The Condition of Painting: Reconsidering Medium Specificity

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Copyright Statement

Dedication

To Mum and Joe

Abstract

The aim of this investigation is to consider the extent to which the processes and material stuff of painting remain central to its identity and meaning. Within writing that supports painting, the role played by the medium of paint is too often sidestepped—sidestepped within writings that take as their starting point the interdisciplinary assumption that the message owes little of consequence to the medium through which it becomes disclosed. The retreat from medium specificity, in the 1970s – a move largely made in opposition to the hegemonic force of Greenbergian formalism and the expanded field ushered in by studio practices, as well as an embrace of the *text* (promoted through theory) – dislocated image from that from which the image is constituted. To a significant extent, particularly in the most vibrant approaches to the medium, the iconographic possibilities of a painting came to be situated in opposition to the characteristics of the painted object.

This project addresses how the reduction of painting to linguistic schemas has rendered the material object of painting redundant. The conception of painting as *image* – free of material baggage and operable through language alone – serves to disguise the temporal nature of the manner by which a painting is constructed. A painting's surface is built incrementally and, in its stillness, offers clues to what it has been—perhaps the only clues to what it is. I will redress this in two ways. First, through a body of studio practice I will demonstrate the indispensability of spatiotemporal concerns in respect of the processes and object of painting. My painting is reliant on responsiveness to methods of making, and I will foreground the image's construction, staging it as an imbrication of language and material in time.

Secondly, I will engage in a written inquiry comprising of five chapters. In *Chapter 1*, I attest to my concerns as a painter. *Chapter 2* embarks on an investigation into the notion of a medium within the post-medium condition. *Chapter 3* will consider the positioning of painting: examining philosophical omissions and historiographical oversights, which have, together, contributed to misunderstandings. *Chapter 4* seeks, through the work of Martin Heidegger and Friedrich Hölderlin, to negotiate a new ontological model for the medium of painting, and *Chapter 5* re-considers my recent practice – and position on medium – through the lens of the aforementioned inquiry.

The context for this work is the realm in which painting's ontological status is questioned—targeting the nodal point where there is recourse to consider the extent to which the meaning of a painting is dependent on the specificity of its material conditions. To that end, I argue that Heidegger's notion of truth (and of equipmentality) – developed in "The Origin of the Work of Art" and the *Hölderlin Lectures* – offers the possibility of replacing the redundancy of the medium with a notion of regeneration, against the backdrop of the endism that haunts painting.

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Declaration

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 here has not been submitted for an award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Signature: T. Palin

Date: 19 / 05 / 18

Introduction

> [O]ne might go so far as to argue that the media of the particular arts not only influence their character, they determine their very possibilities and interpretations.[1]

This exposition takes as its starting point a practical and art historical notion of painting as a confluence of pigment and binder on surface.[2] Certainly, within the *expanded field* of arts practice – an oft-misused term, since Rosalind Krauss applied it to developments in sculpture – painting has taken many forms.[3] However, the arguments raised here, and conclusions drawn, reach practices that retain material, linguistic and historical particularities. This work accepts the notion that painting today is affected by earlier manifestations of objects and ideas. To take a contrary position would amount to a disavowal of contemporary painting's propensity to impact on painting's future.[4] This endeavour is an optimistic one—painting maintains its capacity to affect, and the properties of its medium underscore its distinctions. Such positivity must, however, contend with critics to whom painting's presumed specificities conspire to thwart artistic innovation—a result of its inherent material limitations, connection to modernism and embrace of the mechanisms of capitalism.[5]

From the emergence of photography, to misquote Mark Twain, rumours of painting's demise have been greatly exaggerated.[6] For several decades, photography has replicated painting in colour, which is noteworthy in terms of the likelihood of confronting a form of deception.[7] Since Walter Benjamin, it has been a matter of great

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[1] Philip Alperson, ed., *The Philosophy of the Visual Arts* (Oxford, New York, Toronto: Oxford

[2] Surfaces, including the edges and back of a material support, irrespective of location, placement or orientation.

[3] See: Rosalind Krauss's "Sculpture in the Expanded Field", 1979. Craig Staff discussed this, in *After Modernist Painting*, 2013, and deployed the term more precisely in respect of developments in painting since the 1960s.

[4] This would serve also to disrupt a dialectical linearity – associated with modernist thinking – from which the very idea of medium specificity emerged.

[5] Amelia Jones (1961-) would serve, in her work, to exemplify what Caroline Jones (birth date unknown), *Eyesight Alone*, 2005, has termed counter-formalist readings of modernism, which seek to challenge notions of aesthetics from a deconstructionist angle, re-applying the work of the French feminists, and psychoanalytical theory more generally, to a host of non-painterly practices, or else painterly practices re-interpreted through performative, non-optical, non-aesthetic, anti-Greenbergian lenses.

[6] Reputedly, on a trip to London, an American newspaper wrongly published an obituary, to which Mark Twain issued his now-famous statement.

[7] In the Platonic sense.

debate as to the extent that the mechanical image has assisted in robbing painting of one or more of its specificities.[8] Unlike the photographic image, the *picture* of painting is not achieved simultaneously across its surface. The significance of the processes of painting – processes that guide material in space and time, and which through manual interventions determine a work's form – are subsumed under the concept of *image*. Often, one confronts painting as facsimile.[9] The lack of clarity as to such distinctions, and of how painting's image functions once it is dislocated from site, has a secondary effect – the conflation of the object and processes of painting behind the single moniker – which must be unpacked if an understanding of the ontological condition of painting is to be reached.[10] The object of painting is the result of its processes; and yet, processes remain informed by the very idea of an object, imbuing them with purpose—they orient towards. The materiality of painting is transformative—its object contains evidence of manipulation, temporal duration and purposeful construction.

Notwithstanding, paintings remain ubiquitous. There are approximately 2500 public museums and art galleries in Britain today (excluding overtly commercial spaces).[11] In addition, a host of student-led initiatives add significantly to the number of places in which one might encounter paintings. While many art competitions have broadened their entry requirements to reflect the plurality of current practices, paintings continue to be exhibited. Photographs of major art collections have been made available online as part of a broader drive to increase access to the paintings of the past. Moreover, the influx of Asian art – one manifestation being the Chinese section of the John Moores Painting Prize – has assisted in bringing back modes of practice that had fallen into abeyance (paintings adopting modernist sylistic traits).[12] Within higher education,

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[8] Since photography, mechanical means have reproduced painting; replacing an oily, chalky or resinous palimpsest with a homogenised, emulsified surface. All is altered/approximated, including: colour, scale, tonality and location. Today, vast matrices of pixelated coloured dots sit in many of the places where painted works once sat. Discourse can be rooted, for the most part, in the 1930s, in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", 1936, by Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), and also in *Box in a Valise,* c. 1935-41, by Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968); in which Duchamp replicated the contents of his life's work in miniature, offering a portable museum as a work in itself, yet one whose replicated form critiqued the idea of authenticity.

[9] Consider the prevalence of photographic reproductions within and outside of gallery spaces.

[10] This is the result of photographic reproduction.

[11] http://www.museumsassociation.org. On the high street, prints of famous works, gaudy originals (by painter-pop stars/actors/comedians/politicians), and kitsch classics sell in significant numbers.

[12] The John Moores Painting Prize has been the leading showcase for British painting since 1957. Past award winners include: David Hockney (1937-), Euan Uglow (1932-2000), John Hoyland (1934-2011), Lisa Milroy (1959-), Peter Doig (1959-), and Rose Wylie (1934-). In 1965, Clement Greenberg (1909-1994) was the first non-British Jury Chair.

painting retains a position; although specialist Masters level courses in the UK have diminished in number, some BA programmes in Fine Art have re-implemented discrete strands.[13]

Driving this project is an inclination to not only acknowledge the presentness of painted objects but also to pay heed to the part that the medium plays in respect of a painting's meaning; to consider the causes, effects and consequences of painting's practical, art historical and philosophical situatedness. As a painter and educator (painting has been central to my life for the past thirty years), there is a sense of a stored investment here—of an obligation even: to point to omissions and extensions—to the implications of misunderstanding the role that the medium plays, and to the risks associated with its neglect. To do so requires a consideration of the relationship of painting's present (of which I am a part) to painting's past.[14] This, then, forms the backdrop to a personal endeavour that has grown, also, out of the perception of an obfuscatory mode of address within recent discourses.[15] Such disquiet, however, does not arise from having discerned a lack of material preoccupation per se (within or outside of the studio).[16] Neither does it attest to a particularly strong desire to critique the role assigned to painting within the gallery, arts education, or even the market.

It derives, perhaps, from the fact that formalist and contextual understandings have become naturalised as oppositional.[17] This is supported by Benjamin Buchloh's contention that, since Duchamp, there has been a tension: "[f]or the need, on the one hand, for both a systematic reduction and an empirical verification of the perceptual data of a visual structure stands opposed to the desire, on the other hand, to assign a

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[13] In Leeds College of Art, the general Fine Art programme branched into four strands in 2013 (Painting, Sculpture, Drawing and Media), only to truncate its offer to three in 2015, when it abolished the Media strand.

[14] *Painting's past* takes in that which painting has been, in historiographical terms, and also in respect of a cultural legacy of retained objects.

[15] James Elkins (1955-), in "Why Nothing can be Accomplished in Painting", 2004, considers the root causes of this state of affairs, which I will consider in more detail in *Chapter 3*.

[16] Within artists' or student-artists' studios, or on gallery walls or floors, painting remains present.

[17] Michael Fried (1939-) preferred to use the term *formal* to denote a consideration of the properties of a work, as by the 1960s formalism (as an approach) and formalist (to denote a practitioner of such an approach) had acquired pejorative connotations. However, having acquired these, and in order to avoid confusion, I shall use the former term to denote the framework adopted by art historians and critics who seek to place form ahead of subject matter, or who deem form to be, itself, content. As a consequence, I will employ *formalist* too. I shall reserve *form* for the properties of the works themselves (in opposition to *subject matter*)—carrying the Friedian sense of *formal*.

new *idea* or meaning to an object randomly".[18] The impact of this tension on painting – as both a process and a cultural artefact with a long history of change – has been hugely significant. Worse still, from my perspective, is that, within this oppositional framework, context is too often applied unhelpfully.[19] The term *context* is far from a simple, singular designation, and brings with it a surplus of slippery uncertainties.

To Charles Harrison, artworks are perpetually discursive sites that establish their own theoretical frames.[20] Linguistic in orientation, this nevertheless permits material interventions, yet within particular boundaries. Harrison emphasises the spectator's discernment, which amounts to the promotion of a form of address with roots in the connoisseurial tradition.[21] Keen to differentiate between linguistic potential and the sound bite, he contends that the modern period is noted for: "the development of a corporatist knowledge culture, that has flattened literature, art and the rest of the so-called humanities into information".[22] Raymond Williams, however, presents the medium in broader historical terms, which allow for a spanning of moments of cultural schism. Here, the artwork is determined in respect of the social setting in which it becomes contextually embedded.[23] Adrian Forty, in critiquing what he considers to be the prevalence of one-dimensional contextual (social) analyses, surmises that:

> [I]t has become fashionable to refer to the *social context* or the *social background*. […] Such cursory references to the social context are like weeds and gravel around a stuffed fish in a glass case: however realistic these may be, they are only furnishings, and taking them away would have little effect on our perception of the fish. The use of social context is rarely more than an ornament,

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[18] Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions", *October*, 55 (1990): 111.

[19] From the 1970s, context become everything, resulting in the establishment of a clear dividing line between what was taken to be *form* and what was re-presented as *content*. This was driven, in large part, by the politicisation of arts practice, by reactions to the ideas of Clement Greenberg, and by the emergence of Cultural Studies.

[20] Charles Harrison, *Conceptual Art & Painting*: *Further Essays on Art and Language* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993).

[21] In the eighteenth century, the connoisseur referred loosely to a man of taste, or even, sometimes derogatorily, of fashionable ideas. The nineteenth century brought about the professionalisation of connoisseurship.

[22] Charles Harrison, *The Politics of Representation*. Symposium, the University of Brighton, 1997, accessed July 13, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJJvXqhKg4Y.

[23] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

allowing the objects themselves still to be regarded as if they had autonomous existence where all but purely artistic considerations are trivial.[24]

Michael Fried, in resisting the notion of artwork as *event,* fuses together eighteenth century spectatorship and a notion of context in pursuit of the perpetuation of modernist concerns, so as to retain the aesthetic as of principle importance to the life of the artist and critic-spectator alike.[25] With regard to the work itself, David Sweet maintains that: "the pictorial economy of a painting cannot be identified with its materiality, [suggesting that i]ts function is to offer an intelligible argument to support […] materiality, as the organising principle of perspective orients the brush marks in a Titian".[26] W. J. T. Mitchell went further, proposing that medium-specificity is impossible in the manner outlined by Greenberg, as words are needed to explain the ideological motives behind the modernist retreat from representation.[27] This change is predicated, perhaps, on the fact that Sweet is writing as a painter seeking to comprehend a painterly relationship, and possibly an intuited one. Mitchell, on the other hand, sees painting after the fact, as a work keen to explain itself to the world.

Craig Staff has noted that even in the period of the mid-late 1970s (importantly, prior to *A New Spirit in Painting,* and at the height of hostility to Greenbergian modernism): "a significant number of artists evidently oriented themselves towards the medium, continuing to conceive it both as a viable form of cultural practice and as a contemporary form of art".[28] In spite of this, and in respect of a renewed interest in the

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[24] Adrian Forty, *Objects of Desire: Design and Society Since 1750* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), 8. Forty's work deals primarily with architectural developments, though also the plastic arts more generally.

[25] Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood", in *Art & Objecthood: Essays & Reviews*, ed. Michael Fried (Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 148-172.

[26] David Sweet, "Abstraction's Organising Principles", 2012, in response to David Ryan's "What does This Represent", *Abstract Critical*, 2012, accessed May 11, 2016, https://abstractcritical.com/note/david -sweet-on -abstractions-organising-principles/index.html.

[27] W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). Clement Greenberg, in "Avant-Garde and Kitsch", 1939, "Towards a Newer Laocoon", 1940, and "Modernist Painting", 1960, constructed a highly influential account of the development of modernism, and of the centrality to the modernist project of medium specificity, and, in respect of painting, of flatness and the primacy of the optical as a mode of reception. This *formalism* built on the work of the art historians of the Vienna School, in particular, Alois Riegl (1858-1905), as well as on the works of the Swiss art historian Heinrich Wölfflin (1866-1945), and the English critics of the Bloomsbury Group, Roger Fry (1866-1934) and Clive Bell (1881-1934).

[28] Craig Staff, *After Modernist Painting: The History of a Contemporary Practice* (London & New York: I. B. Taurus, 2013), 57. Exhibition held at the Royal Academy in London in 1981, and

medium and its connectedness to context and idea (and also to spectatorship, document and picture), Ewa Lajer-Burcharth and Isabelle Graw consider that: "[t]he notion of medium specificity as a transhistorical essence of any artistic practice or as an agent of aesthetic teleology has largely been recognised as untenable".[29] The possibility of assigning the medium a role as a vehicle is of relevance here. Stephen Melville – in *Becoming Medium* – asks whether medium is invention or discovery, or even mere assumption.[30] Might paintings have *become* medium, and, if so, how?

A word on the structure and tenor of this work, and some notice of acknowledged limitations. This thesis contains no extended case studies, either of individual works or of artist-makers. Contextual analysis is limited, for the most part, to analyses of textual argument and historical positioning, and to a consideration of the development and orientation of my own practice. Nor have I thought it necessary to pay particular heed to aesthetics, outside of its entanglements with medium. Along the way, I will consider the historical, philosophical and logical bases of the medium's distinctions.[31] A reconsideration of medium specificity in painting requires an awareness of theoretical moves made in the period from the mid-1960s, yet there are pitfalls to look out for.

Medium specificity does not, in itself, denote singularity, and I will explore a number of attempts to find grounds for medium specificities. Nor does it follow that medium necessarily designates physical extension (that painting's medium is paint), and, when it does, there are difficulties in respect of painting's secondary attribute—its picture. In the course of this work it will be necessary to consider the relationship of material to language (image), and to work (thing), and also to consider paint in its dual identity as a moving vehicle and a static object. It might, then, be possible to better understand the basis for what Amy Knight Powell has described as: "the profound attractiveness

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showcasing, among other things, a return to painterly modes of figuration, that became known collectively as Neo-Expressionism.
[29] Ewa Lajer-Burcharth and Isabelle Graw, *Painting Beyond Itself. The Medium in the Post-medium condition* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016), 7.
[30] Stephen Melville, *Becoming Medium*, 2013. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=peXeZ3GAaNY.
[31] Medium specificity is closely aligned with the ideas of Clement Greenberg, though it is perhaps first seen in the work of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781) in the late eighteenth century. Lessing considered a work's success in terms of its adherence to the properties of its medium. In "Laocoön: An Essay upon the Limits of Poetry and Painting", 1766, he defined poetry as a temporal art and painting as a spatial art.

[…] of Clement Greenberg's conception of the fruitfulness of painting that does not go in search of the world beyond painting for its subject matter".[32]

Rather than include extended summaries of the contents of subsequent sections here – indicating areas of engagement in a single extended narrative – I have placed shorter introductions within the five chapters that constitute this thesis. When dealing with a subject as contaminated by other lines of inquiry as this is, such an approach has the advantage of drawing closer connections between particular concerns; of establishing clearer aims and objectives; and of reminding and redirecting the reader at important intervals.[33] The writing is designed to provide a practical blanket around the more theoretical chapters. *Chapter 1* considers the core of my practice in the period prior to commencing this venture, and *Chapter 5* addresses developements in my most recent work through the lens of the intervening material: this includes a shift in the choice of suppport and the inclusion of painted words. Together, these chapters work to provide a studio-based methodology of making. The intervening material comprises of a detailed historiographic survey of key moments within relevant texts; an identification of philosophical omissions and absences in the field; and the construction of a Heideggerian model to redress misunderstandings in respect of painting's medium.

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[32] Amy Knight Powell, *Depositions: Scenes from the Late Medieval Church and the Modern Museum* (New York: Zone Books, 2012), 290.
[33] The chapter structure assumes a sequential reading, with threads becoming variously intertwined.

Chapter 1: Positioning Practice

Part 1: Introduction

The following text supplies an elucidation of my activities as a painter (from 2010-2015), positioning the project by advancing an account of the material and temporal concerns from which it emerged. *Part 2: Becoming Attentive to Material* provides a description of, and reflection on, a period marked by a reassessment of my understanding of the medium. This time witnessed a convergence of interests – within and outside of the studio – the result of a shift in attitude towards the idea of *subject*—of what my paintings address and how they address it. I hope, here, to ground the more theoretical analysis of subsequent chapters in everyday, manual activities.[34] The writing takes the form of an extended artist's statement, wherein considerations are classified, grouped and recounted as intentions, suppositions and material preoccupations.[35] Of primacy within the trajectory of my thinking about painting (and about medium specificity) has been the notion of practice itself, and of the studio as that which provides the conditions of practice. *Part 2* attests to a fleshing out and recompression of these and related concerns within the purview of this undertaking.

Painting has driven my understanding of painting.[36] Along the way, this understanding has come up against theoretical approaches, one of which was the formalist. Though I

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[34] I extend this to include all forms of painterly doing (that results from marking, making and manipulating).

[35] It is sometimes necessary to draw connections with earlier work, either to identify where the seeds of later practices are sown, or else to detect where current practice extends into or reclaims past events. For a collection of shorter statements written prior to the period of this work, see: *Tom Palin: Artist Statements 1992-2012* (Leeds: Workshop Press, 2013).

[36] This includes both making paintings and also looking at/thinking about the paintings of others. After studying in various institutions in Birkenhead and Wallasey I applied to undertake a degree in Fine Art at Liverpool John Moores University. The paintings that got me to university were a series of large-scale acrylic works on paper, of local industrial buildings, particularly gasometers and cooling towers. I had become interested in encaustic processes, textures, surfaces, tonality and relationships between colours in close harmony. At University I specialised in painting, and graduated in 1996. In my final year I shared a studio with the painter Daniel Pulman (1975-), whose poetic seriousness and belief in figuration affected me greatly, though its impact was more noticeable later, when I returned, in a fashion, to the figure. On completion of my degree, I undertook a three-year Research Fellowship – *Drawlab* – in drawing and painting, at St. Helens College. Since then, I have painted from studios in Birkenhead, Wallasey, Liverpool, Leeds and London. Though as a boy I enjoyed drawing, I enjoyed filling in more. I was exposed to art early, through library books and visits to local galleries. Victorian painting and reproductions of works by: John Constable (1776-1837), Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), Hieronymus Bosch (c. 1450-1516), Pieter Bruegel (c. 1525-1569), Claude Monet (1940-1926) and Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919) affected me a great deal, as did those of the Dutch still life painters, and the flowers of Henri Fantin-Latour (1836-1904).

became aware of its limitations and exclusions, formalism stuck.[37] This was not so much an aesthetic appeal as it was an appeal to connect in as direct a fashion as possible with the works I admired. Early on, I knew that to appreciate a painting – for example, *The Piano Lesson* by Henri Matisse (**Fig. 1A**) – was also to appreciate a sensibility.[38] Yet I had come to know. Thus, the painting, whatever its actual status, had acted as a locus, and my *coming to know* was a coming to know some*thing*.

Fig. 1A

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[37] I have grown to comprehend theory as something approaching a parallel form of practice, for thoughts, also, are shackled to their methods of framing, much as the possibility of the colour green is framed by the colours blue and yellow. An awareness of the tangibility of ideas, in theoretical form, provides me with a direct link to my paintings, in that they, too, seem formed of prior and constituent parts.

[38] Perhaps the most radical work by Henri Matisse (1869-1964) – along with *The Italian Woman*, 1916 – *The Piano Lesson*, 1916, appeared to me as approachable only through recourse to other works by Matisse. Additionally, coming to know *through the work* appeared to be a process of mutual exclusion. To know a sensibility is to *see the work as* (a sensibility), yet to presume knowledge of the work *as work*. Whereas, to *see the work*, meant to *not see as* (a sensibility), and, therefore, to deduce a sensibility from the work. Moreover, sensibility is a *seeing as*, and so, paradoxically, to *not see as* was to *see as*.

Part 2: Becoming Attentive to Material

2.1: Beginning

In late-2010, I began work on a series of paintings on small hardwood panels, re-using parts of an oak table that had acted as a workbench.[39] For six months prior to this I had refrained from working in oils to focus on the completion of a commissioned mural that was to consist of two thousand paintings, in acrylics, on train tickets collected from personal journeys over a period of sixteen years. *2000 Journeys* (**Fig. 1B**) ended in September 2010 and was exhibited in *Dream Machine*, as part of the Liverpool Biennial.[40] Afterwards, I thought about how best to approach making paintings on wood.
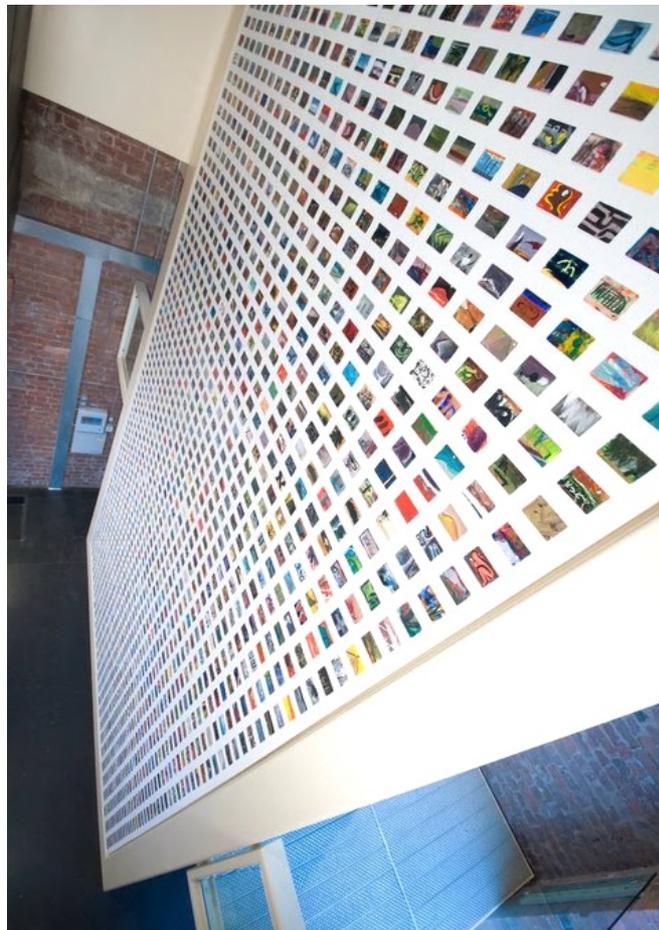
Fig. 1B

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[39] I had painted on hardwood previously, having completed six small works in 2007 and one horizontally elongated piece at the start of the year, all from salvaged material.
[40] *Dream Machine*, 15th September - 23rd October 2010, Metal, Edge Hill Station, Liverpool. The exhibition also featured works by Gareth Brew (birth date unknown), Nicola Dale (birth date unknown), Phil Lockhart (birth date unknown), Richard Proffitt (1985-), and composer Ailis Ni Riain (1974-).

To begin meant to feel my way back into the material of oil paint.[41] I felt strongly that the internal logic driving my work had – over fourteen years – played itself out, or else that something external had interfered.[42] I purchased hardwoods of differing weights and densities: to consider the wood's tendency to warp and to examine the prominence of the grain in respect of ease of filling—to gauge the finish and colour of exposed end grain, should I decide to leave it visible.[43] Shifts were evident: most noticeable was the decrease in scale from what were, by most standards, already small-scale paintings. There were a number of constants too: chiefly, the maintenance of oil as the primary vehicle, and the retention of the palette from previous works, with some additions.[44]

2.2: Studio

The works that comprise this series have been constructed in one or more of six studio spaces. For most of the time since 2010 I have kept two spaces concurrently.[45] Two have been of a modest scale, two somewhat larger, and one especially small; formed of a converted alcove. Two spaces have been external – in the sense of my having to travel to them from home – and the rest comprise of part of, or an extension to, my living space. It is important that a new studio affords me an opportunity to begin again with minimal change. I repeat a battening of walls, maintaining a consistent distribution of space. I retain items that provide links between where I am and where I have been. Additions appear, oddly, to be in receipt of the environment they enter.

2.3: Support and Format

I use materials that would have been recognised in earlier times (to ensure that what I do is painting) – wooden support, pigment, solvent, drying oil and varnish – and which connect me to a period of indeterminate past rather than to a singular moment.[46] The

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[41] By this, I mean a getting used to its physicality and variousness.

[42] This was more than an instance of life getting in the way. In short: the paint seemed to get in the way.

[43] Including: ash, American white oak, sapele and steamed beech.

[44] These additions allowed me to extend the range of grey-greens, enrich the browns and cut the warmer hues more cleanly. Most of my paintings since the time of my graduation (1996) have been painted on resistant grounds, such as: hardboard, MDF and canvas board. From June 2016, I began to experiment with enamel and gloss paint too.

[45] In 2010, having worked in the city for some time, I rented a flat in Leeds, which mean that, in splitting my time between West Yorkshire and the Wirral, I was soon maintaining two studio spaces (in Birkenhead and Leeds).

[46] Panel painting dates to classical times, though it was during the period of Christendom and, notably, during the Renaissance, that working on wood peaked. This was especially the case for religious commissions, though it remained common into the seventeenth century for secular commissions, too,

use of a hardwood support – with a pronounced thickness – accentuates the material aspect of the work. An awareness of the altarpiece perhaps informs my thinking here—an object whose fixedness serves to situate meaning, providing a locale and determining a method of reception.[47] I am more interested in tradition than in novelty – in the stillness of the relic than in the movement of the machine – and remain committed to the idea that one must look back in order to move forward.

I set out to reconsider multi-panel arrangements.[48] This was made easier by the small scale of the works and the ease with which I could juxtapose them. I wanted to keep open the possibility of interrelationships: especially of narrative, formal and material connections. The idea of storytelling informed my thinking. Probable groupings and numbers pertaining to groupings were also left open to consideration, to be explored during the process of painting, and finalised on the completion of the panels. In some, I worked paint across the joins between panels, altering alignment, proximity and orientation. Works were approached from all sides, and frequently rotated to explore compositional variants and to assist in the conjuring of representations. In joining horizontally, I am introducing a material horizon in opposition to the pictured one.

This lack of determination allows for rapid reworking: the result of an altered mood bringing with it a change of heart. From the beginning, individual panels were relieved of their responsibility to account for the entirety of the work, which deferred completion. I reasoned that the indeterminacy of the size of a gap or gaps between panels – and of the uneven globulous lip overspilling the edge – would compel incompleteness upon the work, whose parameters remain approximations, to be reconsidered when displayed. I consider the place where the painting begins and ends, which perhaps stems from an interest in early Renaissance painting: where cropped stairs, windows and doors appear to ramp up the presence of what is not visible.[49] My

mostly in Northern Europe. Poplar, oak, walnut and the fruitwoods – such as lime and pear – were particularly popular.

[47] Painted panel altarpieces date to 13th century Italy. The polyptych, with decorative carvings, appeared in the following century. Melville considers the medium's distinctions and possibilities with respect to forms of painting, noting that the fresco, the altarpiece and the easel painting offer room to distinguish function of a medium in relation to how it is found. See: *Becoming Medium*, 2013.

[48] I had previously completed several diptychs, triptychs and polyptychs, and explored the idea of grouping works thematically and formally in the studio and in the gallery setting.

