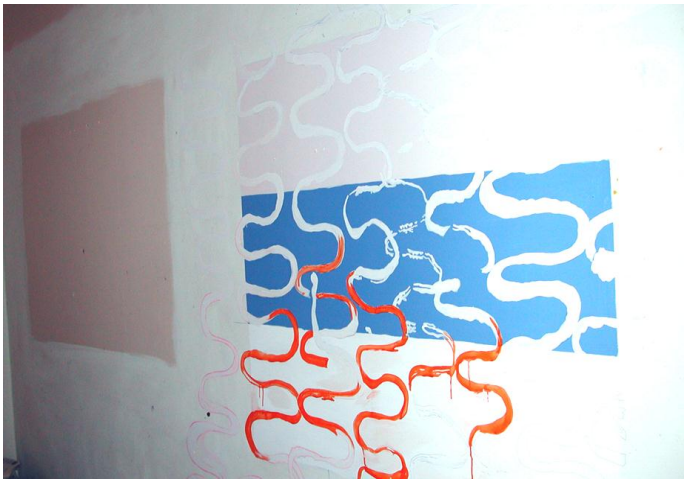
[2] See Chapter Two in this exegesis p. 78.
[3] Johan Huizinga. Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture. Beacon. Boston. 1955. p. 9.

Play is usually rule bound, but I use it differently. I use play in the manner where there are no definite rules. It is a game of my own devising. It requires a state of mental openness, which is akin to holding oneself in a state of waiting, incorporating awareness where a leap to new configurations and juxtapositions in the work is possible. It is linked to the state of 'not knowing' where I use internal structures that may be familiar to my practice such as lines, grids, arabesques or particular colour configurations, so the beginning of the process may be known, but the outcome is not. The result is not planned but is experiential and play is a condition, or a personal method I employ to allow this to happen. No two results are the same.

The leap between what is known within an artwork and moving beyond it to the unknown requires transformation of form or content. The conditions of creating the leap contain risk and doubt and play provides a strategy between the known and the unknown. There is no known path to a new form of the work, and the artist alone through trial and error creates the conditions to make this transformation possible. It is risky, as the boundaries between the work and oneself can become blurred, so a path through to completion may not be clear. Failure is inherent in game playing, so one is prepared for it. Through experimentation and experience, the artist realises that risk, doubt and failure do not disappear from the process. In fact for progress, risk, doubt and failure are necessary conditions, so therefore it becomes an issue how to strategise and work with, and through them.

When I began to work directly on the wall in my studio, it was in the form of play. I was researching how the wall could be used as a large support for painting and to investigate how context could influence content. I began to paint this way with no particular idea of an outcome and as yet had not discovered the interactive aspects of this particular site with painting. The wall was simply a large, flat surface on which to paint, using the body rather than the wrist. At commencement the wall was treated as the equivalent of a large piece of paper, not a three dimensional space with volume. Some marks and striped intervals were already present in the space, so I worked with them, rather than erase them to make a white space. As it was daunting to work at such a large scale and so as to have some control, I employed strategies that I

considered rational. This involved using an overhead projector to transfer an image from a selected small drawing to enlarge it relative to the scale of the wall. The images below demonstrate one section of that sequence of wall works as I 'played' with the painting onto the wall of an image and the erasure of it, to make another version. The more time I worked with the image, the more it transformed. The process entailed the leaps referred to earlier, and the process was revelatory as I could not have for seen the outcome visually, or experientially. Below are examples of five stages of the studio wall work.



Robin Kingston. *Studio wall 1*. Detail. 2001.
Graphite, gouache, acrylic, watercolour on the wall.
Dimensions variable to site.

Robin Kingston. *Studio wall 2*. Detail. 2001.
Graphite, gouache, acrylic, watercolour on the wall.
Dimensions variable to site.

Robin Kingston. *Studio Wall 3*. Detail. 2002.
Graphite, gouache, watercolour, acrylic on the wall.
Dimensions variable to site.

Robin Kingston. *Studio Wall 4*. Detail. 2002.
Graphite, gouache, watercolour and acrylic on the wall.
Dimensions variable to site.

Robin Kingston. *Studio Wall 5*. Detail. 2002.
Graphite, gouache, watercolour on the wall
Dimensions variable to site.

Historically the use of play is associated with the Surrealists who used play as an avant-garde strategy to undermine and critique art institutions and the culture of the day. There has been little investigation of the use of play, as I interpret it within the visual language, other than in studies of Surrealism and Dada where it was overtly stated as a strategy in the construction of artworks.

I am using play differently to Dada and Surrealism. It is not used as a critique, but as a strategy within my process to open up a pathway to the use of intuition. Play is purposively employed as through experience, there was the discovery it was an effective pathway to an unexpected result. This manner of working became apparent through 'the act of doing', rather than discovering that it was a method used by other artists.

Visual artists are not the only creative people to use play as a strategy. The playwright Bertold Brecht, when asked whether the procedures he was using within his writing related to Surrealist methods, to the extent they were unpremeditated, replied,

> *Yes, I suppose you could say that, but I prefer to think that it's a natural process that takes place. Many of what I accept as natural processes are simply a part of all the things that happen to me and of no special*

importance – dreams, accidental occurrences, etc. – were, I think, seen differently in surrealism. And I think that surrealist work looks very different from mine……. but you'll also see that the spirit is very different from the surrealists' experiments along the same line, and I think that the spirit is important. As far as the making of my objects is concerned, it's not, for example, like an experiment in having a blank mind scribbling or writing on a piece of paper more or less in a state of trance. I'm attentive to what's happening all the time; I'm aware of the objects that I'm using and of the words that come to mind. I put them together ... carefully ... whatever that means. I think of what I do as the taking place of a natural process, and the objects that I work with come to me in a natural way. Once they've been assembled, it gives me the possibility of discovering relationships, meanings, associations. [4]

This explanation from Brecht about his procedure is one to which I can relate. It is similar to the state I call 'not knowing', spoken about previously. It is a type of knowing and knowledge within chosen parameters or choices, but there is always chance and 'an attentiveness' that allow other visual relationships and possibilities to enter into the process that were not anticipated when the work was commenced. It is a mental state that allows for shifting, open thought patterns and keenness in looking, where tenuous relationships can be discerned and which may coalesce into a work. Bertold Brecht explains that the procedures are similar to those used in Surrealism, but the intentions differ and this is most important, as he is not using play to get in touch with the unconscious but rather, is using it as a 'type' of looking/creating, one where he appears to be slightly outside himself and watching, and this enables him to be able to put together the world differently.

For me, the sense of play is present when starting a work. A steel ruler and a 0.5 propelling pencil are usually used and I begin to 'play' with the scale of interval, and

[4] Steven Harris. "The Art of Losing Oneself without Getting Lost: Brecht and Filliou at Palais Ideal." Papers of Surrealism. Issue 2 summer 2004. Original citation - Henry Martin. *An Interview with George Brecht.* 1967. In Henry Martin. *An Introduction to George Brecht's Book of the Tumbler on Fire.* Milan. 1978.

relationships of the lines to each other, the edge and surface. In these graphite constructions there are accidents, where forms do not meet as expected, stopping and starting with the pencil, decisions whether to make the line at the complete width of the ruler, one and a half, or half in interval. When a steel ruler and a pencil is used on a vertical surface, it is difficult to keep the lines straight to the horizontal edge, as the sequence begins to skew and slope. This is due to the effect of gravity as it becomes hard to control the equipment on a vertical surface. I allow or even create the conditions of slippage that is akin to accident.

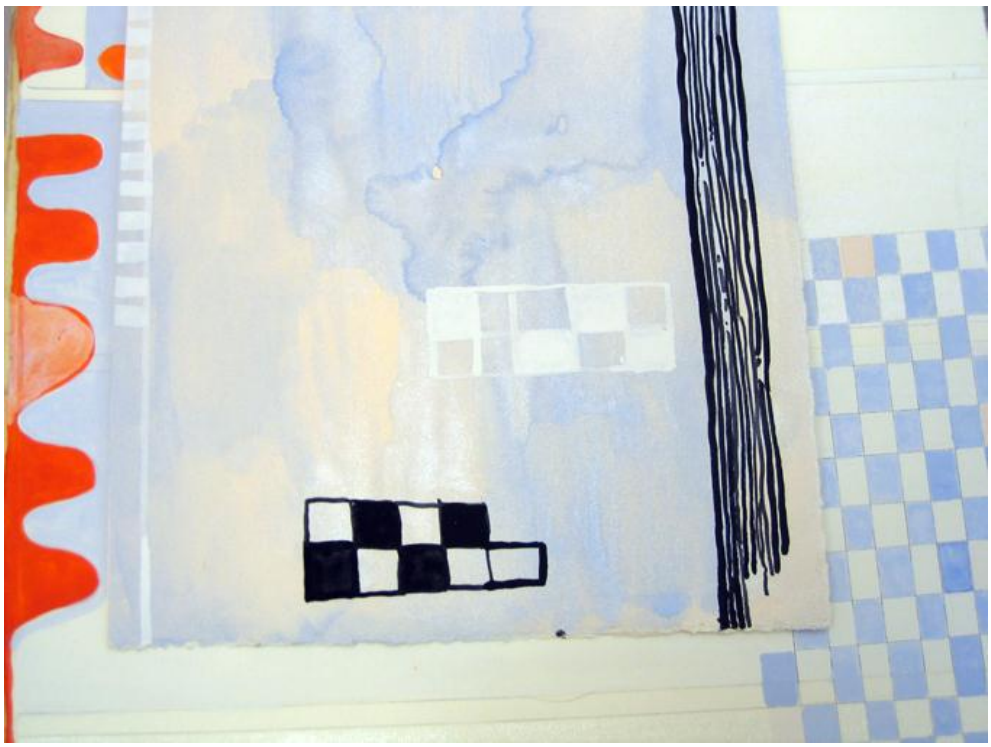
Play is autonomous, as it exists at a remove from reality, which is normally driven by practical necessities. It is a pursuit undertaken for its own sake and therefore it 'doesn't really matter'. Play, when opposed to fundamental knowledge, which is supported by evidence, is perceived as unstable and is fundamentally contrary to rational modes of thought.

