

Blot:

The Material Conditions of Appearance in Painting

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degree of Master of Philosophy

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Abstract

The thesis is conducted through painting and writing, and considers the properties of motion particular to painting. This is examined through the conditions of appearance and the processes of formation in the making of paintings, and the notion of the 'blot' as both a patch of irregular, undifferentiated marks and an 'illegitimate' temporal opening on the surface of the painting. The 'blot' is explored as the embodiment of a perceptual movement, which occurs in the experience of apprehending a painting, in order to challenge the modernist exclusion of temporality from painting.

The thesis depends for its methodology on a model put forward by Yve Alain Bois in the book *Painting As Model*, and relies on 7 paintings and two notebooks written concurrently with the making of the paintings. There is a theoretical text that lays out the main arguments and knowledge expressed in the paintings, and a glossary of terms, that might be defined as artist's writing, detailing terms, which have been adapted to stand for complex events in the process of painting. This is situated in the appendix alongside the transcribed notebooks.

In order to consider and articulate ideas of temporality in painting the thesis has examined Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried's theorisations of modernist instantaneity; Rosalind Krauss's recovery of temporality and the body in *The Optical Unconscious*; a model of visual perception proposed by perceptual psychologist John Humphrey in *Seeing Red – a Study in Consciousness*; a particular model of the grotesque, described by Geoffrey Harpham in *On the Grotesque*; Deleuze's investigation of motion within painting in *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*.

Contents:

Introduction to the Thesis	12
Chapter 1: Description of the Paintings and Notebooks which Constitute the Thesis	17
<i>Please view as a double page spread (Two Up Continuous)</i>	
Introduction	18
Paintings	
1 - Perfect Cannibal	19
2 - Nine	21
3 - Head 1 & 2	23
4 - Hitch	25
5 - FedEx	27
6 - Torque	29
7 - Switch	31
Notebooks	
1 - FedEx Notebook <i>see separate pdf – Thesis Part 2</i>	33
2 - Hitch/Op Notebook <i>see separate pdf – Thesis Part 3</i>	35
Chapter 2: Theoretical Context	38-57
Appendices	
1 - FedEx Notebook <i>see separate pdf – Thesis Part 2</i>	1.0
2 - Hitch/Op Notebook <i>see separate pdf – Thesis Part 3</i>	2.0
3 - Glossary of Terms <i>see separate pdf – Thesis Part 4</i>	3.0
Introduction	3.2
Paint Slide	3.5
Appropriate	3.7
Seeing Else	3.10
Switch	3.11
Dissonance	3.13
Wobble	3.17
Decoy	3.20
Quasi Anamorphosis	3.21
Rictus	3.25

Cont/....

4 - Additional images	see separate pdf – Thesis Part 4	4.0
Laocoön		4.1
Alphabeasts		4.2
Ravennakamp		4.3
Head 3		4.4
Movement in Squares		4.5
Panel Paintings 1 – 5		4.6
1 - 90° x 90°		
2 - 'triangle' painting		
3 - 'flag' painting		
4 - 'red squares' painting		
5 - Seeing Red		
Fold Painting		4.7
5 - Background to the	see separate pdf – Thesis Part 4	
 Monstrous/Perfect Cannibal		5.0
Bibliography	see separate pdf – Thesis Part 4	

List of images

Chapter 1

<i>Fig. 1</i> Perfect Cannibal 5	20
<i>Fig. 2</i> (a) & (b) Research Show, Royal College of Art, 2010	19
<i>Fig. 3</i> Nine	22
<i>Fig. 4</i> (a) & (b) Details	“
<i>Fig. 5</i> Series of 9 images showing different phases in the painting process including the use of temporary collaged elements	21
<i>Fig. 6</i> One in the Other Gallery, London 2008	“
<i>Fig. 7</i> Head 2	24
<i>Fig. 8</i> Heads 1 & 2	
<i>Fig. 9</i> (a) & (b) details of ‘Head 2’	“
<i>Fig. 10</i> ‘Head 1’	23
<i>Fig. 11</i> (a) & (b) details of Head 1	“
<i>Fig. 12</i> Hitch , Royal College of Art	26
<i>Fig. 13</i> Side view	“
<i>Fig. 14</i> (a), (b) & (c) detail	25
<i>Fig. 15</i> FedEx at the end of the first stage - painting	28
<i>Fig. 16</i> (a) & (b) the early stages of painting; (c) – (f) folded and FedExed to Ecole Nationale Superieure des <i>Beaux-Arts</i> , Paris, for inclusion in the exhibition ‘Le Weekend Sept Jour’, February 2010; (g) & (h) images of it unfolded and hung by the curator; (i) & (j) folded and FedExed back to London; (k), (l) & (m) reconfigured as part of a research day at the Royal College by participating artists; (n) painting ‘Jurassic Park’ from ‘Off-shore’ series of paintings brought into the installation of FedEx	27
<i>Fig. 17</i> external view	28
<i>Fig. 18</i> inside view	“
<i>Fig. 19</i> ‘FedEx’ reconfigured in a digital format and imported into a publication produced as part of a collaborative exhibition with Dylan Shipton at LIDO, St. Leonards on Sea	“
<i>Fig. 20</i> Torque	30

<i>Fig. 21</i> Studio shot of 'Torque'	29
<i>Fig. 22</i> (a) & (b) Research Show, Royal College of Art, July 2011	"
<i>Fig. 23</i> detail	"
<i>Fig. 24</i> Switch	32
<i>Fig. 25</i> 'Switch' (and 'Hitch'), Research Show, Royal College of Art, 2010	31
<i>Fig. 26</i> the early stages of painting	"
<i>Fig. 27</i> preliminary marking up in pencil	"
<i>Fig. 28</i> FedEx Notebook cover	34
<i>Fig. 29</i> notebook and chair, studio, Howie St., Royal College of Art	"
<i>Fig. 30</i> pages 10 & 11	"
<i>Fig. 31</i> pages 4 & 5	33
<i>Fig. 32</i> pages 14 & 15	"
<i>Fig. 33</i> Hitch/Op Notebook , cover	36
<i>Fig. 34</i> pages 12 & 13	"
<i>Fig. 35</i> pages 40 & 41	35
<i>Fig. 36</i> pages 58a & 58b	"

Appendix 3: Glossary of Terms

Paint Slide

<i>Fig. 37</i> Single paint slide made with oil paint on primed canvas	3.15
--	------

Appropriate

<i>Fig. 38</i> 'FedEx painting' - cadmium orange/yellow paint slide	3.17
<i>Fig. 39</i> 'FedEx painting' - (a) cadmium red paint slide, (b) detail	"
<i>Fig. 40</i> 'Hitch', cadmium orange paint slide	"

Switch

<i>Fig. 41</i> Detail from 'Head 2'	3.11
-------------------------------------	------

Dissonance

<i>Fig. 42</i> Bridget Riley, 'Movement In Squares' Tempera on board 122 x 122 cm, 1961	3.13
<i>Fig. 43</i> Panel 4 – 'Red Square Painting', oil on panel, 12 x 18.5 cm, 201	"
<i>Fig. 44</i> 'Switch', oil on board, 57 x 52 cm, 2010	"

Wobble

<i>Fig. 45</i> 'Switch' at a distance	3.17
<i>Fig. 46</i> 'Switch' close to the surface	"

Quasi Anamorphosis

Fig. 47 The distorted grid used to make a perspectival
anamorphic image 3.22

Fig. 48 'The Ambassadors' by Hans Holbein,
oil on oak, 207 x 209.5 cm, 1533 3.21

Fig. 49 Anamorphic image of the skull “

Rictus

Fig. 50 (a) 'Hitch' - central hitching up of the surface, 3.25
(b) Close to the hitch
(c) 'Hitch' - black stippled 'blot' of marks

Appendix 4: Additional Images

4.1 Laocoön

Fig. 51 'Laocoön' 4.1

4.2 Alphabeast Series

Fig. 52 'Alphabeast Series', 1,2,3,4,5,7 (there is no 6) 4.2

4.3 Ravennakamp

Fig. 53 (a) 'Ravennakamp', (b) Detail, (c) Hoxton Art Gallery,
London 2011 4.3

4.4 Head 3

Fig. 54 'Head 3' 4.4

4.5 Movement in Squares,

Fig. 55 'Movement in Squares', Bridget Riley 4.5

4.6 Panels 1 – 5

Fig. 56 Panels 1 ('90° x 90°'), 2, 3, 4 ('Red Square Painting'),
5 ('Seeing Red') 4.6

4.7 Fold Painting

Fig. 57 'Fold Painting' 4.7

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During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification.

The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Introduction to the Thesis:

Introduction to the Thesis

My project is concerned with properties of motion particular to painting. I am concerned with an experience of painting in duration – an extended temporality, in which painting can be understood as in motion, despite its material fixity.

I explore this through examining processes of formation in the making of images through paint, as well as the perceptual movement, which occurs in the experience of apprehending a painting. In particular I examine this through the ‘blot’, as both a material entity and a model of perceptual movement. In order to do this, I draw upon my own processes and experiences as an artist, and situate them in knowledge, to argue for painting as a mode of theorising, and to challenge the modernist exclusion of temporality from the field of vision.

The thesis is primarily comprised of a group of 7 paintings, which are itemised and documented in Chapter 1. It also relies upon two notebooks, which accompanied the formation of three of these paintings, transcribed and presented in Chapter 1 and situated in the appendix.

Both the paintings and the notebooks are a primary source material of experiential data within the thesis, and the manifestation of my thinking research. They constitute knowledge that is implicit, but not hermetic. It is connected out to bodies of explicit knowledge. Indeed I aim to demonstrate the movement of thought between implicit and explicit knowledge, through the contingent relationships articulated between the paintings/notebooks documented in Chapter 1, and the theoretical knowledge presented in Chapter 2. Together these elements constitute the thesis.

Notwithstanding this proposition for the thesis, there is some difficulty in presenting a research process here, which has not emerged or developed in a progressive, linear fashion - one thing leading to the next. It has been an activity of working within parallel modes of thought, in painting and writing. In order to express aspects of the movement between these different elements of the research process, and the thinking in contingency between them, I include a glossary of terms, which have emerged during the project. These terms bind theoretical and historical knowledge to

formal aspects of my own work, often through an adaptation of the term's precise meaning. These are located in the appendix.

In order to consider and articulate ideas of temporality in painting, I have drawn on a model put forward by Yve-Alain Bois in his book 'Painting as Model'¹, and in particular, the essay of the same title². He proposes a conception of painting as theoretical model and as 'thinking', through the materiality of the paint, the conditions of appearance, and through that which establishes itself between works. The locus of my research is exactly in this place, close to the surface of the painting, at the point of materialisation. For me also, painting is a process of thinking, as well as invention and exploration: not the illustrating of theory, but paint as an inventing structure, created through the specificity of the modes of its articulation.

In this model, a painting is not a static, 'bounded' object or image, but an active process of consciousness intimately "bound up with the texture of things", drawing "simultaneously on all our senses"³. The site of invention is not the image of the painting, but the materiality of its surface where marks are in the process of formation. Failure to pay attention to the materiality of the painting, Bois says, leads to its misrepresentation.

Of particular significance in the research is that Bois identifies perceptual movement at the heart of the experience of apprehending a painting. He suggests that it is a "question...of "disturbing the permanent structures of perception, and first of all the figure/ground relationship, beyond which one would be unable to speak of a perceptive field"⁴. For him, the action of perception in apprehending a painting has primary importance: "Painting for the one producing it as for the one who consumes it, is always a matter of perception"⁵. Disruption of the permanent structures of perception (the figure/ground relationship), and the introduction of ambiguity is, he says, what makes the surface of the painting a specific theoretical model.