[49] Giotto di Bondone (1266/7-1337), Masaccio (1401-1428) and Fra Angelico (c. 1395-1455).

works could be likened to frames in a storyboard, with peripheral sequences remaining absent. Stills and breaks tell of temporal duration and spatial extension (**Fig. 1C**).[50]

Fig. 1C

2.4: Scale

Why so small? Gesturing on a scale beyond one's reach requires bodily movement (of arm, wrist and torso).[51] Tensions build at the periphery of gestures, which impact on the way the paint sits. With a scaling up of equipment this can be compensated for. More problematic is the replication of the weight of paint across a larger area. The possibility of adding bulking material underpins the assumption that small paintings can be made larger through modifications to technique, equipment and the vehicle itself, yet remain essentially unchanged. This is exacerbated by the fact that reproductions can be projected or printed at any scale. It is the material properties of paint that determine its scope, not the ability to replicate gestures on a larger scale. The ratio of texture to smoothness: of surface to edge: of peak to trough – and the effects of gravity and drying time – are rooted to (determined by and bound up in) the work's scale. A reproduction of a painting at another scale constitutes an impossible view.

This, in itself, does not explain my predisposition for small paintings, though it does tell of my preference for effects achievable at a small scale. There are accompanying

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[50] In film, the storyboard permits alterations at the early stages of a project, allowing the director to explore dislocation, juxtaposition and repetition in order to build tension, insert flashbacks and re-sequence or layer narratives.

[51] Willem de Kooning (1904-1997) was noted for his methods of enlargement, using poles to extend his brushes, which, in turn, acted to extend his gestures.

explanations. As a student, I worked on larger canvases, in acrylics.[52] A growing dislike of the messy physicality of the hanging, bagging canvas (and of the claims made in support of the large-scale expressive canvases of the 1980s) dampened my enthusiasm.[53] Mostly, there was a need to understand materiality at close quarters, within my field of vision and within my reach. To me, the making of a painting is an act of intimacy, and, consequently, this decrease in scale was a drawing towards.

2.5: Ground and Finish

I apply an acrylic gesso primer, initially diluted so as to engorge the grain and coat the fibres of the wood. Subsequently, I put on additional layers; increasing the viscosity and the vigour with which it is applied until I establish a ridged, opaque surface that can be cutback with abrasive papers. My principal concern is how best to protect the wood from the long-term effects of the oil.[54] I test levels of absorption, assessing the rapidity of sinkage. To finish, I usually varnish with a soluble gloss; thinned a little. This protects the surface of the painting, allowing it to be cleaned. However, its primary function is to unify surface variance. Diluting the paint throughout the making of the work (with solvents, varnishes and oils) prevents the material from sticking in a predictable and stable manner. Lean over fat can cause separations, cracking and a lack of cohesion. I employ retouching varnish at various stages of the painting's life, to bring the image back and to bind layers of paint together. Sinking causes matt areas, which interfere with spatial relationships and disturb the balance between the image and the object. To varnish is to come closer to what the painting was when wet.

2.6: Application and Handling

This is tied to scale. I use brushes of varying sizes and coarseness, mostly flat.[55] I enjoy the feel of the brush; it extends me and connects me to the painted surface (to

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[52] I moved from making reasonably small, close-harmony paintings with a blade, under the influence of Nicolas de Staël (1914-1955), to fractured arrangements of pieces of landscape and still life, influenced by Cubism and Abstract Expressionism, especially the pre-drip paintings of Jackson Pollock (1912-1956), and somewhat in the manner of Lee Krasner (1908-1984). From there, I re-established a singular horizon and introduced chromatic greys.

[53] Euphoric, indulgent and theatrical. In particular, the Neo-Expressionist canvases of Julian Schnabel (1951-).

[54] Refined linseed and stand oil, or occasionally poppy oil.

[55] Flat brushes permit the painter to work back from an edge and to modify from an immediate sense of squareness and structure, rather than to impose these things upon roundness. Paul Cézanne (1839-1906) is notable for his use of a round brush to generate angularity and *flat-depth*, which became modified and tightened using a palette knife.

the material constituents of the work). I can push, pull and roll paint: draw and fill. The viscosity of the paint is felt as much as it is seen, and I remain attuned to changes in fluidity, speed of application, and resistance. Painting is reliant on muscle memory. I can drag, shove and bully material; drawing thinner glazes across thicker areas of impasto or stippling. I work on several panels simultaneously, which allows me to a stagger processes across the series of works, maintaining differences along the way.

Much of what I leave is the result of applying more fluid paint to partially dry, viscous underpaintings, or from a thinned wash laid across the face and allowed to settle over a heavier ground. Dry painting involves layering on top of already established palimpsests—drawing with paint around areas of interest; obscuring sections that seem no longer to serve a purpose. I sometimes work through a recently applied, thinned and semi-opaque wash, unearthing partially dried, more heavily bodied material. The contrast in viscosity permits me to bring forth the underneath layer gradually – almost grittily – with resistance. I find, with this, that I can adjust gradations within the surface of a painting much more subtly than would be possible using a standard wet in wet approach, where each covering is equally viscous and manipulable (**Fig. 1D**).

Fig. 1D

I mix colours in pots, to varying consistencies, modifying as I go, whilst ensuring that I am able to access undiluted pigment from a glass plate or wooden board. Adjustments take place throughout, and I combine the contents of pots; pulling one colour through another – on palette and painting – towards elusive tints, until the base

colour is scarcely visible. This provides me with knowledge of colour at its most delicate, when barely distinguishable from white. I do the same with the shades, taking complementaries towards black: cooling and warming. I use knives, too, mostly for mixing, separating and scraping. Sticks, rags and gloves make up the rest of my kit.

2.7: Colour and Tonality

A propensity to seek out the indeterminate informs my palette also.[56] I am inclined to refrain from colours that appear too singular.[57] Blues and greens become grey-blues and grey-greens, and I remain aware that colour – as paint – is tangible. Red rarely remains red. I use it mostly to mix a range of browns and purples, to neutralise the greens and to warm the blacks.[58] Pure colours tend to be cut back, whitened, greyed or generally polluted. I am drawn to close harmonies (to the vividness of non-vivid colour) and to simultaneous contrasts.[59] Quiet colours affect me more than loud.[60]

I begin by accentuating a tonal range—widening local contrasts around or within extended areas of harmony, that, most of the time, draw towards each other, then away, and back towards, in the course of the period of making. I find myself responding to tiny tonal differences as I open and close them. Close harmonies – the nearness of passages of paint – draw me to the moments prior to an evening's stillness—a time when things (by which I mean all things) appear to me as something more than they are. In tone and colour, in light and shade, the motifs emerge partially formed and fugitive, akin to the period of transition that connects the day to the night.

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[56] Philosophically, indeterminacy draws from the work of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), and from his ideas as to the unapproachability of the *noumenon* (thing-in-itself). Within Romanticism, changeability comes to be understood, especially by William Wordsworth (1770-1850) and John Keats (1795-1821), as a mode of thinking about the world and its *events*—as a prerequisite of reception. Materially, indeterminacy serves to define aspects of the painting process (the transition from liquid to solid). Nothing is fixed in the making, where all remains in flux, and is therefore subject to change.

[57] Primary and secondary colours.

[58] What Keats might have called a constrained verdurousness.

[59] In his book of 1839, *De la Loi du Contraste Simultané des Couleurs*, Michel Eugène Chevreul (1786-1899) demonstrated that the fading of dyed threads is not fading at all, but instead due to the effects of simultaneous contrasts between adjacent coloured threads.

[60] Changes in weather – and, more specifically, seasonal variations – certainly infuse my works, altering my understanding, both in the making and afterwards (I am likely to introduce warmer hues in the winter and cooler greys in the summer). More often than not I paint out of season, perhaps to ensure an avoidance of verisimilitude and to maintain a reliance on the ebb and flow of memory and mood from a place outside. A painting attests to what is has been, yet rests within the context of its making. As liminal limitation it stands positioned: a sonorous circumventing of the tide. I am Northern, in European terms—at home in cooler climes. I favour a backdrop that is amenable to, even encouraging of, changes in mood, tending to prefer the colder light of the northern Renaissance – of Bruegel, Cranach (Lucas, the Elder, c. 1472-1553) and Dürer (Albrecht, 1471-1528) – to its warmer southern counterpart.

2.8: Surface and Time

I do not apply paint thickly—rarely as a single impasto. The surface bothers me, because it is all there is; all I have access to. Meaning begins where surface ends. For me, that surface is, after day one of painting, a composite of other surfaces, visible through gaps or transparent washes, most frequently the result of dragged material catching the blobs and brushed edges of older passages of paint (**Fig. 1E**). I used to think that the accrual of paint was merely the result of an inability to establish the motif quickly. Taken to an extreme, such an idea sees paint at the service of image, with the most successful image – in material terms – being the most parsimoniously painted. The alternative explanation seemed less desirable, namely: that I had become fond of a process that resulted in knobbly, pitted and uneven surfaces (an oily Artex).[61]
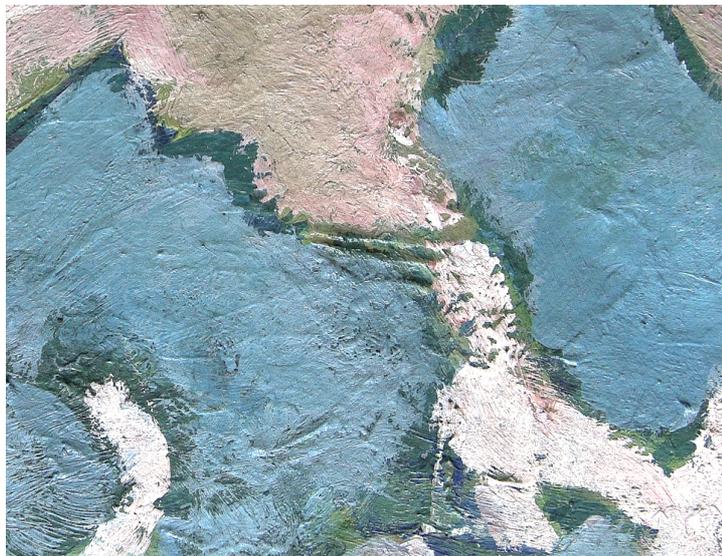
Fig. 1E

There is a third possibility, and it is the one I favour: that the weight of the painted surface is tied to the probability of bringing forth motifs from the substance itself—of sitting layers of material close to an indeterminate divide between the paint and its representation, where each might inform the other. As technique changes, so too does the balance of elements that are required to lock-in this interdependence, in order to resist either an emotive pull towards the image and *the there*, or else a bodily pull towards the paint and *the here*. A painting appears as a still object that time happens to. Its stillness punctures that time and permits another time – the time of its making

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[61] A surface coating, similar to plaster, often applied to ceilings to create textures.

(of all that has constituted its making) – to become visible and knowable. This time takes the form of surface amendments, visible as an array of gestures and marks.

2.9: Pictures and Paint

The idea of one thing standing in for or another – of resemblance and illusion – seems miraculous, and has intrigued me for a long time. From early on, to be affected by a painting was to be transported into the world of pictures. This world told wonderful stories, but it also looked a certain way. That this was, in fact, a constructed world (in that it arose from manual work, chemical processes and acquired techniques: and from intentions, limitations and chance occurrences) was something that came to me later, though as a young child I made a clear distinction between painting-pictures and photograph-pictures. The former could even be mine. I painted more than I drew.[62]

The seductiveness of picturing supplies me with something to work off. However, picturing became compromised as my awareness of painting's artifice increased. I acquired a sense of paint's material presence as something at odds with the pictures that paint fashioned. *Presence* became a barrier to the world of picturing, resulting in a loss of faith in the image. If the image became wholly that which it stood in place of, then the painting vanished. Moreover, an over-awareness of the properties of paint disavowed the possibility of picturing, allowing me to resist the associated meanings generated as shapes and patterns become pictures (**Table 1**). With time, this negation of the image (through an awareness of its constructedness in paint) was replaced by a delayed response to it. And now, I feel able – again – to let pictures seduce me.

Paint/Material—**HERE**	**PAINTING**	Picture/Image—**THERE**

Table 1: Paint and Picture: Here and There

My process is one of having paint acquire an image, and of having an image acquire a host of associations. I am convinced that modifications to form modify content too. The meanings of the constituent parts of a work are tied to relationships (Stetson to cowboy, bird to branch, cloud to sky) that are established outside of the painting,

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[62] Drawing was a big part of my childhood, and I believed painting to be an extension of drawing.

forming a closed loop and a point of reference.[63] To me, painting is an arrow that points not to *the world*, but to an imaginative world suspended between the painting and the world. This is a distancing device that protects me from the ebb and flow of a world outside, allowing me to function in a painterly place of paint's choosing.

I think of the place of painting as a medium-sized stage: a purpose-built theatre of operations, where what is seen is rehearsed. Not everything can be staged in this limited arena, but here I retain a director's privilege. This strategy circumvents the needs for a contextualised rationale (which acts to impose a reading in advance of the work, so as to determine *origins*) for which I have little time. Images simply turn up in costume and are lit variously; assume roles and adopt characters and accents. They can be hired and fired (and even re-hired) and the play is rewritten every night.[64]

2.10: Edges

The messiness of the painting process – the necessity of manhandling the support – results in an accumulation of oily fingerprints that eventually cover the sides of the work. I could apply a protective covering to edges of the support prior to painting, though this would require a gauging of the likely thickness of the final surface skin as it presses and bulges over the front edges, building with time. Sometimes paint thickens at the corners, and, with an uncertainty as to how long each painting might take to unfold to completion, such a decision becomes a matter of guesswork.

In unframed works, an exposed edge can be left to stand: or stained, varnished, painted to blend in or oppose the surface colour, or else hidden in close proximity to the edge of another work. I have also explored a method whereby I route the well-smeared edges back to the wood and behind and up to the lip, removing all traces of paint. This, too, comes with problems: most notably the likelihood of removing the edges of the wood itself, or of splintering the lip from the support. Too even a line could be

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[63] I occasionally return to the Western (in its filmic form, both classic and spaghetti), having borrowed motifs from films for a series of paintings earlier in my career – between 1996-2002 – and for a later series of monotypes, in 2011. Images include: hats, tumbleweed, cowboys, cigars, smoke signals, cacti, horses, saloon (batwing) doors, and Monument Valley (**Appendix 1**).
[64] The metaphor of the play is useful. A play is a singular unit comprised of acts; themselves comprised of characters, locations and exchanges. The play becomes operable only when performed (which includes reading).

interpreted as a forced containment, or as a concession to decoration. This method results in an illusionistic effect that exaggerates the surface's thickness (**Fig. 1F**).[65]

Fig. 1F

2.11: Hanging Methods

I have exhibited some of these works in the course of the continuing series: a series that from the beginning had no determined end.[66] Wanting to accentuate the material object of painting, I thought to sit the works on specially made shelves (**Fig. 1G**). I also tried placing them undercover – on plinths – so as to resemble the artefacts found in museum displays (**Fig. 1H**).[67] Sensing too deliberate a move towards the material (introduced to the paintings, not established by their surfaces), I have fallen back on two solutions. 1: unframed, with the means of attachment hidden. 2: black lacquered hardwood frames (**Fig. 1I**), with a darkened gap between the edge of the support and the inside of the frame. The former serves to expose the object, and the latter foregrounds the picture. I have yet to arrive at a solution that unites both concerns.

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[65] I've backed off from this somewhat, thinking it too artificial a method of pulling forth the material. It now seems additive.

[66] Shown within group exhibitions in Leeds, Liverpool, Salford and London, and in solo exhibitions in Halifax, Leeds and York.

[67] The cabinet of curiosities intrigues me. In offering the particular within the general, it serves to frame the general nature of the particular.

Fig. 1G

Fig. 1H

Fig. 1I

2.12: Place

I am interested in things in a setting, and in settings as things in themselves: as places where other things show up and proceed to interact with one another—as backdrops to events.[68] By this I mean that I define place as a location that I have a physical or emotional connection to. My entry into painting was, in large part, the result of early encounters with the landscape paintings of John Constable, initially through access to library books and to a print of *Flatford Mill* (**Fig. 1J**) that hung on the living room wall during much of my childhood.[69] Later, I saw several of his watercolours in local galleries, and, later still, the majority of the great six footers in public collections.[70]

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[68] Events require locations, and a sense of an openness…to be closed. I return to the unchanging changeability of Snowdonia, paying attention to indeterminacies and schisms between one vantage and another.

[69] Constable is, to me, the landscape painter par excellence—a fusion of Romanticism and Realism, conservatism and radicality: a highly inventive painterly maker of pictures, yet one nevertheless intent on preservation (on the maintenance of things past).

[70] For most of his life, Constable worked on a much smaller scale. However, from 1819-1831 he produced a series of six-foot paintings, each of which was accompanied by a six-foot oil sketch. Within the Western tradition, landscape painting acquired prominence in Northern Europe during the medieval period, and in the South of Europe during the Renaissance, in part through the works of Giotto, then later, Giorgione Barbarelli da Castelfranco (c. 1477/8 -1510) and Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516), who began to place greater emphasis on the natural world and to formulate conceptions of landscape in respect of idealised notions of the pastoral. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw a considerable growth of interest in landscape, especially in Dutch painting. In the Romantic period (in Britain, France and Germany) landscape painting became the vehicle through which notions of the sublime and the picturesque could become visible within plastic form. Within early modernism, the landscape painting remained prominent, especially in the works of the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists, before ceding ground to abstraction by the early-mid twentieth century.

Fig. 1J

2.13: Motifs

The imagery in my paintings is largely the result of a confluence of material and memory (recognised more than determined), yet it would be remiss of me not to accept that the paintings are populated by recurrent motifs – pictures of things in the world – drawn, for the most part, from a repository of objects, actions and locations. These are often rather simple, with distinct and recognisable internal shapes or outlines. While it would, under the circumstances of the processes of making, be misplaced to supply an account of this imagery – in terms of my reasons for using it – it does seem useful to relate the recurrent motifs that have inhabited the paintings during the processes of making, or else on their completion (**Appendix 1**).

In using these motifs, I am not interested in external origins, functions or purpose: at least not when painting (by which I mean the source of the images and their applications outside of the work). The motifs originate in, function through, and have a purpose as a result of the painting they appear in. A painted hat, bird or cloud takes the role of a hat, bird or cloud in the service of becoming a painting. This notion arose from a growing resistance to the more tyrannical tenets of observational drawing, which, taken to an extreme, carry the implication that the more an image can be *like* something, in shape and tone and hue, the more real it is—and in being real, is seen to

point elsewhere.[71] For me, a painting's being is determined by the extent to which it remains visible in and of itself whilst imparting some sense of that which it is not.

2.14: Memory and Seeing

To see is to have seen, and seeing is remembering.[72] I start from here. Memory filters, distorts and relays out of sequence. This generates present meaning in respect of what has been—meaning established outside of the moment, and freed from the oppressiveness of the now. I let paint remind me of, or permit me to recollect.[73] I employ processes and strategies that draw images from the paint—to generate involuntary memories, which become modified and amended once up and running.[74] I throw out an idea, only for it to become changed in the course of the painting. I establish line through overlap and masking, which relieves it of its role as determiner. I return to colours, shapes, marks and motifs. When painting, I allow myself to become preoccupied and to roam without censure—to attend to the painting's making. To move forward is to have other things enter the arena, and to let things leave too.

2.15: Titles

My method of titling is akin to my method of painting. A title is a name that designates a thing with properties. I sometimes let others title my work, or supply me

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[71] According to Pliny the Elder (AD 23-79), Zeuxis and Parrhasius, in the 5th century BC, competed in a contest to determine the greatest painter in Greece. Zeuxis' painting of grapes appeared so real that the birds flew down to peck at the fruit. Impressed, Parrhasius asked Zeuxis to pull back the curtain to reveal his own painting, yet in attempting to do so Zeuxis discovered the curtain itself to be a painted illusion. Zeuxis determined that, though he had managed to deceive the birds, Parrhasius was the greater painter on account of him having deceived Zeuxis.

[72] John Berger (1926-2017) begins *Ways of Seeing* with, "Seeing comes before words". However, there is a contradiction, for, in following a claim by Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), Berger presumes that knowledge (seeing) precedes language (reading). Postructuralism determines that knowledge is the result of language. Seeing, therefore, in this light (and along with reading), is a form of knowledge construction.

[73] In *The Optical Unconscious*, Rosalind Krauss (1941-) mocked the capacity of John Ruskin (1818-1900) to collect moments of seemingly disconnected experience from the visual world around him. The world of Ruskin clearly required a form of sensory engagement at odds with Krauss's rigid theoreticism.

[74] A term used by Marcel Proust (1871-1922) in *À la recherche du temps perdu (In Search of Lost Time*, previously, *Remembrance of Things Past*, 1909-1922. In the novel, an incident of eating madeleines soaked in tea transports Proust back to his childhood. Proust was familiar with the writings of Henri Bergson (1859-1941). In particular, he took note of his speculations as to the nature of the links between time and the body, and of the role of perception and modes of memory. Bergson's concept of *pure duration* – a succession of qualitative changes, melding into one another imprecisely – permitted a non-linear thinking of time (this parallels the space-time of Albert Einstein, 1879-1955). Thus, time is not a sequential line in space, but, instead, a form of overlapping, heterogeneous structuring of existence.

with possibilities drawn from an encounter with the work itself.[75] I change my mind, retitle, and bolt titles together. Untitled is never used, for it denotes nothing save an inability to decide, or else an ideological bent to which I remain indifferent. I favour the singular over the plural, and the moment over the duration.[76] I hope to designate an object as *present*. A title is a method of access, before word gives way to image and material, which, together, in turn, resituate the word. To me, titles do not infringe on the fundamental aspects of a painting's being.[77] However, they appear to be additive. Titles can be flowery or minimal, austere or romantic. More often than not, I fall back on objective titles involving a description of the painting's picture or place, or even its mood.[78] Rarely, I'll employ a more extended description freed of the definite article. More recently, I've appropriated the titles of films – as prompts – though I remain suspicious of such borrowing, and of the rules of appropriation more generally.[79] Titles are never the painting, but remain *of* the painting and *with* the painting.

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[75] This grounds the title in an experience of the object, and in the verifiable, even communal.

[76] In the sense, in the first instance, of the painting avoiding generalisations and/or claims to aspire to the condition of the subject depicted, and, in the second, of ensuring to remind that though painting remains in and of time, time nevertheless *happens to* it.

[77] By which I mean that the painting is something without it.

[78] Clement Greenberg suggested *Lavender Mist* as the title for Jackson Pollock's early drip painting *Number 1,* 1950. A perhaps surprising concession to the Romantic, the richness of evocation is reminiscent of *Dew-Drenched Furze*, c. 1890, a late work by John Everett Millais (1829-1886).

[79] In his earliest work, referred to by Martin Sorrell (birth date unknown), in *Federico García Lorca: Selected Poems*, as his *juvenilia*, Lorca (1898-1936) utilised the names of composers to indicate mood. Later, he rejected this form of shorthand as somewhat heavy-handed.

Chapter 2: The Medium within the Post-Medium Condition

Part 1: Introduction

By the mid-late 1960s, the notion of a medium had come to define that which was most insular and protectionist about painting, with the idea of medium specificity seemingly entirely synonymous with the formalist criticism of Clement Greenberg.[80] As such, the richness of the term, and its historical situatedness, was lost behind a particular defence of the virtues of modernist painting. This chapter sets out to address the legacy of formalism in respect of the fate of the notion of medium specificity within key writings that seek to shed light on the condition of the art object (and its material extensions) in the aftermath of the period of high modernism. I will chart the medium's various and complex entanglements within subsequent discourses.

Part 2: Revision, Reappraisal and Reapplication comes in two parts. Initially, I will examine four recent and related postgraduate papers, foregrounding the retention and currency of the medium (and the language of formalism) within contemporary debates. I will consider the uses of the terms interdisciplinary, purity, grid and surface: analysed in turn and drawn one from each thesis.[81] Of importance, here, is the extent to which challenges and modifications to Greenbergian formalism serve, in locating Greenberg as a source and not a result of thinking about form, to reify his framework, thus limiting a re-examination of the medium. *Part 2.2: Costello: Uncoupling Aesthetics and Medium Specificity* focuses on Greenberg's responsibility for, in Diarmuid Costello's account, a recent marginalisation of aesthetics within discourse.

Part 3: Formalism: Contestations and Withdrawals encounters formalism (and medium) under fire—confronted on several fronts by new and external (in the sense of having no formalist allegiance) lines of inquiry.[82] The focus, however, is not so much these challenges, but the responses to them by those with some sympathy for

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[80] Craig Staff, *After Modernist Painting*, 1.

[81] Interdisciplinarity is founded on an opposition to disciplinary and media distinctions, such as those that Greenberg supplied for painting. Interdisciplinary practices encourage the generation of concepts and material possibilities through an embrace of new media, or the reconsideration of old.

[82] Lucy Lippard's *Six Years: The Dematerialisation of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, 1997, extended her earlier piece (co-authored with John Chandler), "The Dematerialisation of the Art Object", 1968, and chronicled a network of recent conceptual practices whose tendency was to foreground *idea* or *action* ahead or in place of material preoccupations, such as surface, vehicle or medium. Among others, Lippard (Lucy, 1937-) addressed works by Sol LeWitt (1928-2007), Susan Hiller (1940-), Mary Kelly (1941-), and Barbara Kruger (1945-).

Greenberg's approach.[83] Rosalind Krauss's term *The Post-Medium Condition* is contextualised in respect of developments within the trajectory of her thinking, and in relation to her split from Greenberg. Michael Fried is considered in terms of his restatement of the usefulness of the dialectic as a tool to legitimise swings in painting between the optical and the material, for the significance he assigns to *shape* and *surface*, and for the emphasis he places on the conditions of engagement.[84] Fried's critique of Minimalism is recounted in some detail. Of particular importance is the distinction he makes between *presence* and *presentness*. Towards the end of *Part 3* I will return to Krauss to address her notion of *technical support*, and her attempt at rethinking the question of temporality in respect of Fried's position, which, together, form part of a much wider aim to resurrect, for visual practices, the idea of *content*.

In *Part 4*: *The Later Post-Medium Condition* I will explore Yve-Alain Bois's effort to liberate thinking about medium from questions of autonomy and purity (from its relationship to Greenberg), so as to rethink materiality anew, through locating the painted object as residing between, on the one hand, its material constituents, and, on the other, its type and locale. I will draw from Bois's influential essay "Painting: The Task of Mourning", to demarcate an art historical perspective on modernism's end as something written into its beginning.[85] In addition, I will address recent perspectives on time and the centrality of the maker, including David Joselit's conception of painting as *marked time*, Isabelle Graw's notion of *liveliness* – lived painting – and Matt Saunders's interesting distinction between the medium and material of painting.

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[83] Challenges originating outside of formalist discourse (from those with no investment in formalism's history).

[84] Peter Osborne, in *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art* (London & New York: Verso, 2013), has written of the revival of interest in Fried's opticalism (on the back of an interest in the gaze and a renewal of interest in Greenberg's ideas).

[85] And consequently, the medium's end.

Part 2: Clement Greenberg: Revision, Reappraisal and Reapplication[86]

2.1: Greenberg and Medium Specificity within Recent Postgraduate Theses

Within recent discourses, Greenberg is considered still.[87] There is a significant investment within MPhil and PhD theses, too, where, although Clem-bashing has not yet abated (though there is some mollification in its mode of expression), his ideas resonate; and where purity, autonomy and flatness serve as points of location for a renewal of thinking about modernism, medium and the senses.[88] The ubiquity of references would suggest that in order to position contemporary painting critically (and fairly), Greenberg's ideas are to be worked through rather than around.

2.1.1: Payne and Interdisciplinarity

Alistair J. Payne begins "Redefine and Reteritorialise: Painting as an Interdisciplinary Form" with the assertion that:

> Any examination of painting as a practice or discipline must necessarily analyse the philosophical underpinning of formalist modes of thinking. Although contemporary practices are not as driven by the inherent rules of the discipline, they are still dependent upon the theoretical foundations within which they work, and effectively this leads to a retention of medium and material specificity.[89]

Payne introduces Gilles Deleuze, as an antidote to the Hegelian thinking underpinning Greenbergian formalism, and develops an idea of: "the *virtual* rather than the boundaried, rule-based and medium specific limitations of previous formalism".[90] In so doing, he hopes to demonstrate the diversification of approaches to painting. This involves a detailed tracing of the development of thinking about medium, so as to expose painting's inherent interdisciplinarity and permit it a newfound freedom.

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[86] **Appendix 2** offers a glossary of Greenbergian terms and an account of medium specificity within formalist discourse.

[87] Notably: Caroline A. Jones's *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg's Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), where Greenberg's emphasis on sight is framed as an exemplar of a positivistic management of the senses in mid-twentieth century America.

[88] Clem-bashing is a term used to describe the landslide of abuse directed at Greenberg from the 1970s onwards.

[89] Alistair J. Payne, "Redefine and Reteritorialise: Painting as an Interdisciplinary Form" (PhD diss., University of the Arts, London, 2005), II.

[90] Ibid.