> *In fact the breadth and flexibility of play as a signifier threatens to dissolve even these meanings in the multiplicity of its references. To play is to engage – to put into play: yet to play is to* dis*engage from consequence. Play is artificial, as in mimetic illusions, yet it is characterised as a primal impulse. It is useless and it produces nothing, yet is understood psychologically as a form of practice, trial action for life…Play claims to be free – it cannot be coerced – yet it is valued for the restrictions that keep it circumscribed from life….. One of its overarching characteristics is* indeterminacy. *Accordingly, play is repeatedly defined in aesthetic and cultural discourse by what it is* not*, rather than by an essence: there is nothing at its centre: it signifies the absence of essence."*[5]

A further example of play operating in my practice is in the works that have been discovered through the juxtaposition of drawings. I noticed, with works on paper, that

[5] Susan Laxton. "The Guaranto of Chance: Surrealism's Ludic Practices." Papers of Surrealism. Issue 1. Winter. 2003.

they would overlap when placed in a folder, one work over another. I began to photograph this chance arrangement for future use, and have referred to these images when making later works. This produces sampling, using irregularities and interruptions of the whole to make a new sequence or structure. Initially these new structures are a surprise, as I would not have considered placing them together using rational, formal decisions. There is the accidental that operates which can be another form of play. After discovery, they are incorporated in my vocabulary. Play and intuition allows for leaps that I could not have foreseen, and allows for boundary breaking and change.



Robin Kingston. Two drawings juxtaposed. Detail. 2006.
Graphite, gouache, watercolour on paper.

In the example illustrated, I noticed the two works lying on top if each other and documenting the arrangement, producing this 'juxtaposed composition'. Later the composition was used as the basis for a section of the large wall painting in the exhibition *on the wall.* [6], illustrated overleaf.

[6] *on the wall.* The School of Art Gallery. Melbourne. May, 2006.

Robin Kingston. *Untitled On the Wall.Wall Painting.* 2006.
Graphite, acrylic and gouache on the wall.
Dimensions specific to site.

Other artists suggest they use accident, or slippage or game playing as a method in their process. Play is an activity usually embedded in material processes, although for an artist such as Sol LeWitt "his art is an objective *activity* relating to play in the most profound sense of fundamental creative discovery".[7] However he does not discover by making, as he has assistants make the work. He discovers by *doing*, as he makes copious plans and drawings for the realisation of the works. His subjectivity is removed from the finished works and it is curious how moving the work is when completed as it draws energy from the assistants who produce it. His artwork is an interesting synthesis of objective and personal.

> *Play begins, and then at a certain moment it is "over". It plays itself to an end. While it is in progress all is in movement, change, alternation, succession, association, separation. But immediately connected with its*

[7] Alicia Legg ed. Sol LeWitt The Museum of Modern Art New York. 1978. p. 23. Essay by Lucy Lippard. The Structures, The Structures and the Wall Drawings, The Structures and the Wall Drawings and the Books.

> *limitation as to time there is a further curious feature of play: it at once assumes fixed form as a cultural phenomenon. Once played, it endures as a new – found creation of the mind, a treasure to be retained by the memory. It is transmitted, it becomes tradition. It can be repeated at any time, whether it be "childs play" or a game of chess, or at fixed intervals like a mystery. In this faculty of repetition lies one of the most essential forms of play. It holds good not only of play as a whole but also of its inner structure. In nearly all the higher forms of play the elements of repetition and alternation (as in the* refrain*), are like the warp and woof of fabric*.[8]

As Huizinga outlines above, play is closely tied to repetition and seriality. Forms or structures or vocabulary characteristic to my practice are used over and over, but differently in many works. The work is begun with an idea of a particular structure, but as soon as the physical interaction with the surface and materials of the work begins, this structure is nothing but a memory as the state of 'play' is allowed to come to the fore and the process becomes active. It is the activity of the process and the materials characteristics that begins to propel decisions, and clarifications leading to the work's conclusion. The conclusion is not always definitive. There are many conclusions that could be reached depending on the conditions operating at the time of manufacture. However choices are made actively, during the time of construction leading to one conclusion in each work. It becomes a responsive situation between the materials, support and myself. There are discoveries and realisations that occur during manufacture, ones that can be transferred into new works. It is so in a state of play, where the game can begin all over again.

[8] Johannes Huizinga. Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture. Beacon Press. 1955. pp. 9 - 10.

The Performative

My work is primarily concerned with contemplation, looking and perception. The act of the construction of the artwork may be discerned as part of the content. This construction is physical and mental, and is tied to the performative, or bodily action.

The first artist whom I became aware of 'the act of doing' being able to be read as content was Cézanne. I had studied Cézanne's work in books, but had not ever had a direct experience of viewing his paintings. This understanding changed when I saw an exhibition of Cézannes watercolours.[1] By examining his work, there was the imaginative realisation that I was standing in his shoes, seeing what he saw and I was able to reconstruct the very act of him painting. There is a fragmentary quality evident in the watercolours where the air that is contained between the watercolour marks delineates space between worldly elements. The gentle, spare properties of watercolour marry with those of the paper and contribute to the content. They were elusive and ethereal. It was as though the watercolours had recently been painted, rather than almost one hundred years previously. There was the revelation that Cézanne could make the experience of his perception visible to *me* through the process of painting a painting. The issue of making the process visible, as part of the content and constructing a bodily, physical experience for the viewer was something I had not considered before. I have come to know this experience as a phenomenological one, which is the bodily encounter of the artist/spectator and the artwork. This experience is cumulative and changes with time. Time therefore becomes part of the content where the time used painting the work is evident. It is active reflection. Richard Tuttle states,

> *'I am placing in a world that is mostly concerned with recognition a thing whose primary involvement is perception.'* [2] *His works are arguments in favour of a precognitive mode of perception that would allow one to see the world without the constraints of perceptual and intellectual habits. The artist – and the viewer in turn – engages in an ever-present and direct*

[1] Watercolour and Pencil Drawings by Cézanne. Hayward Gallery, London. 1973.

[2] Madeleine Grynsztejn. The Art of Richard Tuttle. ed. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. 2005. p. 60. Originally quoted in Richard Whelan. Review. *ARTnews* 78 (Summer 1979): 186.

> *facing of experience, one that takes place prior to those operations of mind that would define our observations and perforce also standardize and even dictate our perceptions and responses. This activity reawakens us to a fresh experience of the palpable present: the sympathetic observer of Tuttle's art is invited to share in an attitude of enhanced attention that is subsequently available for transposition, from the art object to the world at large, every day. Tuttle's work proposes and fosters acts of the imagination that return to the viewer the ability to associate creatively with the world, to undertake the movement toward meaning that is at the core of art and human experience.* [3]

This contemplative encounter is content in my painting. There is a drawn quality retained in the works, and drawing is an activity closely associated with touch or trace. The actions/gestures of the artist take time to create and the residual marks are evidence of bodily movements and decisions used. The result is evidence of thought processes shifting and floating at times and at others definite and structured. Bodily movement and gesture are also present.

Gesture in my case, is not about large sweeping movements, but rather operates as a sensitivity to the properties of the materials used and as a resonance, of subtle, almost ephemeral mark making including grids, lines, watery flows, gentle strokes of gouache or Perlex. In my work gestures are not homogeneous and this adds to the quality of instability and lack of closure in the work. For example in one work many different kinds of gestures are used. Gestures may be produced quickly, producing a gestural mark, or a line may be repeated slowly with care, using extreme concentration and attentiveness.

In my practice, the performative or movement refers to actions using the whole body or it can refer to mark making and gesture using the arm and wrist. It also refers to walking, a daily practice, and its part in my practice. Different types of movements may be involved in the construction of painting, a mingling of materials, substances and the action of the body, transforming them into painting. The body can transverse

[3]Madeleine Grynsztejn. ed. The Art of Richard Tuttle. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. 2005. p. 60.

space, clambering up and down ladders while painting on walls and creating large movements across canvases. The wrist and arm movements make more controlled and less expansive kinds of marks whether on canvas, paper or walls. This marriage of movement and the material coalesce in painting.

> *Substances occupy the mind by invading it with thoughts of the artist's body at work. A brushstroke is an exquisite record of speed and force of the hand that made it, and if I think of the hand moving across the canvas- or better, if I just retrace it, without thinking - I learn a great deal about what I see. Painting is scratching, scraping, waving, jabbing, pushing, and dragging. At times the hand moves as if it were writing, but in paint: and other times it moves as if the linen canvas were a shirt, and the paint was a stain that had to be rubbed under running water. Some painting motions are like conversations, where the hands keep turning in the air to make a point. Others are slow careful gestures, like touching someone's eye to remove a fleck of dirt.*[4]

The issue of the performative is pertinent when painting directly onto the walls of a site. There is an immersion in the task of making that is physical, conceptual and temporal. Often the work cannot be viewed as a whole except from a distance. There is the engagement with the construction and mark making close to the work and moving back to observe the effect of how the parts coalesce into a whole and how in turn it relates to the physical site of display. This condition does not only pertain to work that relates to site. The performative also comes into play when making work on stretchers, whether they are large or small, as there are several distances that the work is engaged with as it is constructed. In close, where the work is painted, the facture can be observed and the physical properties of the materials examined, and from a distance there is a different view of the work. Brice Marden, in an audio accompanying his exhibition "Plane Image: A Brice Marden Retrospective"[5] instructs the viewer on how to look at his paintings. He suggests that they look at the work from a distance, then to go up close and examine the surface, then to go back twice as far as the height of the painting to view the work. Marden says this

[4] James Elkins. What Painting Is. Routledge. New York and London. 1999. pp. 96, 97.
[5] Viewed December 2006. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

movement is like 'a little dance'[6], similar to the action he plays out himself whilst painting.

Marden's work, including paintings early in his career are influenced by Abstract Expressionism. He acquired an interest in Asian calligraphy that directly inspires his later paintings and drawings. There is physicality built into Marden's paintings, as there is in my own. Our shared interest in the issue originates from Abstract Expressionism and a curiosity in painting from the east, including ink paintings where every mark contains energy that becomes visible to the viewer. This energy may be referred to as 'chi'. The idea that energy can be made evident through mark making and that the space between marks or structures, or what is called the 'negative space' in western art, as being as important as the positive or evident structure has held my interest.