¹ Bois, Y-A, *Painting as Model*, paperback edn., (first published 1990), M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 1993.

² Bois, essay 'Painting as Model', pp. 245-257. In this essay Bois draws on the writing of Hubert Damisch, particularly *Fenêtre jaune cadmium, ou les dessous de la peinture*, Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1984.

³ Bois, *Painting as Model*, p.249.

⁴ Bois, *Painting as Model*, p.248.

⁵ Bois, *Painting as Model*, p.249.

In Chapter 2, I address historical and theoretical definitions of painting as a static form. Here I construct a route from Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's 'Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry'⁶, first published in 1766, in which he argues for a set of assumptions about the difference between spatial and temporal arts, that leads to Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried's theorisations of modernist instantaneity. In relation to these delineations of temporality, I consider Krauss's recovery of it in 'The Optical Unconscious'⁷ and 'Formless – A Users Guide'⁸ (with Yve Alain Bois). I detail her challenge to the modernist model through 19th century empirical science, and her proposal of an alternative model of vision as temporal movement, through a particular motion of 'pulse'.

I then go on to look at a contemporary model of visual perception, proposed by the perceptual psychologist Nicholas Humphrey⁹, specifically in relation to defining motion as perceptual confusion and ambiguity. I develop this through an exploration of the notion of the grotesque adopting a particular understanding of the grotesque as a process of this very confusion or ambiguity. This model of the grotesque, described by Geoffrey Harpham in the book 'On the Grotesque'¹⁰, is a process or motion that is independent of its iconography and defined as a certain set of obstacles to structured thought. I go on to consider this motion within abstract painting as a perceptual movement specific to the materiality of paint.

<Back

⁶ Lessing, G.E., *Laocoön: An Essay Upon the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, trans. E. Frothingham, paperback edn., Dover Publications, New York, USA, 2005.

⁷ Krauss, R.E., *The Optical Unconscious*, 5th edn. (first published 1993), The MIT Press, Massachusetts, USA, 1998.

⁸ Bois, Y-A., & Krauss, R.E., *Formless - a Users Guide*, paperback edn., Zone Books, distributed by MIT Press, Cambridge MA, USA, 2000. First published in France as *L'Informe. Mode d'Emploi* in 1996.

⁹ Humphrey, N., *Seeing Red: A Study in Consciousness*, pub. by the Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA and London, England, 2006.

¹⁰ Harpham, G.G., *On the Grotesque: Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature*, limited paperback edn., (first published 1982). Princeton University Press, New Jersey, USA, 1992.

Chapter 1:

The Paintings and Notebooks on which the Thesis Relies

(NB Please view this chapter as a double page spread by selecting 'Page Display' from the 'View' drop down menu, and selecting 'Two-Up Continuous' so that p19 appears on the left hand side of the screen.)'

Chapter 1:

Introduction

Paintings 1 – 7

Perfect Cannibal 5

Nine

Head 1 & 2

Hitch

FedEx

Torque

Switch

Notebook Transcriptions 1 – 2

FedEx Notebook

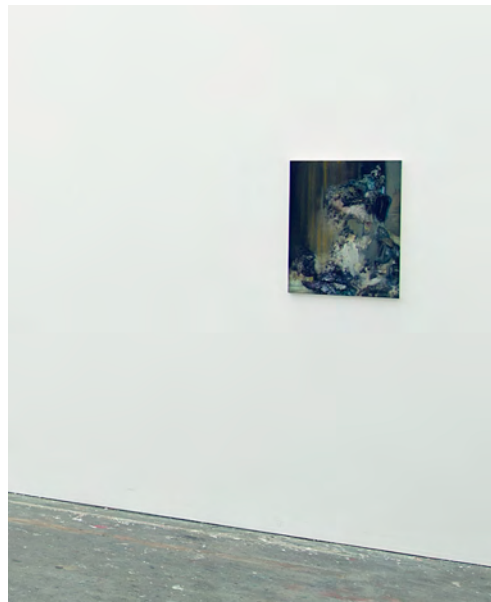
Hitch/Op Notebook

The thesis is comprised of 7 paintings, three of which are supported and documented through notebooks made in parallel with the making of the paintings, which have then been transcribed. The notebooks document the physical act of painting, at the time of their making, and the thinking and process of reflection attendant on it, through textual and graphic elements, and are regarded as a material fact of this process. Alongside the paintings, they are a primary source material in this thesis and a repository of implicit knowledge.



(a)

Fig. 2



(b)

Paintings:**1 – Perfect Cannibal 5**

Painted in 2008, it comprises an mdf panel, 64 x 47 cm, primed front and back and the painting made using oil paint. (This painting is also referred to as Monad in the Hitch/Op Notebook.)



Fig. 1

Fig. 1 Perfect Cannibal 5

Fig. 2 (a) & (b) Research Show, Howie St., Royal Collage of Art, 2010

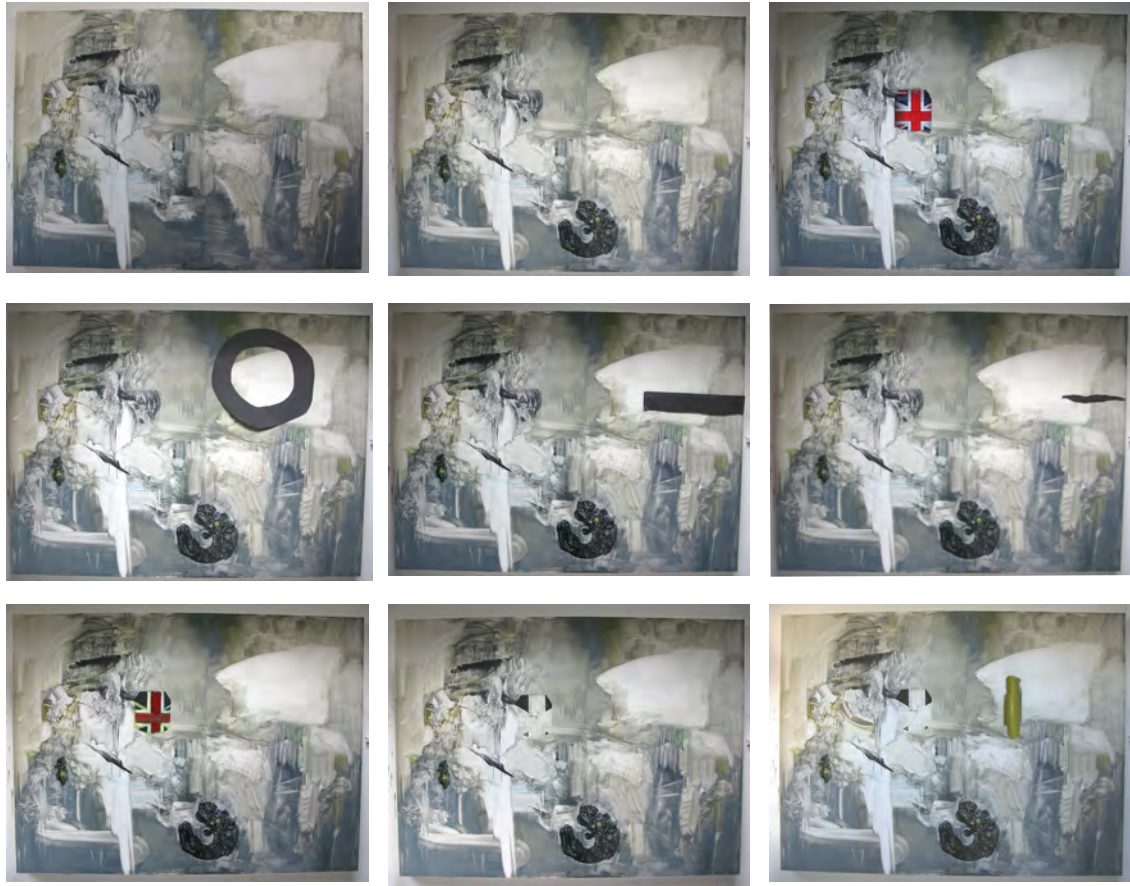


Fig. 5

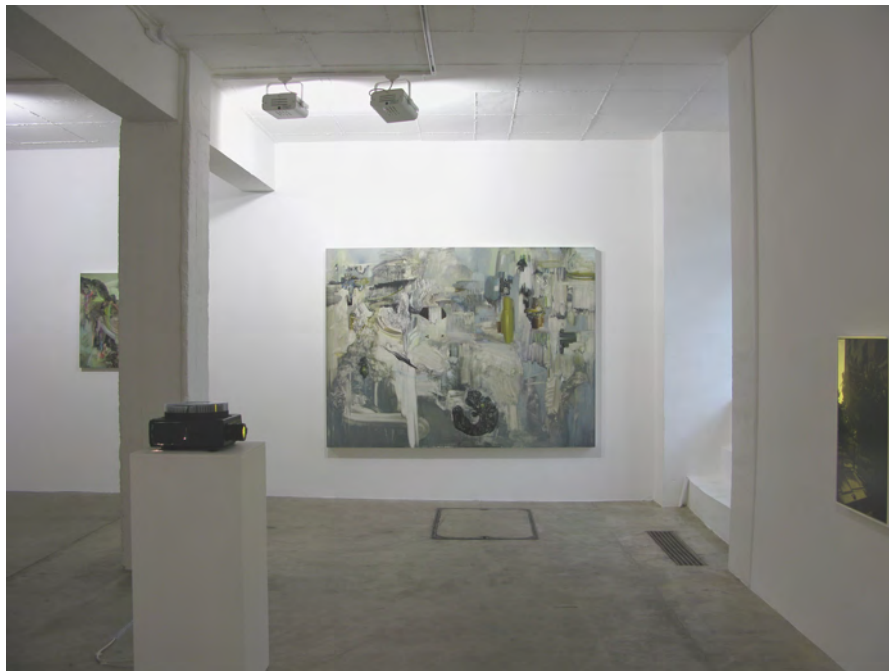


Fig. 6

2 - Nine

Painted in 2008, it comprises an mdf panel, 151 x 204 cm, primed front and back and painted using oil paints.



Fig. 3

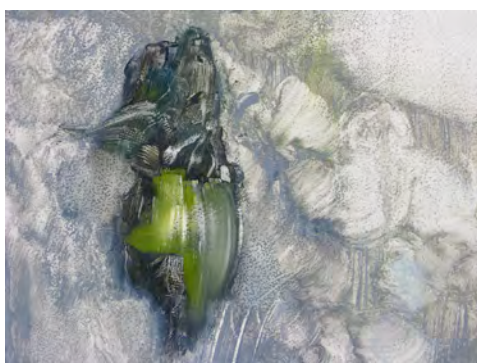
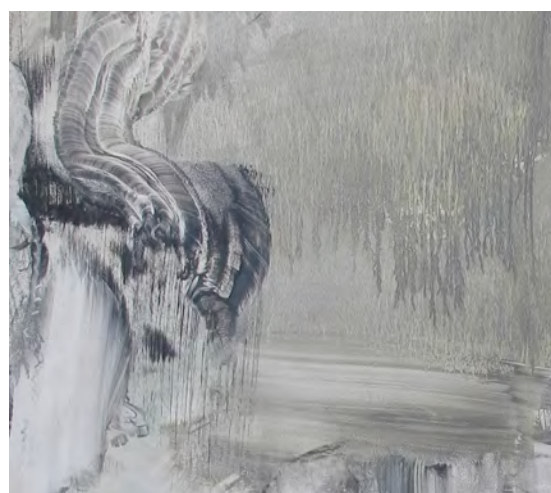


Fig. 4 (a)



(b)

Fig. 3 Nine, Fig. 4 (a) & (b) details,
 Fig. 5 The series of 9 images show
 different phases in the painting process
 including the use of temporary collaged elements,
 Fig. 6 One in the Other Gallery, London 2009



Fig. 11

(a)



Fig. 10



(b)

3 - Head 1 & 2

Painted in 2009, it is comprised of two board panels on a wood frames, 57 x 54 cm, primed front and back and painted using oil paint.