Payne argues that painting has become refracted, by which he means that the enmeshing of theoretical perspectives – in opposition to formalism – has provided painting with opportunities to redirect the search for meaning away from the internalised pursuit of an autonomous identity.[91] Deleuze's notion of the *fold* is employed in an attempt to dissolve the relationship between painting and architecture by re-examining the idea of parameters for surfaces.[92] Henri Bergson's concept of *becoming* is invoked, too, though in the service of demonstrating the inadequacy of a conception of painting that foregrounds its ontological status as a static object.[93]

The central point is that medium specificity has been replaced by interdisciplinarity—by an understanding of practice that takes as its starting point the notion that the refraction of critical theory serves to account for – and perhaps drive – a refraction of practice. The withdrawal from a formalist position that works back from the object of painting – towards theory – is an attempt to free *idea* from an alignment with material constraints.[94] To be interdisciplinary, to Payne, is to dissolve distinctions that serve to separate theory from practice (or from anything else) rather than to address what it is that might work to keep theory and practice apart, or else idea and form together.[95] Such an omission affords an opportunity for further consideration: for interdisciplinary approaches would appear, paradoxically, to erase material distinctions between object-based practices on theoretical grounds whilst establishing clear theoretical divides between formalist and non-formalist positions in respect of those very practices.

2.1.2: Stubbs and Purity

With criticism of medium-specificity necessarily comes criticism of the idea of purity: medium-specificity is, to Greenberg, a local manifestation of a universal truth.[96] Purity has a twofold application, supplying both clarity and foundation. In "Digital Embodiment in Contemporary Abstract Painting", Michael Stubbs ponders what he terms Greenberg's discredited claim: "that painting should seek its own purity through

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[91] Of which medium specificity is the chief support.
[92] In works on Gottfried Wilhelm (von) Leibniz (1646-1716) and Michel Foucault (1926-1984), Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) presents the *fold* as a doubling of one's thoughts onto the thoughts of another.
[93] Ibid., 276. To Bergson, *becoming* is the operation of self-differentiation: the identification and elaboration of a difference within a thing—a quality or a system that emerges *in duration*.
[94] A historical imposition, the result of formalist–orientated thinking.
[95] Ibid., 316-323.
[96] The truth of fundamental difference, as opposed to an ontological indistinction.

the acknowledgment of its material".[97] His central argument arises, however, from a sense of dissatisfaction with irony rather than from an aversion to purity.[98] To Stubbs, any visual practice that extends or refutes the modernist position – as outlined most forcibly in the work of Greenberg – becomes caught up in *dead-end experience*. The death of modernism, to Stubbs, is also the death of practices that take modernism's historical essentialism as a starting point.[99]

Stubbs endeavours to back painting out from this cul-de-sac through a re-employment of the ideas of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who claimed that: "the painter transforms the relationship between the body and a painting by *overlapping* the interior sense of self with the world of external objects as an imaginary texture of the real".[100] In refraining from a simplistic attack on purity, detachment and wholeness – and in resisting the all-too-knowing strategies of irony – which serve only to embed a dualistic interrelationship between postmodernist and modernist discourses, Stubbs presents painting as the body reformed—an equivalent of the impure, acting body, wherein a carnal equivalence can be found.[101] Meaning becomes grounded in a commonality between the body and painting, against the backdrop of an age wherein images are inescapably compromised by digital mediation and must adapt to suit a different role.

Stubbs redeploys Merleau-Ponty's comment, in which he claims that Cézanne's paintings: "suspend[…] the habits of thought and reveal[…] the base of inhuman nature upon which Man has installed himself".[102] Within the exposition, this becomes indicative of a desire to demarcate a shared temporal space between body and work. Moreover, the digital, to Stubbs, turns out to be embedded in the form and reception of painting, and painting emerges as an embodied simulacrum of that which it once

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[97] Michael Stubbs, "Digital Embodiment in Contemporary Abstract Painting" (PhD diss., University of the Arts, London, 2003), 2. The claim was discredited, initially, by Rosalind Krauss and her followers.
[98] Since the 1990s, there have been rumblings in cultural theory regarding the possibility of a post-postmodern. A tiredness with irony, and a return to faith of one kind or another appears to define it.
[99] Michael Stubbs, "Digital Embodiment in Contemporary Abstract Painting", 2.
[100] Maurice Merleau Ponty, in Michael Stubbs, "Digital Embodiment in Contemporary Abstract Painting", 46.
[101] Ibid.,166-169.
[102] Maurice Merleau Ponty, "Cézanne Doubt", 1945, *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*, ed. Galen A. Johnson, trans, Michael B. Smith (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1994), 241.

was.[103] Greenberg's conception of modernist painting as autonomous did not allow for the possibility of technology impacting upon painting's identity, and for a reason other than that he was writing some time in advance of the advent of the digital age. If technology were to become manifest *in* painting, it would – in accordance with Greenberg's analysis – become so as a result of (or *out of*, or *from*) painterly concerns. In other words, to consider the digital as able to infuse a painting with something particular to itself would be to put the cart before the horse. The digital arises dialectically – from painting – as an immaterial effect of a material cause.

2.1.3: Key and Grids

In the process of critically framing formalism's historicity, the idea of a post-formalist, interdisciplinary understanding of practice is itself historically positioned. This can be seen in Sarah Key's "Grids: Painting in a Dialogue with the Digital", where an embedding of the digital within contemporary painting is pursued in respect of an archetypal modernist device (the grid has underpinned design strategies, perspective drawing and modes of utopian abstraction), in order to extend modernist concerns rather than to refute them.[104] This amounts to claiming the grid for the digital age by grounding it within historical parameters, whilst nudging it away from transcendental claims that serve to valorise its form and workings, thus denying it currency.[105]

Key considers the extent to which practice and theory reposition the grid, absorbing visual languages and making them accessible to/through digital technologies. There is clearly an intention to take up where Krauss left off with "Grids", though it is worth noting that she does not revisit the central paradox of Krauss's essay, namely: that the modernist painter is compelled to find originality in – and claim inventiveness through – what amounts to a repetitious re-application of the grid: examples of which can be seen in Cézanne's *Rideau, Cruchon et Compotier*, Pablo Picasso's *The Guitar Player*,

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[103] Michael Stubbs, 203-207. *Simulacrum* is Latin for *likeness*. To Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007), the simulacrum is not a copy, but becomes real as it enters the hyperreal (*Simulations*, 1983). To Deleuze, however, the simulacrum precedes the original (*The Logic of Sense*, 1969). Incidentally, Krauss later translated Deleuze's essay "Plato and the Simulacrum", for publication in *October*, 1983.

[104] Sarah Key, "Grids: Painting in a Dialogue with the Digital" (PhD diss., Loughborough University, 2008). In particular, first generation European abstract painting, including: František Kupka (1871-1957), Kazimir Malevich (1878-1935), Piet Mondrian (1872-1944), Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), Paul Klee (1879-1940), Sonia Delaunay (1885-1979), and Robert Delaunay (1885-1941).

[105] In line with poststructuralist discourses with roots in Heideggerian thought.

and Ad Reinhardt's *Abstract Painting* (**Figs. 2A, 2B, 2C**).[106] To Key, the grid becomes a universally applicable matrix to be reclaimed for, and extended by, contemporary painting. In permitting deep illusion and flattened rectilinear surfaces, the grid is seen to underpin both representational and abstract modes of production.[107]

Fig. 2A

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[106] With "Grids", 1979, Krauss asserts that the grid became emblematic of modernist art – in particular, with the Cubists and with the pioneers of Western abstract painting and sculpture – in that it acted as a tool to assert the present, which, until that moment, painting and sculpture either did not possess, or else had not employed with such assertiveness.

[107] Sarah Key, "Grids: Painting in a Dialogue with the Digital" (PhD diss., Loughborough University, 2008), 4. Krauss had alluded to this position also, but did not expand on it.

Fig. 2B

Fig. 2C

The possibility of considering the grid outside of its modernist application offers Key an opportunity to see in painting the prospect of a resistance to: "the homogenising aesthetic conditions of the digital".[108] This, then, serves to supply painting with a tool to circumvent its own end through re-navigating its beginning. Key places Greenberg's emphasis on the self-referentiality of painting against the backdrop of debates around the end of art. Medium specificity, flatness and opticality thus acted, for Greenberg, as bulwarks against the dissolution of distinctions made possible by unchecked subjectivity—by what Roger Fry had termed wish-fulfilment.[109]

The advent of digital technologies operates, in Key's analysis, to extend painting through the development of image tools that generate digital equivalents of painterly effects.[110] However, processes of replication, to Key, serve only to foreground the absence of the material conditions of painting in reproduced form. Presumably, the notion that medium has become obsolete through the homogenising of the aesthetic conditions of digital generation (reproduction) is questionable on the grounds that digital imagery that references painting references only its image, preventing an embodied understanding of the object whose visual effects it reproduces.[111]

2.1.4: Mathus and Surface

The question of the visual, and of the surface of paintings, is explored in more detail by Miguel Ruiz Mathus, in "Tactility and Optimality in Contemporary Abstract Painting". Mathus examines the construction of surfaces in more recent abstract paintings, considering Greenberg's rejection of tactility in favour of opticality (retinal sensation), with recourse to three analyses of the work of Robert Ryman: "Irreducible Ryman", by Thierry de Duve, and Yve-Alain Bois's "Ryman's Tact" and "Painting:

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[108] Ibid., II.

[109] In 1924, in a lecture to the British Psychological Society titled *Artist & Psycho-analysis*, Roger Fry identified two types of artist, leaving no doubt as to whose endeavours he ascribed value. First, there are artists who are intent on constructing a fantasy-world in which wishes are fulfilled. Secondly, there are artists who concern themselves with the contemplation of formal relations. Wish fulfillment thus became an important barrier to truth. Fry's acknowledgment of content, though an aversion to its import warrants comparison with the notion of defamiliarisation, developed by Viktor Shklovsky's (1893-1984), in "Art as Device", 1917, where he claims that the role of art is to find methods of accessing that which is unfamiliar. In this view, art is thus a calling attention to itself—avoiding submersion into the ebb and flow of events through strategies that make the familiar seem strange. In Fry's case, he seeks to make the familiar unfamiliar – retaining recognition of an object's shape – by hiding worldly associations behind aesthetic disinterest.

[110] Sarah Key, "Grids: Painting in a Dialogue with the Digital", 34. In particular, of applications such as Photoshop, which appeared in 1988.

[111] Ibid., 4.

The Task of Mourning", the latter of which I will consider in *Part 4*.

Though the inquiry is situated within a broad analysis of the relationship between photography and painting, Mathus takes as his starting point Greenberg's resistance to both literalism and tactility – in spite of his promotion of discrete medias and his resistance to interdisciplinarity – and the repeated emphasis on flatness, which he explores through de Duve's essay. Greenberg's keenness to exclude the literal and the tactile (opposing them with the pictorial and the optical) is seen to be indicative of his desire to establish objective parameters to underpin value judgments.[112] It is the notion of a pictorial space that separates the space of painting from the space of the literal world. Such a space is dependent on the optical: for it is in its relationship to, and contrast with, the literal space of the world and that pictorial space becomes operable.

This notion is especially problematic in respect of a work such as Ryman's *Untitled* (**Fig. 2D**), from 1962, where such a distinction appears to dissolve – and where the pictorial is less easy to maintain – as a result of the intrusion of the tactile, and a foregrounding of the situatedness of the object of painting. Mathus turns to Fried, whose rejection of literalism, he argues, extends Greenberg's reliance on the optical by presenting the work as static in respect of the moment of the viewer's comprehension of it. For both Fried and Greenberg, the modernist work exists as a *form* of painting: one that avoids running in step with the viewer through its declaration of a pictorial, optical space and a steadfast resistance to the worldly seductiveness of the tactile.[113] The battleground becomes the skin of the painting, and the restrictions imposed on it attest to a desire to circumscribe its mode of reception in order to maintain the integrity of the aesthetic.

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[112] Miguel Ruiz Mathus, "Tactility and Opticality in Contemporary Abstract Painting" (MPhil diss., University of London, 2011), 5-6.
[113] Ibid., 26-57.

Fig. 2D

2.2: Costello: Uncoupling Aesthetics and Medium Specificity

> In the predominantly anti-aesthetic climate of Anglophone art theory since the early 1980s, the discourse of aesthetics has been notable only for its absence—in contrast to postmodern art theory's willingness to draw on a variety of other theoretical discourses of varying degrees of externality to art.[114]

British philosopher Diarmuid Costello, in his essay, "Greenberg's Kant and the Fate of Aesthetics in Contemporary Art Theory" considers the extent to which Greenberg's conflation of medium specificity and aesthetics has overdetermined artworld conceptions of the aesthetic, resulting in its demise. However, the absence of aesthetics from Anglophone art theory is secondary, here, to that which Costello deems responsible for its discrediting, namely: medium specificity. What follows serves as a summary of Costello's key ideas, and points to a possible route to a more foundational understanding of the identity of painting's medium. To Costello, Greenberg's conception of modernist painting as an investigation into the constraints of the medium – and his establishment of flatness as that which grounded painting –

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[114] Diarmuid Costello, "Greenberg's Kant and the Fate of Aesthetics in Contemporary Art Theory", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, no. 2 (2007): 1.

became entwined with an understanding of judgement and taste.[115] Costello argues that:

> When Greenberg identified modernism with the pursuit of aesthetic value in art, he was thereby identifying medium-specificity with the pursuit of such value, for the simple reason that cleaving to the specificity of their respective media is what made the modernist arts modernist.[116]

Costello's intention in freeing aesthetics from its misapplication by Greenberg and his followers is to resurrect it within critical theory, to be re-applied elsewhere. He asks: is there the possibility of a postmodern aesthetic, or of an anti-aesthetic modernism?[117] These avenues appear cut off, which he considers in respect of Greenberg's influential heirs, Fried and Krauss.

> While Fried's criticism came to be regarded as emblematic of everything that later generations of theorists found restrictive about modernism (the stress on artistic autonomy, evaluative judgement, medium-specificity, and the like), Krauss's star rose in inverse proportion, and largely as a consequence of the extent to which she went on to take issue with the fundamental commitments of Greenbergian modernism.[118]

In an argument reminiscent of that made more broadly by Stubbs, Costello claims that, in seeking to occupy the ground on which Greenberg's view of modernism was formed, both Fried and Krauss fail to escape his system, and end up embedding his terms of reference. The result: neither can navigate Greenberg's conflation of aesthetics and medium specificity so as to redefine a more rounded, non-formalist conception of both terms for the contemporary practitioner.[119]

To Costello, Greenberg's empiricism and rigid alignment of the arts with the optical overlooks the mind's propensity to imagine or extend beyond the material data compiled by the senses.[120] Conceptual artworks thus appear, in this analysis, as able to

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[115] Ibid., 2. Through his foregrounding of what was unique and irreducible.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid., 3.
[118] Ibid.
[119] And theorist alike.
[120] To access stored sense data/knowledge.

reside within a category of that which can be considered aesthetically—one consistent with, and underpinned by, Kant's aesthetic formulation.[121] Costello expands the notion of an aesthetics unburdened by medium specificity, yet deals only implicitly with a medium specificity freed of the baggage of aesthetics. To do so explicitly would run counter to the broader thrust of his hypothesis, which is to provide an aesthetic basis for conceptual and neo-conceptual practices. Hence, Costello is now comfortably able to think of an aesthetic postmodernism, and perhaps even a non-aesthetic modernism. The uncoupling of aesthetics from medium specificity, however, affords a fortuitous opportunity to consider the possible (in)dispensability of the latter term too.

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[121] *Part 1* of the *Critique of Judgment*, 1790, outlines the four reflexive judgments. Reflexive judgments differ from determinative judgments in that they seek to discover unknown universals from determined particulars, rather than subsuming assumed particulars under known universals. Intuition, to Kant, amounts to sensations formed according to the conditions of space and time.

Part 3: Formalism: Contestations and Withdrawals

3.1: Context

In "The American Action Painters" – against the existentialist backdrop of post-war America – Harold Rosenberg advanced a novel and poetic conception of the practice of painting. To him, the meaning of a painting's object draws, at least in part, from the actions that served to determine the painting's form (irrespective of medium considerations), taking place in, "an arena in which to act".[122] This shift in location – from Greenberg's picture plane to a place of external origin – positions the painting as an index or document of the actions of a performing subject. In opening the work's meaning to the body of the artist, Rosenberg provided greater legitimacy for the sublimation of psychoanalytical material too.[123] According to Amelia Jones:

> While modernists such as Clement Greenberg veil Pollock's narcissism (and their own) to confirm him as a unified source of divinely inspired intentionality, incipient postmodernists such as Happenings performer and theorist Allan Kaprow claim Pollock's performativity openly, emphasizing his *body* in its public display as central to the transformation of the art project into an open-ended process rather than a set of *mute* products that can be made to speak their true meanings only by privileged specialists.[124]

As the decade advanced, opposition to medium specificity grew, supported by works that seemed to dispense with specific boundaries, such as *Flag*, by Jasper Johns (**Fig.**

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[122] Harold Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters", 1952, in *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 589. Rosenberg's was a distinctly social (and existentialist) approach to painting, in its evocation of the artist's act. Greenberg countered this by denying the action legitimacy, in part the result of its incomprehensibility to artists of earlier times. Parallel to this, in 1954, a group of young Japanese artists founded the Gutai Movement of Concrete Art. Jiro Yoshihara (1905-1972), Shozo Shimamoto (1928-2013), and others, set out to emphasise the notions of holistic creation, pure materiality, freedom and the beauty of decay. Aware of the processes of recent American Action Painting, the Gutai group combined materials together in diverse fashion, presenting works as theatrical events. This activity pre-dated the emergence of Happenings, in the latter part of the same decade.

[123] As object: the result of process and inclination. The advent of modernism – in particular, of formalism's readings of modernism – foreclosed the body as site of meaning in favour of the object, and in opposition to Romanticism's heightening of subjectivity.

[124] Amelia Jones, *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 52.

2E), or Robert Rauschenberg's *Bed* (**Fig. 2F**), as well as a host of performative interventions.[125]

Fig. 2E

Fig. 2F

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[125] Most notably, Fluxus Happenings. A perhaps greater threat – from outside – took the form of theoretical models keen to root meaning in the personal, the social and the linguistic. These developments had a profound effect on attitudes to form and, by extension, on attitudes to medium, supported as they were by ideas of purity and autonomy. Johns's *Flag*, 1954-55, combined oil paint, newsprint collage and wax, on three canvases mounted on a plywood base. *Bed*, 1955, was the first combine by Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008). He intended it as a material hybrid between painting and sculpture.

3.2: The Post-Medium Condition

The tenor of the discussion as to the significance of the medium in the aftermath of the period of high modernism was highly combative. Those hostile to Greenberg took comfort from the proliferation of practices intent on foregrounding plurality, interdisciplinarity and inclusivity—what Payne refers to as *refraction*.[126] If Greenberg was discriminatory, then the form of painting he espoused – post-painterly abstraction – must be equally suspect? The retreat from formalism to *the text* dislocated image from material.[127] Counterformalist narratives of painting – dealing with referent, context (with *relationships to*) – were foregrounded at the expense of the optical constituents of painted objects.[128] In time, Greenberg's picture plane was disbanded.

The irony with which Rosalind Krauss later declared the post-medium condition betrayed not only her distaste for those practices that rejected a medium, but also served as a restatement of her debt to Greenberg's form of address.[129] For Krauss, the, "monstrous myth" of the post–medium condition signalled the death knell of serious visual practice through the proliferation of bottomed out information.[130] Critics could either take issue with the commitments of Greenbergian modernism – in favour of a Rosenbergian Romantic model – or else, whilst questioning its teleological imperative and emphasis on purity, nevertheless seek to maintain its fundamental approach.[131]

3.3: Fried: Resistance and Extension

In "Three American Painters", Michael Fried presents a critique of the works of Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski and Frank Stella. In his attempt to establish a critical

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[126] Notable examples include: Lucy Lippard's "Eccentric Abstraction", 1966, Lawrence Alloway's "Systemic Painting" 1966, and Leo Steinberg's "Other Criteria", 1972. The medium of paint, loaded as it is with historical and ideological baggage, became the primary target.

[127] From the late-1960s, though there were notable alternatives to formalist thinking from at least as early as the 1940s, including the frameworks of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and Meyer Schapiro (1904-1996).

[128] Caroline Jones, *Eyesight Alone*, 257-258. Jones relates how Greenberg contemptuously referred to Rosenberg as a literary critic, keen to listen to artists talk rather than to spend time looking closely at their pictures.

[129] Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000), 10.

[130] Rosalind Krauss, *Perpetual Inventory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2013), xvi.

[131] Both Krauss and Michael Fried took the latter route. Differences in outlook tended to take the form of considerations as to what extent the world external to the work could be kept out, and if let in, how so and at what cost? Costello, in "Greenberg's Kant and the Fate of Aesthetics in Contemporary Art Theory", 4, recounts how Krauss inverted many of Greenberg's terms…and so we have: the tactile for the optical, the material for the virtual, the horizontal for the vertical, production for reception, and low (*bassesse*) for pure.

space for these painters, he addresses criticism of modernism's reliance on the Hegelian dialectic.[132] Fried acknowledges problems in applying the dialectic to earlier periods: the result of a conflation of the mechanisms of Church and state.[133] When applied, however, to recent history – a radical period notable for a loosening of this relationship – the dialectic becomes a legitimate tool by which to gauge progress (and justify change), amounting to: "an ideal of action as radical criticism of itself founded upon as objective an understanding of one's present situation as one is able to achieve".[134] Fried, wary of the teleological, couches it in terms of a state of perpetual revolution: and it is no surprise, then, to discover that the painters he esteems are those attuned to the Greenbergian notion of art as, "unceasing radical criticism of itself".[135]

For Fried, the dialectic permits painting to renew itself as it oscillates between an optical and material primacy.[136] Fried's affirmation of dialecticism is more radical than Alois Riegl's, who expressed some concern as to the propensity to over-prescribe cause and predict change (style); favouring instead, an openness to the unexpected.[137] The dialectic provides both a method and means of location. Fried acknowledges his debt to Greenberg's notion of an avant-garde (and to Riegl), yet parts company with his mentor over a stressing of the teleological, whilst accepting his attempts to:

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[132] The dialectic proved problematic to critics of formalism in so far as, in the first instance, it provided too neat a solution to problems of difference, and, in the second, it tied all manifestations of practice to what appeared to be strict formal antecedents, irrespective of intention.

[133] Notably, the Renaissance, though the implication is of dominant Christian cultures prior to the modern period. In particular, a system of patronage and common iconography.

[134] Michael Fried, "Three American Painters: Noland, Olitski, Stella", 1965, in *Art & Objecthood: Essays & Reviews,* ed. Michael Fried (Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 218. The recent period evidenced a marked social alienation and philosophical and religious skepticism. To establish separation is, to Fried, to seek to establish an account of the means of separation.

[135] Ibid. Fried objected to the implication of a purpose that appeared to precede the works themselves, and thus a constituted end. Perpetual revolution is similar, in some respects, to the notion of *permanent revolution*, devised in 1904 by Leon Trotsky (1879-1940), and developed in response to the work of Marx and Engels, yet in opposition to the more orthodox notion of socialism in one country. Trotsky's conception of revolution was one that would allow for a disbursement of the mechanism that permitted capitalism to give way first to socialism, then to communism, and was not, therefore, a call for revolution in and of itself. To Fried, however, perpetual revolution in practice denoted both a method of advance and a method of securing a method of advance.

[136] In deeming the painting a necessary utterance in respect of future painting, the painter is pincered between and evolved past and a to-be-evolving future, with responsibilities to both (consider in relation to Stubbs's rumination on purity, *2.1.2*, and Mathus's consideration of surface, *2.1.4.*

[137] Since the 1990s, there has been a renewal of interest in Riegl's methods, most notably by Margaret Olin (birth date unknown), in her study of Riegl and representation, 1992. Olin detects a representational agenda, and one of particular interest within the post-formalist period. Alois Riegl in Diana Reynolds Cordileone, *Alois Riegl in Vienna 1875-1905: An Institutional Biography* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014), 170.

"objectify [the] experience of painting and sculpture in terms that derive from those media alone".[138] *Alone*, then, was not the problem, but rather an overly material sense of the medium. As painting became flatter, flatness – as its defining condition – became progressively problematic. Fried set out to clarify what else need be taken into account if one were to maintain distinctions between the work and that which was not the work. In so doing, he draws attention to some necessary conditions of encounter.

3.3.1: Art and Objecthood: Conditions of Encounter

> Flatness and the delimitation of flatness ought not to be thought of as the *irreducible essence of pictorial art*, but rather like the *minimal conditions for something being seen as a painting*, and the crucial question is not what those minimal and, so to speak, time and conditions are, but rather what, at a given moment, is capable of compelling conviction, or succeeding as painting.[139]

"Art and Objecthood" established Fried's reputation.[140] In it, he demarcates the ground for an opposition to Minimalism, which, in spite of its emphasis on the limits of material, proves to be largely ideological.[141] To Fried, literalist art, in spite of this, is nevertheless a serious attempt to establish a position between modernist painting and sculpture that, subsequently, it, "aspires to occupy".[142] Donald Judd's opposition to painting's relational character, and to its privileging of medium considerations – as well as its inability to escape pictorial illusion (however downplayed) – points to the exhaustion of painting. To Fried: "the success or failure of a […] painting has come to depend on its ability to hold or stamp itself out or compel conviction as shape—that, or somehow to stave off or elude the question of whether or not it does so".[143]

What matters, then, to Fried is not that a painting contains this or that form, or that it evidences properties as such, but, rather, that that which a painting contains (what it is)

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138 Ibid., 216.
139 Michael Fried, *Art & Objecthood*, 169.
140 Rather peculiarly, the work attests to both a re-affirmation of medium distinctions (through an emphasis on containment) and a compromising of them (through the direct invocation of spectatorship). Fried saw this work as an attempt to move beyond formalism, as it was understood up until the mid-1960s.
141 In so far as its meaning can be translated into words, and exists in advance of its realisation in works. Fried preferred the term literalism, or literalist art…a *what you see is what you get* encounter.
142 Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood*, 149.
143 Ibid., 151.

is able to be *experienced as a painting*. The legitimacy of painterly objects, Fried goes on to argue, is dependent on them holding up as shapes, and shapes that belong pictorially *to the painting*, as opposed to shapes that present themselves literally, as a form of physical attachment.[144] An example of what Fried means by contained can be seen in Frank Stella's *The Marriage of Reason and Squalor II* (**Fig. 2G**).
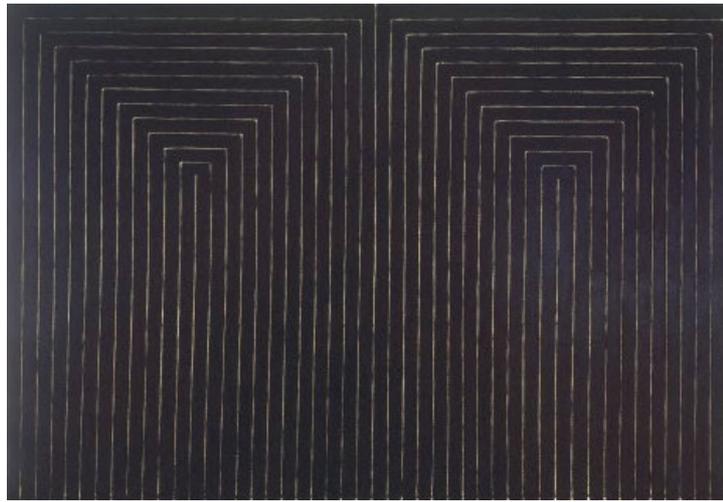
Fig. 2G

Fried contends that modernist paintings suspend their objecthood. In performing its objecthood, the literalist object, on the other hand, negates the pictorial and, in so doing, becomes illegitimate.[145] This property of objecthood is an unusual one, and warrants definition. Fried turns to Greenberg, and to his discussion of *presence* in reference to the work of Anne Truitt. Greenberg admired Truitt, yet, as a proto-minimalist, he believed her, in a work like *Valley Forge* (**Fig. 2H**), to have, "flirt[ed] with the look of non-art [in order to] confer an effect of presence".[146] As even the meagre, tacked-up, unpainted canvas could lay claim to being a picture – though not necessarily a successful one – the look of non-art was denied to painting from the start.[147] Those in search of it had to look elsewhere, towards the three-dimensional

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[144] A Rauschenberg *Combine* would serve as an example of the latter.
[145] Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood*, 151. That which is separates it from the material world of things, yet which positions it in relation to those things, and permits it to *comment on*.
[146] Ibid., 152. Caroline Jones, in *Eyesight Alone*, has described *presence* as the metaphysical (not political) twin of Walter Benjamin's *aura*…the work's temporal and spatial uniqueness—*where it happens to be*.
[147] Clement Greenberg, "Recentness of Sculpture", in *Art & Objecthood: Essays & Reviews*, ed. Michael Fried (Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 152.

realm of sculpture: "where everything material that was not art also was".[148] Thus, objecthood, to Fried, amounts to nothing less than the condition of non-art.[149]
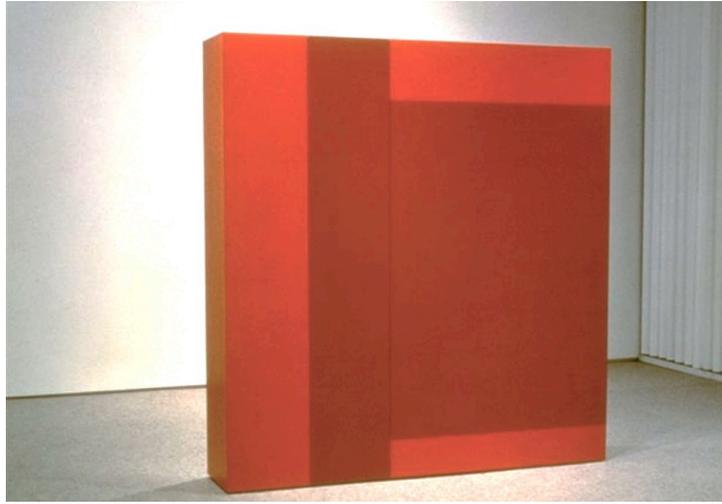
Fig. 2H

3.3.1.1: Theatre and Non-Theatre

Literalist art's promotion of objecthood – its concern with the actual circumstances in which the beholder encounters – at the expense of an engagement with what it is that the work bears witness to, is reasoned, by Fried, to be synonymous with the experience of theatre.[150] Robert Morris, in a work like *Untitled* (**Fig. 2I**), is seen to be concerned with *presence,* in part through his employment of a larger scale (to be distinguished from size in so far as presence is the result of *a response to* and not *a*

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[148] Michael Fried, *Art & Objecthood*, 152.