> *Calligraphy is very personal because it is very physical. It's not a technique or an ideology: it's a form of pure expression. Each time a calligrapher makes a mark, it will be distinctive because he has a particular physicality. Great artists exploit this; their thinking and their physicality become one. Paintings are physical. So is the act of creating them. This physicality should be emphasized. If you're not working with preconceived forms and thinking, then you can concentrate on expression. It is possible, I think, to make art on this instinctive level, out of deeply felt response…."*[7]

In Abstract Expressionism, marks and actions made in the construction of art works remain visible and are incorporated into the finished painting, as in the art of Jackson Pollock. He liberates gestural elements of drawing such as line and gesture to generate large paintings. The intense subjectivity present in the ideology of Abstract Expressionism enabled the struggle associated in the creative process to remain visible, rather than be eliminated be from the finished work. As a result, the boundary

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[6] Brice Marden speaking on the audio accompanying his exhibition Plane Image: Brice Marden a Retrospective. Museum of Modern Art. New York. 2006.

[7] Interview with Brice Marden by Lilly Wei, in "Talking Abstract, Part One." *Art in America.* 76, no7 (July 1987) p. 83.

between the finished work and drawing was reduced to the point where it was no longer an issue. There was no requirement for paintings to be highly polished masterpieces and this allowed for the possibility of the process to remain visible and for a state of flux, fragmentation and a lack of closure to exist.

The manner in which Pollock constructed his large works was from above, as the canvas was laid out on the floor and the artist physically moved over the work manipulating, pouring and dripping cans of paint and using brushes in a manner that was non-conventional in Western art, but was more akin to Eastern Flung Ink[8] painting. The whole body was used to make one mark in a controlled explosion of movement. His use of the body and the performative act in painting was influential both to the painting and the performance movement.

> *Pollock does not use sketches or preliminary drawings; each painting grows out of a period of purely physical adjustment; the real "content" of Pollock's all over compositions is his ability to remain physically and psychically "in" the work so that a viewer feels that rapport: thus the subject is a direct record of the artist's own mind-body dialogue.*[9]

Abstract Expressionist thought had its genesis in Surrealist drawings and an interest in the inner, subjective self. In Abstract Expressionism the artist was interested in an inner truth, accessed through a flurry of gestural mark making that employed spontaneity, risk and chance. The resulting artwork was reflective of the artist's inner self and evidence of their actions in making the work. Therefore, how the work was constructed becomes bound to the painting's content. Pollock especially, worked between control and lack of control, at the point where those two conditions coalesced in an unpremeditated process of art making. He was immersed in the process, not separate from it. Within my own practice, I understand making art as evidence of the materialization of an act, where a gesture embodies and reflects the active thought that

[8] *Hatsuboku* - the style of Japanese landscape ink painting originating the 15th C, characterised by splashed, wet, gestural, brush strokes.
[9] Jack Burnham. The Structure of Art. George Braziller Inc. New York. 1974. p. 102.

gave it impulse. The psychoanalyst Bion proposes, "The self is able to be conscious of itself in the sense of knowing itself from the experience of itself."[10]

This state of immersion and the lack of separation between the artist and the making of the work, emphasizing the experiential nature of the act during the Abstract Expressionist movement, can be linked a series of lectures given by Dr D.T. Suzuki in the mid nineteen fifties. His weekly lectures on Buddhism were held in Room 716, Philosophy Hall, Columbia University[11] where they forged an important link between Eastern thinking and those in New York intellectual and artistic circles at the time. It is known that John Cage and Philip Guston were amongst those who attended. Suzuki outlined the lack of separation between the experience and the outcomes of art making and life. His philosophical teachings were absorbed into the art of the time and his legacy is still evident early in the twenty first century. Currently, at the time of writing, the sculptor Richard Serra is overseeing the installation of his large steel works into the Museum of Modern Art for a retrospective of his work. When questioned as to why he is always present, directing and engaging in every step of his work from conception to exhibition rather than being at a removed standpoint, he said,

> *If you're going to watch the process, watch it all the time, because it's always bespeaking something that's of interest and I don't think that's Duchampian. I think that's more Eastern. That's more Suzuki*."[12]

He sketches and takes notes at all stages of production, as documented in the PBS series "Art Now"[13] To him, the whole process is philosophical, a lesson he said he learned by osmosis from mentors like John Cage.

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[10] Ibid. p. 72.
[11] Arthur C. Danto. "Upper West Side Buddhism." in, Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art. University of California Press. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London. 2004. p. 54.
[12] "Sculpture (and Nerves) of Steel." Randy Kennedy. The New York Times. (Published May 20, 2007). http://select.nytimes.com/mem/tnt.html?tntget=2007/05/20/arts/design/20kenn.html&tntemail1=y&emc=tnt&pagewanted=all. Accessed May 21, 2007.
[13] Art: 21- Art in the Twenty-First Century. Season 1. "Place and Contemporary Art." PBS. 2001. USA.

This link between Abstract Expressionism and the teachings of Suzuki emphasizing the experiential aspect of making art, the attitude of 'being in the moment' and an attentiveness to the process, is also present in my own art making.

Walking oneself into being.

Through my research here has been a gradual realisation that the act of walking, a habit practiced daily, induces a similar in the state within my body and mind, to that of making artwork. There is a connection between walking and painting for me. It is not used as a strategy for making artwork, but more provides a space and a physical activity that allows thoughts to flow. It is conducive to thought and rumination.

The Surrealists also used walking as a strategy linked to automatism[14], taking it into the spatial realm. This practice, a game of chance, was called *errance* and was meant to stimulate unconscious images by using the practice of walking around the city in a non-purposeful manner. The random images that were captured were to act as a pathway to tap into unconscious associations. It was also linked to being 'present' in the experience.

Walking for me is contemplative and experiential. It is also a journey and a journey is a space to be occupied. A different route is taken at will, and often impulsively. The activity is participatory and immersive and conducive to fostering sensitivity to the environment, observing elements such as the light, colours and surfaces under foot. There is a quality of attentiveness associated with the activity, where one is part of the surroundings. Walking is a relatively slow activity that allows for an introspective state and a transformation of thought that is impossible to predict and possibly would not happen if one were sedentary. The act of placing one foot in from of another is ritualistic, repetitive; creating a constant rhythm that is hypnotic and aids thinking. It is also related to play, as there is a relationship to the accidental, as each walk offers new information that cannot be predicted prior to the activity. It is also related to repetition and seriality, as the habit contains both.

[14] In Automatism, the Surrealists expressed verbally or visually the functioning of the mind, including the unconscious for artistic subject matter. In Abstract Expressionism Automatism was used as a technique for objectifying conscious experiences as they were unfolding, rather than for accessing the unconscious.

The writer Michael de Certeau suggests,

> *Certainly walking about and travelling substitute for exits, for going away and coming back, which were formerly made available by a body of legends that places nowadays lack. Physical moving about has the itinerant function of yesterday's or today's "superstitions." Travel (like walking) is a substitute for legends that used to open up space to something different. What does travel ultimately produce if it is not, by a sort of reversal, "an exploration of the deserted places of my memory," the return to nearby exoticism by way of a detour through distant places"……What this walking exile produced is precisely the body of legends that is currently lacking in one's own vicinity: it is a fiction which moreover has the double characteristic, like dreams or pedestrian rhetoric, of being the effect of displacements and condensations.*[15]

Walking is an activity that is both about constructing and walking ones self into being and also a space for rumination and forgetting, being immersed in the trajectory of space one passes through, solitary, but observing. There is a different quality to walking in the country, to that of walking in the city although both are transformative and absorbing.

New York is a city that is easy to navigate because it is based on the grid and is for the most part flat. I consider the grid as a metaphor for the unconscious and a space to be occupied, so New York is one of the best cities for me to navigate on foot and by the physical action I access deeper portions of my mind and thought. In Manhattan it takes one minute to walk one block north to south, and around three minutes each block from east to west. It is easy to immerse oneself and not plan the route, as the grid allows for spontaneity and it is hard to get lost. It is ideal to be able to walk in a city and a very different experience to viewing it from a moving vehicle or on the subway. One can walk for an hour and not even notice time passing as it is so

[15] Michael de Certeau. The Practice of Everyday Life. University of California Press. Berkeley. 1984. p.107.

engrossing - the rich street life, the people and the architecture. The experience is a series of fragments that coalesce into a whole called 'a walk'. The experience is about forgetting oneself and also walking oneself into being at the same time. It is related to the intuitive as it requires an attentiveness and awareness and a 'being in the moment', similar to that when painting.

An evocative passage on walking is by the writer Paul Auster,

> *…….More than anything else, however, what he liked to do was walk. Nearly every day, rain or shine, hot or cold, he would leave his apartment to walk through the city – never really going anywhere, but simply going wherever his legs happened to take him. New York was an inexhaustible space, a labyrinth of endless steps, and no matter how far he walked, no matter how well he came to know it's neighbourhoods and streets, it always left him with the feeling of being lost. Lost, not only in the city, but within him self as well. Each time he took a walk, he felt as though he were leaving himself behind, and by giving himself up to the movement of the streets, by reducing himself to a seeing eye, he was able to escape the obligation to think, and this more than anything else, bought him a measure of peace, a salutary emptiness within. The world was outside of him, around him, before him, and the speed with which it kept changing made it impossible to dwell on anything for very long. Motion was of the essence, the act of putting one foot in front of the other and allowing himself to follow the drift of his own body. By wandering aimlessly, all the places became equal and it no longer mattered where he was. On his best walks he was able to feel that he was nowhere. And this, finally, was all he ever asked of things: to be nowhere. New York was the nowhere he had built around himself, and he realised that he had no intention of ever leaving it again.* [16]

The act of walking and the act of painting are synonymous where both involve an act of forgetting or not knowing and allowing the experience to build. It involves a state

[16] Paul Auster. The New York Trilogy. Faber and Faber Limited. London. 1987. pp. 3,4.

of attentiveness where the repetition of an action creates a state of immersion and an awareness that allows for the experience to be responsive to stimuli. There is a beginning and an end, repeated often, similar, but different. This situation is analogous to my painting in the use and reuse of strategies and imagery.