Fig. 7

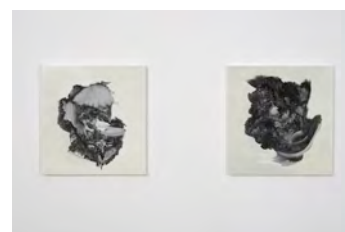


Fig. 8



Fig. 9

(a)



(b)

Fig. 7 Head 2, Fig. 8 Heads 1 & 2,
Fig. 9 (a) & (b) details of Head 2,
Fig. 10 Head 1, Fig. 11 (a) & (b) details of
Head 1



(a)

Fig 14



(b)



(c)

5 – Hitch

This painting was made in 2009. It is comprised of unstretched, ready primed canvas 210 x 464 cm that has been painted using oil paints. It has been stapled to the wall at the upper edge and the central section of the painting has been hitched up and secured at either side by staples, withdrawing part of the painting's surface from view.



Fig. 12

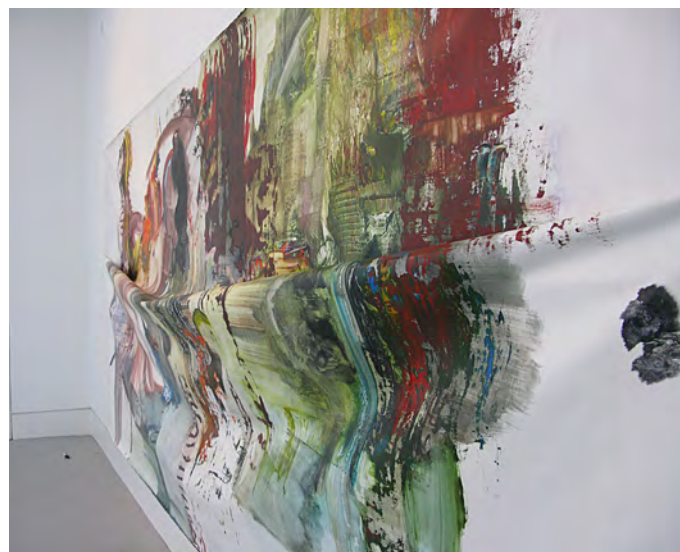


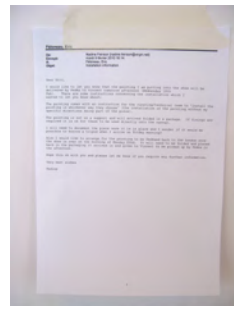
Fig. 13

Fig. 12 Hitch, Royal College
of Art
Fig. 13 Side view
Fig. 14 (a), (b) & (c) details

Fig. 16



- (a)
- (b)
- (c)



- (d)
- (e)
- (f)



- (g)
- (h)



- (i)
- (j)
- (k)



- (l)
- (m)
- (n)

6 – FedEx

This is an on going piece of work where its ‘making’ is extended, the painting being reconfigured each time it is shown, and the process of making after the initial painting, delegated to a third party. The first stage of this painting was made in January-February 2010 on acrylic primed canvas, 53.3 x 250 cm, and painted using oil paints. Its making is documented in the FedEx Notebook. The images on these two pages document the initial making and its further reconfigurations to date.



Fig. 17



Fig. 18

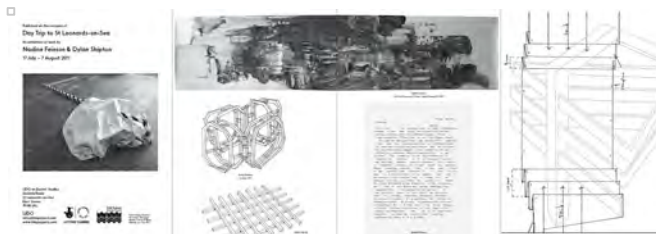


Fig. 19



Fig. 15

Fig. 15 FedEx at the end of the first stage - painting Fig. 16 (a) & (b) the early stages of painting; (c) – (f) folding and FedExing to, École Nationale Supérieure des *Beaux-Arts*, Paris, for inclusion in the exhibition ‘Le Weekend Sept Jour’, February 2010; (g) & (h) images of it unfolded and hung by the curator; (i) & (j) folded and FedExed back to London; (k), (l) & (m) reconfigured as part of a research day at the Royal College by participating artists; (n) painting ‘Jurassic Park’ from ‘Off-shore’ series of paintings brought into the installation of FedEx; Fig. 17 exterior view; Fig. 18 inside view; Fig. 19 FedEx reconfigured in a digital format and imported into a publication produced as part of a collaborative exhibition with Dylan Shipton at LIDO, St. Leonards on Sea.



Fig. 21



Fig. 22

(a)



(b)



Fig. 23

7 – Torque

This painting was made in 2010. It comprises an mdf panel, 204 x 151 cm, primed front and back and the painting made using oil paint. (Also referred to in the Hitch/Op Notebook as 'Spine' and 'Torquetorque'.)



Fig. 20

Fig. 20 Torque, Fig. 21 studio shot of Torque unfinished, Fig. 22 (a) & (b) Research Show, Royal College of Art, July 2011, Fig. 23 detail



Fig. 25

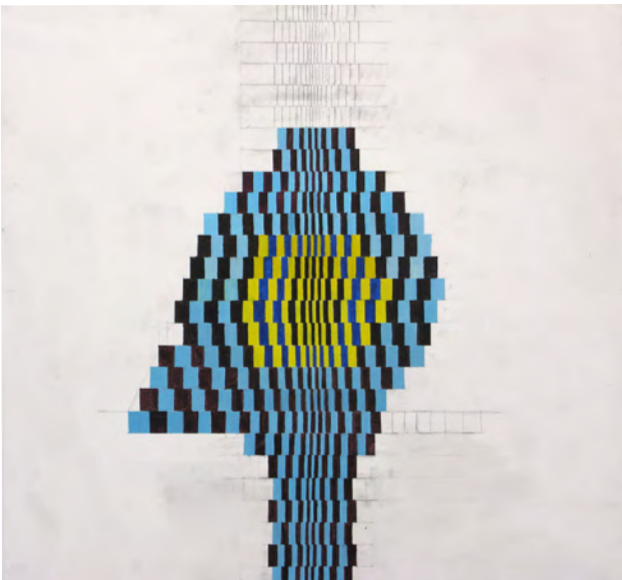


Fig. 26

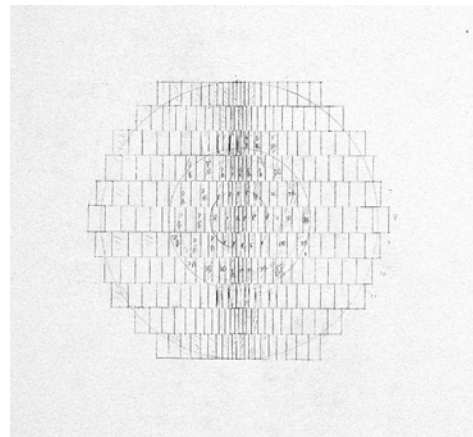


Fig. 27

8 – Switch

Painted in 2010 it comprises a board panel, 57 x 54 cm, primed front and back and painted using oil paints.

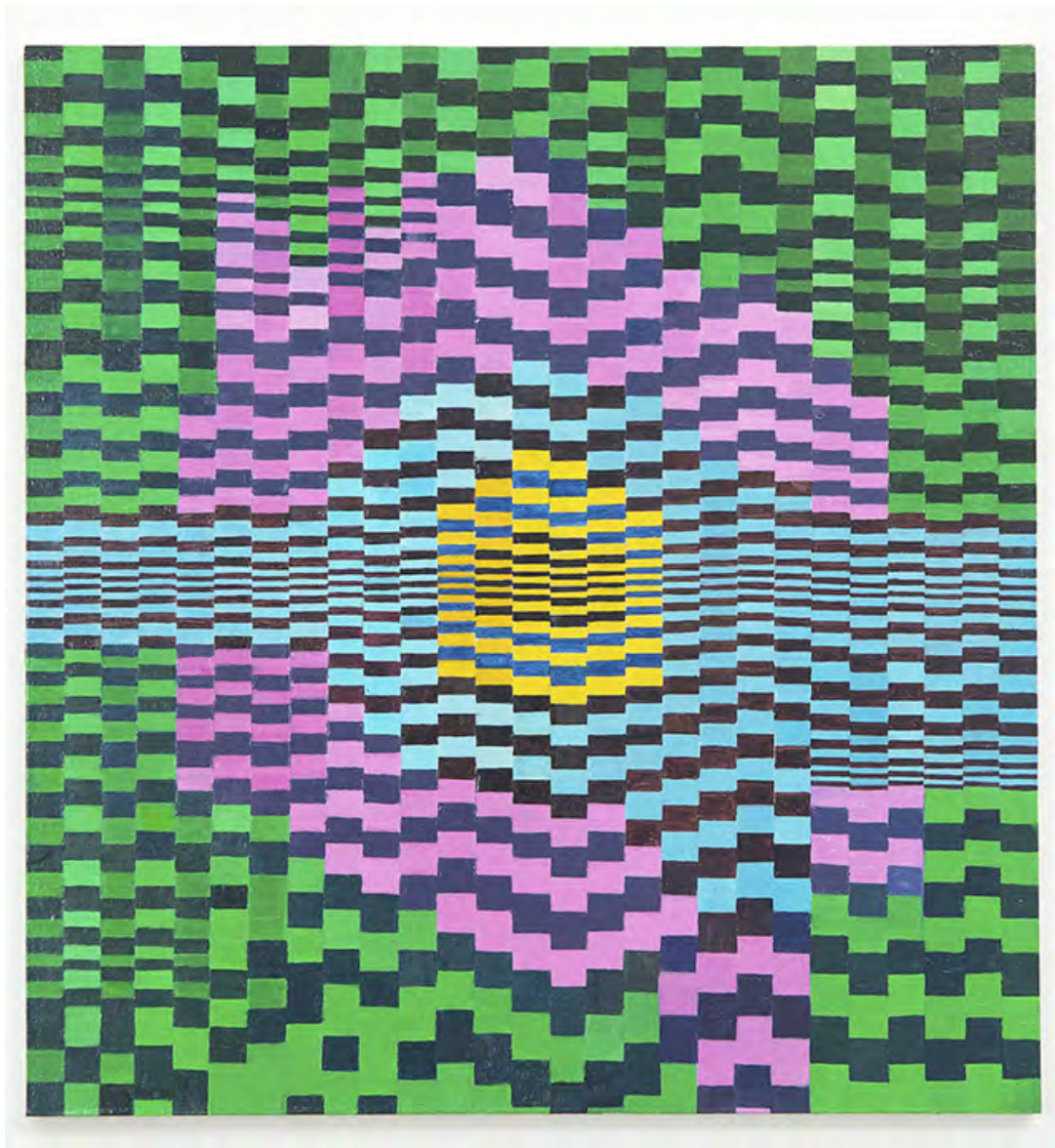


Fig. 24

Fig 24 Switch, Fig. 25 Switch and Hitch, Research Show, Royal College of Art, 2010, Fig. 26 In the early stages of painting, Fig. 27 preliminary marking up in pencil