[149] Ibid. Hal Foster, in *The Return of the Real* (1996), argues that Fried's move positions the literalist object as personage in disguise, which brings with it a situation to be contended with, which thus separates it from art. It is interesting to note that painting was deemed ineffective, by Donald Judd (1928-1994), and others – as minimal object – on the grounds that it brought with it illusionistic conventions—pictures. Therefore, language forever compromises painting's claim to material purity (the relationship between language and material will be considered in detail in *Chapter 4*).

[150] Ibid., 153. Conventionally, theatre immerses its audience in its situations. Fried's presentness is more akin to the distanciation of Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), first outlined in "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting", 1936. Brecht meant to signify a form of awareness. Here, the artifice of theatre becomes foregrounded through processes whereby the audience is prevented from having a full engagement in the narrative, so as to bring about a heightened sense of awareness and a critical distance from which a deeper intellectual engagement might be arrived at. Later, cinema mimicked such effects, in large part through processes of lighting, editing and cropping. Also of importance is the fact that Stanley Cavell (1926-) was Fried's friend and mentor at this time. In "Music Discomposed", 1964-65, and "A Matter of Meaning", 1967, Cavell considers the possible dissolution of the notion of a medium in music, which he saw challenged by the incorporation of real time interludes into musical compositions to disrupt their structures, particularly by John Cage (1912-1992). Cavell also provided Fried with an understanding of the necessity of considering tradition. To what did painting have to remain faithful in order for it to remain painting? Additionally, how are new instances of what painting can be incorporated into what painting is? See: Stephen Melville, *Becoming Medium*, 2013.

recognition of something that the work contains).[151] To Staff, it was the enveloping of the embodied spectator's presence by the minimalist object that contributed, at least in part, to Fried's particular stance on presence.[152] Objecthood, then, is *the result of* (and not that which is *established by*), and resides within the viewer's compass. For: "the presence of literalist art, which Greenberg was the first to analyse, is […] a theatrical effect or quality—a kind of stage presence".[153] This demands awareness, and so awareness is therefore temporal. Moreover, it is temporal as we know it.

Fig. 2I

To Fried, the requirement of indefinite duration in the experience of objecthood supported the theatre hypothesis in that theatre, too, demands to be taken into account temporally.[154] By contrast, modernist art: "has no duration—not because one in fact experiences a picture by Noland or Olitski or a sculpture by David Smith or Anthony Caro in no time at all, but because at every moment the work itself is wholly manifest".[155] Fried terms this *presentness*, and contrasts it with the *presence* of literalist art and theatre (**Table 2**). To Fried, a modernist work is experienced as a, "kind of instantaneousness".[156] It is, therefore, in their presentness that modernist works defeat theatre. Theatre is the condition of common relations, which is cause

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[151] Ibid., 154.
[152] Craig Staff, *After Modernist Painting*, 51.
[153] Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood", 155.
[154] Ibid., 166.
[155] Ibid., 167.
[156] Ibid.

enough to seek out what modernist art offers, and to allow oneself to be moved by it. To Fried, "[p]resentness is grace".[157] However, in spite of Fried's protestations, theatricality and objecthood won the day.[158] In 1979, Douglas Crimp commented:

> Over the past decade we have witnessed a radical break with [the] modernist tradition, effected precisely by a preoccupation with the *theatrical*. The work that has laid most serious claim to our attention throughout the seventies *has* been situated between, or outside the individual arts, with the result that the integrity of the various mediums – those categories the exploration of whose essences and limits constituted the very project of modernism – has disappeared into meaninglessness.[159]

Art (Modernist)	Objecthood (Literalist/Minimalist)
Presentness	Presence
(No Duration)	(Endless Duration)

Table 2: Fried's Conditions of Encounter

There is a comparison between Fried's theatricality and Riegl's *beholder*, as Margaret Olin has pointed out.[160] Riegl's conception amounted to a binding of the observer to the observed through the internal structures of the work. Whereas, for Fried, the work presents itself to the observer as an *a priori*: the potential meaning of which precedes the encounter to which the viewer subsequently attests. This has proven of interest to those seeking to reconstitute theatricality as a form of intersubjectivity in support of post-minimalist, performative and participatory practices. Attentiveness, to Riegl, amounts to a form of exchange—the beholder comes across a work's structure in light

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[157] Ibid., 168. Peter Osborne (*Anywhere or Not at All*, 24) characterises Fried's invocation of grace as that which establishes as absent all sense of the imaginary or the fictitious.

[158] Fried maintained his trajectory well into the 1970s, before he abandoned criticism for history, writing a trilogy of works: *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Didero*, 1980; *Courbet's Realism*, 1990, and *Manet's Modernism*, 1996. Into the new millennium, Fried redirected his concerns towards photography, with *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before,* 2008, reinforcing his position in respect of painting and sculpture through an extension and reapplication of his themes. Douglas Crimp, however, sees, in the video and performance pieces of the 1970s, the victory of theatricality, which is re-contained within/as surface in the photographs of Cindy Sherman (1954-).

[159] Douglas Crimp, "Pictures", *October* 8 (Spring 1979), 76.

[160] Margaret Olin, "Forms of Respect: Alois Riegl's Concept of Attentiveness", *The Art Bulletin* 71, no. 2 (1989): 285-299.

of what he might already have encountered. Thus, there is a temporal prerequisite to Riegl's position, and so attentiveness thus amounts to one's attentiveness in time.

3.3.2: Shape: The Interplay of Opticality and Materiality

In "Larry Poons's New Paintings", Fried sought to protect against objecthood. Resistance to the everyday is to be: "fought out through the medium of shape".[161] To Fried, this is achieved only by accepting shape as residing *within surface* and not *upon surface*. Fried does admit to the historical precedent of an all-surface painting, whose surface, "competes for presentness": for this, he contends, is the key to understanding the shift from Abstract Expressionism to Colour Field Painting, then to a new involvement with tactility, as evidenced by Poons's paintings circa 1970, such as *Donen* (**Fig. 2J**)—each move can be seen to begin and end with the painting, which presents itself as, in effect, a static moment of internalised affirmation.[162]

Fig. 2J

Put another way, the assertion of painting's materiality that began with the drips and spatters of Jackson Pollock gave way to a concern for opticality – in the form of the colour fields of Morris Louis – before swinging back to the tactile properties of paint,

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[161] Michael Fried, "Larry Poons's New Paintings", 1972, in *Art & Objecthood: Essays & Reviews*, ed. Michael Fried (Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 197.
[162] Ibid., 197-201.

with the elephant skin paintings of Larry Poons. Presentness, to Fried (and counter to Riegl), results from a periodic interplay between the optical and the material, which shape each other in a common dialectical practice.[163] Fried's use of the term *surface* avoids the awkwardness of Greenberg's preferred term *flatness*, and denotes a lack of spatial circumscription. Surface, here, is material and optical: design is medium and location. Surface extends infinitely, yet remains self-contained and near. Nearness, to Fried, is an important concept when considering works, and determines the legitimacy of shapes. Outside of modernist practices, nearness meant only *one's nearness to*.

Mick Finch has explored these issues in respect of the Supports/Surfaces group.[164] In particular, the notion of thickness in relation to surface, which he considers in terms of its potential to open up the possibilities of painting. In reflecting on Hubert Damisch's work on Jean Dubuffet – in which Damisch described the vigorous scarification of surfaces – Finch questions the Greenbergian notion of an *a priori* condition of flatness. In shutting down talk of thickness – through the promotion of opticality – Greenberg, in effect, denied American painters the possibility of exploring the potential of surface (as materially present), and thus undermining the modernist rhetoric of *ground and field*.[165] To Finch, Supports/Surfaces operated in the space between the prescriptions of Greenberg and the dissolutions of Minimalism: unable to sanction either the specificity of optical painting or the absolute disbanding of a notion of a medium.[166]

3.4: Krauss: Redefinition and Redirection

In her third collection of essays, Krauss provides an overview of her thinking: from her years as a critic for *Art Forum* to the founding of *October*, and on into the 1980s when: "[t]he onset of postmodern practices […] saw the collapse of traditional mediums such as painting or sculpture".[167] Krauss saw this as a challenge for both

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[163] *Presentness* was a term invented – or at least used – by Fried to account for the material properties of the surface. In Fried's analysis, presentness is the result of competition between the material surface of the painting and what sits beneath it, orienting its position.
[164] A loose grouping of approximately fifteen artists, mostly from the south of France, who, from the late 1960s, explored materiality, colour and abstract modes of making, in close affinity to their American contemporaries.
[165] Mick Finch, "Supports/Surfaces: Contexts and Issues", 1999, accessed June 12, 2017, http://mickfinch.com/texts/ss.html.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Rosalind Krauss, *Perpetual Inventory*, viii. Founded with Annette Michelson (1922-) and Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe (1945-), in 1976. *October*, named after the Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948) film of 1928, took issue with what it perceived to be the loose social tone of much of the criticism of the time. Krauss

critic and maker, and: "welcomed the perseverance of new artists in leveraging the meaning of their work in relation to what [she] came to call *technical support*".[168] In her attempts to: "wrestle new mediums to the mat of specificity", whilst freeing practice from its Greenbergian hold, Krauss conjures a series of ingenious conceptions of structure.[169] Importantly, she regarded Fried's: "[making] shape into the medium of abstract painting", in opposition to an obdurate reductionism, as a critical moment in the medium's liberation.[170]

Krauss invokes an expanded notion of medium. Mirrors (the specular) act to supply video with its specificity, and the index becomes the bedrock of photography. Krauss finds, in all she examines, a discrete condition – referred to as *apparatus* – by which practices become operable.[171] The stop-frame of animation, in respect of William Kentridge's *Sobriety, Obesity and Growing Old* (**Fig. 2K**), or a slide tape installation by James Coleman, such as *INITIALS*, (**Fig. 2L**), or Christian Marclay's employment of a synchronous soundtrack in *Video Quartet* (**Fig. 2M**), or the automobile to explain Ed Ruscha's fascination with gas stations and parking lots, in a work such as *Standard Station* (**Fig. 2N**), all serve to: "allay the confusion of the use of *Medium*, too ideologically associated as the term is within an outmoded tradition".[172] Matt Saunders contends that while the hand remained banished, the idea of a medium safeguarded modernist concerns by mobilising a sense of discrete modes of practice.[173]

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later recounted how she and Michelson had: "fled *Artforum* […] because of the new commitment […] to art as social statement [which she saw as hostile to] the aesthetic concerns necessary to formulate the basis of formal coherence" (Rosalind Krauss, *Perpetual Inventory*, 1). *October* quickly became a pioneering contributor to the proliferation of French critical theory in the visual arts.

[168] Ibid.

[169] Ibid., xiii.

[170] Rosalind Krauss, *Under Blue Cup* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2011), 8.

[171] In *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art on the Post-Medium Condition*, 2000, Krauss employs the terms *differential specificity* and *the essence of Art itself* alongside *apparatus*.

[172] Ibid., xvi. Marclay (Christian, 1955-) pieces together over seven hundred film clips, unified as a result on an emphasis on sound or music. The work is projected through four adjacent screens and looped in a soundproof room. Nothing can be added to the work, and nothing taken away.

[173] Matt Saunders, "Thread, Pixel, Grain", 2013, in *Painting Beyond Itself*, ed. Isabelle Graw and Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, 174.

Fig. 2K
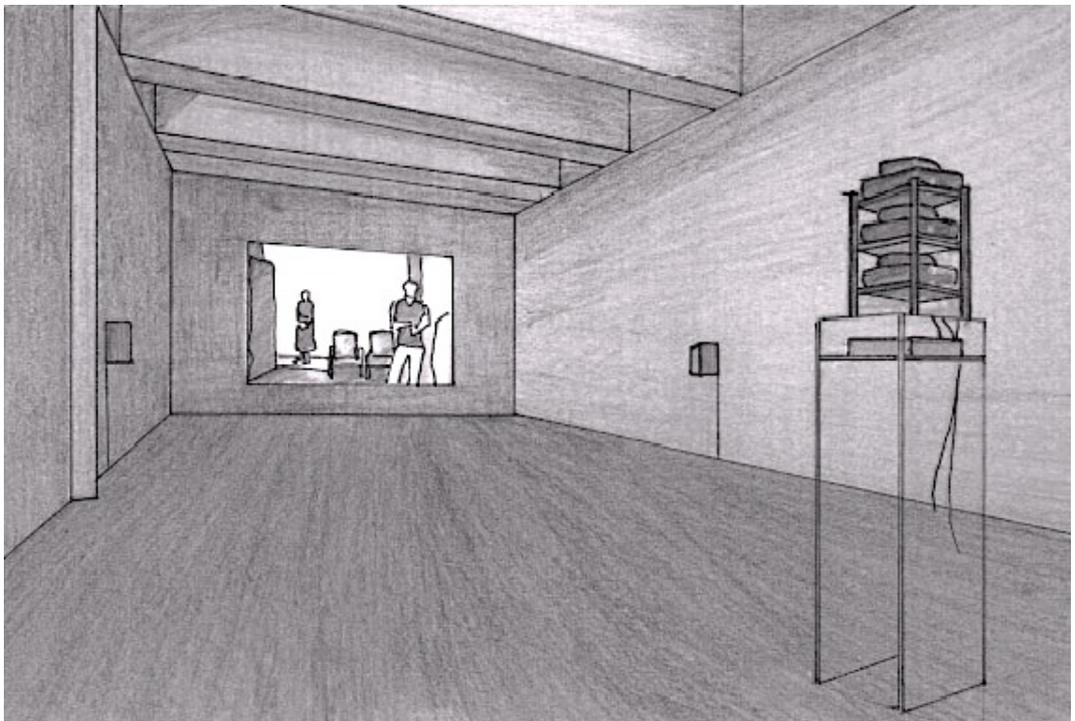
Fig. 2L

Fig. 2M

Fig. 2N

Like Fried, Krauss began as a disciple of Greenberg, and was impressed by his steadfast resistance to, "the psychologising whine of existentialist criticism".[174] More generally, Krauss was resistant to any approach to art criticism that viewed painting and sculpture as: "the language of sense expression, mental images and private sensation".[175] This, Krauss equates with the privileging of a private, unverifiable language.[176] Nonetheless, even early on, there were discernible points of difference between them, which with time grew more pronounced. As Dylan Kerr puts it:

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[174] Rosalind Krauss, "A View of Modernism", 1972, in *Perpetual Inventory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2013), 121. This was epitomised by Rosenberg's brand of criticism.

[175] Rosalind Krauss, "Line as Language", 1974, in *Perpetual Inventory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2013), 210. Krauss wrote her PhD thesis on the work of David Smith (1906-1965), who Greenberg had consistently championed. *Terminal Iron Works: The Sculpture of David Smith*, 1971, in expanded and revised form, became her first book.

[176] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1953). For both Krauss and Greenberg, to recognise how social conditions impacted on a work is one thing, but to understand the work socially – as the product of broad, intersubjective concerns – is another.

For Greenberg, truly avant-garde art strove for an ever-increasing purity and adherence to the history of its medium, a view Krauss eventually came to regard as overly simplistic. As she says, [Greenberg's] whole relationship to art was incredibly teleological. His idea was that art had to end up in a certain place, and if it didn't contribute to that trajectory then he dismissed it.[177]

By the early 1970s, Krauss regarded her mentor's adherence to purity and medium specificity as able to be maintained only through a form intellectual denial, or an act of faith. She became convinced that the meaning of a work of art amounted to more than that which could be pointed to. What of intentions, knowledge, understanding and feeling, and of the temporality of works? Driving all of this was not a question of the suitability of medium in respect of an individual work, or even distaste for flatness in and of itself. Krauss had come under the influence of structuralism and, later, poststructuralism.[178] This arrival forced a crisis. In her attempts to work through, and to understand how it is that the world impacts on the object of art, she drew from phenomenology, too, though, as with Fried, remained resistant to its propensity to psychologise—to extend beyond the parameters of the work to what she termed *context*.[179] In her introduction to *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and other Modernist Myths*, Krauss points to Greenberg's privileging of judgment over method, in spite of, in Krauss's view, the establishment of a framework to support judgments. Krauss could not accept Greenberg's refusal to concede that formalism was, in fact, a methodology, complete with its own history, structure, language and purpose.[180]

3.4.1: Content

"A View of Modernism" marked a divergence from Greenberg, and signalled Krauss's

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[177] Dylan Kerr, "How to Understand Rosalind Krauss, the Art Critic who made Theory Cool (and Inescapable)", 2016, accessed May 10, 2017, http://www.artspace.com/magazine/art_101/know-your-critics/how-to-understand-rosalind-krauss-53988.

[178] In particular, the works of Foucault, Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009), Roland Barthes (1915-1980), Jacques Lacan (1901-1981), and Jean-Francois Lyotard (1924-1998), whose, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* was first published in 1979.

[179] To Krauss, Greenberg provided a coherent account of developments within modernism, managing, through his invocation of Kant, to root the aesthetic in a response to the conditions of the object—to provide testable and objective criteria from which qualitative assessments could be made. However, structuralism and developments within conceptual and sculptural practices from the late 1950s convinced Krauss that she was in danger of becoming saddled with an indefensible metanarrative in the face of a changing climate hostile to the form of power that Greenberg now represented.

[180] Rosalind Krauss, *Perpetual Inventory*, 117-122. Nor could she accept his enmeshing of judgment and value, which, to Krauss, Greenberg had long since determined to be the same thing.

split from Fried too.[181] More importantly, it stands as a meditation on the significance of content. Krauss recounts an incident in the Fogg Museum, where she and Fried were challenged by a student to explain why a copper painting by Frank Stella was any good.[182] Fried responded that Stella wants to paint like Velasquez, but this isn't an option that is open to him so he paints stripes.[183] For Krauss, this made clear the significance of a temporal link that connected artists three centuries apart. Also, it foregrounded the fact that stripes were, for Stella, a form of subject matter— something he chose to paint: that it was still possible for him to paint. Ruminating on criticism from Judd, Krauss charts a gradual distancing from her mentor, describing her reaction to a seemingly unexpected comment by Greenberg that: "formalism was one of the most intellectually vulgar notions he knew of".[184] To Krauss: "the experience of a work of art is always in part about the thoughts and feelings that have elicited – or more than that, entailed – the making of the [art]work".[185]

Fried's decision not to address the role of colour in his review of the series paintings of Noland and Olitski attests, to Krauss, to the difficulties of writing about arbitrary decisions – based on feeling – as opposed to structural decisions based on reason.[186] For Krauss, modernist works display feelings reined-in within structures whose mode of address, in resisting the inessential, aspires to presentational lucidity.[187] So, too,

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[181] Ibid., xii. Greenberg had commented: "[s]pare me smart Jewish girls with typewriters". What Krauss shares with both mentor and colleague – a deeply embedded concern for a rigorous and publically verifiable underpinning for modernism – can too easily become lost behind the engorged ingenuity of her theoretical constructs, and her tendency towards loaded personal anecdotes, biting sarcasm and oppositional rhetoric.

[182] At Harvard, USA.

[183] Rosalind Krauss, *Perpetual Inventory*, 115.

[184] Ibid., 117. Based, or so Krauss thought, on the assumption that Fry's and Bell's hostility to subject matter (as interfering with form) was objectionable on the grounds that art amounted to more than an arrangement of disembodied design elements. Judd had recently and rather contemptuously described her and Fried as Greenbergers.

[185] Ibid. Later, Greenberg expanded on his previous comment, describing aesthetic value as originating in *content*, though content underscored by formalist technical (artisanal) considerations.

[186] An opposition of colour to drawing had helped to shore up distinctions between Classical and Romantic paintings in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Drawing appeared, increasingly, to represent reason, and colour to represent emotion. Yve-Alain Bois (1952-) considers what Matisse referred to as the, "eternal conflict between drawing and colour", in "Matisse and *Arche-Drawing*" in *Painting as Model* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993), 59. Also, consider the remarks by Robert Ryman (1930-) on white as colour, accessed February 11, 2016, http://art21.org/read /robert-ryman-color-surface-and-seeing/

[187] It was from a distaste of subjective indulgence, and a belief in objectivity, that Krauss accepted Greenberg's account; in particular, of the necessity of material inventiveness as perpetual advance. If the logic of modernism compelled its advance, then it was the critic's job to point to the accrual of detritus that builds around it in the course of its journey. Moreover, it was the critic's job to ensure that that which interfered with function was not mistaken for a friend.

with the best writing about modernist art, where a perceived lack of upfrontness mistakenly positions the critic as cold, distant and removed.[188] To Krauss, feelings must not attach themselves to works from the outside. Desired attachments (stories) are precisely the attachments that Roger Fry termed *wish-fulfilment.*

Krauss takes issue with Fried's disavowal of temporality as inherently unfriendly to the modernist project. Fried's claim that a modernist work must declare itself: "in terms of a continuous and entire presentness amounting to the perpetual criticism of itself, […] to be experienced as a kind of *instantaneousness*, […] proves problematic on the grounds that [to Krauss] the two parts of the statement are in contradiction, or at least conflict".[189] For Fried, temporality is narrative. To maintain a shared temporal space between work and non-work is thus to inhabit the work as one inhabits the world. Yet for Krauss: "a series […] is diachonic in character—the experience of it is entirely temporal".[190] It must, therefore, present itself in time. Thus, either Fried is mistaken in the instantaneousness of modernist practices, or else instantaneousness and the diachronic must be reconciled in respect of series painting, so as to gauge what happens at the seams.[191] Either way, a new definition of narrative has to be found.

3.4.1.1: Towards and Away

Through recourse to the works of Richard Serra, Krauss makes the case that sculpture is about sculpture.[192] It is also about, "one's own perspective".[193] Perspective is dictated to by the encounter, the relationship between sculptures, and the sculpture itself, which together Krauss calls *narrative*. This is not wish fulfilment (**Table 3**), as the extent to which narrative is within, outside or part of the work is crucial. To her, Greenberg had known that some works *contained* more than others, and that that which is contained is content. Consequently, that which cannot be pointed to becomes

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[188] Rosalind Krauss, *Perpetual Inventory*, 118-121. In part, Krauss saw this as the result of having to draw-in a large body of discourse. This remains a problem for theoretical writing.
[189] Ibid., 125.
[190] Ibid.
[191] Krauss's issue with Fried's idea of time is considered in James Meyer's: "The Writing of Art and Objecthood", in *Refracting Vision: Essays on the Writings of Michael Fried*, eds. Jill Beaulieu, Mary Roberts and Toni Ross (Sydney: Power Publications, 2000), 83-85. Meyer deems Krauss to have grafted a notion of real time and space onto post-war art, to replace the idealist time and space she perceived Fried to be overly concerned with. This involved a centering of the perceiving body by subverting the instantaneousness of presentness, in favour of the play of forms of movement.
[192] Presumably, painting is about painting too.
[193] Rosalind Krauss, *Perpetual Inventory*, 128.

visible not in addition to formal-material relations but because of them.[194] A pointing towards, it turns out, in following Krauss, is also a pointing away. For a work is two-faced, looking out towards the beholder as it looks back towards the shaped sum of its being (**Table 4**). Therefore, to behold a work is to remain attentive to its directedness. To be modernist is to avoid, "bringing in the world's perspective".[195]

P	A	I	N	T	I	N	G			
Form			**Wish Fulfillment**					**Content**		
Formal Relations			Desires					Associated Meanings		

Table 3: Positioning Wish Fulfilment

Beholder (Away)

Painting (Picture Plane)

Sum of its Being (Towards)
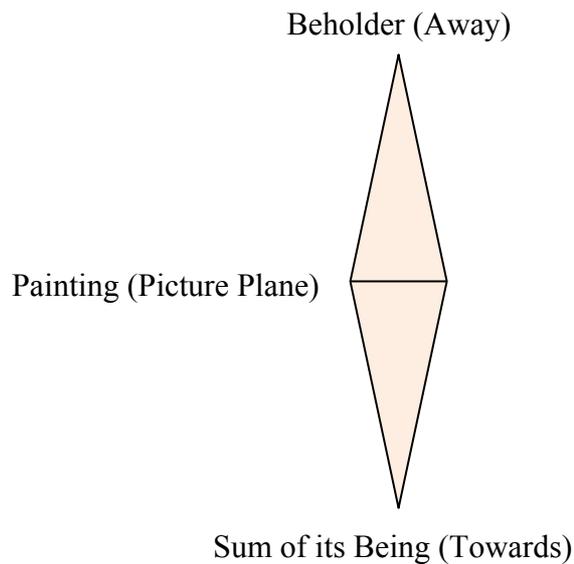
Table 4: Krauss's Work Diamond

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[194] As opposed to being more than others, which didn't require the accrual of externally sourced components.

[195] Rosalind Krauss, *Perpetual Inventory*, 128

Part 4: The Later Post-Medium Condition

4.1: Bois: Redrawing Formalism

> The vast corpus of American criticism, […] so superior to the French, was largely dominated by the reaction against Greenberg. But the terms of this reaction were still entirely ruled by the tenor of his theory. What the critics writing at the time could not see, […] was the dialectical relationship of their positions to that which they were rejecting.[196]

From a European perspective, the American formalist enterprise had, by the mid-1970s, played itself out, and with its demise went medium specificity and the notion of painting as *visual*.[197] In *Painting as Model*, Yve-Alain Bois presents two formalisms. This arose from the perceived unfairness of having to take sides and declare oneself either formalist (oblivious to subject matter) or else antiformalist (uninterested in configuration).[198] Such an opposition, to Bois, acted only to limit an understanding of the object of art, attesting as it did to the *morphological* and the *structural*.[199]

The economy or arrangement of a work (its shape) in relation to its context (its situatedness) became central to Bois's understanding of formalism. Greenberg's disinterest in the latter – or its conflation with the former – resulted, so Bois claims, in the perception of formalism as essentialist and detached. To unpack this meant to connect with the object as material process.[200] Also, the dialectic – prized as a legitimating tool by formalists, from Riegl to Fried – is seen, in this instance, to provide little that would help one to understand the relationship of the material constituents of the object of painting to one another, or to the world outside.[201]

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[196] Yve-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993), xvii.

[197] In the sense of its meaning remaining rooted in the optical alone.

[198] Ibid.

[199] Bois borrowed these terms from linguistics. The morphological describes a discrete unit of language. The structural denotes a place within the language.

[200] Not as a means to an end, as it had been for Greenberg and Fried (as a route from, or resistance to, picture) but perhaps as an end in itself, in so far as the concerns of painting could be considered finite and discrete.

[201] A Heideggerian solution to the dissolution and resolution of joins will be put forward in *Chapter 4*.

Bois writes that: "[f]orm, for Greenberg, had become an autonomous ingredient, and meaning a virus that could be dispensed with".[202] Greenberg had resolved the form/content dualism – rooted in Plato – through reclassifying content as form.[203] However, Bois detects in this too easy a resolution and sets out to reclaim a materialist conception of form from the safety of its idealist dwelling.[204] Greenberg's solution was a sleight of hand, and paid scant attention to the means of production—referred to, by Bois, as a *technical model*.[205] This is close to Krauss's *technical support* – what Saunders refers to as: "the technology of doing something and the *conventions* attached to it".[206] However, there is an emphasis on the tangibility of stuff. To Bois, Greenberg's form was, an: "a priori, […] an idea pre-existing its actual *projection*, its actual descent into the realm of matter, just like the image had been for Sartre".[207]

4.1.1: Painting: The Task of Mourning

In *Reference and Simulation in Recent Painting and Sculpture*, Bois addresses the notion of the death of painting and, in particular, the death of abstract painting against the backdrop of a host of proclaimed deaths (including of the medium), and apocalyptic discourses more generally—what Finch refers to as: "a now you see it, now you don't game".[208] To Bois:

> [T]his [claim] is bounded by two historical circumstances: the first is that the whole history of abstract painting can be read as a longing for its death; and the second is the recent emergence of neoabstract painters who have been marketed

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[202] Yve-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model*, xix. Bois's articulation of Greenberg's conception of form reminds one of the formalism of Fry, in particular of the notion of *classic quality*.

[203] Plato (428/427 or 424/423-348/347 BC) speculated as to the nature of shape (*eidos*), which developed into his famous theory of forms. To Plato, the deceptiveness of shape was the result of the thing itself (truth) being non-reproducible. Therefore, to replicate the thing through shape in art (to bring it into the world of Man) required the employment of artifice—of representation.

[204] The notion of reality as immaterial (later construed as mental) derives, in large part, from Plato's theory of forms.

[205] Ibid.

[206] Matt Saunders, "Thread, Pixel, Grain", in *Painting Beyond Itself*, 173.

[207] Yve-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model*, xix.