Chapter Four: Painting the Space

Painting and Context

Painting the Space brings together all of the important factors in my practice. The process is the embodiment of the experiential which is the major issue in my work through the creation of material visual fields. All of the issues I have outlined previously including Intuitive and Rational Thought, Seriality/Repetition, Play and The Performative are orchestrated in the creation of paintings that incorporate 'real world' space. Because of the magnified scale of the experience of painting in relation to the external world, this activity incorporates space and time, as I will discuss. There are many issues, material, physical, philosophical and psychological, that contribute to content in my work, and the incorporation of paintings' relationship to site in my practice highlights the issue of painting and its context. This issue of context has become increasingly pertinent to my work during the period of research. The exploration of painting directly into specific sites such as my studio and gallery spaces has enriched my understanding of how intuition operates within my practice. This issue has been researched throughout this project, though at the early stages there was little understanding of just how important this aspect would be to my overall understanding of how I use intuition, at the conclusion.

Through the rise of installation art in the twentieth century, aspects of viewing and reading meaning from an image has affected content in contemporary abstract painting. The experiential and the response of the viewer have become of primary consideration. Phenomenology emphasises the bodily encounter of the spectator and the work. The perception of the artwork and how its physicality and resonance coalesce to construct content is contained within an investigation between the visual and the physical; the seen and the experienced. The painting's relationship to its site affects meaning, as paintings are no longer viewed as separate to the conditions of display.

An important document, now historical, is *Inside the White Cube: the Ideology of the Gallery Space.* written in 1976 by Brian O'Doherty. The attributes of the gallery itself have become of importance when thinking about what it contains. Its walls and

the volume of air bounded by them have assumed a significance which O'Doherty sees as arising from two main strands of painterly development in the twentieth century, firstly, the exploration of the two dimensional picture plane and the elaboration of the technique of collage. Collage interacts with the real space of the gallery by pulling material from the real world and building it up on the paintings surface out into the spectators viewing space. The second strand is an investigation of the tension between the objective existence and the illusory function of painting.

"As modernism gets older, context becomes content. In a peculiar reversal the object introduced into the gallery "frames" the gallery and its laws."[1] Meaning arises out of the encounter between the spectator and the artwork and is no longer a 'given' residing in the object until discerned by the perceptive viewer. It is something that is *made* in the encounter.

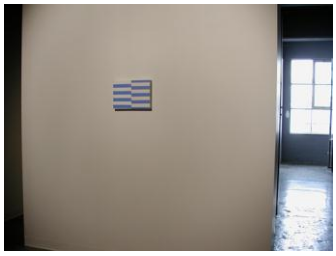
It is obvious, but not often acknowledged, that paintings are objects that have many variables in the material aspects such as scale, depth of the stretcher, the kind and surface of the canvas or linen and the nature of the ground used. I am conscious of the stretcher's relationship to the wall. A painting on a stretcher is an object with a volume of air behind it. The thickness of the stretcher is a concern, as is the relationship of the image to the work's edge. Whether there are traces of manufacture, and how the painting sits in relationship with the wall are also issues of content in painting. Modern paintings are also objects that can be moved and have no allegiance to the place they are displayed. During the time of creation or construction there is little consideration of where or how the work may be displayed. The artist often doesn't know at the time of manufacture where they will be shown in the future. They are made to be objects that are mobile, to be placed in variable situations and conditions for viewing, placed on the wall using nails, pins and plugs.

Early in the twenty first century, the issue of the relationship of the viewer to the artwork and their encounter with the work is considered to be of primary importance. Therefore the site and the context in which the artwork is viewed adds to the meaning

[1] Brian O'Doherty. Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space. (Expanded Edition) University of California Press. Berkeley Los Angeles and London. 1999. p.15. The essays in this book originally appeared in Artforum magazine in 1976 and 1986.

of the work. The content is not viewed as separate to the conditions of display. The location of the site, and its characteristics play a part in the interpretation of the work. How the viewer approaches the work, and how they are able to negotiate the encounter is part of the content. For example, in my work '*An Exact Copy*' the two paintings were placed parallel to each other in the space. It was impossible to see them both at the same time. The viewer had to use their memory of one to look at the other, or go backwards and forwards between them to inspect them more closely. A decision was also made as to what the viewer would encounter after I had established how the viewer would probably move through the space.

Robin Kingston. *An Exact Copy*. 2000. Installation view.
acrylic house paint on the wall. Dimensions specific to site.



Installation view of opposite wall.
including *Untitled*. 1999.
oil on canvas. 25 x 35 cm.

One approach to working with painting in relation to site is to paint directly on the wall. If these paintings only exist in the site for a limited period of time the issue of time and the temporary/ephemeral nature of the work comes into play unlike the permanence of the painting on stretchers or paper. After a period of time the works are painted out, removed from site and exist under layers of white paint within the gallery space. Therefore the documentation becomes the work, as a remembered experience of those who saw the work. The photographs become the only evidence of the artwork having existed.

The physicality of the structures of painting is important to me, and I am conscious of how the body or the viewer interacts with a painting. The scale, the physical properties of the materials used, such as the depth of the stretcher, the nature of

surface – the properties of the linen, ground and paint and where and how the painting is to be displayed are important. The body, my body, the viewer's body and the relationship of the artwork to the body are central issues.

At the beginning of this project in 2000, I had the opportunity to consider what kind of artwork I would exhibit at West Space, an artist run gallery in Melbourne. This was not a commercial gallery, so this situation allowed me to consider the space itself as a starting point. Examination of contemporary abstraction, including artists such as Sol LeWitt, Polly Apfelbaum, Jessica Stockholder, Richard Wright, Fabian Marcaccio, David Reed and David Thomas' exhibition called "Painted Spaces", piqued my interest in painting spatially.

All of these artists combined painting issues and actual space. Their practice extended the idea of what painting could be, which incorporated not working on the singular object of the stretcher. For these artists (and many more) their practice is a hybrid and unable to be classified easily within traditional canons. This issue is one of the characteristics of contemporary abstraction where boundaries are blurred between disciplines such as video, painting, sculpture and installation practice. The category of 'painting/installation' is one I have coined for my research project.

Jessica Stockholder is an artist whose work incorporates painting/installation. There is a strong painterly, pictorial quality within her artwork and a use of high chroma palette in both ephemeral installations documented in catalogues and intimate studio works in smaller formats. She makes drawings for the installations, though her practice is often a work in progress as she responds to the site. It is here "the project, the notion of the sensuous-aesthetic appearance of the work begins to take form."[2] The work continues to be developed in the studio, but only up to a point as the work can only be judged when 'in situ' as the aesthetic, poetic relationships of the component parts to each other and the site only come fully into play when on location. Her work is not genre specific and the practice flows between collage, installation, assemblage, relief, sculpture and painting. There is an overlapping of these genres in her work, and the formal and informal nature of the objects she chooses. Her works inhabit and make use of the wall, floor, and the free space of the site. The relationship

[2] Stockholder, Jessica. On Spending Money Tenderly. Richter Verlag. Dusseldorf. 2002. p 22.

of the viewer to the work is important as the viewer can walk around and into the space inhabited by the works 'in situ'. Her work is not deconstructing painting or sculpture or any other discipline, but uses their characteristics to construct the pictorial.

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Jessica Stockholder. *Vortex in the Play of Theatre with Real Passion: In Memory of Kay Stockholder* 2000, Installation at Kunstmuseum St. Gallen. Duplo, theatre curtain, work site containers, bench, theatre light, linoleum, tables, fur, newspaper, fabric and paint. Dimensions site-specific.

In an interview, Stockholder has stated that her work, "technically....may be more related to sculpture than to painting, because it takes up space in the room, but conceptually it is closer to painting." [3] She uses the whole space of the gallery as a large 'walk in' painting utilising the formal language of painting; line, colour, form, weight, but because of the kinds of materials she uses, their inherent content and their titles, the result is poetic. The materials are diverse including sheet rock, wool, incandescent lights, paint, mattresses and plastic. The materiality, and the chroma, and the previous use of the chosen objects and materials, play into the content of the work. They are chosen because of "a response to circumstances, space, people available,

[3] Raphael Rubenstein. Abstraction Out of Bounds. Art in America. November 1997. p. 113. Originally published in *Art in America*. November, 1995.

materials, my mood. The work also builds on itself…..”[4] She does not respect the physical boundaries of the objects or the space as she paints colour over surfaces that create a theatrical, pictorial experience. Her titles reveal little literal content, but are evocative in opening out the poetic possibilities, for example *With Wanton Heed & Giddy Cunning hedging Red & That's not Funny* or *Fat form and hairy; sardine can peeling.*

The relationship between Stockholder's work and my own is related to the strong painterly aspects to her work and to her practice extending the nature of painting. There is a playful, theatrical quality to her works and they provide a rich painting experience.

As this project draws to a close there is a recollection of importance. The artist Judy Pfaff's studio was in the same building in which I lived.[5] In the early nineteen eighties Pfaff worked in a manner that could be a precursor to Stockholder's. She collected objects and arranged them in elaborate, painterly installations. Her practice was interesting to observe closely over a period of time, as she worked in a manner that appeared chaotic, out of which an order arose when she created an exhibition, as she constructed elaborate, 'walk in' paintings. Her work had a real sense of investigation of how to create meaning out of diverse objects, materials and the space they inhabited. She was influenced by the gesture and theatricality in Abstract Expressionism and to me, there was a relationship to theatrical sets created by artists for use in ballet or the theatre. I was able to discuss her work with her. Pfaff's relationship to painting is strong as she was taught by the late Al Held at Yale University. Her work was informed by issues in painting, though she was using real objects and space and painting them to construct a painterly experience. The works were like large walk in paintings. I suggest Pfaff's work possibly influenced Stockholder's relationship to painting and space. Pfaff's installations were diverse in style, dramatic and unlike any other at the time.