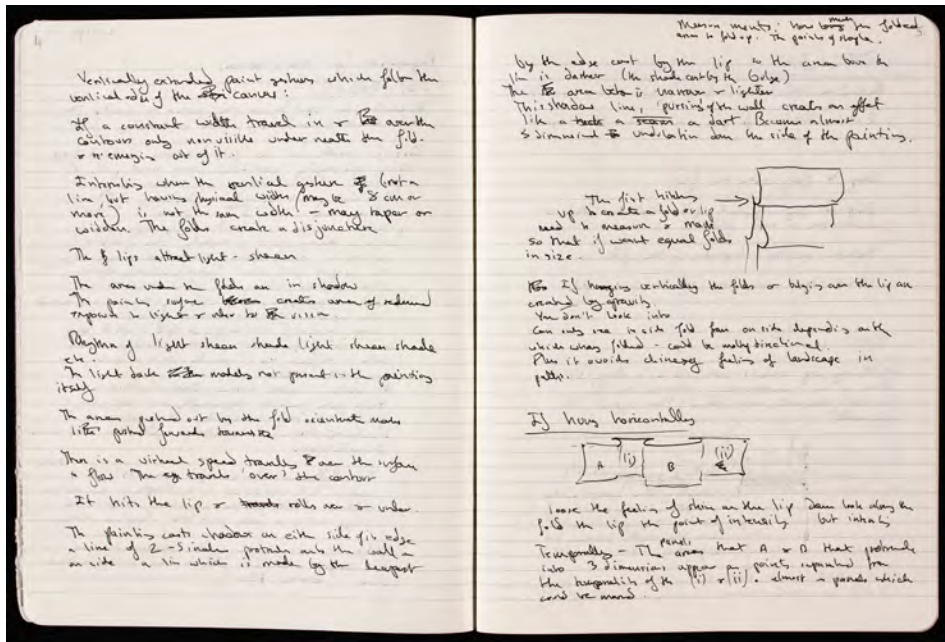


Fig. 31

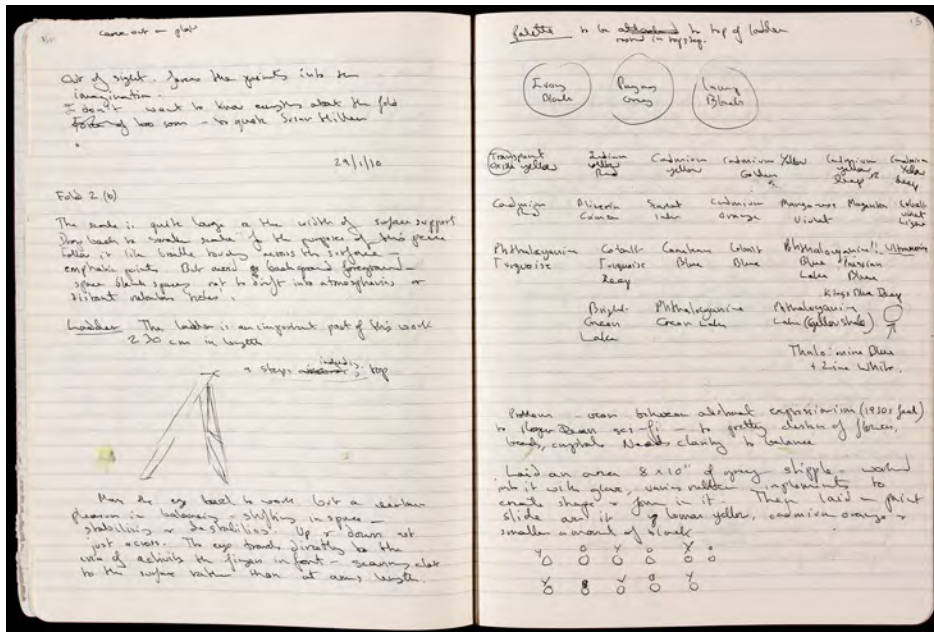


Fig. 32

Notebooks:

1 - FedEx Notebook

This notebook documents the making of the painting 'FedEx' in the period from the 1st of January to the 20th of April 2010 and also refers to the making of the painting 'Nine' and 'Hitch'. The complete transcribed notebook is situated in the appendix.



Fig. 28



Fig. 29

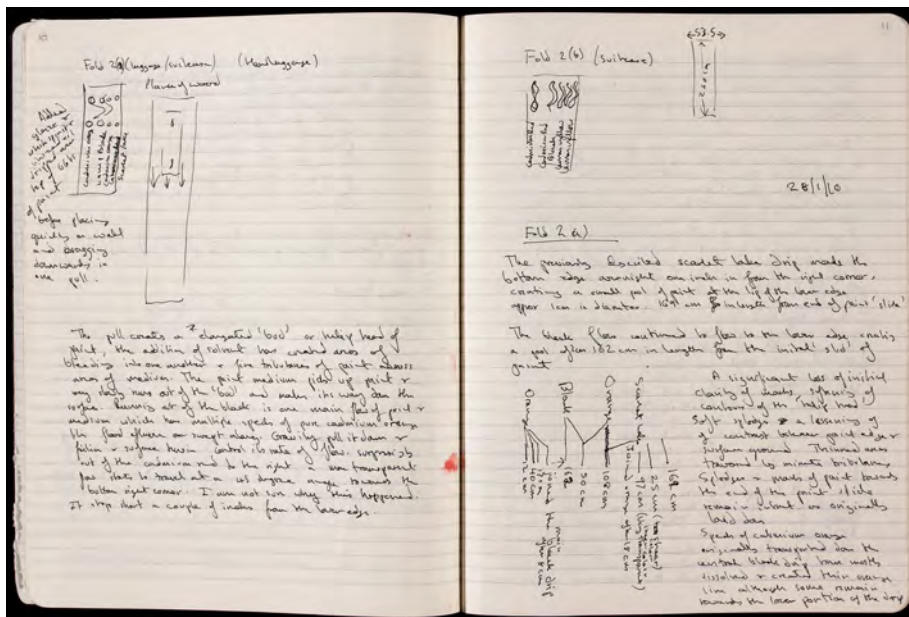


Fig. 30

Fig. 28 FedEx Notebook, 25 x 15 cm, Fig. 29 Notebook and chair, studio, Howie St., Royal College of Art, Fig. 30 pages 10 & 11, Fig. 31 pages 4 & 5, Fig. 32 pages 14 & 15

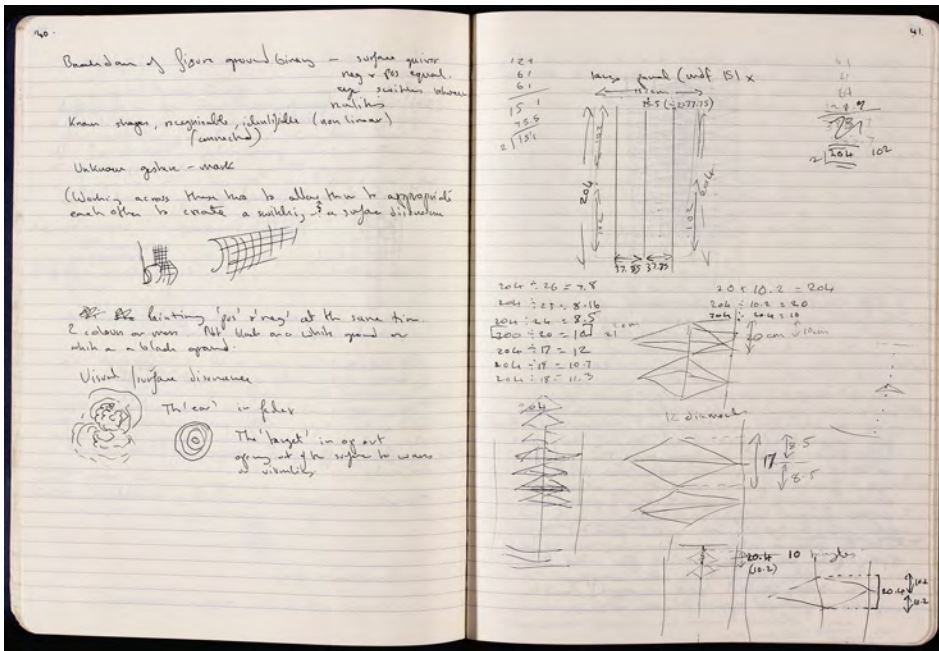


Fig. 35

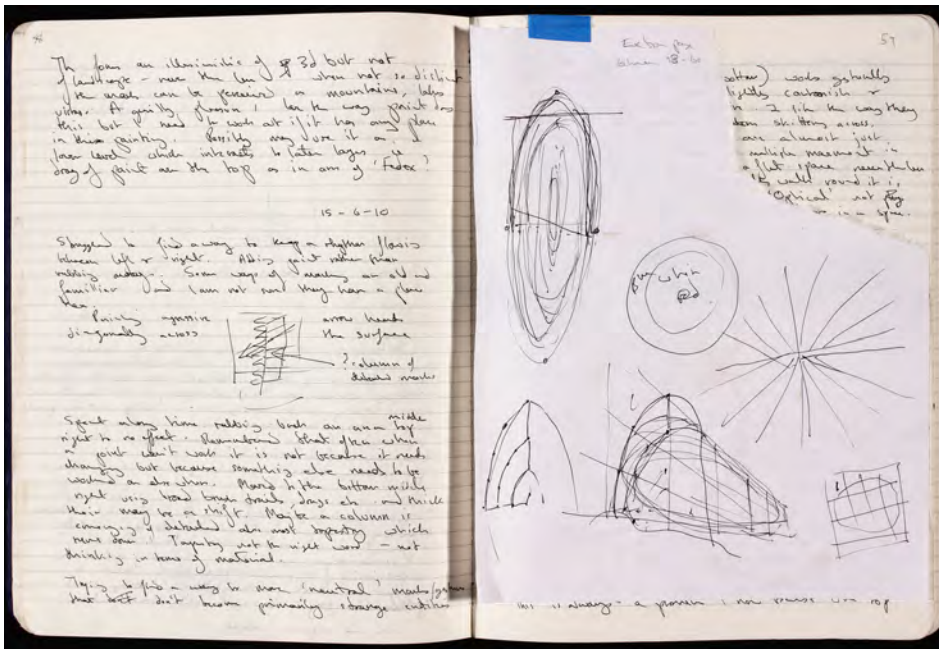


Fig. 36

2 – Hitch/Op Notebook

This notebook documents the making of the paintings ‘Torque’ and ‘Switch’ in the period from the end of March to July 16th 2010. It also contains subsequent thoughts on the painting ‘Hitch’. The complete transcribed notebook is located in the appendix.