[208] Mick Finch, "Painting as Vigilance", 1997, accessed July 30, 2016, http://mickfinch.com/painting_as _vigilance.htm. This work is a catalogue of an exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art (Boston, Massachusetts, 25 September-30 November 1986). For more on endism, see: Tom Lawson's: "Last Exit Painting", 1981; Douglas Crimp's: "The End of Painting", 1981; Arthur Danto's: "The End of Art", 1994; Francis Fukuyama's: *The End of History and the Last Man*, 1992; Jacques Derrida's response: *Specters of Marx: The state of the debt, the work of mourning and the new international*, 1993; and later; Eva Geulen's: *The End of Art: Readings in a Rumour after Hegel*, 2006.

as its official mourners (or should I say resurrectors?). But we will see that it is the same.[209]

This leads Bois to reflect on the constitution of the end's beginning.[210] The end stands as a precondition of modernism, and abstraction; for, in its earlier formulations, abstraction had fully intended: "to bring forth the pure *parousia* of its essence, to tell the final truth and thereby terminate its course [and with it the course of painting]".[211]

Bois agrees with Greenberg on the centrality of industrialisation to the modernist project, and in respect of the crises that photography and mass production brought about.[212] However, he goes further, and, in seeking to extend a notion developed by Meyer Schapiro, suggests that the birth of the readymade signalled a form of resistance in painting, and a sharp redirection of its interests towards touch, texture and gesture—towards all that stood in opposition to capitalism as it systematically sought to, "banish the hand".[213] This emphasis on the manual, and on individual crafting, is a defining characteristic of modernism that, to Bois, reaches its zenith with Robert Ryman, who, in his series of white works, such as *Ledger* (**Fig. 2O**):[214]

> [P]roduces a kind of dissolution of the relationship between trace and its organic referent. The body of the artist moves towards the condition of photography: the division of labor is interiorized.[215]

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[209] Yve-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model*, 230.
[210] Bois subdivides this questioning so as to allow for a consideration of the possibility of abstract sculpture, of non-abstract painting and sculpture, and indeed of painting at all.
[211] Yve-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model*, 230. European abstraction as opposed to North American. Invocations of essence situated the material of paint as a sign of that which transcended it.
[212] From Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", 1936. Also of interest, is John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*, 1972, which addresses the condition of painting in respect of 1970s mass production. Berger acknowledges Benjamin as his primary influence.
[213] Yve-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model*, 231. In "The Nature of the Abstract", 1937, Schapiro takes issue with the assertion of Alfred H. Barr (1902-1981) that abstraction concerned itself purely with its own laws, and that representation simply mirrored the world (and was, therefore, superficial and of less importance). Tactility was something Greenberg largely ignored (for both painting and sculpture), or else downplayed as of marginal interest. Consider Riegl, Krauss and Fried on the nature of the haptic (see: *Chapter 2*, *Part 2*).
[214] Ryman adopted Malevich's square format, and his use of white. However, unlike Malevich, or indeed any of the earlier European abstract painters, Ryman concerned himself primarily with surface and texture. Working in numerous media within very tight, self-imposed restrictions, Ryman eschewed representation, foregrounding extreme subtleties (both of an optical and a material nature), and considered the work's internal relations as situated in respect of the wall.
[215] Ibid., 233.

To Bois, this permitted an appearance of mechanisation. Taking form, as it did, within abstract painting, it ramped up an appeal to the haptic, or what Krauss called *tactilization*, which sat on the periphery of the pictorial, fusing the symbolic, the optical and the material together.[216]

Fig. 2O

This tension – between the condition of the readymade and the condition of painting – allows Bois to position Ryman at the crossroads of modernism and postmodernism, as: "the guardian of the tomb of modernism".[217] Bois considers the role played by the mechanical, which subsequently and paradoxically – in respect of modernism's attempt to escape the industrial – became evident as an emphasis on process, culminating in Pollock.[218] Modernist painting is couched in terms of its resistance to, and incorporation of, the structures of capitalism and commodification: incorporation, in respect of both its reliance on technological innovation (from the portable tube of paint onwards) and emphasis on process: and resistance, in the sense of a railing against what Baudelaire called, "[t]he terrifying and endless return of the same".[219]

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[216] Rosalind Krauss, "Agnes Martin / The Cloud", 89.
[217] Yve-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model*, 232.
[218] Ibid., 233.
[219] Charles Baudelaire, in *Painting as Model*, 234.

Bois relates Benjamin's analysis of Baudelaire's predilection for identification – with the dandy, the prostitute, the flâneur, the bohemian – considering them to be: "heroic roles bearing the stigmata of commodification".[220] Thus conceived, Baudelaire's formulation of novelty attests to a perpetual desire to resist: "the inevitable process by which the novel [or the painting] becomes antique".[221] To Bois, however, Baudelaire failed to recognise that the commodity and the novel were derived of the same fetishistic impulse, which blinded him to the limitations of the new.[222] And yet, in attempting to escape an encroachment of the market, the poets and artists of the late nineteenth century grasped at methods of elevation and resistance. The distinction of the medium served such a purpose, in tandem with the idea of a materialisation of language as a means of resistance to the abstraction of commodification.[223]

4.1.2: The Authenticity of the Medium

Authenticity becomes, in Bois's analysis, complimentary to medium specificity, which can be seen in Duchamp's negation of painting in favour of the already mechanised, *non-imaginary* readymade, such as *Fountain* (**Fig. 2P**). To Duchamp, an embrace of the already-mechanised was as effective a strategy for the critique of commodification as a retreat from it.[224] A demonstration of the terms of the end, to Duchamp, ensured its peculiar ineffectiveness and exposed the structures of the thinking out of which endist discourses arose. In contrast, Bois reflects on the utopian endism of the 1920s, recounting a lecture by El Lissitsky, of 1922, in which he related Rodchenko's description of his contribution to an exhibition of 1921, stating: "I reduced painting to its logical conclusion and exhibited three canvases: red, blue and yellow. I affirmed: it's all over. Every plane is a plane, and there is to be no more representation" (**Fig. 2Q**).[225]

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[220] Yve-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model*, 235. In *Le Fleurs du mal* (*The Flowers of Evil*, 1957) and *Le Peintre de la vie modern* (*The Painter of Modern Life*, 1863). Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) coined the term *modernity*, which typified fleeting experiences in urban metropolises. The responsibility of art was, therefore, to capture such experiences and, in so doing, become modern.
[221] Ibid.
[222] And to what became Benjamin's position.
[223] Ibid. Later, this became a strategy of Andy Warhol (1928-1987), and of Jeff Koons too (1955-).
[224] So as to subvert it from within.
[225] Ibid., 238. This lecture was delivered in Berlin, on the subject of recent developments in Russian art.

Fig. 2P
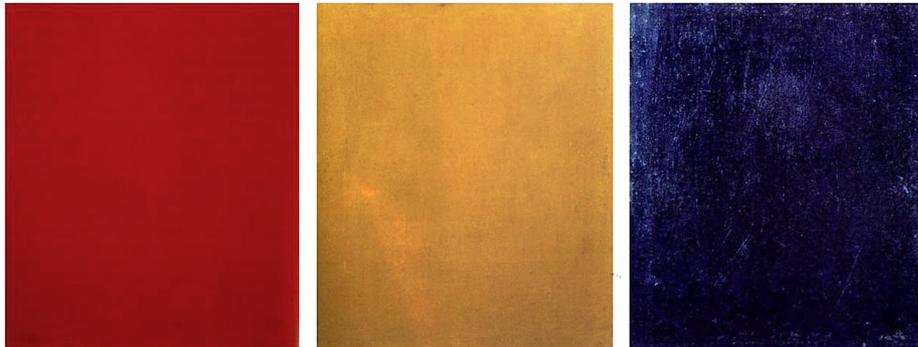
Fig: 2Q

What El Lizzitsky points out, is that Rodchenko's gesture was an important moment, not just within modernist practice, but also in the very evolution of painting itself:

> [N]ot because it was the *first* monochrome – it was not the *first* nor the *last* – and not because it was the first *last picture*, […] it was because it showed that painting could have a real existence only if it claimed its end.[226]

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[226] Ibid.

Rodchenko's work, according to Bois, needed to present itself as *real* (not imaginary) in order to end art—a gesture repeated more than forty years later with Minimalism. The optimism of this approach to the end, in opposition to Duchamp's knowing negation, redirected the creative impulse – the spiritual – through an avatar of what had once been painting, back towards the social oneness from whence it came.[227] This reached an apotheosis in Mondrian, to whom the general principle of plastic equivalence amounted to the employment of artificial means to permit a subsumption into the world and engender a state of being wholly present.[228] Powell has gone as far as to claim that the *death of painting* at the hands of the machine underwrote modernism's optimism: from Suprematism to performance and video practices.[229]

Bois, then, asks if the end has come, couching it in Lacanian terms not discussed here.[230] He discounts the prevalence of painting today as a reason to answer no to this, on the grounds that most painting has dispensed with: "the task of belonging to modern painting, [and exists simply as] artefacts created for the market and by the market".[231] However, to answer in the affirmative comes with its own problem, namely: to risk a historicism that discounts painting because of what has happened to it.[232] In attempting to escape from this double bind, Bois employs the game theory of Damisch, distinguishing between *game* (practice) and *match* (incident), to conclude that declaring the match *modernist painting* finished is not the same as affirming the game *painting* to be over.[233] Though the imminence of the end has been a preoccupation of modernism since its inception, one hundred years have unfolded undercover of this foreboding.[234] To Bois, to release painting is to throw off

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[227] Both shared the desire to dissolve the conceit of art, be it aesthetic or representational.

[228] Piet Mondrian, Bart van der Leek (1876-1958) and Theo van Doesburg (1883-1931) – through *De Stijl* (*The Style*) – sought a universal underpinning to abstraction founded on a utopian mysticism, and leaning heavily on the theosophical teachings of Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891) and Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925). "Neo-Pasticism: The General Theory of Plastic Equivalence", 1920, was published periodically, in French in 1920 and German in 1925.

[229] Amy Knight Powell, *Depositions: Scenes from the Late Medieval Church and the Modern Museum*, 40.

[230] Bois maps his argument onto Lacan's conception of the *Real*, the *Symbolic* and the *Imaginary*, themselves mappable onto Freud's *Ego*, *Id* and *Superego*.

[231] Yve-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model*, 241.

[232] Ibid.

[233] For an understanding of Hubert Damisch (1928-) and, in particular, of the development of his thinking in this area, see: *A Theory of Cloud: Towards a History of Painting* (California, Stanford University Press, 1992). Also of interest is the recent anthology of Damisch's essays on architecture: *Noah's Art: Essays on Architecture: Writing Architecture* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2016).

[234] Usually considered to be locatable to France in the 1850s.

melancholy in favour of, "the difficult task of mourning".[235] The desire to paint is painting's strength. Alongside the desire to situate it in history, it becomes its hope.

4.2: Post-Medium/Pre and Early-Modern

> The Term *beyond* may be said to define painting today: it speaks of painting's attempt to reach outside of itself – to situate itself beside itself, as David Joselit put it – in an effort of self-redefinition. In this way, contemplating painting abolishes and yet sustains itself.[236]

Bois and Costello have each identified the dangers of positioning Greenberg's notion of medium as a point of location. Krauss, too, attempts to manoeuvre the medium more freely, so as to release it from its formalist harness. Yet there is clearly a balancing act to perform: one that requires the performer to gauge the extent to which Greenberg's conception of modernism is, in fact, a willed imposition or else an intuitive response to a specific set of changed cultural and artistic conditions. With this comes a second difficulty: that of determining the degree to which medium and form can become safely disentangled without reifying the tangibility of the former or the optical objectivity of the latter.[237] More recent theory tends to work back from here.

In *Painting Beyond Itself*, David Joselit, Matt Saunders, Benjamin Buchloh, and others, attempt to bypass much of the modernist teleology, framed as it is by Greenberg (and also by developments in nineteenth century formalism): what, together, Ewa Lajer-Burcharth and Graw term its, "monolithic articulations".[238] In so doing, the intention of the authors is clearly not to re-privilege painting, but to re-historicise the medium so as to produce an alternative account of its development— one that situates the work and its material parameters as site rather than support of meaning.[239] And so, these works tend to draw from earlier periods, including from the

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[235] Yve-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model*, 243.
[236] Ewa Lajer-Burcharth and Isabelle Graw, *Painting Beyond Itself*, 9.
[237] Riegl's problem returns, to be rearticulated today (see: *Sections 3.3.1.1* and *3.3.2*).
[238] Ibid., 7. This work is edited by Isabelle Graw and Ewa Lajer-Burcharth. The text results from a series of conference papers delivered at Harvard University in April 2013.
[239] This has arisen out of the emphasis on making, and the renewal of interest in crafting and material investigations within contemporary practices more generally.

Renaissance, when definitions of painting's specificity were first formed.[240] If, pre-Kant (and pre-Baumgarten), beauty meant goodness, Pre-Greenberg, what did medium mean?[241]

To move backwards in order to go forwards is, to Lajer-Burcharth and Graw, to consider painting as *subject*, in opposition to the Hegelian formulation wherein subjectivity is seen to be: "the very principle that governs painting as medium".[242] It is to re-contaminate painting – to un-form it – only to reinternalise the results (to not have them float about outside, as context).[243] This *subject* involves moving away from a consideration of medium in respect of formal properties, and has splintered into discussions of use, agency and intention. There is now, it seems, a discernible desire to locate for painting a mode of temporality at odds with that of the moving image.[244]

4.2.1: Joselit: Marking Time

> In every work of art there is an irreducible singularity; a fund of affect and visual stimuli that is inexhaustible.[245]

Joselit, in his reconsideration of time in respect of processes of scoring, stays mostly within the modernist period, building his analysis around Cézanne, Duchamp and Pollock. He considers the work as that which stages meaning (as opposed to supplying it). This allows for the possibility that works of art operate on a different temporal horizon to, for example, politics, which deals with the immediate and the pressing. To Joselit: "painting marks time, rather than intervening in the events which populate it".[246] This is presented as a challenge to the appreciative faculty, in that painting – in marking time rather than following it – permits an inexhaustible attenuation of the

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[240] Ibid., 7-8.

[241] Preziosi, Donald, "title unknown", The University of Manchester, lecture and Q&A session, Manchester, 2006. Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714-1762) shifted the meaning of the term aesthetics from the more general meaning of *sense*, to *sense of beauty*, laying the foundations for Kant's *Critique of Judgment*.

[242] Ewa Lajer-Burcharth and Isabelle Graw, *Painting Beyond Itself*, 9.

[243] Ibid.

[244] This was Krauss's project, too, though nevertheless filtered, in part, as Costello and Stubbs have commented, through a Greenbergian lens.

[245] David Joselit, "Marking, Scoring, Storing, and Speculating (on Time)", 2013, in *Painting Beyond Itself*, 11.

[246] Ibid.

scrutiny afforded it. Once reproduced, this vast repository of possibility far outweighs the capacity – or the time – of an observer to survey it for meaning. In effect, it becomes an infinite library of resources at the mercy of a limited loaning facility.[247]

Joselit cites Jonathan Crary, as drawing attention to the link between painting as marked time and distracted spectatorship, which Cézanne was perhaps the first to conceive of, in so far as in Cézanne's paintings: "the accumulation of marks [in the medium] is dialectically linked to distraction".[248] Joselit distinguishes film, video and photography (which store time), from painting, in which the: "*marking* and *storage* or *accumulation* of time are simultaneous and ongoing".[249] With a nod to history, Joselit declares painting: "[on] the air as opposed to plein air".[250] This opens painting up to choice: to what Merleau-Ponty referred to as *Cézanne's doubt*—the indecision as to what to add to the surface, which, to Joselit, gives painting its existential edge.[251] There are overtones of Rosenberg, too, which surprisingly go unacknowledged.[252]

4.2.1.1: Wholeness

This brings us to the problem of wholeness – that troubled Cézanne – and which has to a great extent been dispensed with in recent practice, where there is a sense of the impossibility of resolving the complexities of a work into a single composite equating to the work's meaning.[253] It is advisable to recognise this *energy*, as Joselit puts it, and to accept a deferred resolution.

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[247] In particular: on mobile phones, for museum catalogues and websites, and on/through all variety of digital platforms.
[248] David Joselit, "Marking, Scoring, Storing, and Speculating (on Time)", in *Painting Beyond Itself*, 12. This is reminiscent of Benjamin's presentation of modes of distraction as that which define modernism's sensibility. The reference is to Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception, Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1999).
[249] David Joselit, in *Painting Beyond Itself*, 11.
. Film and video do this by having an indexical link to the time of the exposures.
[250] Ibid. Painting outdoors became common in the mid-late nineteenth century, with the Barbizon School (France), The Hudson River School (USA), the Newlyn School (England), and, most importantly, the Impressionists (France). Constable and Turner had worked outdoors, but completed works indoors, from studies and memory.
[251] Ibid., 14.
[252] In 1956, Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) commissioned Rosenberg to write a chapter on Marx for *Famous Philosophers*.
[253] This draws heavily from the deconstruction of Jacques Derrida (1930-2004): in particular, his work on *différance*. See: *Of Gramatology*, 1967.

One of the marvels of modern painting is that this tension between making and storing time remains present on its surfaces, since its constituent marks, which are laid down over time, are always simultaneously available to vision.[254]

Interestingly, Joselit roots the picturing of works, through reproduction (by galleries such as MOMA), in Pop Art's response to Cézanne's doubt.[255] *Accumulation*, Joselit asserts, is at the heart of what is now the practice of painting—of marks within individual paintings, and images/reproductions of works within collections or repositories of images. In explaining the unremitting snapping of images, Joselit invokes Guy Debord's definition of spectacle as: "the accumulation of capital beyond a certain threshold to the point where it becomes an image".[256]

Of most relevance is Joselit's notion of snapping as: "scoring experience rather than devolving [it] into spectacle".[257] He seeks to draw a connection between painting as an unregulated form of marking time, and reproduction: which he terms a, "reified representation".[258] Pollock provides an answer. Thus, Pollock's methods of application – the drip and spatter (**Fig. 2R**): "opened an aesthetic threshold between disorganised sensation and organised form".[259] This tension is evident in Pollock's attempts to maintain non-referential painting whilst under a constant pressure to re-assert the image, or to formalise a method, or even to resist falling back on the decorative.[260]

[I]t is important to insist that this pressure to *become a picture* characterised the most important painterly styles after Pollock—namely, Pop and Neo-Expressionism. Here, the accumulation of marks is no longer located at the threshold between unregulated sensation and its registration in form. Rather, the mark has come to occupy the threshold between a painterly mark and a picture, defined by Pop, and appropriation as a commodified image.[261]

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[254] Ibid. This can be seen in paintings' production, and also in its consumption.
[255] In the reproduction and enlargement of a brushstroke, by Roy Lichtenstein (1923-1997).
[256] Ibid., 15.
[257] Ibid.
[258] Ibid.
[259] Ibid., 16.
[260] Ibid.
[261] Ibid., 17.

Fig. 2R

Joselit presents what he terms *Duchamp's doubt* – that of an anxiety as to the circulation of works as images rather than perceptions and productions per se – as exemplifying the post-Pop condition.[262] This is an externalised doubt as to the work's situatedness—not what it is, but what it will do, where, and to whom. Joselit sees this as the extension of scoring to incorporate the entirety of the possible whereabouts of painting, and it includes: archiving, delegated spectatorship, performativity, an overt interactivity with technological media, and an acute awareness of the discourses into which painting will enter.[263] Thus, the post-medium condition, to Joselit, amounts to an: "eruption of external conditions into the traditionally well-bounded object of painting".[264] This aligns with a globalised, digital age: its anxieties and speculations.

4.2.2: Graw: Liveliness

Graw takes a different approach, focusing attention not on the score but on the brushstroke: not as evidence of medium's particularity, but as a carrier of something else. She notes Damisch's notion of the brushstroke as an indicator of subjectivity – a translation of the activity of the eye through the brush – and runs this idea past the pluralistic practices of today, free as they are from the more restrictive material and

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[262] Ibid.
[263] Ibid., 18.
[264] Ibid.

utopian conceptions of painting.[265] By subjectivity, Graw does not mean to invoke the individualistic feelings of the painter (as sensations passed to the observer through the work), but, rather, to consider painting as able to bring with it what Damisch referred to as, "its own narrative".[266] Graw situates the idea of painting as *subject* as opposed to *object* within the French tradition of Louis Marin and Georges Didi-Huberman; made legitimate because of painting's: "specific language, or, more precisely, because of its specific indexicality".[267] Graw's notion sits comfortably close to Krauss's sense of content, yet with greater ambivalence as to the potential horrors of contamination.[268]

4.2.2.1: Indexicality

Indexicality permits a finger to be pointed in the direction of a maker, irrespective of intentions.[269] Though other art forms rely, to varying degrees, on indexical models, it is painting, Graw writes – in foregrounding the physicality of the sign – that unifies its semiotic functions, in order to: "simultaneously evoke the ghostlike presence of [the] absent author".[270] Graw terms this notion of presence *liveliness*. There is a Heideggerian flavour to this, in so far as, to Graw, a painting contains and withholds what she terms *labour* (**Table 5**).[271] The storing of the labour of the painter in the object is, so Graw argues, and in seeming contradiction, a withholding of the life of the artist. The artist need not connect through touch for this form of indexicality to become operable, and nor is the work reducible to the artist's labour alone.[272]

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[265] Isabelle Graw, "The Value of Liveliness: Painting as an Index of Agency in the New Economy", 2013, in *Painting Beyond Itself*, 79.

[266] Hubert Damisch, *Im Zugwang: Delacroix, Malerei, Photographie* (Berlin: Diaphanes, 2005), in *Painting Beyond Itself*, 79.

[267] Isabelle Graw, "The Value of Liveliness", in *Painting Beyond Itself*, 80. Broadly speaking, as residing within French poststructuralist discourses of the 1970s and 1980s.

[268] From all that lies outside of the varying parameters that together constitute the work.

[269] Graw cites the examples of Sigmar Polke (1941-2010) and Gerhard Richter (1932-), who each expressed anti-authorial intentions.

[270] Ibid., 81. The physical (object), the iconic (image/graph/diagram) and the symbolic (written/spoken, including number).

[271] The implications of which will be explored in *Chapter 4*. Consider, then, the dual process of disclosure and concealment.

[272] Ibid., 82.
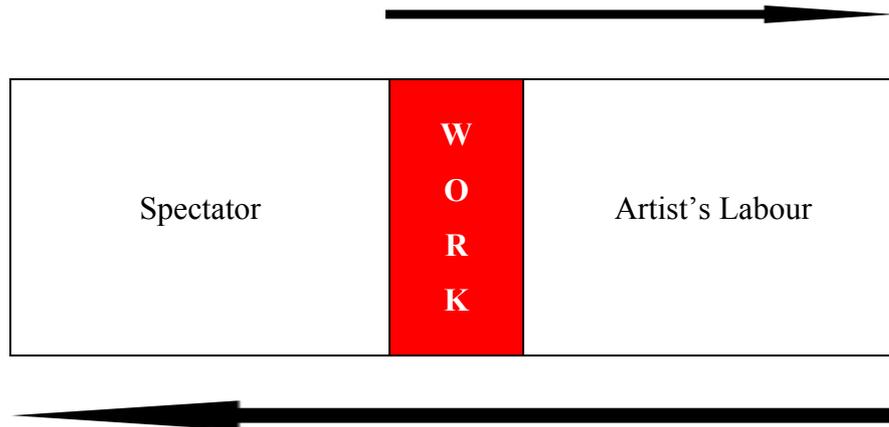
Table 5: Graw's Release and Retention of Labour

The emphasis on the artist's life – which the social history of art played a large part in helping to inauger – serves as a retreat from the image and from the material support on/through/by which the image sits.[273] Graw points to the practices of Francis Picabia, Yves Klein and Niele Toroni, as important early refutations of a narrow sense of liveliness, which was rooted, within modernism, in the physical and linguistic properties of the object itself. Graw employs the Husserlian concept of *Lebenswelt* (*lifeworld*) to expand it.[274] On Picabia's *Natures Mortes* (**Fig. 2S**), she writes:

> It is not only a manifestation of how boundaries of painting exploded but stands for painting's fusion with something external to it: a consumer object. On the one hand, Picabia's painting literally integrated the readymade by attaching a consumer item – a stuffed monkey – to the surface of a canvas.[275]

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[273] Within poststructuralism, the image doesn't *sit* (*sit* is a Greenbergian term), which makes this contentious.

[274] Edmund Husserl (1859-1958) used *Lebenswelt* to denote that which is given, out of which experience occurs.

[275] Ibid., 83.
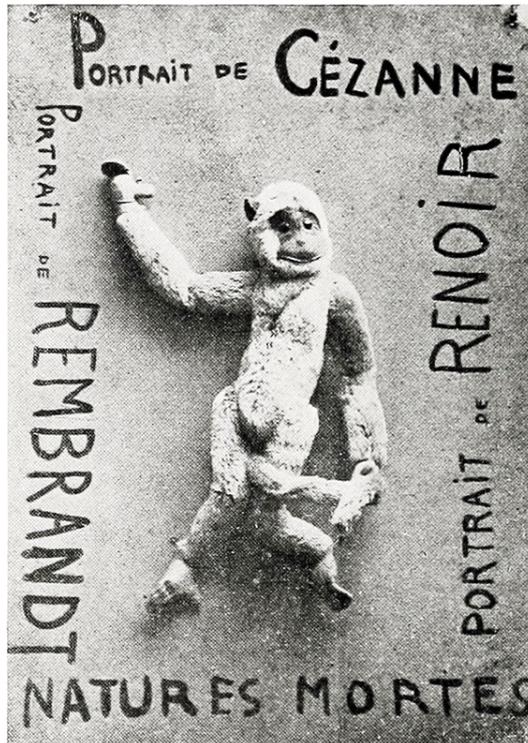
Fig. 2S

The novelty of Graw's position is that, far from seeing the incorporation of the readymade into the schema of painting as a threat, she sees in it the possibility of renewal (as, in fact, had Bois).[276] In short: Graw considers the incorporation of, *social living labor*, which the readymade readily supplies, as affording painting an opportunity to contaminate the aesthetic.[277] What Graw sees – *at first glance* – to be a refutation of essence – the result of the transformation of the names of, "supposed master artists" through a reduction to linguistic propositions – is problematic on the grounds that propositions function as terms of reference, and thus remain affirmative.[278] However, Graw perhaps sees this coming and backtracks, claiming that:

> On closer inspection, the painting is simultaneously revitalized because it seemingly speaks, albeit in silent fashion. And only living things can speak. To the same extent that this painting has opened up – towards the sphere of commodity, labour and textual propositions – it gains vitality and liveliness.[279]

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[276] In reflecting on Duchamp's response to Baudelaire's consideration of the new.
[277] Ibid., 85.
[278] Ibid.
[279] Ibid.

<u>4.2.2.2: Boundedness</u>

Graw enlivens painting again, this time through Klein's employment of the body, and then through Sigmar Polke's conflation of fashion and painting, which brings with it the trace of the actual body (as dress) through its proximity to the artist's skin (**Fig. 2T**).[280] To Graw, the boundedness of painting – the result of its recourse to liveliness – attests to the delimitation of the Greenbergian and Friedian boundaries of flatness and wall.[281] Painting today, in Graw's analysis, speaks of the institutional boundaries to which painting bears witness, which serve, in turn, to impute to it a life of its own— what Graw terms its, "subject-like qualities".[282] And so, in the face of such uncontainability it appears redundant to seek for painting the distinction of specificity. Such a notion, however, falls in line with a Hegelian teleological approach to which contemporary criticism takes issue. An exponential expansion of painting – to include *all* conditions – acts to deny painting its particularity, whilst reifying *situatedness*.

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[280] Polke's *The Large Cloth of Abuse*, 1968, was worn like a gown.
[281] Consider the work of Daniel Buren (1938-). Buren's work highlights fracture, mostly in installation, and draws on painting and performance, and on writing too.
[282] Ibid., 86.

Fig. 2T

Graw demarcates practices that seek to: "push beyond the edge of the frame, while still holding onto the specificity of the picture or canvas or to variations of this format (on the grounds that the prevalence of such practices make them viable and functional in some manner or other)".[283] She writes that: "If it were not for [painting's] residual specificity, it wouldn't make sense to speak of painting at all".[284] I will consider the residual in *Chapter 4*, in respect of Heidegger's ideas. The problem, then, seems like a restaging of that which Greenberg and Fried faced at the onset of the 1960s – that of untangling a sense of residual specificity from an external world of things – yet without the requisite faith in the modernist project to re-invoke formalist distinctions.

In addressing this, Graw draws from Charles Sanders Peirce's notion of indexicality, which permits her to consider the sign outside of its painterly manifestation, and also to consider the union of object and person—especially strong in painting.[285] Graw refutes assertions as to performance art's greater bondedness to the artist's body, on the grounds that, in performance art, the body is (or becomes) the vehicle, whereas in

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[283] Ibid.
[284] Ibid., 89.
[285] Owing, in part, to Rosenberg (and to notions of gesture). Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) is sometimes referred to as the father of Pragmatism.

painting the vehicle sits in proximity to the body.[286] Such an appeal to the maintenance of reduced proximity parallels Fried's disavowal of presence as aspiring towards the unification of the work and the spectator through the dissolution of difference. To Graw: "[t]he metonymic relationship between product and person is mediated and *negotiated* through the picture on canvas".[287] Painting and the body are thus kept apart in their linking, much as the moon is kept from catastrophe: maintaining its position in respect of the Earth by virtue of its velocity, mass, and a mutual gravitational pull.[288]

Graw re-applies indexicality – the physical connection of object to subject – and situates it in respect of the longstanding idea that photography is the best fitted of art forms to provide automatic inscription without an author: based on well-established anti-subjectivist assumptions (in part, the result of the work of Roland Barthes).[289] To Graw, painting provides an alternative indexical link between the work and: "the one who left his or her marks".[290] But how is this different from the commonly understood assumption as to an object's connection with the person or persons who made it? Graw stretches the theory, claiming that: "[w]hereas Pierce places emphasis on the factual, physical connectedness of the index to its object, I highlight the index's faculty for *evoking* such a physical connection".[291] Thus construed, the index opens up a direct channel to the idea of authorial preoccupation, yet one whose medium aspect approximates painterly possibility rather than quantas of transmogrified intentions.