[4] David Ryan. Talking Painting: Dialogues with Twelve Contemporary Abstract Painters. Routledge. London and New York. 2002. p. 237.
[5] In Greenpoint Brooklyn. New York.

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Judy Pfaff. Rock/Paper/Scissors. 1982. Steel, perspex, sheet metal, wood panelling, contact paper, paint, tin. Approx. 5 x 9 x 9 metres. Installation Albright-Knox Gallery. Buffalo, NY.

Another artist whose work has informed my own is the contemporary German painter Katherina Grosse. She subverts the white cube of the gallery using a variety of supports – aluminium, walls, canvas, paper with a basic repertoire of gestures including sprayed paint and gestural painting. Colour is sometimes taken from the surrounding landscape near the site or is completely unrelated and is used for its expressive qualities. Her painting has a keen sense of "the act of the making". The brush marks, gesture and the components of the colour create layered depths and a tension between flow, movement and stasis. Although the work looks spontaneous it is rigorously planned prior to the act of painting with to scale models and plans of the site taken into consideration. The performative aspect is also important in Grosse's painting.

> *Through gesture and orientation, Grosse's work is grounded back into the space of the body because it invokes the very body that created it……. The movement of the body affects the space the space impacts in turn on the body.*[6]

[6] David Ryan. "Transverse Spaces." Contemporary Visual Arts. #27. p. 35.

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Katherina Grosse. *Untitled*. 1999. acrylic on wall. 370 x 916 x 717 cm. Kunstverein Bochum.

Grosse's work is of interest as she deconstructs the white cube of the gallery, using painterly washes of colour. She uses thin veils of sprayed paint that are reminiscent of the paintings Morris Louis and Rothko, both of whose works have informed mine. Louis painted large canvases with veils of colour into which one becomes immersed whilst viewing. The ephemeral nature of the veils and washes of paint was important to my practice when I first considered painting on the wall. I began with work that was geometric, flatly painted, traversing the whole site and using scale to its maximum. Grosse's work introduced other possibilities I had not thought of relating to veils, and washes of colour. Grosse's use of colour also is suggestive as it is directly related to the site of the work, and the paint vaporous and fugitive like the experience of light and landscape.

Scale in relation to the human body and the use of site as an issue introduced another element that incorporated the emersion of the painter and viewer into the space. It also extended the range of content that was possible in what the viewer was asked to do, and how they viewed the work. This issue has extended the vocabulary of abstract painting in the twentieth century as numerous artists including Mondrian, El Lissitsky, Theo Van Doesberg and other artists from the De Stijl movement, and

Daniel Buren have made the entire architectural space of a room integral to the artwork. My interest in this matter extends to interior designers such as Josef Hoffman and the Wierner Werkstätte and the Bauhaus, where every architectural feature including custom made furniture and fabrics was considered.[7] The German painter Blinky Palermo made painting/installation works that were responsive to the site in which they were displayed. The works echoed architectural elements found within the sites and hence the artwork is inextricably bound to the site. Other artists including Ellsworth Kelly and Bridget Riley have also made artwork that that relates to the architectural sites in which they are displayed. The works occupy entire walls and provide complex experiences for the viewer as they traverse the site.

As mentioned previously the American contemporary abstract artist Polly Apfelbaum uses crushed velvet or bed sheets that she stains using Sennelier inks and dyes. Apfelbaum made a conscious decision to work using the floor as her site rather than the wall. Her partner is an architect and she wanted to extend the possibilities for painting and realised the site and the floor had been under utilised so decided to make that her area of interest. She made it clear her work was process driven, intuitive and quite chaotic, out of which an order emerges. She works by *doing* and using the relationship between her sensibilities, the everyday, the materials she chooses and the site.[8]

Pfaff, Stockholder, Grosse and Apfelbaum's work presents me with a playful, painterly experience, one that reminds me of my interest in the properties of materials and chromatic experiences that are rich and full of possibilities. Their work incorporates qualities of beauty, richness, variety and repetition. These artists' works present a tenuous, open ended, evocative set of circumstances, which although stimulating, do not easily coalesce into definitive meaning. There is the use of the vocabulary of painting, literally expanded into space, so the viewer can interact with the work, like a 'walk in' painting, where the illusionary function of painting is

[7] The Neue Galerie in New York is devoted to the decorative arts from Germany and Austria. Dagobert Peche and the Wierner Werkstätte. Viewed December 2002. Josef Hoffmann: Interiors 1902-1913. Viewed December 2006.

[8] Apfelbaum in conversation with the author during a visit to Apfelbaum's studio. New York. 2003.

replaced with content about the materiality of objects and substances in external space.

Sculptor Fred Sandback's delicate string constructions, although physically slight, have a profound affect on how the viewer perceives space. He uses skeins of acrylic yarn that he stretches point to point within a room to create geometric figures that define pictorial as the viewer's site lines change as they move around planes. Though fixed in space they seem to shift dynamically the work.

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Fred Sandback. *Untitled* [9] 2006.
David Zwirner Gallery. New York.

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Alternate view of *Untitled* 2006 at left.

My interest in Sandback relates to his simplicity of means, both in his use of material[10] and the geometric forms he constructs and their relationship to the site in which they are shown. The forms are usually simple and geometric – rectangles, trapezoids, lines - shapes that can be formed by stretching acrylic yarn from various points to another point in a space, for example from the ceiling to floor or wall to wall into a corner. They are meticulously and seamlessly constructed and the powerful presence of the work defies the fragility of the coloured yarn and adds to the paradox as to how work that is so subtle can change the way we see the space in which they are displayed. The yarn often defines a plane and which personally, for me as a viewer, is impossible to cross. For example one of the works at Dia:Beacon consists

[9] *Untitled* (Sculptural Study – Seventeen Part Right Angled Construction) (Conceived 1985) Seventeen parallel L-shaped lines of red yarn.
[10] Sandback carried everything he needed in a small suitcase when he arrived to make a work.

of a floor to ceiling rectangle defined by yarn. The work is large scale, as the ceilings at Dia:Beacon soar in an immense, former industrial building. From certain angles and in different lights, one perceives the form as a defined, solid plane, such as one drawn onto a sheet of paper, made of glass or some transparent, but solid material. In actuality the viewer could, if they so wished, pass from one side of the plane to the other, by walking "over the line", as it is made of air. Intellectually, one knows there is nothing there but air, but there is the sense, one cannot cross the invisible plane. Like Tuttle, Sandback uses unheroic materials, which he uses to create sculpture that relates strongly to the body moving around his work, in space, using a language that relates to drawing using coloured lines in space. It is remarkable how such an insubstantial material can convey so much information. These are subtle interventions into the space, but leave a powerful and lasting impression.

As mentioned earlier, Richard Tuttle's interest is also in so called 'humble materials' and all aspects of the object and its relationship to the viewing conditions. His work is not site specific, but rather site responsive. He is usually involved with the installation of his work, as the relationship of the objects to the site is crucial to making the work come alive. Prior to his retrospective in 2005/6 [11], Tuttle spent many hours pacing the gallery spaces talking with a Whitney curator about how to minimise the effect of a very dominant ceiling and the floors in the galleries where his work was to be seen. He was worried that his delicate work using such materials as florist's wire, Styrofoam, tissue paper and cardboard would be overpowered by the space in which it was to be shown.

> *The symbiotic relationship between art and the space in which it is seen has been an essential concern of Mr. Tuttle's from the beginning. 'Although he is a maker of discrete objects,' Robert Storr a curator and professor, notes in the show's catalogue, 'the framework in which they will be placed is of paramount importance.'*[12]

[11] The Art of Richard Tuttle. Whitney Museum of American Art. 2005/6. Viewed December 2005.
[12] Randy Kennedy. When a Museum Building Competes with Art. The New York Times. January 10, 2006.

Tuttle asks us to notice things that we may normally miss such as a shadow, the edge of a painting or the texture of a drawing. For this reason his art demands careful observation, revealing its beauty and nuance with time. But his work is also immediately playful, demonstrating a wry sense of humour.[13]

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Richard Tuttle. *Inside the Still Pure Form*. Installation view. Detail.
Blum Helman Gallery, New York. 1990.

As I stated previously my first experience of working directly onto the wall of a site was when creating *An Exact Copy* at West Space. It was a work that was planned before manufacture, researching how the work may look at completion. The time it would take to paint the work into the space dictated which image I could use as there was a finite period of time to access the gallery to complete the work. Photoshop was

[13] The Art of Richard Tuttle. November 10, 2005 – February 5, 2006. Exhibition Brochure. Whitney Museum of American Art. 2005.

used to test how the image may look in the site. I planned and constructed studies that were to scale, taking into consideration the path of the viewer and how I anticipated the work could be revealed as they moved through the space. Materials were tested, to see how they performed over time before installation. In the early stages it appeared that this planned process was the antithesis of working intuitively and that it left no room for the accident or slippage in the construction, content and meaning of the work. Later I found that this was not to be the case as intuition came to the fore when I was in the site and constructing the work. Intuition was important in the resolution. As I constructed the work in the space there was an awareness I had only made one set of choices in the construction of the artwork, and there were a multitude of other decisions that could have been used in the process of manufacture. I had not anticipated that this before construction.

In the studio, after *An Exact Copy,* for a period of two years in duration, I painted directly onto the wall in the studio and used a camera to document the painting processes and results as demonstrated earlier.[14] This was in the form of research into the relationship of painting to site and the use of the body rather than the wrist to construct work. The site presented an element of the unknown and one I could not control. I had envisioned commencing with a white space. This proved impossible, so I began working over and within the test stripes for the West Space exhibition painted previously on the studio wall. Using an overhead projector I began by drawing a gestural, rhythmical sequence and repeated it both contained within the stripes and spilling out onto the wall. Then photography was used to document the changes to the work over time. By photographing the work I became aware of the expanded nature of the artwork. Initially I thought the work was what I had painted onto the wall. Through the viewfinder it became obvious that incidents in the room and the space itself, were part of the work. This realisation changed the manner in which I proceeded. This painting process of working directly on the wall of the studio became a constantly evolving work. There was little thought of how the work was going to eventuate. It was a process of discovery and responsiveness to the painting and the painting to the site.