Fig. 33

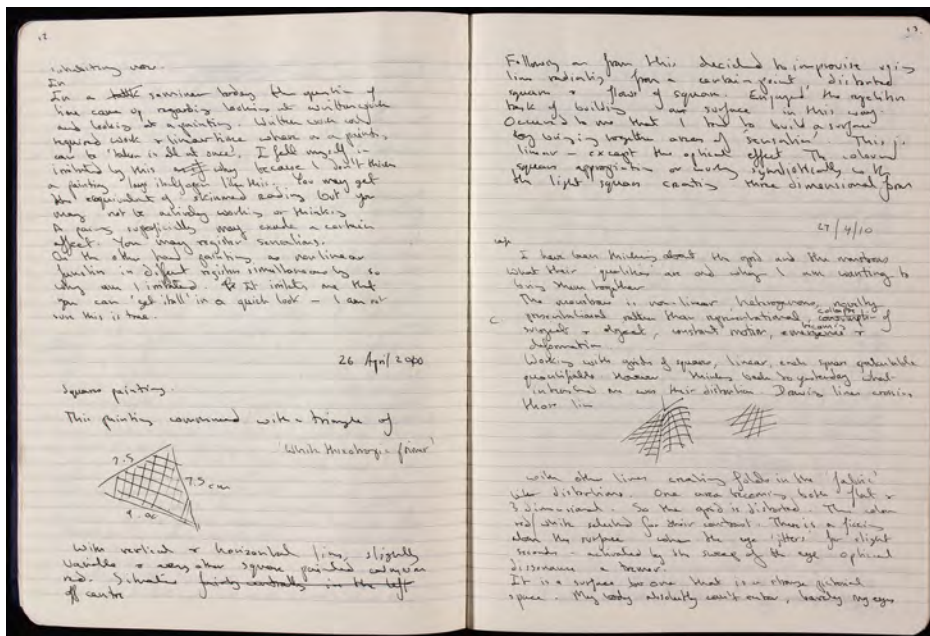


Fig. 34

Fig. 33 Hitch/Op Notebook, 25 x 15 cm, Fig. 34 pages 12 & 13, Fig. 35 pages 40 & 41 Fig. 36 pages 58a & 58b

Chapter 2:

Theoretical Context

Chapter 2:

Theoretical Context

There exists a long established assumption that painting does not lend itself to the expression of temporality. This notion arguably reaches back to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's '*Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*',¹ one of the earliest theorizations of medium specificity, first published in 1766.

Lessing makes temporal movement the point of distinction between art forms; arguing that since poetry "can take up every action, from its origin, and carry it through all possible changes to its issue"² it is therefore temporal. In contrast, painting³ (figurative) is understood as mimetic, since it reproduces objects upon flat surfaces. And because it can only "imitate actions", it should therefore "confine itself to the single moment in time" and "not express anything transitory"⁴. Indeed Lessing is derogatory about any attempt to 'extend' the moment and invest a painting with temporality.

"All phenomena, whose nature it is to suddenly break out and as suddenly to disappear, which can remain as they are but for a moment; all such phenomena, whether agreeable or otherwise, acquire through the perpetuity conferred upon them by [spatial] art such an unnatural appearance, that the impression they produce becomes weaker with every fresh observation, till the whole subject at last wearies or disgusts us."⁵

For Lessing, the depiction of more than a single moment was an "offence" against classical notions of beauty⁶. The skill of the classical artist was to select a single instance which would avoid throwing the body into 'unnatural' contortions, and instead

¹ Lessing, G.E., *Laocoon: An Essay Upon the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, trans. E. Frothingham, paperback edn. (first published 1766), Dover Publications, New York, USA, 2005.

² Lessing, p. 21.

³ Lessing p. xi. Lessing states that under the name of painting he includes the "plastic arts generally" by which I take him to mean sculpture, ceramics etc.. Art forms characterised by modelling as distinguished from art forms, which are written such as poetry and music.

⁴ Lessing, p.16.

⁵ Lessing, p.17.

⁶ The *Laocoon* was identified with the discourse of the ideal because where one would expect the depiction of a scream of agony from the crushing and strangling action of the serpents wrapped around the central figure, instead he is depicted as merely groaning.

lead the observer to “imagine the crisis without actually showing it”⁷, thus allowing the “free play” of the imagination, which a depiction of the point of “culmination” would have terminated.

He states that “the first law of art, [is] the law of beauty”⁸ and that the naturalistic portrayal of strong emotion should be avoided because, it leads to the grotesque and to ugliness. An open mouth expressing anguish becomes a “blot”⁹ on a painting similar to a mole on the face, which he gives as an example of an “object of disgust”^{10 11}.

In this extraordinary observation, Lessing arguably conflates the depiction of temporal movement with aspects of naturalism, and implies that they share a related trajectory, both culminating in base failure. Indeed, he takes issue with painters contemporary to himself who choose to paint the naturalistic, ugly or common place, because he views this as inappropriate subject matter for a “fine artist”. Whereas classical artists “represented nothing that was not beautiful”¹², he comments that these artists show their “fondness for making a display with mere manual dexterity, ennobled by no worth in the subject”¹³. He gives examples of painters in ancient Greece associated with painting ordinary, “depraved” or grotesque subject matter such as the artists Pauson¹⁴

⁷ Lessing, p.18.

⁸ Lessing, p.13.

⁹ Lessing, p.14.

¹⁰ Lessing, p.160.

¹¹ Menninghaus, W., *Disgust – Theory and History of Strong Sensation*, trans. Howard Eiland and Joel Golb, State University of New York Press, Albany, USA, 2003. Menninghaus describes the significance of the mouth as an object of disgust in the discourse of the classical body, Lessing identified as being the first to “define the oral danger to beauty as the danger of disgust” (p.60). He explains that the sculptural body in the classical ideal, it is not the mouth which is the main speech organ, but the “uninterrupted surface of the skin”. Any interruption such as warts, wrinkles, puckers were regarded as “illegitimate” openings distorting the skin by “inscribing a “spot” onto the perfect skin of the aesthetic” (p.62). He quotes the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder’s expression for the “continuum of the skin” as *das sanft verblasene Leibhafte* meaning “the softly blown corporeal” like a “softly blown glass” (p.52) which carries with it the image of a “beautiful hollow” form (p.55). It represents a “sublimation of all materiality...beneath the skin of the beautiful”(p.56); the classical ideal being a “civilised”, “hygienic” and “strictly regulated body” which emerged out of the Renaissance aesthetic, “isolated, alone fenced off from all other bodies”(p.58). This is in great contrast to the medieval venting, excreting, desiring body of the middle ages associated with the field of the grotesque. The grotesque body was not seen as separate from the world, nor as a “closed, completed unit”, but instead it was unfinished and outgrew itself, transgressing “its own limits” through “copulation, pregnancy, childbirth, the throes of death, eating, drinking and defecation”(p.57).

¹² Lessing, p.8.

¹³ Lessing, p.9.

¹⁴ Not much is known about Pauson however he is thought to have lived sometime before Aristotle and is mentioned in William Smith’s ‘A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology’ originally published in London in 1844. He writes that Pauson was one who “delighted in imitating what was defective or repulsive, and was in fact a painter of caricatures” (vol.3 p.162). www.ancientlibrary.com/smith-bio/2940.html accessed 27/7/201.

and Pyreicus¹⁵, and remarks that they were punished for it. Pyreicus, who was given the name of “rhyparographer, the dirt painter”¹⁶, and Pauson, who, because of his “depraved taste”, lived “in abandoned poverty”, rejected by the discerning or educated viewer. The word rhyparographer, originated from the Greek *rhyparos* meaning dirt or excrement, and *graphos* meaning writing. It was used to denote someone who painted sordid, obscene, grotesque or trivial subject matter.

He goes on to identify a problematic, dual response to the depiction of such grotesque imagery. He states that “terror is almost lost in desire”¹⁷ in the encounter, by which I understand he means that our terror of the depicted, is overcome by our fascination with the craft of illusion in its creation. This, he feels, blunts our proper empathy and evokes almost an immoral curiosity with what he regards as “trifling entertainment”, explaining that though “we possess the power of diverting our minds from this ugliness by admiration of the artist’s skill...this satisfaction is constantly disturbed by the thought of the unworthy use to which art has been put, and our esteem for the artist is thereby greatly diminished”¹⁸. And more than this, he says that “the discomfort which accompanies the sight of ugliness is permanent”¹⁹, and notes that Aristotle himself “commanded” that the pictures of the artist Pauson “should not be shown to young persons, in order that their imagination might be kept as free as possible from all disagreeable images”²⁰.

This attention to the corrupting craft of the rhyparographer is highly significant. It is clear that the act of painting naturalistically is viewed pejoratively, as the art of appearance only (the artist Pauson is described as having “depraved taste” in part because of this). That is to say, the craft of depicting everyday temporal experience extends the corruption of its lowly subjects. It is as if the baseness of creaturely embodied experience is contagious, and contaminates the art form of painting, through the material of paint itself. In relation to this, it is interesting to note that Lessing’s

¹⁵ Pyreicus is thought to have lived around the time of Alexander the Great (around 300-400 B.C.). Smith (see above) mentions that Pyreicus “devoted himself entirely to the production of small pictures of low and mean subjects... [Of] a grotesque manner.” (vol.3 p.606). The ancient Greeks having a word for this type of painting, *rhyparography*, literally dirt painting. <http://www.ancientlibrary.com/smith-bio/2940.html> accessed 27/7/2011.

¹⁶ Lessing, p. 9.

¹⁷ Lessing p. 155.

¹⁸ Lessing, p.154.

¹⁹ As above.

²⁰ Lessing, Note 2 to p.9.

arguments about the specificity of painting rely upon artworks he may have never actually seen.

He identifies the sculpture of *Laocoon*²¹ (see Appendix 4.1) and the work of the ancient Greek painter Timomachus²², as exemplars of the medium. However whilst it is possible Lessing saw the sculpture of *Laocoon*, because it was located at the Vatican, it is not certain that he did so. It is not clear from his own text, that he ever encountered it, in fact. The paintings of Timomachus were no longer in existence at the time of writing in 1766, and only descriptions survive. It is therefore reasonable to assume that for Lessing, the identification of these as ideals of their medium, may in part be attributed to an actual repression of that medium. The material of paint, and of marble, are not present to the argument. The question is, does it matter? Wolfgang Ernst in his essay 'Not Seeing the Laocoon'²³ suggests that perhaps "Lessing's blindness towards actual evidence was the condition for theoretical insights?"²⁴.

Clement Greenberg, writing two hundred years after Lessing, in *Towards a Newer Laocoon*²⁵ also argues for the specificity of art mediums, and in particular for the exclusion of temporality from painting. This imperative was to maintain the authenticity and distinction of the painting medium, and to remove the illegitimate influence of literature and poetry from painting and sculpture. In this he followed Lessing, to avoid

²¹ The statue of *Laocoon* stands in the Vatican Museums, and is understood to have been made between 40-20 BC by the artists Athanadoros, Hagesander, and Polydoros. According to Greek mythology *Laocoon* was a Trojan priest who, with his sons, offended the gods, and as punishment were strangled by serpents. The sculpture portrays the agony of their death. <http://www.digitalsculpture.org/laocoon/index.html> accessed 2/10/11.

²² Timomachus is an ancient Greek painter, thought to have lived in Byzantium in the 1st century B.C., and known for two paintings, *Ajax* and *Medea*.

²³ Ernst, W., 'Not Seeing the Laocoon', i Bender, J., & Marrinan, M., (eds), *Regimes of description: in the archive of the eighteenth century*, Stanford University Press, CA, USA, 2005. This essay deals with the question of whether Lessing actually saw the 'Laocoon' and if it matters. Ernst says that whilst archive material shows that Lessing took a trip to Italy and visited Rome, it is not clear that he saw the Laocoon at the Vatican. Lessing's notes apparently suggest the trip was one of reading rather than seeing, visiting a number of city libraries. Ernst comments that Lessing "did not perceive any defect in confronting artistic monuments only as second-hand reproductions" as for him "evidence from books" was "more valid than what appears to the eye"(p.128). Ernst goes on to say that in the 18th century there was a "rise of a genuinely *historical* imagination" that confronted "the temporal absence called "past" in terms of passed life and, tries to make it *speak* in order to confront it dialogically"(p.128).. Lessing, he says, gave "supremacy" to "literary narrative, i.e. consecutive and temporalizing depiction of Laocoon's death as opposed to his simultaneous representation in sculpture", so that "Lessing literally saw the ancient model in his imagination as a prototype, transforming the plastic image into a literary *topos*."(p.129).

²⁴ Ernst, p.118.