To Graw, a painting brings with it an author, a connection, a place and a probable intention (though not necessarily physical contact).[292] Presumably, as with Key's analysis of the role of technology, new media approaches to painting maintain an indexical link through the inference of decision. The object thus determines the power of the indexical sign: "which in this case is a subject—the person of the artist".[293] Graw recognises that such links also exist between a sculpture and its maker, yet: "it is

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[286] Ibid., 90.
[287] Ibid., 91.
[288] Graw ponders the idea, developed by Daniel Arasse (1944-), of sensing the thoughts and dreams of Piero della Francesca (c. 1415-1492) through an encounter with his frescoes.
[289] To Graw, this allowed authorship to be conceptualised as a blank spot. See: *Camera Lucida*, by Roland Barthes.
[290] Ibid., 92.
[291] Ibid., 92.
[292] This allows for the inclusion of paintings made by a machine, or else the result of instruction of one form or another.
[293] Ibid., 95.

only painting that is backed up with a plethora of historical arguments, attesting a subject-like power to it".[294] Graw relates Diderot's claim that paint is the place where: "a man's character and temperament" comes to the fore, arguing that deconstructivist approaches fail to exorcise the ghost of presence.[295] Thus, an artist like Gerhard Richter – who refutes the written – is resituated through inscription. The squeegee imprints the body and its various actions and rhythms (**Fig. 2U**): "allow[ing] the artist to enter through the back door".[296]

Fig. 2U

Graw concludes with an assessment of painting's value, which she underpins with a notion of the memorial and the trace, shored up by Marx's conception of the, "congealed state of labour".[297] And so, ironically, in light of the ubiquity of references to painting's propensity for commodification, painting becomes valuable as that which

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[294] Ibid. Graw (Isabelle, 1962-) relates Hegel's presentation, in *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, 1835-38, of painting as a repackaging of subjectivity—as a general condition rather than a host of individual conditions.
[295] Ibid. Denis Diderot, "Notes on Painting: To Serve as an Appendix to the Salon of 1765", in *Diderot on Art, Volume 1: The Salon of 1765 and Notes on Painting*, trans. John Goodman (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 197-98.
[296] Isabelle Graw, *Painting Beyond Itself*, 96.
[297] Ibid., 98.

reveals rather than conceals the labour-value of the work.[298] The liveliness Graw writes of is, therefore, a bulwark against commodification in favour of, "a concrete foundation of value" (which painting is best suited to supply).[299] Painting's stored labour – in its expanded temporality – is viewed *at once*, and its brush marks are seen to serve nothing less than a: "new economy that is busy absorbing life".[300]

4.2.3: Saunders: Material and Medium

In "Thread, Pixel, Grain", Saunders explores distinctions between medium and stuff, yet as a practitioner, and from a post-medium platform teaming with false assumptions as to the seeming safety of its position, which he reminds the reader of when he writes:

> [D]espite how proudly post-medium we are, when have dead ideas truly stayed in the ground? […P]robably half our heroes were specific to their means and forms. So what is wrong with considering the particular traits – perhaps needs – of the medium?[301]

Saunders equates the bad taste left by medium specificity with a dislike born of the student years, wherein young would-be artists struggle to get to grips with the requirement of bridging the unbridgeable gap between: "the muddling, stupid work we do with our hands, and all the sexy things we read about that came before".[302] Saunders sees painting as defined by a defensiveness born of uncertainties as to the role of its medium. Thus, today's successful painter is he or she who can wrestle productively with what being a contemporary artist means, and with the: "potentially pleasurable difficulties of the real problems of material and visual construction".[303] The resulting anxiety becomes, to Saunders, a mechanism of advance.[304] This feels rather unconvincing, as it too easily situates *the contemporary* as an operational base.

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[298] Wary of ascribing supernatural power to labour, Marx did not use the term *labour theory of value*. He used the term *law of value*.
[299] Ibid., 99.
[300] Ibid., 101. Notably, Eugène Delacriox (1798-1863), in his *Journal*, asserted the instantaneousness of reception. There are overtones of Fried's idea of *presentness*, too, though they appear inversed.
[301] Matt Saunders, "Thread, Pixel, Grain", in *Painting Beyond Itself*, 172.
[302] Ibid.
[303] Ibid., 173.
[304] This smacks of dialecticism, akin to Riegl's or Fried's.

<u>4.2.3.1: Mobility</u>

Saunders considers Krauss's notion of *technological openness* in respect of the disassembling and building up of painting and the prevalence of aggregate mediums – such as film – where Krauss's *apparatus* extends to all that permits of making, screening and viewing.[305] This sets up a line of questioning designed to consider how (if post-medium) media can still pollute or intersect, which permits of an interesting distinction.[306] To Saunders: "materials stand in for medium, [being] freer to wander".[307] Thus, it is paint and support that do things, including being images. Materials cling, which allows him to claim that: "the future of medium is increasingly bound to mobility".[308] Mobilisation, to Saunders, is at its most pronounced when materials are misused—only then might one recognise functionality. Saunders's examples include: the blocked out photograph (the photogram), a print drawn on plastic (inverting light and mark), and a photograph printed on a canvas (showing the weave). Such merging reveals the, "fissures and particularities in each [medium]".[309]

The result (and importance) of intersections is not that medium specificity is disbanded, but that new specificities are acquired in place of old assurances—not so much an aggregate, in the Kraussian sense, but an addition to the pantheon of possibility. To Saunders, by equating medium with material, the medium becomes more about its own image, as the material becomes reinvigorated and redeployed.[310] In this light, material is considered to be: "the nuts and bolts and a signifier of a broader endeavour (medium)".[311] In Saunders's analysis, painting is haunted by medium, yet he sees it as the painter's job (more so than the theorist's) to challenge borders—to delve, literally, into the murky world of materials so as to consider what is *seen*.[312]

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[305] Ibid.
[306] Ibid., 174.
[307] Ibid.
[308] Ibid.
[309] Ibid., 175.
[310] Ibid.
[311] Ibid.
[312] It is interesting to note a return to *seeing* (the optical) within recent approaches to painting. This perhaps underpins a return to the picture (and to picturing), and seeing might well support contextual rather than aesthetic inquisitiveness.

Chapter 3: Exclusions and Intermissions: Finding Medium

Part 1: Introduction

Mira Schor states, in reference to her work, that: "you are, I hope, trapped onto the surface for long enough to have to deal with the image".[313] Here, she draws image and surface together, conflating word and picture. Schor opposes Greenberg's privileging of opticality and distance, as well as his classificatory impulse, fondness for oppositions and distaste of narrative (**Table 6**).[314] To Greenberg, writing had no place in painting, for it offered an escape; serving an aesthetic purpose only when considered as calligraphic shape in a language to which the reader had no access.[315] In considering Schor's remark, it is interesting to note how critiques of Greenberg tend to take the form of pulling terms apart that have – intentionally or otherwise – become illegitimately enmeshed, or else closing gaps that have been kept open—the former on philosophical grounds, and the latter seemingly the result of a distaste of apertures.[316]

Avant-Garde (High Art)	Kitsch (Low Art)
Picture plane	Object & Writing
Purity	Narrative (Story)
Form	Subject
Autonomous	Dependent
Aesthetic	Literary
Flat	Sculptural & Illusionistic
Eye	Body
Art	Life

Table 6: Greenberg's Oppositions

To Melville, questions of medium go all the way down.[317] This chapter considers a series of absences: the consequences of not going far enough—an outcome of adopting too physical a conception of medium as material (a by-product of formalism's inability

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[313] Interview with Stuart Horodner (birth date unknown), 1993, at the Horodner Romley Gallery, New York.
[314] At the same time, however, Schor (Mira, 1950) is acknowledging what might be considered a staggered temporality—images, unlike surfaces, take time to deal with.
[315] See: *Chapter 3*, *Section 2.5*. Cy Twombly (1928-2011) fused mark making and writing together.
[316] Consider in respect of Heidegger's understanding of linguistic, spatial and temporal gaps (*Chapter 4: 3.2.1*).
[317] Stephen Melville, *Becoming Medium*, 2013. By down, Melville implies to the core of things.

to maintain its Greenbergian distinctions), or else too immaterial a notion of content as *idea*. In looking for medium, I will lay the foundations for a phenomenological model of medium as interval and/or meeting in time and place, which I will assemble in *Chapter 4*.[318] Difficulties in understanding the idea of a medium can be rooted in how painting – as object and practice – has been approached within critical writings, and also in assumptions as to what it is that painting addresses, and how it addresses it. I will point to three interrelated areas marked by a sense of lack. These concern:

1: The extent to which a painting orients itself towards *other*.
2: The degree to which a painting (and a medium) can lay claim to its own time.
3: The consequences of positioning painting in terms of social and linguistic structures.

Furthermore, I will explore the processes of making a painting, and reflect on the usefulness of adopting a threshold model of animal behaviour to gauge the extent to which imagery (language-use) might actually be predicated on material manipulation. Though problems of forming, and of absence, are ontological concerns, they bear upon perception.[319] Where they do, I will take them up – and in respect of concerns pertinent to the previous two chapters – and consider resemblance and the relationship between image and world, and between images. In *Part 3*, I will interrogate the impact of mimesis on ideas about the medium and, in particular, problematise *proximity* and *likeness* against the backdrop of a sense of painted images as having been *formed of*.

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[318] Through the employment of the ideas of Heidegger and Hölderlin.
[319] Within the discipline of Art history, E. H. Gombrich (1909-2001) is noted, in particular, for his work in drawing together the iconographic, perceptual and manual facets of works of art.

Part 2: Painting: The Absents

2.1: Writing about Painting

Writing about painting has become compromised by its merger with writing about other things.[320] Though perhaps merely a reflection of the diversification of visual arts practices, there are, nevertheless, important implications. James Elkins has pointed to the dearth of exploratory literature on painting, providing a five-tier taxonomy of types of writings that support painterly practices today: none of which (excluding, of course, the classificatory tier) does he consider to be particularly helpful (**Table 7**).[321]

1	Writing that is opportunistic, impressionistic and informal
2	Writing that seeks to classify and order
3	Writing concerned with declaring painting dead
4	Writing that declares a distance from modernism, or aversion to Greenberg
5	Writing that takes painting as an occasional subject among others

Table 7: Elkins's Taxonomy of Types of Writing about Painting

To Elkins, this phenomenon is part of a more pervasive problem: that of a dislocation between theory and practice, with neither now seemingly grounded in, reflective of, or able to account for the concerns of the other. "As a medium and a set of practices, painting is practically dismembered, torn to pieces among many media. It seems to be faltering, directionless, indecisive".[322] In respect of current discourses that seek to account for and position painting, he maintains that: "[t]hey drift, they are indulgent in regard to logical argument, they take pleasure in very small occasions and try not to look too far afield or compare things that appear too different".[323] Elkins speculates as

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[320] In 1989, Michael Podro and Ernst Gombrich discussed the related problem of the conflation of the discipline of Art History with other areas of enquiry, and, in terms of knowledge of the object of art, of the possible advantages of isolation. https://gombricharchive.files.wordpress.com/2011/08/showdoc109 1.pdf.

[321] James Elkins, "Why Nothing can be Accomplished in Painting", 109 (2004): 38-41. Related: *What Happened to Art Criticism* (New York: Routledge, 2003). Additionally, *What is Interesting in Writing an Art History* (this is a blog, which Elkins frames as: "probably a book project, or maybe just a series of class notes"). And: *What Painting is?* (New York: Routledge, 2000). Elkins (James, 1955-) is a critic and historian whose work spans painting, photography and writing about art. In particular, Elkins concerns himself with images as constantly developing forms of language, positioned between science and nature.

[322] James Elkins, "Why Nothing can be Accomplished in Painting", 38.

[323] Ibid.

to whether such a tone: "represses an anxiety about the possibility that there may in fact be a significant form beneath the scattered surface of the present moment".[324] Though presented as polemic, any invocation of the *significant* is significant.[325]

Charles Harrison has remarked on the conflation of word and image, which he sees as key to maintaining the current orthodoxy, where: "the typical tendency of the critic is now to emphasise the mutual implication of the verbal and the visual".[326] Such a languid passivity as to the possibility of linguistic distinction is not the result of a suspicion as to painting's ability to deal with the modern world. Nor, paradoxically, is it a comment on painting's popularity. On the contrary, painting's dependence on a representational scaffolding equips it fully, in an age of image, to reference that which lies near or far, to draw from the *imaginary* and the *real*, and to seek out the personal and political. Graw argues that: "one can relate painting's regained popularity to how it seems to store the artist's life—and work time".[327] No doubt painting's longevity – its exhaustion of novelty – remains close to the root of its ubiquitous indistinction?

If historical baggage alone is not culpable, then difficulties perhaps reside in the extent to which painting's medium drags on its bearing in a manner that eludes comparison with other practices.[328] To understand this more fully is to consider the causes and effects of a series of absences. Here, I mean to suggest that what I've described is a symptom, not a cause, of painting's problem, and that to approach this is to wrestle with concerns that, though not specific to painting, are more pronounced as a result of the nature of its medium in respect of the constitution of its object. This object – in its

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[324] Ibid., 41.
[325] Clive Bell's formalist stock waned, then collapsed with Greenberg's.
[326] Charles Harrison, *Conceptual Art & Painting*: *Further Essays on Art and Language* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 13.
[327] Isabelle Graw, "The Value of Liveliness", 82.
[328] As material, and also as ideological construct. Less attention has been paid to the notion of medium specificity (and related areas of enquiry) in respect of sculptural and photographic practices within a comparably recent period of art historical and philosophical discourse. Fried is an exception, in "Art and Objecthood", 1967, and *Why Photography Maters as Art as Never Before*, 2008, and Krauss, too, in "Sculpture in the Expanded Field", 1979. Also, Vilém Flusser (1920-1991), in *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, 2000, and *Into the Universe of Technical Images*, 2011, explores a complex notion of *apparatus* within photography and media practices. His works have only recently been translated into English. Additionally, Susan Sontag (1933-2004) has expressed formalist, if not fully fledged medium-specific inclinations in respect of photography, and a distrust of textual hermeneutics, in *Against Interpretation*, 1966.

material and temporal extensions – is present. And yet, within theory, there appears to be a subtle legerdemain at play, which serves to deny the medium its legitimacy.[329]

2.2: Is or Of: Painting as Prompt

One effect of the indeterminacy accompanying the role of medium is that abstraction and figuration sit side by side, as images—the former too easily stripped of ideological, religious, political or aesthetic meanings, and the latter now wholly mimetic.[330] The past three decades have been a golden age for pictures, with the image seemingly able to lay claim to whatever meaning is reckoned to be appropriate to a projected intention at the moment of reception. The beholder circles an object that, in its appeal to image, has been hollowed out.[331] If painting is in/of its time: then time, in painting, is conceptually, perceptually and perpetually now—the richness of its extensions truncated by a suspicion of tomorrow and the repudiation of yesterday.

In the early 1980s, Tom Lawson considered painting's potential to provide a, "never-ending web of representations" to be useful still.[332] And yet, painting is seen here as something approaching a living death: the painter caught between a position of blind faith and the adoption of co-opted ironic strategies no longer at the service of the radical artist.[333] Notably, Jean-François Lyotard's critique of grand narratives preceded

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[329] Here, legitimacy means its distinction from other things and also the importance placed on it.

[330] Consider the ubiquity of crapstraction and zombie formalism (abstraction's equivalents of Stuckism). Such labels serve to denote groundless, decontextualised modes of practice…paintings that happen to look like art.
Abstraction in painting has its roots in theosophy and mysticism. Kupka, Mondrian, Kandinsky, Klee, and Sonia and Robert Delaunay considered it, therefore, though in varying manners, to be symbolic of knowledge (ideas) that existed outside of the painting. These pioneers of abstraction rooted their works in the material conditions of the painted object, which, in turn, could be seen to act as the material vehicle on which transcendence rested. Today, severed from its origin, abstraction is rarely taken to mean more than *not bearing a strong resemblance to*. Within modernity, mimesis took a secondary role, as painting found other things to do (moreover, photography sought its own version of medium-specificity around 1910, when photographers ceased to imitate the idioms of painting).

[331] Panofsky (Erwin, 1892-1968), in *Idea: A Concept in Art Theory*, 1924, recounts Plato's aversion to mimesis, and to artists concerned only with the rendering of appearance, contrasting them with those artists who, within the means at their disposal, sought to pursue ideas. Though, in his own time, the pursuit of *idea* in the Platonic sense would have been of interest to a minority of artists, Plato nevertheless conceded the possibility that painters could transcend representation through the mixing and blending of base materials, yet only when guided by the divine. Today, it could be argued that the divine is in scarce supply.

[332] Tom Lawson, "Last Exit Painting", *Artforum*, 2 (1981): 40-47.

[333] Ibid. Faith, in this context, refers to a belief in the potential of the image to carry meaning regardless. Alternatively, or additionally, the contemporary artist is able to find comfort in his connectedness to the notion of vocation (Hermann Leicht, *History of the World's Art* (Germany: Spring Books, 1965), 316).

Lawson's comment by two years.[334] However, in painting (in its retreat from formalism), the smaller narratives that grew to replace them lacked not only the unity of a position, but also a sense of position per se.[335] To be mediumless was to be a consumer or facilitator of images alone.[336] At stake is the extent to which a painting embodies, stands apart from, or points towards its subject (referent). The move away from the notion of a painting that points to nothing save itself (or which points *back to* rather than *away from*) is a move towards the dissolution of the medium of painting. From *only paint* to *always of* is a sequential shift of emphasis – something that is done to painting – by those who position the work on the maker's behalf (**Table 8**).[337]

1	A painting is only paint
2	A painting is paint and something else
3	A painting is something else and paint
4	A painting is always *of*

Table 8: Dissolution of Medium/Inauguration of Image

2.2.1: The Hidden Screen

This *of* is what hides painting, disguising the function of its medium (much like an image on a TV screen hides the screen itself, where reflections, dust or signal failure allow for a break in the illusion). Only when the text is interrupted is the viewer brought back to his own space (in proximity to the work's space). The reminder of the vehicle through which the moving image travels is not part of the film, though it permits the film to become operable. The screen on, behind or through which film is visible attains the position of carrier (distinguishable from that which is carried).

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[334] In *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, 1979, Lyotard contended that knowledge, in the post-war period, had become a commodity, to be redistributed in discrete form as pockets of information by a legislator or authority figure/organisation. Through the language-game, meaning is generated. However, it is meaning determined by, and operable through, the structures that serve to underpin it. Legitimation is, therefore, dependent on a conductor. To Lyotard, the restructuring of Western Europe in the post-war period had been responsible for a decentering of cultural production, and thus contributed substantially to the precipitation of a loss of belief in grand narratives.

[335] In the 1980s and beyond. Evident in the divergent and shifting trajectories of artists connected with Fluxus, Post-Minimalism, Stuckism, Neo-Pop, Body Art, Computer Art, Institutional Critique, New Subjectivity, Arte Povera, Video Installation, Graffiti, Neo-Conceptualism, YBA, YGA, Stuckism, Photorealism, Projection Art, Classical Realism, Transavanguardia, and Figuration Libre.

[336] See: Jean Baudrillard's *Simulations*, 1983, for a consideration of the demise of *the real* as a result of the proliferation of images and the exponential expansion of new media (and by the means and mechanisms of distribution).

[337] Including: theorists, historians, critics, curators and educators.

When playing, the screen exists through resolution alone. As Krauss pointed out, in "Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism", only when applying crude generalisations is it feasible to consider the monitor or projection screen to be the medium of film or video art.[338] This points to a different relationship between surface and subject in a painting than that which exists between the screen and the film/video. To seek to differentiate between the functioning of these two relationships is to consider the nature of time.

2.3: The Times of Painting

Time – in painting – has several applications, some specific to the practice, others to the object of painting. Others oscillate indeterminately between the two. Statement-questions like, *how long did the work take* and *what was the artist trying to do* point in opposing directions, towards object or practice, invoking processes of endeavour and intention respectively. The time of a painting is thus positioned as either a sequence of things that have happened in the lead up to the manifestation of an object of painting (Graw's *absent other*), or else as that which happens post facto (Joselit's *scored spectatorship*), and which can be classified as a mode of interpretation. That which this happening happens to happen to – what, in Joselit's analysis, amounts to *the marked object of painting* – sits seemingly stilled, as something akin to an absent middle, between the scored time of the maker and the response time of the viewer.[339]

Notions of time tend to coalesce around concerns indicative of one's perspective or vantage. Both the maker's time and the viewer's time identify as *lived*, insofar as our notion of time in respect of works is of an identification with the activity of the artist, or with the immediacy of our own interpretive, experiential facility as viewer (**Table 9**). Therefore, both times orient themselves in relation to – and emanate outwards from – the material object that sits between, namely: the painting.[340] They are *always of*.

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[338] Rosalind Krauss's "Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism", 1976, emerged within a few years of the birth of video art, as media boundaries were beginning to blur and conceptual practices became more mainstream. In her search for what it was that, in media terms, grounded video art and made it specific, Krauss put forward the notion that the psychological state of narcissism was, for video, its condition, and defined it in terms of self-discovery.

[339] An interest in that which happened prior to the manifestation of the object of painting (as anything other than of technical interest) originated within modernist criticism in Harold Rosenberg's "The American Action Painters", 1952, which was heavily indebted to the work of Merleau-Ponty.

[340] No doubt, these statements could be reworded and the activities reclassified so as to refine them or to conceive of other groupings. Also, from the perspective of the maker there might well be simultaneity in terms of understanding statements one and two, and, from the perspective of the viewer, the second conception of time would come to be understood through the first. Additionally, the maker and the

1	The time taken to conceive, plan, carry out and display a work
2	The time taken to recognise, decode, understand, appreciate and value a work

Table 9: The Two Times of Painting

2.3.1: Paintingtime

Whilst a modern conception of the physics of time is rooted in Einstein's spacetime, a notion of time in respect of works of art eludes a comparable origin.[341] There is no universal grammar of painting that might comfortably encompass it, and no concept of *paintingtime* within artistic theoretical discourses with which to cement the relationship between maker's and viewer's times. These times comprise not of the interaction of universal forces – the building blocks of existence – but of an impulse.[342] The times of painting are thus psychological times, which become visible and knowable in respect of our intentions—of what we seek to do with them.

Difficulties arise when one attempts to strip painting of its maker's time (what Joselit refers to as an unregulated form of marking) and also its viewer's time, so as to establish a third manifestation of temporality specific to, and dependent on, the painting.[343] This would appear to be impossible, if only because we conceive time as a mode of perception—the result of a sensory directedness towards the object of painting (and towards things generally). The maker's time and the viewer's time reside within this formulation. How, then, might we be able to construe a time that owes nothing to that which leads towards the painted object, or that which stems from it (**Table 10**)? It is worth pointing out that this has not been the pursuit of recent art historical inquiry. The social history of art, feminist art criticism, and structuralist and

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viewer might, in some instances, be the same person. Nevertheless, the central point here is that when time is contemplated in respect of the painted object, one can conceive of a separation of vantages on which differing understandings rely.

[341] The notion of combining space and time into a single theoretical model preceded the work of Einstein, but its common usage derives from his paper of 1905, entitled "On the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies".

[342] Hermeneutics originated in response to scripture. Through the work of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), hermeneutics developed as a modern discipline with concerns for general ideas. In the twentieth century, Martin Heidegger, and his pupil, Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002), shifted the emphasis from *knowing* to *being with* (or *reconstruction*), in order to circumvent presumptions as to the content of works, and thereby deny the possibility of unequivocal excavation and the revelation of essence. This can be seen in "The Origin of the Work of Art", 1936, and Gadamer's *Truth and Method*, 1960.

[343] David Joselit, "Marking, Scoring, Storing, and Speculating (on Time)", in *Painting Beyond Itself*, 17.

deconstructive approaches position the object of painting, though in varying manners, as a cipher through which one might come to consider the personal, social, political and historical. Thus, within these formulations, there is nothing left to examine.[344]

1	The time taken to conceive, plan, carry out and display a work
2	Paintingtime?
3	The time taken to recognise, decode, understand, appreciate and value a work

Table 10: Paintingtime

2.4: Towards: The Social History of Art

Those engaged in the social history of art, and its feminist extension, sought to remove the brackets that, to formalists at least, acted to maintain a separation between the work of art and its situatedness in the world—what Caroline Jones referred to (in relation to Clark's work on Jackson Pollock) as, "the largest possible modernist frame".[345] Their efforts, though well-intentioned and, at times, monumental in scope,

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[344] Nothing communicable—in line with Wittgenstein's claim that: "[t]he limits of language mean the limits of my world" (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 74).

[345] Caroline Jones, *Eyesight Alone*, 275. Edmund Husserl's concept of a bracketing of ideas (*epoché*), or the phenomenological reduction – the suspension of judgments about the natural world in favour of judgments as to one's experience of it – developed out of Kant's distinction between the *noumenon* and the *phenomenon* (the thing itself and the thing as it appears). Though the methods and strategies of the social history of art predated the emergence of Arnold Hauser's seminal work *The Social History of Art*, 1951, it was Hauser (1892-1978) who redefined art historical enquiry as the pursuit of an understanding of the influence of social structures on objects of cultural production, and from an overtly Marxist orientation. Hauser's overarching trajectory decreed that art shifted from an intuitive naturalism to a formalised symbolism, which encompassed abstraction, then again, to a hierarchical realism, as society became increasingly bourgeois from the Enlightenment onwards. This became known as vulgar Marxism, from which later historians of a social persuasion moved away. In *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, 1973, T. J. Clark (1943-) elucidates a series of theoretical problems by tying them to concrete situations, not in order to provide an account of practice in and of itself, in the manner of Fry or Greenberg, but to attempt to gauge to what extent societal specificities impact on practices that result from them (and how these practices could be seen to embody or relate to such concerns). Clark, influenced by what he termed the ambition of the art historians of the first half of the century, including Panofsky, sought to investigate the effects of revolution on modern painting: binding art (object, style and content) to the conditions of life. The best example of Clark's early method is perhaps his treatment of *A Burial at Ornans*, 1949-50 (**Fig. 3A**), by Gustave Courbet (1819-1877), in which the painting can be seen to evidence the increased sophistication of peasant politics and a sense of burgeoning class-consciousness. In *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*, Griselda Pollock (1949-), with Rozsika Parker (1945-2010), 1981, in building on earlier works in which she examined the paintings and the context of the paintings of Jean Francois Millet (1818-1875), Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) and Mary Cassatt (1844-1926), challenges a host of culturally embedded myths and assumptions about women artists, while, in the process, demonstrating the constructedness of male reputations during the early modernist period. Here, practice becomes rooted firmly in a vast network of interconnected forces from which the object emerges as confirmation. *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*, 1984, by Rozsika Parker (1945-2010), charted, through a detailed analysis of a wide range of domestic items and practices, the separation of the arts and crafts,

acted to doubly situate the work of art: within the macrocosm of socio-political forces and the microcosm of psychological determinates—within a world of artists and others (of politics and its subjects).[346] This advanced the now-naturalised idea that material forms of cultural production operate both as panes of glass and as reflective surfaces—as transparent mirrors.[347] In positing the object of painting as evidence of conditions that reside outside of the object of painting, such analyses took the form of extended personal anthropologies, wherein an abundance of biographical, psychological and societal drivers were siphoned through works whose arrangements and linguistic particularities revealed only that which they stood in place of.[348] Works became *informing of*. To adopt this position unmodified is to declare the match *modernist painting* finished, yet, as Bois has pointed out, this does not in itself denote that the game *painting* is now over.[349]

Fig. 3A

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exposing the basis of hierarchical distinctions between *masculine* arts and *feminine* crafts. For the most part, the social history of art drew from Marxist and neo-Marxist criticism, including that of the Frankfurt School thinkers. More recently, in *The Sight of Death: An Experiment in Art Writing,* 2006 (through an extended analysis of two paintings by Poussin), T. J. Clark has employed phenomenological analysis in support of the personal and the socio-political. Raymond Williams fused aspects of humanism and Marxism, to ground the social and the ideological (and Cultural Studies) in history.

[346] What, to Roger Fry, would amount to a world of story.

[347] That the work could be seen through (to its originating forces), and yet serve to reflect use and intention also.

[348] Adrian Forty, *Objects of Desire: Design and Society Since 1750*, 8. In "The Age of World Picture", 1938, Heidegger provides an account of the anthropological, which I will consider in *Chapter 4*.

[349] Yve-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model*, 242.

Here, paintings endured so long as they pointed towards *other* (and away from *paint-thing*).[350] Within this framework, a work's success relies on the readability of socially constructed systems of signification: presented, decoded and re-interpreted in the object's wake—staking claims as to the object's reach. What, then, of the role of the vehicle of painting – outside of its function as a translator of modern experience – and of the legitimacy of a methodology that construes the work as evidence of something whose identity resides elsewhere?[351] To adopt a social approach in respect of painting is to consider the work as that which signposts a historical or personal moment inscribed on – and operational through – a thing/work of wholly indeterminate nature.