[14] See pp. 102 – 104.

Later, documentation of the wall was used to make acetates, that were then either traced or placed on the overhead projector to construct the works on paper or on stretchers. Photography became a tool for editing, selecting and identifying the next state of the process.

On reflection, the painting directly on the wall helped me to "see" the intuitive, because of the magnification of scale painting directly onto the wall enabled me to understand how I use intuitive thought. Because of the increased physical scale of the work and the time it took to complete, working this way allowed me to explore processes and simplify imagery. It permitted me to see and objectify my process and to expand my vocabulary. This expansion was aided by noticing effects as the work was either painted onto or painted out on the wall. These effects were often only discovered through the framing device of the camera. It edited the view, and objectified it so it could be used for later works, or stored for future use as the camera captured new vocabulary within my practice. By 'new vocabulary' I am referring to the different relationships and placements of forms and structures discovered through the editing and cropping that occurs when the work is scanned or photographed. Incidents in the qualities of the painted surfaces, or juxtapositions of imagery when magnified or edited, allow me to discover 'new' compositional relationships in the works that I would not have considered without the photographic process.

Robin Kingston, *Untitled Wall Painting* 2006. Graphite, watercolour, gouache on the wall. Dimensions variable.

Detail of *Untitled Wall Painting.* 2006.

'*Untitled Wall Painting* - For the Travel Show' [15], was painted directly on the wall and for the first time watercolour and gouache was used instead of house acrylic. I was encouraged by the luminosity of this kind of paint on the wall. It bought into play issues of history – frescos in Italy, such as Massaccio and Giotto. The work had a glow that the house paint used in *An Exact Copy*, did not have. The house paint was a skin that sat on top of the wall. Using watercolour, the paint hangs lightly into the wall, interacting with it, taking the colour/whiteness from the wall and incorporating or bouncing the colour off it as white grounds do in oil painting, or as paper does with gouache and watercolour. The wall painting became like a piece of paper put under a magnifying glass because the wall behaves rather like a piece of paper. In other words it mimics the aqueous nature of parts of the drawings.

The '*On the Wall*'[16] exhibition was an important development in my research. The exhibition was used to explore different methods of display within the gallery space. Framed works, unframed works on paper, works on stretchers and a work painted

[15] Exhibited in the *X Marks the Spot.* School of Art Gallery. RMIT University. Melbourne. 2006.
[16] *On the Wall.* 2006. School of Art Gallery. RMIT University. Melbourne.

directly on the wall were planned, with consideration as to how the viewer would move through the space. This exhibition yielded a result that was not anticipated.

Robin Kingston. *On the Wall.* 2006. Oil on linen. Installation view. 70 x 228 cm and 228 x 70 cm.
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Robin Kingston. Installation view of *On the Wall.* 2006. Framed works on paper.

Robin Kingston. View of display of multiple drawings in *On the Wall.* 2006. All works 2005 – 2006 Graphite, gouache and watercolour on paper. Each individual work 56 x 76 cm.

Due to the high chroma of the 'hung works' in the exhibition, the decision was made that the work painted directly in the space should be subtle, as if it was similar, the space would have been visually too loud. Consequently, the work painted directly into the space had the quality of a large, very pale watercolour using graphite,

gouache and watercolour, materials usually used to create the works on paper. Later there was the realisation that the work painted directly into the space could have been the only work of mine in the exhibition. Its delicacy and atmospheric quality produced content that slowly revealed itself to the viewer as they moved through the space. The translucency of the paint, the relationship of the forms to the architecture already present in the gallery, extended the content of the work in ways I had not anticipated. The work was no longer planar as it was painted onto the pillar in the middle of the space, and on two walls at right angles to each other. The painting drew viewers across the gallery to its proximity where they were able engage with the illusory space of the painting through close observation of the physical matter of the paint and the qualities of the mark making that had constructed it.

Robin Kingston. *On the Wall. Wall painting*. 2006. Installation view. Detail. Graphite,watercolour, acrylic, gouache on the wall. Dimensions specific to site.

The '*On the Wall*' exhibition worked with the entire space of the gallery. One became aware of the room itself engaging with the works. The space was thoroughly cleaned to remove marks that hindered the engagement with the artwork. This issue of how and what the viewer experiences is pertinent to my work as it is in the work of

Richard Wright who, answering a question about his work, painted in a skylight [17] where the viewer is enticed by its elaborate and detailed nature, but because of its inaccessibility, cannot view it closely.

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Richard Wright. Untitled. 2000.
gouache on the wall. 198 x 88.9 cm.

Detail of work on left.

> *In the end the position of the work could be half of the work for me. In the first instance the work has the possibility to affect or change the way you are drawn through the space and there fore it has the potential to reveal the space in a new aspect…….*[18]

The results of the research in '*On the Wall*' have informed my practice. It is possible to paint an ephemeral work, one that is barely visible, part of a quiet space and has the quality of a watercolour. I learn by 'doing' and that is part of the 'not knowing'. It is by being attentive to the site and interpreting the relationship of painting to a particular site. I have a developed awareness of serendipitous events, a slippage between the rational and intuitive in my process as in the development, just described. This example is indicative of the way meaning is created in my practice. So much is serendipitous and appears to be a 'lucky accident.' Through this project I have discovered it is not luck as it is about recognising the intuitive. That is, approaching a work in an open state of mind or being in the moment and responsive.

[17] At Gagosian Gallery, 555 W 24th Street, New York. Viewed December, 2002 and 2003.
[18] Richard Wright. (Catalogue) Kunstverein fur die Theinlande und Westfalen. Dusseldorf. 2002. p.58.

There is a temporary quality in my painting, as the wall work only exists as documentation after the fact, as the work is painted out at the end of a period of time. There is no physical object though the memory of it lives on. The painting of a temporary work directly into a site is the experience gained, that of being 'in the moment' during the construction of the painting. When the artwork is removed it only exists for those who encountered it. I have discovered within this research this experience is difficult, if not impossible to replicate though documentation.

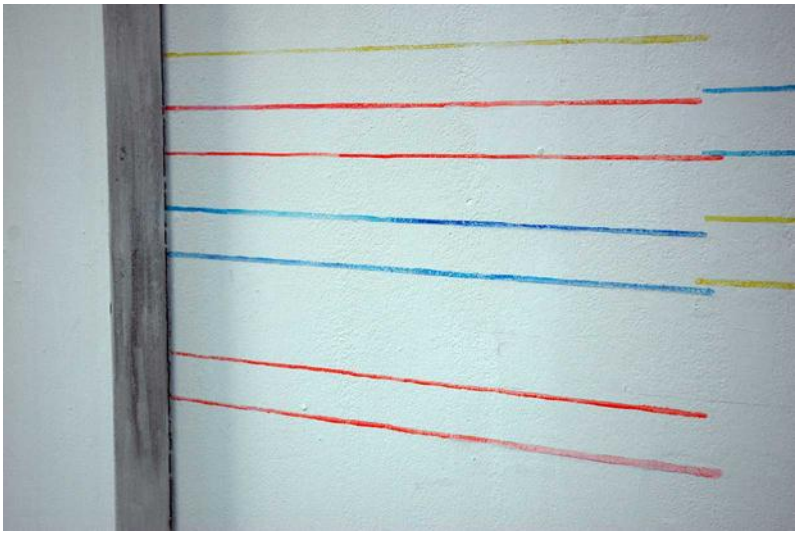
By painting directly on the wall and incorporating the space or site of display, it becomes effectively a 'walk in painting'. The frame has been removed and the work is no longer contained by the stretcher or the frames of individual works or the object. The boundary is been extended. There is no object and viewer relationship as the viewer is *in* the work, there is no barrier. There is no inside, outside, and the boundaries of the work shift and flow. The work ebbs out into the space where it is shown in and the work literally opens out, as there are multiple views or perspectives on the piece as the viewer moves around it. During construction, many decisions cannot be made without being in the space and absorbing the characteristics of the site, to ascertain what can be adjusted, and what not, and how the work is to operate within the space. As the artist working directly with the space, this requires me to be in a state of mind where I am entirely present and in the moment. It is a fluid, flexible condition that requires me to be open to possibilities with the site and the thoughts related to and the act of painting. My awareness is heightened due to the risk and the time limitations. The work emerges from a practice that requires attentiveness and provides an immersive experience for the artist, as well as for the viewer .

These issues are evident in the '*Untitled.Gossard'*[19] and *Untitled.Gossard Corridor*,[20] wall paintings. Both works enliven and influence the space of the sites they inhabit. As I suggested earlier, these works are no longer planar, but seep into the surrounding site. The exchange flows from the works to the site, and from the site to the work. An example of this is the work in the Gossard corridor, (page 141) where the

[19] Robin Kingston. *Untitled.Gossard.* 2007. Gossard Building. RMIT University. Melbourne. Dimensions specific to site.
[20] Robin Kingston. *Untitled.Gossard Corridor.* 2007. Gossard Building. RMIT University. Melbourne.

continuously changing daylight from the windows in the site mingled with, and directly influenced the nature of the forms painted on the wall opposite.

Robin Kingston. *Untitled. Gossard*. 2007. Graphite, gouache, acrylic and watercolour on the wall. Dimensions specific to site.



Robin Kingston. *Untitled. Gossard*. Detail. 2007. Graphite, watercolour, gouache and acrylic on the wall.

Robin Kingston. *Untitled. Gossard Corridor.* 2007. Graphite, gouache, watercolour and acrylic on the wall. Dimensions specific to site.

Robin Kingston. *Untitled. Gossard Corridor*. 2007. Detail.
Light from the windows opposite moving over the wall painting.

Through the duration of the studio project there was exploratory, developmental artwork using paper, the stretcher and the wall. I assumed the final works would be either on the stretcher or paper, but as the project progressed there was the realisation that it was the wall works that fully allowed the experiential immersion the work required to explore the issues pertinent to this project. Working spatially facilitated

analysis of how I used intuitive and rational thought as the spatial allowed the experiential to come to the fore in a manner that was not possible on a two dimensional support. Working spatially in the formative stages of the project was an aside, however as the research involved in process of the manufacture of the artwork was revelatory, working spatially became crucial answering the research questions defined in the project. Working spatially, every action and reaction was magnified because of the scale and the particular characteristics of the sites and my responses to them. The fact that I had no idea how the final work would be in advance was of interest and the investigation of how the vocabulary of abstract structures and strategies of working would change and develop when used spatially. The question became what happened when I was actually in the space. No amount of planning could answer this question.