²⁵ Greenberg, C., 'Towards a Newer Laocoon', *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism Vol. 1 – Perceptions and Judgements 1939-1944*, ed. O'Brian, J., University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1988, pp. 23 – 38. First published in *Partisan Review*, July-August, 1940.

at all costs the infinite suggestion of poetry and its implicit temporality. However, contra to Lessing, it was the paint, its abstract 'plastic' qualities, that Greenberg argued were the ones that counted in formulating the authenticity and distinctiveness of painting. Through emphasising these, the "purely plastic", "proper" values of visual art, the medium of paint, its two dimensionality, and its flatness, were brought forward. Greenberg's main concern was that the medium of paint, was not overshadowed or hampered by subject matter: painting and sculpture should be like "functional architecture" or a "machine", to "*look what they do*"²⁶.

However, Greenberg proposed the condition of painting as a purely optical space, which admitted the eye but not the physical body, so that the observer, as the generator of vision, was reduced to an abstract eye without a body. Greenberg described this as a "strictly pictorial, strictly optical third dimension...one into which one can look, can travel through, only with the eye."²⁷ a dimension which, "most fully reveals itself in the first fresh glance". However "this "meaning", he said, "fades progressively"²⁸ through continued examination, destroying the "unity" of the first "instantaneous shock of sight". What was to be avoided, at all costs, was the passage of real time and the attendant "collapse into the dumbly physical"²⁹, and the flesh of the temporal body. But by implication, what was also denied, through the exclusion of temporality, was the tactile physical material of paint, so that although Greenberg spoke of the essential, "physical", properties of paint, it appears that this was with regard to paint as optical medium only. Rosalind Krauss picks up on this omission, and takes issue with this exclusion in her book *The Optical Unconscious*, which will be discussed further on.

For Greenberg, Krauss argues, it was "the look that art solicits, the look that is the medium of the transaction between viewer and work", and that "The time of that look is important ... because it must be time annihilated."³⁰ Therefore "to understand works of

²⁶ Greenberg, 'Towards a Newer Laocoon', p. 34.

²⁷ Greenberg, C., 'Modernist Painting', 1965, *Art in Theory 1900-1990: an Anthology of Changing Ideas*, eds. Harrison, C., & Wood, P., Blackwell Publishers Ltd., Oxford, UK and Cambridge, MA, USA, pp 754 – 760. First published in *Forum Lectures* (Voice of America), Washington DC, 1960, quote p.758.

²⁸ Greenberg, C., 'On Looking at Pictures', 1945, *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism Vol. 2 – Arrogant Purpose, 1945-1949, ed., O'Brian, J.*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1988, p.34. First published in *The National*, 8 September, 1945. Quote p. 34.

²⁹ Krauss, R.E., *The Optical Unconscious*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, USA & London, UK, 1998, quote p.98.

³⁰ Krauss, p.98.

art – “to grasp them as wholes” – is the function of a revelation whose very essence is that its all-at-once-ness simply suspends the temporal dimension”³¹. If time is not suspended then, Greenberg says, “the trajectory of the gaze that runs between viewer and painting begins to track the dimensions of real time and real space” and the “viewer discovers that he or she has a body that supports this gaze, a body with feet that hurt or a back that aches, and that the picture, also embodied, is poorly lit” and then “the ‘full meaning’ of a picture – i.e. its aesthetic fact” drains out of this situation” and is “relocated” in the “all too real”. When this happens, he says, the picture, instead of generating an “aesthetic fact”, now “simply returns the look, merely gazing “blankly” back at you”³². This is an echo of Lessing’s description of the encounter with a grotesque image: “As soon as the surprise passes and the first curious glance is satisfied, the elements separate and loathsomeness appears in all its crudity.”³³

This scenario of viewer beholding the art object, also has some parallels with Michael Fried’s notion of theatricality. In ‘Art and Objecthood’ (1967)³⁴ he stated that ‘literalist’³⁵ work, which persisted in time was “paradigmically theatrical”; the element of ‘theatricality’ in an artwork being that which “virtually, by definition, includes the beholder”³⁶ i.e. the material body of the viewer.

As with Greenberg, Fried argued that what was at stake in modernism, was the central experience of temporality as instantaneity. For Fried, modernist painting was to be autonomous, separate from the body of the viewer, understood as “at every moment...wholly manifest...a continuous and entire *presentness*, amounting...to the perpetual creation of itself that one experienced as a kind of instantaneousness”³⁷. It

³¹ Krauss, p. 98.

³² As above. Krauss is quoting Greenberg from ‘On Looking at Pictures’, *The Nation*, September 8th, 1945.

³³ Lessing, p.167.

³⁴ Fried, M., ‘Art and Objecthood’, in Harrison, C. & Wood, P., (eds.), *Art in Theory 1900-1990 – An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Blackwell Publishers Inc, Oxford UK and Cambridge MA, USA, 1996, pp. 822-34. The essay ‘Art and Objecthood’ first published in *Artforum*, summer 1967.

³⁵ Fried, p. 822. Fried used the term “literalist” to refer to Minimal Art - in particular the work of artists Donald Judd and Robert Morris. Whilst for modernist painting he says “it was imperative that it defeat or suspend its own objecthood...the crucial factor in this undertaking...[being]...shape, but shape that must belong to *painting* – it must be pictorial, not, or not merely, literal.” Whereas, he says, “literalist art stakes everything on shape as a given property of objects” (p.824) and rather than ‘defeating’ or ‘suspending’ its own objecthood it “aspires to ...discover and project objecthood” - objecthood for Fried being “the condition of non-art”(p.825).

³⁶ Fried, p. 825.

³⁷ Fried, p. 832.

was *presentness* and autonomy that prevented the painting from being simply an object (dumb matter), and duration was perceived as an “infection” which degenerated a work of art, the more it approached the “condition of theatre”³⁸. The theatrical fused with the corrupting influence of the physical body and attendant anthropomorphism.

In the penultimate section of the essay, Fried likens the duration of “literalist” work to a circular road of endless change where there is no novelty and progression but only endless homogeneity. He sees time “simultaneously approaching and receding as if apprehended in infinite perspective”³⁹; duration as a vacuum or trap, within which the viewer becomes isolated and fixed - moving but going nowhere.⁴⁰

So, it can be seen that there is much common ground between Greenberg/Fried and Lessing in respect of the perils of temporal duration. Just as Fried compares the presence of duration to a vacuum, Lessing argued that depicting anything other than the most “fruitful moment” would obstruct “free play to the imagination”, warning that “no moment...is so disadvantageous [to the imagination] as that of culmination. There is nothing beyond, and to present the uttermost to the eye, is to bind the wings of Fancy, and compel her, since she cannot soar beyond the impression made on the senses, to employ herself with feebler images”⁴¹. These arguments seem to reflect, through the presence of the sensing, physical body within duration, the hierarchy of the Enlightenment, in which the body and its sensations were seen as ‘lower’ and less developed than activities of the ‘mind’, associated with perception and logic. The presence of the temporal body is understood as damaging or blocking the action of perception and the intellect.

It is interesting to note the relative consistencies between Lessing’s notion of duration in 1766, and Greenberg’s and Fried’s in the mid 20th Century, given the interval of time and the developments of scientific knowledge. This may be why Krauss chooses to revisit 19th century empirical science in the ‘Optical Unconscious’, to argue that temporality is inseparable from vision and that seeing is a bodily experience, by drawing on the perceptual implications stemming from this period.

³⁸ Fried, p. 831.

³⁹ Fried Section VII p.832

⁴⁰ I discuss homogeneity and dissipation with regard to my own work in FedEx Notebook p.38.

⁴¹ Lessing, p.17.

Lessing's description of temporality seems to rely on an understanding of time as linear, a sequence of separate images out of which one image can be selected for its beauty and economy and then detached, the single moment according to Lessing having an "an unchanging duration"⁴². Meanwhile, his description of the temporality of poetry, is of a linear progression of sequential elements, reminiscent (to a post 19th Century reader) of a film or animation: "Every change which would require from the painter a separate picture, costs [the poet] but a single touch...which taken by itself might offend the imagination, but which, anticipated, as it has been, by what preceded, and softened and atoned for by what follows, loses its individual effect in the admirable result of the whole"⁴³.

Greenberg also seems to have understood temporality as a line of "discrete, sequential moments"⁴⁴, one following on from the other so that a single moment would be so infinitesimally short, it could not admit time and hence the body. A painting's "all-at-onceness" he said, "simply suspends the temporal dimension"; the temporal dimension within modernism being situated outside the visual and pure opticality.

Rosalind Krauss, writing 26 years later, took up the issue of, what she saw as "the modernist exclusion of temporality from the field of vision"⁴⁵, and argued that it was precisely the temporality of motion as endless repetition, that Fried described, that was in fact the activity of the modernist "grid". This "pellucid field, all surface and no depth"⁴⁶ created by the modernist reworking of the painting as "pure exteriority", absolutely separate to the body, grasped by the eye in the condition of "pure immediacy" and completely self-enclosed. The problem that Krauss addressed in the 'The Optical Unconscious' was to show that the "depths"⁴⁷ were in fact there, and she attempted to materialise them.

In '*The Optical Unconscious*' and '*Formless – A User's Guide*'⁴⁸ (written with Yve-Alain Bois 3 years later), Krauss points out that art history only addresses the visual representation of "tactility", and that matter does not exist unless "made over into

⁴² Lessing, p.19.

⁴³ Lessing, p.21.

⁴⁴ Krauss, p.98. Krauss quoting Greenberg from 'On looking at Pictures'.

⁴⁵ Bois, Y-A. & Krauss, R.E., *Formless - a Users Guide*, paperback edn., Zone Books, distributed by MIT Press, Cambridge MA, USA, 2000, p.32. First published in France as *L'Informe. Mode d'Emploi* in 1996,

⁴⁶ Krauss, *Optical Unconscious*, p.24.

⁴⁷ Krauss, p.25.

⁴⁸ Bois and Krauss, p.32.

form”⁴⁹. Modernism, in “liberating” painting from representation, had to justify its existence through its “essence” and autonomy. Firstly, painting had to address itself “uniquely” to the sense of sight⁵⁰ (matter is excluded), and secondly, pictures must reveal themselves in an instant, only addressing the eye of the viewer⁵¹.

In order to deconstruct this model she returned to the discoveries of the 19th century German scientist Hermann von Helmholtz⁵², and to the idea that it is the body “solid and dense”⁵³ that forges perception. Krauss argued that it is precisely through the subjectivisation of sight that seeing becomes a bodily experience, and therefore that temporality is inseparable from vision: “There is a duration to the blink, and it closes the eye.”⁵⁴

The work of Helmholtz on perception and colour theory, and Goethe’s⁵⁵ earlier work on the *after image*, had changed the understanding of perception in the 19th century, so that vision became understood as a product of the observer’s subjective mental and physiological processes⁵⁶. The eye, Helmholtz had discovered, was optically poor, and it alone could not make vision possible; sensory data providing no more than “signs” for “external objects and movements” and seeing being “really a matter of learning “how to interpret these signs by means of experience and practice.””⁵⁷. Challenging the classic paradigm of cognition, which proposed that knowledge was based on perception, Helmholtz had put forward the idea that the basis of perception was derived from “unconscious inference”⁵⁸. His discoveries suggested that prior knowledge was applied unconsciously - hence sense data could be faulty, as in the case of optical illusions.

The model of the viewer as an autonomous producer of images, as Krauss pointed out, became fundamental to early twentieth century modernism. Painting was newly seen as a purely optical experience, the flat plane of the retina being understood as

⁴⁹ Bois and Krauss, p.25.

⁵⁰ As above.

⁵¹ Bois and Krauss, p.32.

⁵² Hermann Ludwig Ferdinand von Helmholtz. German scientist born August 31, Potsdam, and died September 8, 1894.