2.4.1: Choice: Image Begets Image

A painting is the product of manipulations that, in tandem with the processes that determine its resting form, act to fix the paint to which these concerns attest. To account for the social in this narrower sense requires a consideration of what it is that binds the maker to the painting.[352] Such a concern – an experiential one on the part of the maker, as well as an ontological one (in that it helps determine the being of the painting) – sits closer to Rosenberg's *arena* than it does to Greenberg's *picture plane*, as a first order line of inquiry.[353] As a painter, aware of the role played by choice, an appeal to a more empirical scrutiny of behaviour seems particularly useful. To gauge the extent to which an action is the result of choice is to extend Riegl's formalist considerations so as to include the processes of *forming* (in place and time), and to circumscribe the social through an emphasis on that which impacts most directly on the founding of the painting – the hand – whose enabler is the very stuff of painting.[354]

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[350] Bill Readings, *New Art History*, Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal, 1994, accessed September 13, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=danAEcnlS-o.

[351] Which includes its medium and fashioning.

[352] To address the factors which regulate the form that an object takes.

[353] Fundamental ontology, to Heidegger, is a shift from traditional ontology, evidenced in the works of Leibniz and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775-1854), which sought to ask: *Why there is what there is*? Heidegger, however, set out to ask: *What is it to be*? This move towards the fundamental pushes ontology from the *ontic* (a concern for entities) towards the *ontological* (a concern for being as such). Such speculation is fundamental, in so far as an understanding of being must take into account how it is that entities arrive as entities in the first instance (in order to become sources of speculation). Language is thus situated as a second-order response (in that it works to discover knowledge of) to a first order condition, namely: the condition from which language operates to discover knowledge of.

[354] Including extensions to the hand.

2.4.2: Dawkins and the Behaviour of Chicks

In "A Threshold Model of Choice Behaviour", Richard Dawkins considers the behaviour patterns of chicks.[355] Of particular interest here is the notion of decision-making, and also that of instigation. The mechanism of choice (what it is that permits a decision to do one thing and not another) is considered, by Dawkins, to be difficult to determine from random observation alone, and so, in his paper, he sets out to study the stimuli required in order for a chick to choose one of two alternatives when faced with a moment of decision (the chicks are offered a choice of blue, red and green spots, presented alternately). He subsequently proposes a choice threshold model.[356]

Behaviours, he concludes, derive impetus from more than direct stimuli; and, in earlier ethnological experiments, fluctuating behaviours had been identified as having been activated by the same drive or excitation, but at different thresholds. In other words, behaviour patterns were tied to situations, with some behaviours visible only under specific conditions (higher thresholds), and more common behaviours evident at other times (lower thresholds). Therefore, behaviour fluctuated in respect of variable thresholds, which determined type. And so, when faced with a moment of choice: "an animal either chooses the preferred one or chooses completely indiscriminately; the less preferred stimulus [...] only [...] chosen during periods of non-discrimination".[357]

In other experiments, Dawkins concludes that the movements of a chick's head and beak during feeding time form cyclical patterns. Once a chick had engaged in this or that feeding procedure or series of movements, there was little or no chance of the sequence becoming broken prior to its having completed the cycle. During a particular routine, the chick acted as if having no freedom to choose to stop, redirect attention, or modify its comportment. Having started, it would surely finish, and, on finishing, pause and begin again. Between cycles, the chick's behaviour was unpredictable.

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[355] Richard Dawkins, "A Threshold Model of Choice Behaviour", 1969, accessed February 27, 2015, https://richarddawkins.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/The-attention-threshold-model.pdf. Before his pioneering work in evolutionary biology – and his more recent advocacy of fundamentalist atheism – Dawkins undertook an extended series of experiments on chicks in order to determine response times and patterns to repeated stimuli, so as to understand the relationship between cause and effect within a specified context.
[356] Behaviorism has been criticised, notably by Noam Chomsky (1928-), on the grounds that it does not examine mental processes. Therefore, it has nothing to say about internal causality, emotion, selfhood and the employment of language. Here, such concerns are either peripheral or redundant.
[357] Richard Dawkins, "A Threshold Model of Choice Behaviour", 1969, 131.

Though these insights illuminate the behaviours of chicks under test conditions, the conclusions drawn from Dawkins's research might prove to be helpful in shedding light on the workings of what Harold Rosenberg termed, *the act of painting*: informed by what Merleau-Ponty referred to as, *Cézanne's doubt*. An understanding of the constitution of an image: of what the painter chooses to paint, of why he chooses to paint it in respect of what he has already painted, and of the likelihood of him choosing, offers a chance to gauge the extent to which images generate images.[358] The choice of mark (and its realisation) bears upon the distribution of paint. This is useful when considering forms of painting in which the paint takes the lead—where behaviours with regard to material usage have a say in the image's formation.

2.4.3: Working off

Paint is the constant restriction in painting. Other things come and go, and yet the paint of painting stays. To work through it is to work off it, with choices as to how to modify (or when not to modify) made throughout the process of constructing a work. The fluidity of paint plays a central role in the determination of that which paint becomes. This has something to do with forming speed and with reaction speed—the time it takes for the paint to form shapes and for those shapes to be recognised as images. The more fluid the paint, the quicker the line or area extends to cover the ground, and in the process conceal or highlight areas of the surface, establishing new surfaces from which to begin again. Once recognised as an image, the choice of what to do next is modified in accordance with what is now the case. Image begets image.

Within painting, the notion of a threshold appears problematic, in part a result of the difficulty in identifying the parameters of the painter's environment (a consequence of the plurality of painting practices)—what would serve to constitute useful data and help to determine a limit to choice within respective practices? And, could such findings be applied to discover a general law? If so, to what end? Besides, what, one might ask, would the painter be required to exceed in order that a particular reaction might take place, and how is this to be quantified?[359] Also, at what point (or points) in

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[358] My own, for instance.

[359] To painters, the conditions of practice vary considerably, and considerations of difference must address the following: the setting in which the work takes place (*en plein air* or studio), the method of image generation (transcription from life; working-up from photographs or else finding the image in the paint), and the method of application employed (brush, stick, knife, etc.).

the construction of a work might a threshold be determinable? And finally, what of modes of painting where the material of paint appears not to take the lead?[360]

2.5: Looking and Reading

Art & Language, the most rigorous of the conceptual projects of the 1960s and 1970s, questioned the critical assumptions of recent arts practice and all that supported it—value, reception, taste, methods of production, even criticism itself became the subject of extended critique.[361] Drawing on linguistics, the singular presumption, in following Wittgenstein's assertion that: "the limits of my language means the limits of my world", was that that visual practices are reducible to language.[362] As such, Art & Language refuted the notion that a work can be looked at and read at the same time.[363] The stakes of this antithesis can seen in Buchloh's comment in respect of Sol LeWitt, that: "LeWitt's work (in its dialogue with [Jasper] Johns's legacy of paradox) insisted on forcing the inherent contradictions of […] two spheres (that of the perceptual experience and that of the linguistic experience) into the highest possible relief".[364] Art & Language helped to lay the foundation for what Bois would later redeploy as the *morphological* and the *structural*. However, an important question remains, namely: what happens when/if language breaks down—when pictures no longer picture?[365]

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[360] Modes of painting rather unlike my own.

[361] Art & Language was an English conceptual art group that emerged in the late 1960s in Coventry. Members included: Terry Atkinson (1939-), Michael Baldwin (1945-), Mel Ramsden (1944-), David Bainbridge (1941-1913), Charles Harrison (1942-2009), and Harold Hurrell (1940-). The group set out to question the foundations and assumptions of recent practice, in particular the legacies of Greenbergian formalism, aesthetics more generally, and the role of the market. Operating mostly through text and diagrammatic information, through their eponymous journal, the group expanded into the 1970s, crossing the Atlantic. By the 1980s, painting was re-incorporated into the scope of the project, through not without irony.

[362] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 74. Even if sense data precedes language, its resonance (and its sense) requires language in order that it might become communicable to others. The argument is analogous to that levelled at the notion of beauty prior to Kant. Then, reason provided a brake and an order to sense data, and thereby permitted it a role as knowledge. From the late nineteenth century, philosophy – in the works of Gottlob Frege (1848-1925) and Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) – lurched decisively away from metaphysics and fashionable German Idealism towards the study of language (Russell began as a young Hegelian, until a closer reading of his works revealed to him the fallaciousness of all Hegel had to say about mathematics), in what became known as the linguistic turn. At approximately the same time, Edmund Husserl published *Logical Investigations*, in two volumes, in 1900 and 1901.

[363] Elena Crippen has noted that, to Charles Harrison, the artwork was a form of expansive location, which brought about its own theoretical frame. Costello contends that, to Kant, artworks denote expressions of aesthetic ideas, which encompass both content and the presentation of content ("Greenberg's Kant and the Fate of Aesthetics in Contemporary Art Theory", 12). He presents Greenberg's reading of Kant as partial, in its prioritisation of form.

[364] Benjamin Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969", 113.

[365] The corollary being: what might looking and not reading be?

The negation of the idea of a vehicle on which language is carried provided legitimacy for the consideration of text-based works, and for the acceptance of notions of intermedia and interdisciplinarity practices – from the late 1960s onwards – whilst sidestepping questions of medium in respect of discrete practices and processes. This – along with a broader rejection of *stuff* – is made explicit in Douglas Huebler's comment on the Conceptual enterprise that: "The world is full of objects, more or less interesting; I do not wish to add any more".[366] Terry Smith has argued that the widespread use of the term postconceptual within recent and contemporary practice serves to position conceptual art within a late modernist trajectory, re-legitimising its tenets through the notion of a continuum.[367] Moreover, postconceptual becomes indicative, too, of a shift from immeasurable idea back to material measurability.

Outside of the laws of quantum physics, *idea* is considered immaterial.[368] It opposes the somatic, occupying the world as iteration without substance. Within the scaffolding of conceptual practice, painting becomes operable in/as language: and language establishes rather than reveals.[369] And so, that which is not yet established cannot be revealed. The medium of paint, and the work which it forms, become simply that which can be seen to operate *through/in/as* language. However, when we are confronted by a linguistic formulation that we do not understand, a problem arises, and it would appear not to be a problem of interpretation.[370] To illustrate this, let us take the example of comparable words drawn from two irrefutably disparate languages.

I choose English and Mandarin for their lack of similarity (visual and spoken), and also for the fact of my understanding only one of them.[371] Within groupings of

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[366] Frances Colpitt, *Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990), 133.
[367] Terry Smith, "One and Three Ideas: Conceptualism Before, During, and After Conceptual Art," e-flux journal, vol. 29, 2011, accessed April 24, 2015, http://www.e-flux.com/journal/one-and-three-ideas-conceptualism-before-during-and-after-conceptual-art/.
[368] Within philosophy, *idea* is perhaps most materially manifest in Leibniz's notion of indivisible monads, in *The Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason*, 1714.
[369] According to structuralism and poststructuralism.
[370] In "Against Interpretation", 1966, Susan Sontag argues that it is the practice of approaching works of art in order to interpret them that sustains the notion that there is such a thing as content. It is worth noting Sontag's support of photographers such as Alfred Stieglitz, who thought that to be taken seriously photography must operate in accordance with its own particularities (and thus free itself from its connection to painting).
[371] Mandarin is a grouping of Chinese languages. Written characters can denote individual words or syllables within words. Mandarin utilises both pictographic and ideographic forms. Thus, sometimes

European languages, resemblances of sound or form would likely become apparent sooner rather than later, leading related words to related objects or concepts. We can safely assume that English is not, in this sense, *visible* in Mandarin, by which I mean that that which an English word refers to – its referent – is not accessible through the written mandarin equivalent, and vice versa. From now on, in order to avoid repetition, I will use only the example of an English reader approaching Mandarin, though the converse – a Mandarin reader approaching English – is implied also.

2.5.1: Chair and 椅子: In and of Itself

The English word for the object-image chair is *chair*, and the Mandarin equivalent is 椅子. If both languages are understood by the subject, then the signifiers *chair* and 椅子 produce the signified chair (the image/concept of a chair). Within practice, linguistic equivalence – and the semiological loop – is most clearly seen in Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* (**Fig. 3B**).[372] Through placing a definition of the word *chair*, a photograph of a chair, and the chair itself in close proximity, word and image were shown to be equivalent signifiers for the common signified—the chair itself.[373] What is particularly interesting, here, is the interchangeability within Kosuth's closed system. All instances of *chair* stand as both signifier and signified within the work itself, none having to draw from an outside. However, there is clearly an outside – that which is not the work – which establishes the work as a work, and which, in turn, permits the setting up of the work's microcosm of signification. Kosuth's chairs attain equivalence collectively – as a unit – and only in comparison with what the unit is not.

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elements within characters represent objects through visual likeness. More often than not, however, they point to abstract ideas or methods of pronunciation.

[372] Assembled in 1965, Kosuth (Joseph, 1945-) claimed this moment in conceptual practice as evidence that art *makes* meaning: in this instance, the meaning of equivalence, and with it a platform for the discussion as to the nature of meaning. To Kosuth, this piece served as an orderly demonstration of the successful conflation of work, context and idea, to become newly operable as concept.

[373] Here, chair itself serves to denote the object to which the concept corresponds. For the sake of the example, when I use *chair* without qualification, I mean simply the concept of chair as a mental construct, as opposed to the sign for chair (that which invokes the mental concept of a chair).

Fig. 3B

Notwithstanding, let us return to the primary example. An English-only reader would, as it were, *see through* the signifying word *chair* to the signified behind it (to what it is that the word chair stands for). If *behind* is too loaded a term – carrying with it the implication of something hidden – then perhaps *instead* is better. Another way of putting this is to *see as*. The chair – as constituted in the mind – would come to replace the word as written. However, when the English reader approached the Mandarin word 椅子, he would see not a chair but a series of shaped *things*, perhaps comprehendible (if a language user) as a symbol for something not yet knowable and, in following an inference of Wittgenstein's, not yet sayable.[374] Incidentally, the employment of a shape as a symbol amounts simply to the positing of one thing as another.[375]

If it is a given that the English reader would have no access to the image or concept chair through the symbol 椅子, then it must follow that either he would formulate something else to stand in for chair (as associative signified), or else be confronted by 椅子. Take the first possibility: as one confronted by 椅子 without knowledge of

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[374] The notion of the *thing* (and *thinglyness*) will be explored in *Chapter 4*, with regard to the ontology of painting and, in particular, to Heidegger's conception of an origin. Here, *things* might be an inappropriate or unsatisfactory term, but I use it in this instance simply as a commonplace term to designate a non-designated entity, or, more accurately, an entity whose designation amounts to a generic and unspecified indistinction.

[375] Gombrich, in *Art and Illusion: The Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, 1960; Nelson Goodman (1906-1998), in *Languages of Art*, 1968; W. J. T. Mitchell, in *Iconology*, 1987; and Norman Bryson (1949-), in *Vision and Painting*, 1983, reach a consensus here, and I will consider their ideas in *Part 3* of this chapter.

Mandarin, I conjure something like a slashed *7*, or a rectilinear form of the letter *O*, or aerials perhaps, or branches in winter, or even a Zodiac sign? I grasp for a resolution, by which I mean *for something instead of that which I am confronted by*—something resolvable *in language*. In assuming the question to be something like *what can I see*, I force a reading and drag forth an image or concept to replace 椅子. Take the second: to be confronted by 椅子 without reference (the conjured associative signified), would be to permit a hermeneutic hiatus within which to perhaps glimpse 椅子 *for what it is*.

If, having forced a reading, and asked myself *what is it that I* see, is it then possible to return to an unforced position of encounter with 椅子 (with that which could not be identified in place of that which displaced it)? This example proposes that when confronted by shapes that we assume to have linguistic content, but which we cannot *read* (accessible to our sensory apparatus…to what Laura Marks has termed *haptic visuality*), we proceed to search: to strive for meaning through formal association.[376] This *striving for* is a pursuit of that which lies *beyond*—we distort, edit and fill in the gaps (likening this to that). In short: we invent. When this proves difficult, or when we no longer believe in the veracity of our interpretations, we confront the notion of a *some(thing) else*, whose identity is non-communicable along linguistic channels. Whatever this something might be, its life is precarious and its opacity fugitive: for we grope our way gradually back towards the safety of language—the safety of the text.[377]

2.6: Barthes: From Work to Text

In "From Work to Text", Roland Barthes built on "The Death of the Author", in order to determine the mechanism by which, newly liberated, the reader might inscribe the

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[376] Here, formal association attests merely to a pre or post-linguistic presence. Laura Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment and the Senses* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000).

[377] To Barthes, Foucault and Derrida, the text served as a disruption to naturalised notions of authorship, history and the fixity of locations of meaning. Thus conceived, the text dissembles meaning, acting as a critique of unification and presence. Picking up Heidegger's assertion that, "language speaks", 1950, and, in following Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), Derrida developed deconstruction as a formal demonstration of how it is that language acquires meaning. The result of a play of binary oppositions, language is, Derrida contends, never an unmediated expression of the non-linguistic. And so, meaning is never wholly present, in that it is always deferred (reliant on that which, within this oppositional framework, constructs and informs the particularity of its expression). Derrida's target is logocentrism within Western thought (the belief that words express an unmediated reality or presence), which he expounds in *Of Grammatology*, 1967, *Speech and Phenomena*, 1967, and *Writing and Difference*, 1967.

work.[378] He asserts that: "over the past several years, a change has been taking place in our ideas about language and about the (literary work)".[379] This is not a real break, but, rather, an epistemological shift. Barthes writes of: "the relativization of the *scriptor's*, the reader's and the observer's […] relationships".[380] In so doing, he distinguishes between work and text.[381] "The work is concrete, occupying a portion of a book space, [whilst the text is] a methodological field, [existing] only in discourse, [to be] *experienced only as an activity, a production*".[382] This form of production orients itself towards representation…towards image. In *Section 3* of the essay, Barthes states that: "[a] work whose integrally symbolic nature one conceives, perceives, and receives is a text".[383]

Symbolism is common to both work and text, and Barthes's analysis is thus intended to determine type.[384] As Hal Foster points out in *The Return of the Real*, Barthes wanted Pop Art to, *desymbolize the object*.[385] Thus, text is required to achieve a form of *irreducible plurality*, answering: "not to an interpretation, liberal though it may be, but to an explosion, a dissemination. Every text being itself the intertext of another text belongs to the *intertextual*".[386] Intertextuality denotes a type of relationship – of a something to a something – yet Barthes stops short of speculation as to the text's constitution outside of its use as that from which one might derive great pleasure— what Saunders termed the nuts and bolts of the signifier, namely: the medium.[387]

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[378] 1968 and 1971 respectively.
[379] Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text", 1971, in *Aesthetics*, ed. Susan Feagin and Partick Maynard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 270. Barthes attributes this change to developments in literary anthropology, Marxism and psychoanalysis.
[380] Ibid., 271.
[381] Barthes erects a scaffolding of seven tiers.
[382] Ibid.
[383] Ibid.
[384] In *Symbolism*, Monroe C. Beardsley (1915-1985) considers the three bases of symbolism: the natural or actual (sharing properties with), the conventional (based on shared decision), and the vital (how it is that the image has functioned in history).
[385] Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1996), 128.
[386] Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text", 272.
[387] Matt Saunders, "Thread, Pixel, Grain", in *Painting Beyond Itself*, 175. Saunders retains the sense of material distinction—of a physical vehicle that carries language with it. Intertextual analyses, according to Gérard Genette (1930-) (*Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, 1997), are those concerned with pastiche, allusion, plagiarism, translation and quotation.

2.7: The Ontology of the Text

Let us consider the text and its entanglements. The following analogy might prove helpful.[388] Imagine a form of super software: a multi-functioning, cutting edge package, inside of which all potential bugs have been ironed out and any propensity to malfunction eradicated completely. To become operable, this software requires an equally high performance piece of hardware—a powerful system that will allow the software to operate at full capacity and to fulfil its unarguable potential. Behind the notion of the text is a built-in assumption that, to continue the analogy, we (the reader/viewer/writer of the text) are the vehicle into/onto which such software is loaded (Barthes's referred to this as *jouissance* or, "a pleasure without separation").[389]

This dualism is useful in permitting a visualisation of the functioning of the text and, moreover, in allowing for a distinction to be made between inscriber and inscribed.[390] The hardware is inscribed, the software inscribes.[391] And yet, this in itself fails to dispense with a sense of that which lies between, either in the form of the thing of the inscriber or, indeed, the thing of the inscribed. This *lying between* software and hardware – inscriber and inscribed – is in fact central to understanding the problematic relationship between medium and language in painting. There are two points to consider: first, if, to function, the software requires the hardware – and if the being of the software (the inscription/text) evades ontological consideration – can we safely dispense with the being of the hardware (the inscriber) too? One would assume that textual inscription could not, as it were, reciprocate the favour, inscribe the inscriber and thus remove its being. Secondly, hardware and software are requiring of a third manifestation, namely: electricity, which works to fire the system. Is this a second act of inscription, or perhaps something else? What of its being, and of its meetings?

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[388] Thomas S. Palin, "Something and Nothing: A Consideration of the Ontology of Painting" (MA diss., University of Manchester, 2006), 33-34. This analogy, in two paragraphs, is, for the most part, a re-editing of an analogy that I originally devised for my Masters dissertation, yet which, in revised form, is central to this exposition also, and has been formative in my thinking about a key aspect of the project.
[389] Ibid., 74.
[390] Hubert Dreyfus (1929-2017), in "Alchemy and Artificial Intelligence", 1965, and *What Computers Can't Do: A Critique of Artificial Reason*, 1972, in following Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, considers the whole artificial intelligence problem to be based on a false assumption, namely: that the brain and mind are mappable onto the dualistic framework of hardware and software. To Dreyfus, human beings are not rule-followers, but, instead, piece a (their) world together in fragmentary fashion, from the processes of coping, modifying, accepting, refuting—in short: from living…from being-in-the-world and, more importantly, from being-with-the-world.
[391] Epigraphic scrutiny pays attention to the inscription, the inscriber's tools and the inscription bed, in order to shed light on the meanings of material and linguistic particularities, as well as context, purpose and age.

Part 3: Mimesis and Medium

3.1: Being Like Something: Gombrich and Goodman

Intertextuality relieves representation of its determinism whilst shifting the burden towards the interpreter/maker of meaning.[392] The impulse to read is the impulse to relate reading to that to which reading attests, and, in attesting, to test its claim to verisimilitude. The question of mimesis (posited by Plato) forms part of an ontological question, with implications for hermeneutics.[393] Post-photography (and post-abstraction), it remains key to understanding assumptions that lie behind the capacity of one thing to hide or subvert the identity of another. To what extent a painting is *like* something else is of significance with regard to matters of construction. Within modernism, abstraction lessened the importance of mimesis. The point of revisiting it, here, is to show how mimetic frameworks operate in respect of painting's medium.[394]

3.1.1: Schemata

To open this out is to confront what Ernst Gombrich termed the psychology of pictorial representation.[395] In his concept of *schemata*, Gombrich posits an involved process of individual and, by extension, societal and epochal trial and error, whereby the artist seeks – through a manipulation of materials – to correct (and thus improve) his work in accordance with what amounts to a three-pronged positioning of

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[392] See: Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author", in *Image, Music, Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill, 1977).

[393] Prior to the late 18th century, meaning in the arts was, in effect, taken for granted. Literature and art tended to concern themselves with evaluation and principles (moral and aesthetic truisms). Good art was deemed to be transparent, and, therefore, to be requiring of *interpretation* meant to be unclear. The Romantic period, and the foregrounding of *great* and *obscure* literature, legitimised hermeneutics, and it subsequently developed as a discipline and method in its own right. The question of mimesis formed a central part of debates in the period after Abstract Expressionism, reinvigorated no doubt by Greenberg's emphasis on opticality and flatness – on methods of resisting mimesis – and on his dislike of narrative. Authenticity became important. To Plato, there are two realities. First, there is the reality that we perceive through the five senses (the world of things). Secondly, there is the realm of *forms*, to which things correspond. This realm occupies the position of *another dimension*, accessible through reason (thinking), and is therefore approachable, yet lies outside of direct experience. And yet, intuition is reliant, in Plato's analysis, on such outside absolutes, or else how might one comprehend the truth or falsehood of statements? How, for instance, could one distinguish between a lion and a lamb, if *lionness* and *lambness* did not first inform one's understanding of what one intuits through one's sensory apparatus, and in advance of the alternately ferocious or cuddly particularities of encounter?

[394] Refer to W. J. T. Mitchell's comment, in an interview with Asbjørn Grønstad and Øyvind Vågnes, that: "images do not belong exclusively to any single discipline", accessed March 29, 2016, http://www.visual-studies.com/interviews/mitchell.html.

[395] Psychology, in the non-oedipal sense of having the processes of mind acquire knowledge of things (images, nature, the World, art). *Art and Illusion* was first published in 1960. Moreover, Caroline Jones details Greenberg's relationship to Gombrich, and, moreover, to the positivism to which both he and Gombrich remained indebted (*Eyesight Alone*, 108-119).

approximations.[396] These approximations draw, in the first instance, from what it is that he expects to see (from prior experience); in the second, from what it is that he actually sees; and, in the third, from what he could possibly see (the result of societal conventions, known artistic advances and embedded cultural norms).[397]

3.1.2: Agreeing Use

In *Languages of Art*, and in opposition to Gombrich, Nelson Goodman points to the absurdity of an idea of representation built on resemblance. To him, likeness is determined in its entirety by systems of symbols, established in spite of an external world not in conjunction with it—all such systems are, therefore, systems of convention, including the system of perspective drawing, where truth is to be validated not by how accurate the drawing renders reality, but by how successful the particular framework is in terms of sanctioning meaning.[398] And so, a one-point perspective drawing cannot be *like the world*, in part because the conditions could not be replicated whereby one could experience the drawing *as the world*.[399] In Goodman's analysis, then, a painted flower would represent only how a flower could be within a local system. Determination encompasses both ideas and material considerations.[400]

To Gombrich, the particular seeing that resulted in, for example, Giotto's *Ognissanti Madonna* (**Fig. 3C**) was no less acute than that which resulted in Michelangelo's *The Delphic Sybil* (**Fig. 3D**).[401] Merely, Giotto's inherited schemata served to determine the nature and limit of the Madonna's verisimilitude, as, two centuries later, did Michelangelo's in respect of the *Sybil*. To Goodman, however, both of these paintings would operate on a symbolic level only, acquiring currency within their respective systems of epistemological exchange, and the schemata, then, would serve as a means

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[396] Ernst, H. Gombrich, *Art & Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (London: Phaidon Press), 1960.

[397] Perceptions born of a biological inclination, ability or propensity. For more on this, consider Paul Richter's essay "On Professor Gombrich's Model of Schema and Correction", 1976.

[398] Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis: Hacket, 1968).

[399] Scientific tests have revealed that the eye becomes blind when forced by artificial means to stop moving. Incidentally, a two-point or three-point perspective drawing would be equally unlike the world.

[400] External criteria are framed by language, in the sense that language *brings appearance to*. Kant's distinction between the *noumenon* and *phemomenon* is perhaps of interest also (providing a parallel, though of a contrasting nature), in so far as the subject's sensory apparatus is seen to restrict access to *what is*, instead providing only likeness, resemblance or impression.

[401] Giotto's is a later work, originally painted for the Ognissanti Franciscan Church in Florence. Michelangelo's is from the Sistine Chapel ceiling, the Vatican, Rome.

to hide a fictitious perceptual join between the world and that which represents the world, supported by the notion of a medium in which the world is *found*. Impositions on one's ability to see, whether culturally determined or the result of physical differences – formed one way or another – were not the point. Goodman concerns himself entirely with the construction of the world *in/as art*—not with how art reflects a world *out there* to varying degrees of mimetic accuracy or approached resemblance.

Fig. 3C

Fig. 3D

To Donald Judd, being *like something* was by definition not being the something in question. An essential problem posed by painting (and the reason for his dissatisfaction with it) lay, first, in it being a composite of discrete elements, and, secondly, in it drawing inescapably on the logic of picturing (*seeing through*).[402] Even at its most reduced or abstracted, picturing allows for a painting to be, in part, elsewhere.[403] Staff sees this as at the root of painting's (late modernist) identity – a desire to retain and yet free itself from the past – which serves to position it as a, "conflicted medium".[404] Nevertheless, Judd's objection to painting's illusionism

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[402] Determined for the visual arts, since the Renaissance, by perspective drawing. Alberti's window (developed by Leon Battista Alberti, 1404-1472) provided a method of understanding—of conceptualising the presentation of distance on a flat surface (*finestra aperta*—window to the outside). Using a grid of threads, Alberti's method foregrounded the geometry of the world itself as something to be looked at, which brought with it a consideration of one's relation to what was being seen. The window – whether implicit, as in the case of Bellini, or explicit, as in Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840) – permitted one the sense of being elsewhere (sometimes in several places simultaneously). Within modernist painting, Matisse returned to the window throughout his career, notably in *The Open Window*, 1905, *The Window at Collioure*, 1914, and *The Open Window*, 1918.

[403] Judd's objection is rooted, also, according to John Yau (1950-), in a rejection of metaphor. The aftermath of the Holocaust and the atomic bomb necessitated a rethinking of the structures of meaning. Donald Judd on Ovation TV, accessed June 26, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t0stpkzsNDU.