The large red wall painting investigated in the last three site artworks at the culmination of the project, developed spatial issues that will be continued after the conclusion of the project.

Robin Kingston *Untitled (for Sol).* 2007. Graphite, gouache, acrylic and watercolour on the wall. Dimensions specific to site.

The work constructed at Switchback Gallery in Churchill *Untitled* (*for Sol).* 2007, was in a gallery that contained high, clear-storey windows down one side-wall. When examining photographs of the site, the windows cast a feint moving shadow in the shape of a triangle from the window to the floor on the adjacent wall. A decision was

made to use this phenomena as part of the work, by 'painting in' the triangular shape of the cast shadow, but not it's exact contour. This large triangle was painted in a thin, gestural wash and the effect was a large, gestural monochrome. It expanded the experience for the viewer, spatially - both three dimensionally in actual space; as well as optically or pictorially as the gestural monochrome was not visually stable - there was variation in the paint application of thin watercolour washes.

Robin Kingston *Untitled (for Sol).* 2007. Detail.
Graphite, gouache, acrylic and watercolour on the wall.
Dimensions specific to site.

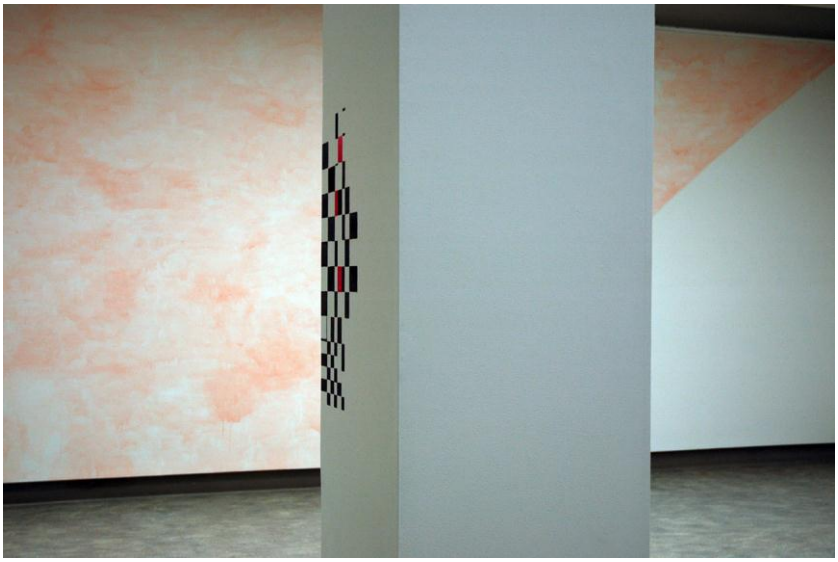
This potential for spatial expansion discovered in *Untitled (for Sol)* became the starting point for the two subsequent works at the culmination of the project, *The Un-Limiting Conditions.* 2007, and *Where Things Stop and Start.* 2008. The placement of the large red, monochrome triangle in the School of Art Gallery was made with consideration of the architectural features and to draw the viewer to enter the space.
A serendipitous discovery of a diagram of a black and white set design by Malevich[21] led to subsequent important developments within the research.

[21] Kazimir Malevich. Study for the décor of the opera *Victory over the Sun.* Act 2, Scene 5, 1913. St Petersburg State Museum of Theater and Music. In Monochromes: from Malevich to the Present. Barbara Rose. University of California Press. Los Angeles, London. 2006. p. 15

[Copyrighted Material Omitted]

Kazimir Malevich. Study for the décor of the opera *Victory over the Sun*.

In Malevich's diagram the back-drop was a square divided diagonally in half. The bottom triangle was white, and the top was black. It challenged the decision to make the 'lower' triangle the monochrome. The decision to reverse the painted area moved the monochrome into the wall above the triangle, which enabled more of the wall to become active. The dramatically enhanced scale of the monochrome visually activated the entire gallery space and accentuated the architectural features.



Robin Kingston *The Un-limiting Conditions.* 2007.
Graphite, gouache, watercolour and acrylic on the wall.
Dimensions specific to site.

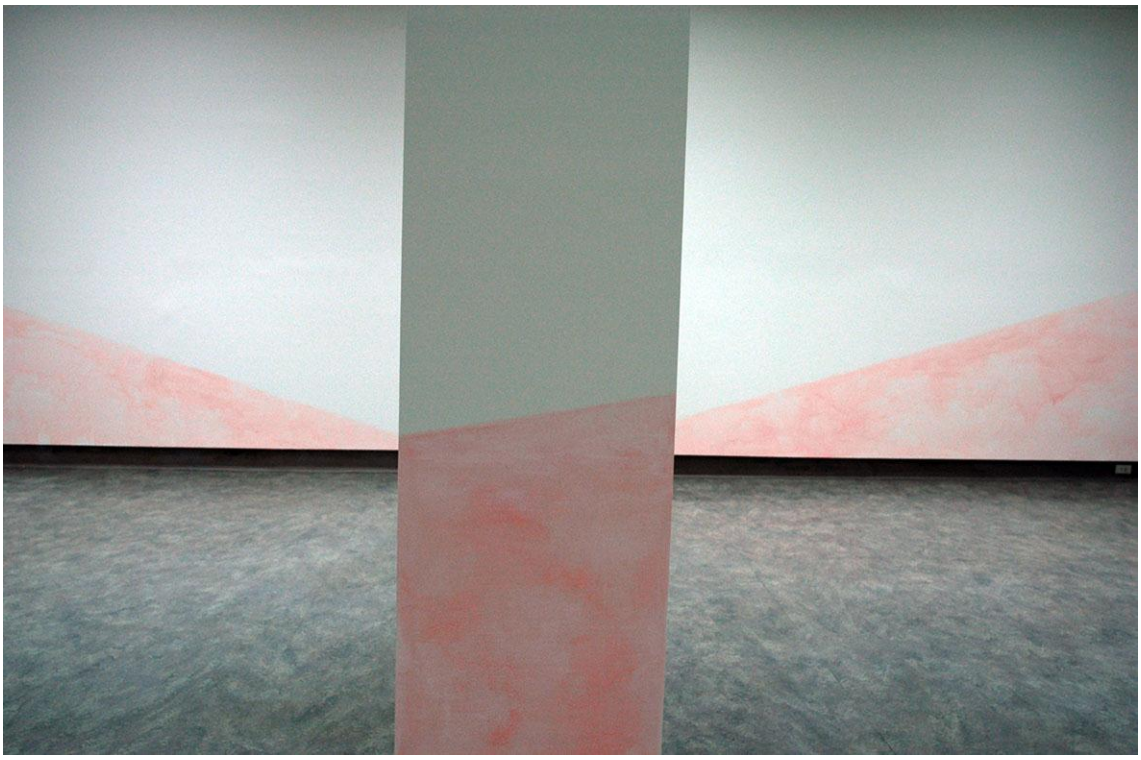
Previously, each of the paintings made on the wall used the wall merely as a support, but did not relate strongly to the architecture of the site. *The Un-limiting Conditions* incorporated the architecture features as integral to the content. The work was bound

to the site. In a different site, those painterly components if repeated, would not have the same meaning. The spatial/architectural component in the final works of the project became paramount and operated as it had not previously within my work. Fred Sandback speaks convincingly of this relationship, to which I concur.

> *"More and more, working seems to be like a performance: not in the sense of presenting a process, but in the conditions required to complete a piece. Some things are done and complete in my studio, but others are ambiguous until done in a particular place. A studio is necessarily vague and hypothetical for pieces like that. I like the connectedness of that kind of a piece – you can't stick it under your arm and carry it home. It has its own place and lifespan."*[22]

All aspects of the site – how the work was revealed as the viewer moved through the space; what was painted and what was not; how the viewer examined the work from a distance and closely, became integral to the painting of the works and in engaging intuitive and rational thought when emersed in the experiential. The expansion of the plane of the single support (paper, canvas) into the space and time of the three dimensional world through an investigation of colour, structure, form and space enabled the examination of intuitive and rational thought in the construction of issues in contemporary abstract painting.

[22] Fred Sandback in Fred Sandback. Herausgeber Friedmann Malsch, Christine Meyer-Stoll. Editors. Hatje Cantz Verlag. Germany. 2005. p. 91. First published in Fred Sandback Kunstraum, Munich. 1975. pp 11+12



Robin Kingston *Where Things Stop and Start.* 2008.
Graphite, gouache, watercolour and acrylic on the wall.
Dimensions specific to site.

Conclusion

"And at the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time."[1]

At the conclusion of this project, I have a deeper understanding of how and why I use intuitive and rational thought within my practice. The research began with the presumption that intuition and rational thought was a binary structure and the basis of my methodology. As I proceeded I discovered the situation was more complex. It is not a binary relationship but rather one of synthesis as these types of thought are inseparable and work together simultaneously within my practice.

Other areas I sought to separate into binary forms such as body/mind, illusory and object nature of painting are also now difficult to separate. Within my practice they operate simultaneously and to impose a boundary is superficial, as though by describing the conditions of one, it allows the other to be defined.

By investigating the use of intuitive and rational thought in the construction of contemporary art I have drawn the conclusion that I have used the terms 'intuition' and 'rational thought' to give names to structures of thought and these words reference a state of attentiveness, openness and awareness and a way of 'being' in the world and in making art. This 'act of attention' is a creative act.

Within my practice, intuition is a state of attentiveness. In the making of an artwork, it is *the act of doing* and attentiveness to those actions, where there is no barrier between the activity and myself as I move through the process to a conclusion. It is a state of being 'in the moment' without an expectation of the result and being responsive to the situation and the conditions so I can make choices. As I cannot separate intuitive and rational thought, at the end of this project there comes the realisation that I use those terms as substitutes for more unexplainable, ineffable content underlying my work. The intuitive also allows me to construct the work in a

[1] T.S. Elliot. *Four Quartets*. Harcourt, Brace and Company. New York. 1943. p. 39.

state of flux, where the condition of ‘not knowing’ can operate so the outcome is unexpected and a result of the choices made through the process.