⁵³ Krauss, p. 133.

⁵⁴ Krauss, p. 215. Krauss quoting from Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*.

⁵⁵ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. German natural philosopher and writer, born 28 August 1749 in Frankfurt, died 22 March 1832.

⁵⁶ Crary, J., *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, paperback edn. (first published 1990), MIT Press, Cambridge MA, USA, 1992, pp. 67–69.

⁵⁷ Krauss, quoting Hermann von Helmholtz (1867). p.133.

⁵⁸ Krauss, p. 135.

analogous to the flat plane of the painting surface. New technologies of illusion were developed, such as the Phenakistiscope⁵⁹ and the Zoetrope⁶⁰. However the exploration of the new concept of a temporal image remained tied to mechanical devices, and critical thinking around these developments and their implications do not appear to extend out to encompass painting.

Krauss drew on philosophers such as Jacques Derrida and Jean-François Lyotard to build her argument for temporality in vision. Derrida proposed that “there can be no lived experience...in the absence of memory and expectation” and that “as soon as we admit this continuity of now and not-now, perception and non perception...non-presence and non-evidence are admitted into the blink of the instant”⁶¹.

The blink, like a wedge, opened up a space in the modernist model, through which Krauss inserted a particular model of temporal motion, the ‘pulse’⁶², based on the work of Lyotard. In particular, this was a pulse which operated from within the physical visceral body, its beginnings located in the unconscious. Such a motion interrupted the order of the gestalt (the order of form), and mapped instead the principle of “interruption”, with a pulse between existence, followed by “total extinction” - a “beat” that did not “promise the return of the same”⁶³. This pulse emerged out of the non-lingual space of the libidinal and sensory, a form in which Lyotard said “desire gets caught” beating “with the alternation between pleasure and extinction – into a compulsion to repeat”⁶⁴.

⁵⁹ Crary, p.109.

⁶⁰ Crary, p.110.

⁶¹ Krauss, p. 215. See footnote 21.

⁶² Krauss, R., pp. 217-222. Krauss takes her model of ‘pulse’ from work done by Jean François Lyotard (*Discours, Figure*) who wanted to look beyond phenomenology, which he regarded as a space of the progressive production of form, and turned to psychoanalysis. He was interested in the non-visible unconscious, an unimaginable space that only gave hints of its presence through slips of the tongue, fantasy and daydreams, a space where form is transgressed. Through Freud’s notion of the ‘death drive’ and the case ‘*The Child is Being Beaten*’ he identified two types of pulse, one being the pulse between charge and discharge of tension, an on/off pulse, presence and absence, the pulse of ‘good’ form and gestalt. And the existence of a second pulse, which was not a principle of recurrence guaranteeing that an “on” will always follow an “off”; it mapped instead “the principle of interruption”, existence followed by “total extinction.” This pulse undermined structure and the coming into being of form, allowing the paradox of multiple things suspended simultaneously. He called this space *matrix*. It was not a system, but a blocking together of what was logically incompatible. And what ‘blocked’ the elements together was the ‘pulse’ of desire – the medium of the figure of the matrix.

⁶³ Krauss, p. 222.

⁶⁴ As above.

The pulse, she argued, was by definition a function of temporality, “For the life of nervous tissue is the life of time, the alternating pulse of stimulation and enervation, the complex feedback relays of retention and protension.”⁶⁵ And therefore, temporal motion of pulse operated within vision, not external to it. In order to exemplify this motion, she turned to the work of artists such as Duchamp, Bellmer, and Ernst, whose work did not fit into the classical modernist account. This action she thought was exemplified in the “carnal” pulse of Duchamp’s *Rotoreliefs*⁶⁶. Krauss argued that it is precisely “through the lowest and most vulgar cultural forms that the visual is daily invaded by the pulsatile” blinking lights, neon signs, the insistent beat of contemporary music.

Significantly Krauss does not choose to demonstrate the movement of ‘pulse’ through painting. Indeed she says, that within “high art”, and in particular painting, “form is constructed so as to ward off the violence of this beat, to achieve the permanence of the configuration, its imperviousness to assault”⁶⁷ and, that it was to that end, that “Enlightenment philosophy [Lessing] theorised a distinction between spatial and temporal arts, specifying that they be held separate from one another”⁶⁸. Krauss says that from this “classicizing perspective...if the pulse were to enter painting at all, it could only be through the highly controlled and mediated rhythms of formal proportion, so that...geometry would take up and purify the effects of repetition”⁶⁹. And so she attempts to break with the canon of painting through art works where the “violence” of the temporal beat, its motion of extinction and repetition, is played out within the visual field.

However, I would like to suggest that a temporal motion does exist within painting, one which is generated through the experience of the physical, tactile, material of paint and not purely through the visual interplay of formal characteristics. Later in the essay, I will draw on Deleuze’s discussion of the paintings of Francis Bacon⁷⁰ to extend this. But before that, I want to map a relationship between Krauss and the contemporary perceptual psychologist Nicholas Humphrey.

⁶⁵ Krauss, p. 216.

⁶⁶ Krauss p. 135.

⁶⁷ Krauss, R. E., ‘Pulse’, in Bois, Y-A. & Krauss, R.E., *Formless - a Users Guide*, p. 164,

⁶⁸ As above.

⁶⁹ As above.

⁷⁰ Deleuze, G., *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. D.W. Smith, pub. Continuum, London and New York, 2003. First published in France in 1981.

Krauss's motion of pulse is situated within a temporality where "memory and expectation" feed into the present, where a work, such as Duchamp's *Rotorelief*, physically moves in real time. Whilst clearly a painting does not move in any objective way, I am interested in a model of temporal movement existing *within* the notion of a single *extended* moment, as proposed by Nicholas Humphrey⁷¹, where sensation generated between the painting and a the person experiencing it, leads to a subjective experience of motion where objectively there is none.

Nicholas Humphrey, similar to Krauss, uses the image of artificial light to explore this further. He presents a theory of temporal experience in vision, (hence movement), in relation to an unchanging physical stimulus - in this case a red projected screen. Humphrey's model can arguably provide a way to think about perceptual motion in an apparently unmoving painting.

He argues that sensation is a particular type of temporal motion, and that the sensation a person experiences standing in front of a red-lit screen is generated by the subject, a *bodily* fact "of the subjects own making"⁷². The sensation generated, he says, is a "self-creating", "self-sustaining" motion of neural feedback activity that repeatedly loops back on itself, so as to create a kind of self-resonance. This 'activity' is similar in character to a class of bodily actions called *expressions*, such as smiling or leering, hence he refers to the bodily 'expression' generated by looking at a red screen as 'redding'. He locates the motion of sensation in the basic metabolism of the body, similar to Krauss's model of pulse, but it differs in being generated through the neural sensory pathways of a potentially knowable visceral body rather than the unknowable 'subconscious'.

Humphrey's model proposes that visual perception and sensation are two independent yet parallel processes, despite the fact that we experience them as being one thing, both called 'seeing'⁷³. In this model, perception is relegated to "affectless" bystander, and sensation, the opposite of 'cheap' sensation, is the means by which we gain

⁷¹ Humphrey, N., *Seeing Red: A Study in Consciousness*, pub. by the Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA and London, England, 2006.

⁷² Humphrey, p.14.

⁷³ This model proposes a radical reversal to the usual hierarchy of sensation, perception, and cognition where sensation is equated with the bodily and primitive and perception as more 'developed', associated with the mind, ideas and the imagination.

selfhood. In the classical model there is a sequence, sensation followed by perception – here they occupy the same period of time.

Humphrey describes the mode of production of sensation, as having a particular relationship to time and creating a particular experience of temporality. Time and motion are not outside the visual, as in the modernist model, but like the one proposed by Krauss, within its bodily generation. Vision, he says, is a kind of “covert movement”⁷⁴ occurring prior to full conscious cognition: “the redding arrives in consciousness before he [the subject] can even begin to put his mind to it and extends deeper than he can put his mind to (even given all the time in the world)”⁷⁵. So despite the fact that the sensation is experienced in the present as happening *now*⁷⁶, as in the modernist model, the present appears to have a paradoxical dimension of temporal ‘thickening’, or “depth”⁷⁷. It is as though the *single* moment is taken and held onto “so that each moment is experienced as it happens for longer than it happens”⁷⁸. This represents a significant point difference between Humphrey and Krauss, as the latter proposes a model of temporality where the past is admitted into the present.

In this model there is a splitting of subjective and objective experience, a qualitative difference between the experience of looking at a painting, and the real’ time temporality it is situated within. Whilst Greenberg made a distinction between temporal “real time” and a non-temporal “strictly pictorial, strictly optical third dimension” (see p.43), Humphrey proposes a distinction between two orders of experiences, both temporal. The physical present, which might be understood as an abstract point of “infinitely short duration”, and a “subjective present” where the present is stretched. It is not that past and present extend into one another (Krauss), but that the single moment (Greenberg/Fried’s instantaneity) is *stretched* or extended in Humphreys model, so that several elements or motions can simultaneously inhabit the same instant of time – a temporal experience of *now* in which there may be perceived movement in a physically non-moving painting.

⁷⁴ Humphrey, p. 105

⁷⁵ Humphrey, p. 16.

⁷⁶ Humphrey, p. 82.

⁷⁷ Humphrey, p. 112.

⁷⁸ Humphrey p. 119.

From Humphrey's red screen, I would like to return to Lessing's image of the blot: the open mouth which disturbed the classical idea of beauty, through the admission of the venting, excreting, desiring body associated with the field of the grotesque. This juncture brings me to certain crucial issues for the research conducted through painting, and so at this point I would like to refer directly to my painting 'Head 3' (see Appendix 4.4) which features what might be described as a splodge or blot of blackish paint on a red ground. With this image in mind, I would like to go on to consider the grotesque in relation to the prior discussion of temporality, embodiment of vision and sensation as a particular experience of temporal motion.

Throughout my discussion of Lessing, Greenberg, Fried and Krauss, the markers of the grotesque are apparent. They appear in Lessing's discussion of the "blot" and his disgust with regard to the rhyarographer, and their association with contamination and base materialism. The markers are present in the writing of Greenberg and Fried, the imagery of temporal contamination and the illegitimacy in the "dumbly" physical. And again in Krauss's decision to exemplify her model of temporal motion through artworks using a "degenerate" counter culture of "the blind, irrational space of the labyrinth"⁷⁹

Geoffrey Harpham⁸⁰ proposes a model of the grotesque, which may open up a way of thinking about it as a particular kind of perceptual motion in painting. He argues that the grotesque is a process or motion separate from its iconography, and that there is no single, constant quality or manifestations of predictable behaviour present in all grotesques, and as such it cannot be formally defined. Instead, he describes the grotesque as "a single protean idea that is capable of assuming a multitude of forms"⁸¹ being as much a "mental event"⁸² as a formal property. The grotesque, he says, can be identified by its resistance to categorisation, occupying multiple categories or falling between them, and as such, is a "concept without a form", a "non-thing", never fixed

⁷⁹ Krauss, p.21. She connects to this "counter culture the concepts of the informe, mimicry, the uncanny, bassesse [a lowering beneath the *figure* to the formless], mirror stage, Wiederholungszwang [the compulsion to repeat (Freud)]; the figures of the acéphale, the minotaur, the praying mantis; the artists Giacometti, Dali, Man Ray and Bellmer; the theorists Bataille, Breton, Caillois, Leiris, and "In the background" Freud.

⁸⁰ Harpham, G.G., *On the Grotesque: Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature*, limited paperback edn., (first published 1982). Princeton University Press, New Jersey, USA, 1992.

⁸¹ Harpham, p.xv..