My painting refers to another plane of experience, incorporating metaphysical and contemplative content. I was aware of the presence of this content in aspects of my practice, first encountered when I began to draw using a Zen method. I had not connected my use of what I call intuition as arising from this practice, though upon reflection it was when I began to understand and develop a deeper relationship to intuition in my working practice. Through this method of drawing and observing the world, a direct source had been accessed within my mind, to thought and experience I perceived as authentic. It was directly experiential and produced results that could not have been predicted. Intuition is hard to explain to those who do not believe in it. As a consequence I used other more logical terms to explain the work, and my processes. This was by the use of a formal visual language that provided a visual structure and also became a distancing device when using verbal language, so the core of the work was protected. The work is, elusive, subtle and fragmented and occupies a place of ‘in between-ness’. The content of the work is a mixture of introspective experience combined with an awareness and use of a contemporary abstract language. It forms a pathway to another level of understanding, which involves the experiential for the artist and for the viewer.

I have discovered that what matters in my work are one’s own reactions at any given moment, as the paintings become visual ‘sounding boards’ or mirrors for indeterminate and complex meaning relating to humanness or the human condition. This response is inclusive of the viewer as well as the artist as the paintings provide the conditions for privileging the experiential. This embodiment of humanness and privileging the experiential within my research are important contributions to the body of knowledge in the visual arts. The complexities generated through my sense of touch and the hand made are given priority in my practice and the sensibility generated by the paint, the structures and the thought processes are a mixture of physical, emotional and psychological responses. The relationship to the content arising in my work emerges through the process of manufacture rather than illustrating preconceived ideas. It is a process of trial and error, conscious recognition and judgement incorporating what I call play. In the exegesis I have attempted to

demonstrate that play is crucial in the response to the materials and thought processes as it allows for a state of not knowing and incorporating the unexpected. Play also draws on the condition of "being in the moment" and an attentiveness that is synonymous with intuitive and rational thought. Because play, as I use it, has been infrequently addressed in relation to the visual arts, my research contributes to the current body of knowledge. The crucial difference explained between experimentation and play further elucidates this matter for those who may work with a more conceptual framework. It provides for a broader understanding of the creative processes utilised in the making of visual art.

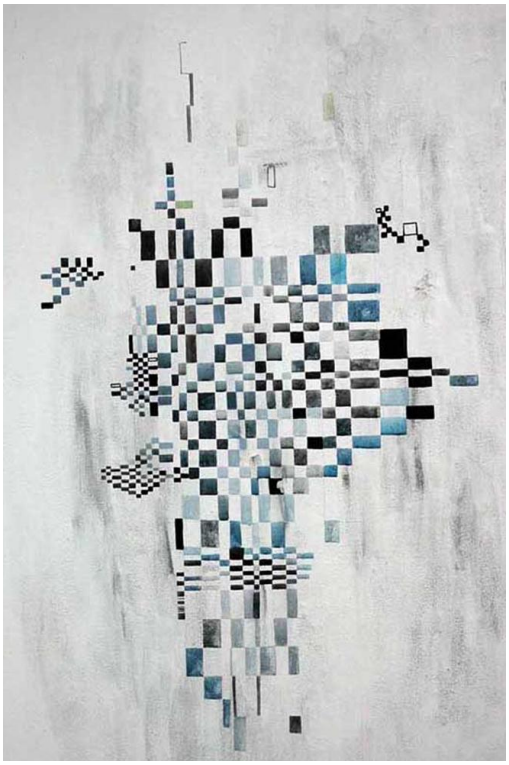
The paintings simultaneously use the formal visual language or formal principals of painting such as line, colour, form, order and complexity that I equate with a more rational understanding of the working process. It is through the use of this formal visual language that the intuitive or subjective is accessed. I stress it is not that they are part of a binary system, and moreover they contribute to a holistic working practice through their relational interplay. It is about the complexity of creativity and providing the conditions that allow for the intuitive or subjective to become factual or understandable which in turn within my painting leads to content involving humanness.

Over the time of my research there has been a loosening or unravelling of imagery and the space within the work. The paintings in substance have progressed from being solid and skin like, to almost immaterial, using the shimmer of Perlex and clouds of ephemeral pigment on the wall or on paper. Paint has become thinner, and more aqueous, to the point of breaking down to pure pigment. The edge, whether it is of interval, form or paper, has become more important. The grids slip, collapse and visually move. Space has re-entered the work, both illusory and external.

The pictorial structures that have been generated through my period of research have become more diverse. I do not believe the expansion has been generated by directly exploring the binary relationships stated in the research questions, which were investigating intuition /rational thought, body/mind and the object/illusory nature of painting. These issues have been synthesised within a holistic practice. I suggest that the pictorial structures have developed in an organic manner that arose from the

processes in the construction of the artwork. There is a knowledge that the variety of marks, forms and pictorial structures used in my vocabulary now and previously identified, are at my disposal to be orchestrated at will through the application of a formal visual language. This formal visual language allows for a transformation of imagery by changing issues such as the placement of forms, scale, colour, intensity of colour. Varying the material used to paint the forms and structures also changes the artwork's meaning.

One of the characteristics of my practice is that the work folds back on itself in my use and reuse of imagery. This method was present at the beginning of the research however, I now have a greater understanding of how I generate that imagery and a confidence in my ability to be flexible and attentive the changes that may be necessary as I construct the artwork. For example by gradually narrowing the structure of a grid as it is constructed it creates a spatial illusions as in the example overleaf. The sensations arising during the creative process and attentiveness to those conditions produce an inner alertness to the active possibilities between the artwork and myself. It is an experiential relationship where there are many variables that may be called on at will.



Robin Kingston. *Untitled. Gossard.* 2007. Detail.
Graphite, gouache, acrylic on the wall.
Dimensions specific to site.

I conclude, through this research, that the context and placement of painting does influence the content. This issue was tested in the studio through a process of working directly on the wall and also by exploring various methods of presentation when exhibiting the work. I also explored sites with different characteristics for painting wall works.

Throughout this project the decision to work by painting directly into internal architectural spaces has affected and directed this research. It has expanded my practice, both literally and physically. As a consequence, there has been new imagery and structures discovered through painting directly into the space. The experience of painting directly into a site, as I now approach it at the end of the project is with a state of openness and with an expanded vocabulary at my disposal. The experience of and vocabulary now used in painting the space is approached with the same flexibility as working on a piece of paper where the structures are able to be changed and transformed at will. It is not pre-planned. This situation has allowed me to examine the intuitive or a state of attentiveness as they operate at the forefront of the process as

I paint directly into the space. It requires attentiveness, and a silence, which is analogous to 'listening' for the character of the site to reveal itself. The scale of the wall works allows for a magnification of the mark making. Their interpretation by the viewer of the painterly structures provides an opportunity to engage with the patterns of thought and the material matter used to construct the work.

My painting incorporates an extended view of abstraction rather than that of a formal pictorial language associated with late twentieth century. The influence from fine art and most especially abstraction has flowed into the media in the forms used in advertising, housing and industrial design. These means have provided a pathway for geometric abstraction in particular to be incorporated into every day life. The yellow and black geometric Commonwealth Bank logo is one familiar example. However, this research project has explored and demonstrated the form abstraction may take when the content is determined by the painting's materiality, strategies and processes and it is the antithesis of the way abstraction has been used in popular culture. My works are invested with the embodiment of humanness and the handmade and are experiential for the artist and the viewer. They are complex and take time to view.

I have contextualised my practice in light of late twentieth century abstraction and more particularly from an understanding of abstraction informed by New York. I have demonstrated how it has been vital to my understanding of arts practice to look directly to the source of twentieth century abstraction in New York institutions, rather than to information filtered through secondary sources. The opportunity to view important examples of European abstraction as well as the subsequent American movements has allowed me to research the developments and to find links for my self. This has enabled me to be selective in synthesising information directly into my practice by examination of the intellectual and experiential nature of the artworks including the scale, specificity of the materials, touch and the complexities of the art making processes. The physicality and sheer scale, and the manner in which the artworks exhibited in New York relate to the human body, the architecture and sites in which they are displayed have been important to my understanding of the potential of contemporary abstraction. There are fine examples of how the performative can be interpreted as trace or touch, most particularly, in the work of the Abstract Expressionists and their antecedents, where the scale and sensibility of the painting

envelops the viewer in contemplative and metaphysical content. The abstraction I have viewed, particularly American abstraction, incorporates the representation of an inner psychological space where images evoke feelings and generate pictorial structures and surfaces. Uniting this information in a holistic manner has enabled me to create an abstraction that is a narrative of recording sensibilities.

My interpretation and synthesis of historical and contemporary abstraction and most especially in aspects I have outlined in this exegesis, has enabled me to contribute to the contemporary abstract visual language and I hope my artwork and knowledge represent important contributions to my field. My research represents a meeting place between the physical characteristics of painting with its transitional nature, whilst being aware of the potential of that meeting point to instil contemporary abstraction with subtle, indeterminate, hand made content, which is the embodiment of humanness.

This project's investigation into the role of intuition and rational thought in the manufacture of contemporary abstraction, contributes to an understanding of the complexities of the visual language and thought structures, used in the creation of art. Whether the structures are grids or ephemeral, gestural mark making and paint is matt, gloss, scumbled or flat, the paintings allude to the fold to which Deleuze refers, where the fold is at once empty and full. The material matter of the paint and the support presents an experience that is contemplative and contains metaphysical content. The object of my artwork is to create material, visual fields. The paintings in this body of research provide a tangible, physical, transitional space that evokes emotional, poetic and philosophical content. The paintings, and the research necessary to make them, are experience and knowledge made manifest.

Robin Kingston. *Untitled (for Sol).* 2007. Graphite, gouache, watercolour and acrylic on the wall. Dimensions specific to site.

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