⁸² Harpham, p.23.

and stable “but always a process”⁸³. This has led him to define the grotesque, not through its iconography, but as a certain set of obstacles to structured thought. He argues, that the action of the grotesque creates an interruption in the processes of identification and classification, transgressing and disrupting structure and logical interpretation. It designates Harpham says, “a condition of being just out of focus, just beyond the reach of language.”⁸⁴ Like Humphrey and Krauss’s model, Harpham situates the grotesque “at a margin of consciousness between the known and unknown, the perceived and unperceived”⁸⁵, accommodating “the things left over when the categories of language are exhausted”⁸⁶.

The grotesque therefore represents a contradiction, that of “an image, object or *experience* – simultaneously justifying multiple and mutually exclusive interpretations”. When confronted with the confusion, the mind, Harpham says, operates in certain ways, it moves to a level of detail, towards the surface, to find a place where categories are still adequate. However he notes, the “quality of the grotesqueness arises not so much from the specific contents of the image as from the fact that it refuses to be taken in whole”⁸⁷, the whole being “if not more than, at least very different from the sum of its parts”⁸⁸.

Further to this, Harpham says, grotesques have a very particular relationship to time. They are marked by a sense of illegitimacy, genealogical abuse, or bastardy – that something that should be kept apart is “fused together”, an echo of Lessing, Greenberg and Fried’s comments regarding the corrupting influence of the temporal. This is not, he argues, hybridization but “images of instantaneous process, time rendered into space”⁸⁹. To explain this, he says that “in order to achieve grotesqueness, it suffices to abridge an evolution, to attach a creature to another phase of its own being, with the intervening temporal gap so great that it appears that species boundaries, and not mere time, has been overleaped.”⁹⁰ This is the interruption of the grotesque, the perceptual movement of something simultaneously being *there* and *not there*, a “struggle” between absolute dissolution and projection that, as with Humphrey’s model, holds the viewer in an

⁸³ Harpham, p.14.

⁸⁴ Harpham, p. 4.

⁸⁵ Harpham, p.3.

⁸⁶ Harpham, p.4.

⁸⁷ Harpham, p.6.

⁸⁸ Harpham, pp. 4-5.

⁸⁹ Harpham, p.11.

⁹⁰ As above.

extending or deepening of the present moment: “Resisting closure the grotesque object impales us on the present moment, emptying the past and forestalling the future”⁹¹

Finally Deleuze, in *Francis Bacon – The Logic of Sensation*⁹², specifically addresses the movement of sensation through paint. For Deleuze, the question is not the relationship of form and matter, but materials and force and “making these forces visible through their effects on the flesh”⁹³. Painting, he says, is particular in that it is able to “render visible forces which are not in themselves visible”⁹⁴. In an echo of Humphrey, it being the force of “stretch”, that he says is the consequence of “the elasticity of...sensation, its *vis elastica*”⁹⁵ [elastic force], creating a “rhythm” through the “interplay” between the different levels of sensation, as paint, and the “material structure” of the painting.

Like Krauss he draws on the work of Lyotard’s concept of the *figure*⁹⁶, which is described as primarily a ‘body’ of sensation, opposed to figuration and representation, partly corporeal, and partly psychological. As in Humphrey’s model, sensation acts “immediately on the nervous system”⁹⁷, and in doing so becomes both body and object (painting) “indissolubly”⁹⁸ both giving and receiving sensation. It is in this way, he says, that what is painted “on the canvas” becomes body “insofar as it is experienced as sustaining this sensation”⁹⁹. And when “linked to the body in this way it [sensation] ceases to be representative and becomes real”. (And perhaps, therefore, when paint becomes *body*, it also becomes *temporal matter*.)

For Deleuze a “primary function” of a painting is to “directly” attempt to “release the presences beneath representation, beyond representation”¹⁰⁰, which are the bodies of sensation. The experience of sensation, being “grasped in a close view, a tactile or “haptic” view”¹⁰¹, not from a distance, so that the experience of sensation can only be

⁹¹ Harpham, p.16.

⁹² Deleuze, G., *Francis Bacon: the logic of sensation*, trans. D.W. Smith, pub. Continuum, London and New York, 2003. First published in France in 1981.

⁹³ Deleuze, p. x,

⁹⁴ Deleuze, p. 56.

⁹⁵ Deleuze, p. 41.

⁹⁶ Lyotard, J-F, *Discourse, Figure*, trans. A.G. Hudek & M. Lydon, University of Minnesota Press, USA, 2011. First published by Klincksieck, Paris, 1971.

⁹⁷ Deleuze, p. 35.

⁹⁸ As above.

⁹⁹ As above.

¹⁰⁰ Deleuze, p. 51.

¹⁰¹ Deleuze, p.5.

experienced “by entering the painting by reaching the unity of the sensing and the sensed.”¹⁰²

Deleuze describes motion in relation to the paintings of Francis Bacon as a “spasm” between two deforming motions, systole and diastole, the former contracting and the latter extending and dissipating. The “coexistence of all these movements in the painting” he says “is rhythm”¹⁰³, an “intensive movement” flowing through “the whole body, deformed and deforming, transferring the real image onto the body in order to constitute the Figure”¹⁰⁴.

Of particular significance for Deleuze, is Bacon’s use of “indeterminate”, “wiped-off” or “scrambled”¹⁰⁵ zones, which he describes as “zones of indiscernibility”¹⁰⁶, being “neither ...landscape, nor that of the formless or the ground”¹⁰⁷. He describes these areas of painting as a “*malerisch* treatment”¹⁰⁸, a term, he says used by Heinrich Wölfflin to designate “the mass in opposition to the contour”¹⁰⁹. The patches of indeterminate marks, he says, do not concern representation nor does it “give birth to abstract form” but instead it “is common to several forms” and “irreducible to any of them”^{110 111}. These “zones” are to do with the hand of the artist, he says, a kind of

¹⁰² Deleuze, p. 35.

¹⁰³ Deleuze, p. 33.

¹⁰⁴ Deleuze, p. 19

¹⁰⁵ Deleuze, p. 31.

¹⁰⁶ Deleuze, p. 21.

¹⁰⁷ Deleuze, p. 5

¹⁰⁸ Deleuze, p.29.

¹⁰⁹ Deleuze, p. 177. In the notes to footnote 6 (p. 29), Deleuze says that the Swiss art historian Wölfflin used the term *Malerisch*, a German word which in translation means *painterly*, to “designate the pictorial opposition to the linear, or more precisely, the mass in opposition to the contour” in *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art* (1950). Greenberg also used the term *malerisch* in his essay *Post Painterly Abstraction*, which accompanied the exhibition of the same name, held at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art April 23 – June 7, 1964. In his essay he describes *malerisch*, as meaning “among other things, the blurred, broken, loose definition of color and contour. The opposite of painterly being “clear, unbroken, and sharp definition” which Wölfflin called the “linear”. Greenberg used the term in order to make a point of difference between earlier abstract expressionism and post painterly abstraction. This, he thought exemplified in the work of artists that he had selected for the show, such as Helen Frankenthaler, Ellsworth Kelly, Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski and Frank Stella. Work which resisted gestural brush work, in favour of a relatively anonymous open execution lacking in detail and incident. However Greenberg also describes Post Painterly Abstraction, and by inference the term *malerisch*, to be a more *systematic* way of working than Abstract Expressionism. This is a very different use of the term to Deleuze, who uses *malerisch* to describe a way of working which is radically unregulated and unsystematic. The essay *Post Painterly Abstraction* can be found in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism Vol. 4 – Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957-1969, ed., O’Brian, J., University of Chicago and London, 1995, p. 192.*

¹¹⁰ Deleuze, p. 59.

¹¹¹ The art historian Georges Didi-Huberman in *Fra Angelico: Dissemblance and Figuration*, discusses the “blotches of paint” in the frescos made by Fra Angelico in the convent of San Marco in Florence. These painted “blotches” he describes as seeming to be without “subject” and to “imitate nothing in particular” (p.2). He goes on to link the “blotch” to the concept of “dissemblance” as “figuration”, (cont/...)

working “blindness”, and an “abandonment of visual sovereignty”¹¹², used to make the *figure* appear independent of a definite form. They are areas of “pure force”¹¹³, “traits” of sensation, that “mark out possibilities of fact, but do not yet constitute a fact”¹¹⁴. And, Deleuze says, it is “precisely through the action of these marks that the visual whole” (the painting) ceases to be an “optical organization”, giving “the eye another power, as well as an object that will no longer be figurative.”¹¹⁵

Sensation, he says, is a “body without organs”¹¹⁶ at the “limit of the lived body”¹¹⁷, a transitory organ, changing if the force it encounters changes, so that “What is mouth at one level” of a sensation “becomes an anus at another”¹¹⁸, temporality entering the painting through the “allotropic variation of bodies”¹¹⁹ and the “deformations” of sensation.

Painting he says, “liberates” the eye, to become a virtual “polyvalent indeterminate organ” giving us “eyes all over: in the ear, in the stomach, in the lungs (the painting breathes...)”¹²⁰. This, he says “is the double definition of painting: subjectively, it invests the eye, which ceases to be organic in order to become a polyvalent and transitory organ; objectively it brings before us the reality of the body, of lines and colors freed from organic representation”¹²¹. This is particular to painting, which unlike, say music, which he says “disembodies”, “dematerialises” the body, painting “is lodged farther up, where the body escapes itself”¹²². In escaping, the body “discovers the materiality of which it is composed”¹²³.

a theological tradition in the middle ages, stemming from the texts of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, and linked to “impurity and sin” and “fundamentally” to the “idea of otherness”. Such dissemblant figures, he says, were “made to transit us from the visible to something beyond even the intelligible”(p.53). Didi-Huberman, G., *Fra Angelico: Dissemblance and Figuration*, Todd, J.M., trans., University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1995.

¹¹² Deleuze, p. 106.

¹¹³ Deleuze, p. 31

¹¹⁴ Deleuze, p. 101.

¹¹⁵ Deleuze, p. 101-102.

¹¹⁶ Deleuze, p. 44. The *body without organs* is a term, Deleuze says, originally used by Antonin Artaud in *The Body is the Body*, trans. Roger McKeon, *Semiotext(e)*, vol. 2, no. 3 (1977), pp. 38-9.

¹¹⁷ Deleuze, p. 44.

¹¹⁸ Deleuze, p. 48.

¹¹⁹ Deleuze, p. 63.

¹²⁰ Deleuze, p. 52.

¹²¹ As above.

¹²² Deleuze, p. 54.

¹²³ Deleuze, p. 54-55.

I see a relation in my own work to the grotesque and Deleuze's *malerisch* through the attempt in my paintings to mediate a movement on the surface of the painting between *there* and *not there* and *almost nothing* and *something*. Of particular importance has been the grotesque 'blot', as a way of analyzing and expressing aspects of the experience of making the paintings and the material conditions of appearance. The 'blot' seems to embody a movement between the virtual and the actual through the material of paint as temporal matter, a highly mutable surface which transgresses its own limits but is nonetheless tethered to tactile matter. I use this knowledge to think about and make paintings that address a concept of paint as 'extended' temporal material, and these ideas are crucial to 7 the paintings on which this thesis relies.

The FedEx Notebook, Hitch/Op Notebook and Glossary of Terms also comprise the thesis. They are situated in the appendices. Please see further pdfs: Thesis Parts 2, 3, 4 & 5.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: FedEx Notebook Thesis Part 2

Appendix 2: Hitch/Op Notebook Thesis Part 3

Appendix 3: Glossary of Terms Thesis Part 4

Appendix 4: Additional images “ “

Appendix 5: Background to the “ “
Monstrous/Perfect Cannibal

BIBLIOGRAPHY “ “