[404] Craig Staff, *After Modernist Painting*, 51.

remains an endorsment of symbolism.[405] In the hermetically sealed work of the Minimalist practitioner, reference had no place, unless, as in the case of Carl Andre's *Equivalent VIII* (**Fig. 3E**) or Judd's *Untitled* (**Fig. 3F**), as a form of self-reference, through the use of multiple units—as if in referencing itself through the repetition of a basic unit, the minimal object forced out the possibility of referencing something else.[406] This, however, is illusory (in that it is wholly ideological), and returns the debate to the ruminations of Fried, and to presentness and the presence of a world outside.[407]

Fig. 3E

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[405] In that Minimalism is symbolic of the idea of a refutation of picturing. Hal Foster, in *The Return of the Real*, 1996, makes an interesting point that Pop Art represented an antithetical genealogy in respect of Minimalism, in that it committed to illusionism and forms of visual realism (with images attached to referents), culminating in the photorealism of the 1970s.

[406] Andre's work consists of 120 firebricks (2 high x 6 x 10). Judd's work consists of 10 rectilinear steel boxes of blue anodised aluminum, with acrylic sheeting, and equal space to form ratios. Reference, here, means only pointing towards. Thus, difficulties in distinguishing between reference and resemblance can be bypassed. It is feasible to state that an individual brick in Andre's work resembles another brick in the same work, and yet, at the same time, deny that the first brick represents the second. Reference, on the other hand, sits closer to resemblance, with *brick A* able to point towards *brick B*, and thus to not stand in its place. Peter Osborne (*Anywhere or Not at All*, 82) presents Thierry de Duve's notion of Judd's absolute purification of painting – leaving only its object-character behind – as a form of positivism, to which those objecting must seek to locate a post-Duchampian negation.

[407] Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe has written of the difficulty (even the impossibility) of staring at a blank surface and not turning into depth, accessed December 19, 2017, http://nonsite.org/article/a-marginal-note-on-art-and-objecthood.

Fig. 3F

3.2: Perceptualism and Signification: Bryson and Mitchell

In the 1980s, Goodman's critique of Gombrich was re-considered from a structuralist angle by W. J. T. Mitchell and Norman Bryson.[408] If Gombrich was mistaken (as Bryson asserts in *Vision and Painting*), and painting is not a record of perception, then why is it that paintings – from ancient Egypt to Greece and Rome: from Giotto to Cézanne: from Picasso to Richter – present worlds of remarkable visual similarity? Perceptive difference seems circumscribed by possibility, or else a shared biological inclination to *see as*. Rothko stressed that his work contained no landscape.[409] When confronted, however, by one of his brooding works, such as *Rust and Blue* (**Fig. 3G**), only the most fervent anti-perceptualist would disavow the sense of immersion within an unmediated place of air and space akin to that with which we are familiar.[410]

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[408] Bryson, in more recent years, has cast his net wider, exploring both phenomenological and analytical approaches. See: *Visual Theory: Painting & Interpretation*, 1990.
[409] Rothko conceived the shapes in his painting as animate and not representational—perhaps akin to archetypes.
[410] First exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1961. Several times, Rothko described the layering of colour in his works from this time as creating an effect of inner light.

Fig. 3G

Here, paint dissolves. In *looking at*, to *look like*, or to *see as*, is to engender a disappearance. Bryson acknowledges the danger of a closed system of reference within Saussure's scheme, in which: "the sign is defined by formal means, as the product of oppositions among signs within".[411] In so doing, he asks how it is that signs interact with the world.[412] Had Gombrich been correct, the sign would amount to duplication only, and would have little claim to being a sign at all (according to Umberto Echo, a sign is a form that refers to something it is not).[413] Gombrich's difficulty arose from an attempt to account for differences between representations— why and how could perception differ from person to person and period to period?[414] Freed of the need to account for these differences, Bryson's difficulty amounts to a search for that which connects the sign to *the world*. An attempt to free his analysis of works from the perceptualism of Gombrich, whilst loosening a rigid structuralist

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[411] Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), iiv.

[412] Ibid., iiv-xiii. Saussure distinguishes between the signifier and the signified as dual components of the sign. His structuralist framework foregrounds the sign as constructed (operational within the specificity of a given context). The signified is thus *formed* through the signifier, which imparts knowledge of things only as meaning disseminated through the processes of signification.

[413] Umberto Echo, *Einführung in die Semiotik (Introduction to Semiotics)* (Munich, Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1972), 30.

[414] Gombrich has been criticised, too, for not addressing the various workings of abstract (non-representation) art. From c. 1935 (with the drafting of "The Origin of the work of Art"), epochal shifts in the nature of being became Heidegger's concern.

approach unable to escape its own system, leads to a discussion of: "signifying forces outside of the painting itself".[415] In a painting, these forces become visible—for visibility itself promotes the notion of signifying forces. In what serves as an endorsement of Bryson's phenomenological approach, Alan Paskow believes that:

> Many of the aestheticians who have written about symbolism, such as Monroe Beardsley, Richard Wollheim, Nelson Goodman, Erich Fromm, and Erwin Panofsky, have made the same basic mistake; that is, they have failed to understand the relationship between symbols and their worldly referents.[416]

3.2.1: There and Not There

Mitchell contends that the notion of an image depends on consciousness of the artifice of images, suggesting that humans have the ability to see something as both *there* and *not there*.[417]

> When a duck responds to a decoy, or when birds peck at grapes in the legendary paintings of Zeuxis, they are not seeing images: they are seeing other ducks, or real grapes—the things themselves, and not images of the things.[418]

Mitchell considers this in relation to a common and, to him, misleading distinction between real and mental images, which, in effect, partitions picture from medium. Nevertheless, the notion of an ability to say *there* and *not there* at the same time has an implication in respect of Greenberg's notion of flatness, and in regard of Krauss's rejection of pointing, and of Fried's circumscription of the conditions of encounter. In all three cases, *what is there* attests to *that which is not there*, and vice versa. In Greenberg's case, a mark on a surface acts to break the picture plane, thus awarding itself a dual identity as *in* and *out*. This arises from a familiarity with the conventions of perspective drawing.[419] To see *as image* one must not see that which permits one to

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[415] Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze*, 1983.

[416] Alan Paskow, *The Paradoxes of Art: A Phenomenological Investigation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 162. This bears comparison with Bois's suspicion of the dialectic's suitability as a tool to tie painting to the world (see: *Chapter 2: 4.1*).

[417] It is useful to reflect on Mitchell's example in connection with Art & Language's contention that a work cannot be looked at and read at the same time.

[418] W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 17.

[419] The human animal has the capacity to assemble likeness. For instance, the ancient Greeks assembled a host of characters with accessories from the alignment of the stars.

see as. This paradox, when applied, for instance, to Pollock's *Number 1: Lavender Mist* (**Fig. 3H**), would play out in sequential stages, as follows (**Table 11**):

Fig. 3H

Not Image	To see Pollock's drips as drips
	To see Pollock's drips as other than drips
Image	To see Pollock's painting as drips *and* anything other than drips, and to hide the latter beneath the former

Table 11: Not Image and Image

2.3.2: Thought Experiment: More than Material—Leonardo's Stains (**Appendix 3**)

When Leonardo da Vinci saw a battle scene in the stains on his studio wall, were those stains material or medium?[420] The answer rests on whether one takes the stains to be a work: if a non-work, they remain stains. As a work, they operate *through the stainness*

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[420] Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) advised young artists to use dirt and stain-covered walls to find inspiration (to overcome painter's block). In the twentieth century, the Surrealists developed automatic processes, such as grattage, frottage, decalcomania and exquisite corpse, to release the artist from deterministic modes of creativity and to, in following Freud, open the processes of making to the unconscious.

of *the stains*. Thus conceived – what Saunders would deem to be *a new possibility for material* – stains become medium, having enabled the work (now rooted to the particularity of its confluence with the wall).[421] A work doesn't relinquish stains, but remains *of stains*, and thus *of material*. Moreover, the medium appears as an effect of the social world, and not a literal thing, in so far as it is dependent on symbol, image and sign—on escapes from material.[422] Medium is not, then, dependent on a sense of intention having taken place (the spectator does not need to intuit prior intention): a pareidolia will suffice—faces in in the wallpaper or, for that matter, a face on Mars (**Fig. 3I**), the result of shaded rock formations photographed from the correct height.[423]
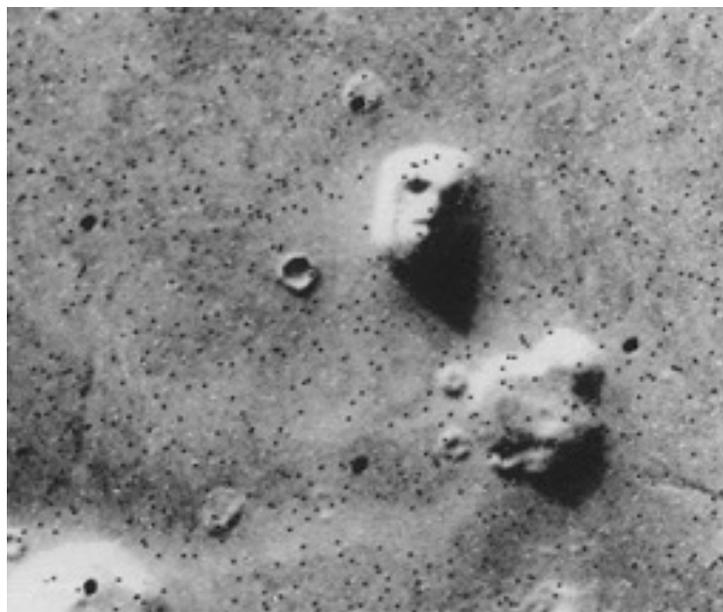
Fig. 3I

Seeing as brings with it a question of primary intention. To be art, there must be a sensed prior intention (whether there is intention or not, the spectator must act as if there is). Can medium be present, but not art? Yes, in this very face on Mars, where rocks become medium through the formulation of an image in spite of a lack of presumed prior intention (assuming that there is facial recognition along with a scepticism over the likelihood of alien design). Thus, it seems that one could misread

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[421] Matt Saunders, "Thread, Pixel, Grain", in *Painting Beyond Itself*, 175.

[422] On what Greenberg and Fried would call *picture*. To have language is, to Wittgenstein, to be a social being.

[423] Pareidolia is a psychological phenomenon whereby one perceives a pattern to exist where there isn't an intentional pattern. Faces in the wallpaper would serve as the most commonplace example, or seeing the house as a face, with the first floor windows becoming the eyes, and the door a nose. Correct, here, means permitting the said illusion operability.

Picasso's *Guernica* (**Fig. 3J**), yet still impute intention and, therefore, deem it to be art. In the very act of considering an object to be other than material, paint becomes medium.[424] To sum up: an image seen presupposes medium, and art presupposes intention, or else image would have only spatial effect—a Newman monochrome deploys the medium of paint, and a Rauschenberg blank canvas only material.[425]

Fig. 3J

3.3: Krauss: A Note on Resemblance and Proximity

As part of her exposition, in "Michel, Bataille et Moi", Krauss, in arguing for a Bataillean reading of Miro's early work (and modernism more generally), considers the functioning of different categories of sign.[426] Drawing from her work on the index,

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[424] Consider Saunders's distinction between medium and material (*Chapter 2: 4.2.3*).

[425] Michael Belshaw, email, 2017. Of relevance here, too, is whether discussions of medium (and form) can exists outside of discussions of art. Kosuth, writing under the pseudonym Arthur R. Rose, wrote that: "Being an artist now means to question the nature of art. If one is questioning the nature of painting, one cannot be questioning the nature of art. If an artist accepts painting (or sculpture), he is accepting the tradition that goes with it. That is because the word art is general and the word painting is specific. Painting is *a kind of art*. If you make paintings you are already accepting (not questioning) the nature of art. "Four Interviews", *Arts Magazine* (February, 1969), in Kristine Stiles, ed., *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artist's Writings* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, New York: University of California Press, 2012), 978.

[426] In *Formless: A User's Guide*, 1996 (to accompany an exhibition at the Centre Pompidou, Paris), Bois and Krauss consider the Bataillean concept of *formlessness*, 1929, applying it to visual practices of relatively recent times: including works by Jackson Pollock, Andy Warhol, Cindy Sherman and Robert Smithson (1938-1973). The authors contend that the *formless* (*l'informe*) has been subsumed beneath the Western privileging of skill (including forming and designing). In keeping with the ideas of George Bataille (1897-1962), the formless becomes a method (to be maintained) rather than a site or internal relationship. Thus, the incorporation or retention of dirt, pollution and detritus – as well as of varying forms of destructive modes of practice – are resurrected as productive strategies in the realisation of formless works.

she claims that photography evidences a type of sign that is the result of a physical cause.[427] She continues:

> Unlike the icon, a sign that relates to its referent through the axis of resemblance, or the *symbol*, where the relationship between sign and referent is arbitrary and conventional, the index has an existential connection to its meaning, with the result that it can only take place on the spot.[428]

The photochemical processes that result in the casting of a form of shadow (registering a trace of the object photographed), position the photograph as index.[429] Of particular interest is the notion of resemblance, which seemingly requires, in Krauss's analysis, and unlike either symbol or index, a degree of approximation—to be like something is clearly not to be the something in question.[430] All three designations share the property of unlikeness in this sense, and subsequently resemble differentially. Furthermore, is the proximal relationship of the index to the something that *takes place on the spot* an absolute distinction, and, if so, to what end? Whilst Krauss's intention is clearly to establish an indexical primacy, nearness is not quite near enough to ensure one a familiarity with the displaced site to which all manner of sign systems (not)point.

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[427] Rosalind Krauss, *Perpetual Inventory*, 169. In this work, Krauss draws heavily from the work of Peirce, who, in the 1860s, distinguished between the *iconic*, *symbolic* and *indexical* aspects of the sign. The iconic refers to resemblance, the symbolic denotes an object by virtue of agreement, and the indexical invokes actual (physical) connection.
[428] Ibid.
[429] Ibid.
[430] In respect of Gombrich, Goodman and Mitchell's formulations, and of earlier considerations too.

Chapter 4: Origins and Ends: Understanding Medium According to Heidegger's Truth

Part 1: Introduction

To formalists, the artwork owes its meaning to nothing save the validity of its discrete formal properties.[431] The dominant conceptual frameworks – from Duchamp, via Art & Language to the looser neo-conceptualism of today – position the work of art as idea (bringing with it the problem of a possible sliding scale).[432] The social history of art locates the work as a historical cipher—a message without a messenger. Though aesthetics has muddied the waters, the problematics of medium arise from doubts as to what it is that is present when a work of art is encountered, and also from an uncertainty as to the mechanism permitting one to read, interpret and *know* things.[433] To re-consider the operability of the medium is to work within a family of thought.[434] Here, it is also to seek to locate the whereabouts of the varying absents (and of the part-absents too) identified in *Chapter 3*, which include: painting's time, its picture, and its material.[435] If it is a mistake, then, to address a work as wholly physical – or else the product of incorporeal ideation – how might one hope to arrive at a sense of medium that locks-in the primary concerns of aforementioned models, and where might it be appropriate to draw a line between the language and thing of painting?

This chapter will consider the idea of truth (*aletheia*) – and of an origin of the work of art – developed by Martin Heidegger in his essay of 1936, and ponder its implications in respect of notions of material, language (picture) and medium.[436] Behind discourses

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[431] With Greenberg, form became inextricably linked to medium. I exclude Riegl from this, as his concept of *Kunstwollen* brings in a notion of external force – collective will – and is thus, in part, societal: and also Fried, who envisaged "Art and Objecthood" as a radical re-framing of the formalist debate (through the incorporation of desirable – aesthetic-inducing – conditions of encounter). Fry's *classic quality*, Bell's *significant form* and Greenberg's *flatness* and *medium specificity* all serve as attempts to denote properties or conditions internal to art objects, which free up an outside in which the art object can become non-art.

[432] If conceptualism is an orientation of thinking – as opposed to a methodology – then it follows that one might draw from this a given orientation. To be oriented towards is to be oriented away from…yet from what? Also, can form become idea, and vice versa, and, if so, how so and at what point?

[433] Matters of beauty became conflated with those of medium in the writings of Clement Greenberg, as Costello has pointed out (*Chapter 2*). Heidegger doesn't deal with taste per se, though, in one passage of "The Origin of the Work of Art", he presumes his notion of truth in art to be conditional on the art's greatness. The mechanisms permitting greatness seem to derive from the operability of the object to hand. Thus, only when truth is disclosed through art does the art become great, and only when great does art offer the possibility of a disclosure of truth.

[434] Hal Foster notes, in *The Return of the Real*, 1996, 219, how Heidegger viewed distance and closeness as folded into uniformity, so that everything is neither near nor far.

[435] An outside, or *that which is not the painting*.

[436] In Greek, *aletheia* approximates to *unconcealedness* or *disclosure*, and was revived by Heidegger. "The Origin of the Work of Art" was worked on between 1935 and 1937, and reworked for publication

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that concern themselves with medium sit other questions, of an ontological nature; and Heidegger has done most to shift an understanding of the world away from the static and deterministic, and towards the fluid and experiential. Although, as Peter Osborne has pointed out, Heidegger's project pertains not to art [let alone to painting], but to *Dasein*, art nevertheless falls within the purview of Heidegger's analysis of the projective structure of human existence.[437] Moreover, the phenomenological tone of much recent criticism – including that of Joselit and Graw – would suggest, perhaps, that Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty (and, through them, Husserl) have become central to writings about contemporary art, and, as such, that they have replaced Hegel and Marx as the philosophers best suited to illuminate the condition of painting, at a time when there is a discernable keenness to couch *progress* in more localised terms.[438]

To open this out will be to examine the principal themes of the artwork essay. In particular, this will involve a clarification of Heidegger's classification of being, so as to enable the ontological character and function of a medium to attain visibility (and knowabilty). I will position the central paradoxes of Heidegger's exposition, and address his re-situation of the prerequisite of truth as a challenge to the primacy of aesthetics, reflecting on his attempts to provide solutions to metaphysical intricacies with regard to the artwork's constitution. I will re-consider the comportment of Van Gogh's *A Pair of Shoes* and the Greek temple, seeking to extend the scope of Heidegger's concepts of concealment and disclosure and world and earth respectively.

Part 3 will comprise of a re-consideration of the basis of aesthetics as a mode of modern thinking.[439] I will foreground Heidegger's employment of *picture* – from "The

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in 1950, and again in 1960. Initially based on lectures delivered in the early-mid 1930s in Frankfurt and Zurich.

[437] Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All*, 170. In *Being and Time*, the word *art* is never used. In *Being and Time*, 1927, the concept of *Dasein* (*existence*, sometimes translated as *being there* or *being the there/situation*) permitted Heidegger to avoid falling back on prior philosophical assumptions: as to the existence of objects and subjects, or bodies and minds. To Heidegger, *Dasein* operates against a background (the world), in which *encountering* takes place, and into which it is thrown. This *thrownness* (*Geworfenheit*) serves to connect *Dasein* with the present and the past, whilst pushing into the future.

[438] Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All*, 8. Fried, Krauss and Bois have all deployed Heidegger's ideas in erecting their own frameworks. Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Spirit* was published in 1807, becoming hugely influential for the remainder of the nineteenth century. It laid the groundwork for the young Karl Marx (1818-1883), whose *Communist Manifesto*, 1848, with Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), put forward a conception of dialectical materialism, which, in effect, replaced Hegel's *Geist* with a concrete notion of material evolution based on a series of social relations.

[439] In the sense of post-ancient and, also, of post-Enlightenment formulations.

Age of World Picture" – as key to understanding the relationship between science (rational, object-oriented thought) and representation (image) within the modern epoch, which has assisted in hiding the materiality of the work beneath the non-material idea of *idea*.[440] I will reflect on the practice of Paul Klee – perhaps unique among the moderns – as offering something approaching a painterly visualisation of Heidegger's thinking. With Hegel's end of art thesis providing the backdrop to this inquiry (in the dual sense of it having to contend with both the death of painting and the death of the medium of painting), I will engage with Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin's river poems, and reflect on Eva Geulen's analysis of Heidegger's *Hölderlin Lectures*. I will address the idea of a preservational modality prior to providing an account of the necessity of poetising the end of art as a means of circumnavigation, with implications for the beginning too. The point is to permit the medium specificity of painting to attain centrality in respect of the work's meaning.

I will consider Hölderlin's reliance on rumour and double-directedness, approached through his poem *The Ister,* which signals in the direction of a new ontological model for painting.[441] The medium will be presented as *equipment*: with the stages of its operability revealed sequentially. I will foreground the mechanism of *the caesura* as, in essence, a dual-purpose holding bay in which picture and material find themselves suspended. The result: that the medium-aspect of a painting might, within a Heideggerian and Hölderlinean framework, become resurrected and re-situated—its functionality made visible through its embeddedness in both language and history.

If Heidegger's understanding of being is correct – in respect of what can be said about painting and the function of a medium – then it must be something we can see: that is commensurate with one's experience of works. We might think this amounts to an aesthetic approach to painting, but, as we will see, Heidegger's argument presents painting as a form of truth (Heidegger takes Van Gogh's *A Pair of Shoes* as an

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[440] Consider in relation to Panofsky's *Idea: A Concept in Art Theory*, 1924, in which the idea of art as evidencing idea per se is considered within a broad art historical trajectory, from the ancients to the moderns. Here, Panofsky points to the illusion of oppositions, such as *idealism* and *naturalism*, and *subject* and *object*, and to the futility of any pursuit of discrete meaning (of objects, for example), in light of Kant's disavowal of the idea of the possibility of access to the thing-in-itself. Panofsky positions himself as a chronicler and cataloguer of, in effect, that which has shown up to be chronicled and catalogued. Thus, to Panofsky, the panoply of ideas thrown up by culture is to be taken as indicative of simply that. No external truth is locatable or, in fact, necessary to his central thesis.

[441] The ancient Greek name for the Danube.

exemplary instance of the truth of painting). I will address his claims as they bear on the concept of medium, as discussed previously. In order to stay afloat and steer a way through Heideggerese we must be circumspect about some key terms, whilst at the same time granting Heidegger a necessary inventiveness in the pitch of his thought.[442]

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[442] Heideggerese denotes the abundance of new and complex terminology developed by Heidegger to present his ideas. His desire to centre being (not objects) resulted in the compounding of space and time.

Part 2: The Origin of the Work of Art

> In the artwork, the truth of beings has set itself to work. Art is the setting-itself-to-work of truth.[443]

2.1: A Hermeneutic Circle

In "The Origin of the Work of Art" – Heidegger deploys the notion of a hermeneutic circle (**Table 12**), the interdependence of whose parts rests on a paradox.[444] To illustrate: consider that the Vienna School, pragmatic though its inclinations were, had assumed *knowledge of* (past and object).[445] How, Heidegger contends, can one know of relations among things without knowing the identities of the entities that relate? Conversely, how can one know of the identity of related entities in isolation from their relations to one another? For Heidegger: "[n]ot only is the main step from work to art, like the step from art to work, a circle, but every individual step that we attempt circles within this circle".[446] How, then, is a work of art to become knowable as a work at all?

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[443] Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", 1936, in *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann GmbH, 1950), 19.

[444] This essay is a redirection of his thinking towards the ontological condition of the work of art. Furthermore, Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, as one of the founders of modern hermeneutics, first employed the notion of a hermeneutic circle. Dilthey also used the circle in his work. Later, Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) and Paul de Man (1919-1993) extended Heidegger's application. Heidegger's model involves drawing the idea of the *artist*, the *artwork*, and the concept of *art* towards one another in the course of demonstrating the peculiar interdependence of their relationship. For more on hermeneutic circles (and their possible instability), see: David Gamez, *Positive Scepticism and the Collapsing Hermeneutic Circle* (Colchester: University of Essex, 2002).

[445] Form, work, period, etc. The Vienna School – from the the creation of the first teaching position in Art History, in 1847, to the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918 – laid the foundations for art historical enquiry that would underpin the discipline thereafter. A series of brilliant scholars, including: Rudolf Eitelberger (1817-1885), Moritz Thausing (1838-1884), Max Dvořák (1874-1921), Julius von Schlosser (1866-1938), Josef Strzygowski (1862-1941), and Alois Riegl were responsible for the pragmatic, the idealist, the structuralist, the ideological, and the formalist schools of thought. Though each professor brought with him an approach specific to his favoured method, all nevertheless shared a belief in the empirically grounded as a bulwark against unharnessed subjectivity. Many who taught at the School worked with prominent museum collections as curators or advisors, and developed ideas in direct response to a localised connection to the objects within their purview.

[446] Ibid., 2.
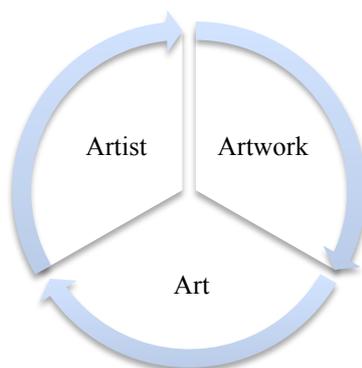
Table 12: The Hermeneutic Circle

2.2: Classification and Thinglyness

The succession of isms prior to the emergence of the artwork essay – and the futuristic tone of modernism more generally – provided the conditions that legitimised a re-examination of the work of art.[447] To distinguish the work involved a classification of states of being.[448] Heidegger begins with an indistinction born of ubiquity: what he terms the thingly character of works, for: "works are as naturally present as things. The picture hangs on the wall like a hunting weapon or a hat".[449] There is a reflection here of Saunders's assertion that: [i]f we dig deeply enough into any endeavour – into any medium – there is often a gooey world lurking".[450] Thinglyness is, therefore, omnipresent—it is little more than a property that things have. Heidegger writes:

> Yet even this much-vaunted *aesthetic experience* cannot evade the thinglyness of the artwork. The stony is in the work of architecture, the wooden in the woodcarving, the coloured in the painting, the vocal in the linguistic work, the sounding the work of music. The thingly is so salient in the artwork that we ought rather to say the opposite: the architectural work is in the stone, the woodcarving in the wood, the painting in the colour, the linguistic work in the sound, the work of music in the note.[451]

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[447] Including: Impressionism (1860s/1890s), Neo-Impressionism (1870s/1880s), Post-Impressionism (1880s/1900s), Fauvism (1900s), Cubism (1900s/1910s), Futurism (1910s), Expressionism (1920s), and Surrealism (1920s/1930s). Also, for the most part, "The Origin of the Work of Art" attests to a tightly knotted rumination on the nature of the work of art and, in particular, on its source and possible composition in respect of the world in which it finds itself.

[448] Though reliant on order and structure, this is not formalism: nor is it a social reading, for it lacks both an appeal to the aesthetic and a direct invocation of the political or the individual. If iconographic concerns become manifest, they do so as a means of designation: as second order effects of an already determined ontological cause.

[449] Ibid., 2-3. To Heidegger, this *thingly character* is what a painting shares with a book of poems, a sculpture, a building or a piece of sheet music.

[450] Matt Saunders, "Thread, Pixel, Grain", in *Painting Beyond Itself*, 172.

[451] Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", 3.

Thinglyness, then, provides an experiential stage from which to begin contemplating beginning.[452] It could be likened to what Graw calls painting's, "residual specificity".[453] To move beyond this point is to consider the *attachment of language* in the process of becoming a work, for: "[a]llegory and symbol provide the conceptual framework from within whose perspective the artwork has long been characterised".[454] Though the artist does not determine this thingly element, he permits it greater visibility through the particularity of its framing.[455] This is akin to Michelangelo bringing forth the thinglyness of marble through his chiselling of the statue of *David* (**Fig. 4A**), rather than the marble allowing for the thingly aspect of the *David*.[456]

Fig. 4A

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[452] To consider the nature of this thingly character/substructure is, in the first instance, to present a common platform from which the *artistic* nature of the work might come to be understood, or its origin gleaned.

[453] Isabelle Graw, "*The Value of Liveliness*", in *Painting Beyond Itself*, 89.

[454] Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", 3. *Throughness* is perhaps a more accurate term. However, attachment provides a clearer visual model of difference.

[455] Framing becomes central to Jacques Derrida, in *The Truth in Painting*, 1987, in respect of his consideration of the relationship between the *parergon* (that which is supplementary to the work) and the *ergon* (the work). In seeking to critique Kant's framing of truth as *inside*, in relation to an *outside*, Derrida points to the binary relationship that exists between the frame and the work. Thus, framing (in all its guises—from the physically immediate to the socio-political) becomes limitless and rhizomatic. Therefore, the work's meaning (and the frame's) is maintained in an infinite series of shifting dialogues. For a good summary of Derrida's analysis – in *The Truth in Painting* – of the ground contested by Heidegger and Schapiro with regard to the status of the shoes, see: *The Methodologies of Art: An Introduction*, by Laurie Schneider Adams, 1996.

[456] Consider in light of an assertion by Michelangelo (di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni, 1475-1564), that every block of marble has a statue inside it. As such, it was his job simply to reveal it.

2.2.1: Mere, Equipmental and Work

How is the art thing to be defined? To Heidegger, things can be divided into *mere* things – elemental (non-manipulated) – and *manipulated* things—things to which Heidegger assigns the label *equipment*. Art things straddle two camps, being manipulated – and therefore equipmental – yet constructed of mere materials. Things can also be self-contained (complete within themselves) or otherwise (requiring of completion). To use his example: whilst a pair of shoes has been fashioned, and is thus equipmental (their being resides in their usefulness), they share with the mere thing, once complete, the property of self-containment. This is complicated further by a presumption of self-sufficiency on the part of the art thing and the mere thing, but not the equipmental thing, whose being requires a form of use. To clarify a subtle distinction: self-containment is to have maintained or else arrived at completeness, whereas self-sufficiency is the quality of being without the requirement of use.[457]

If both art thing and mere thing share the property of self-sufficiency, and both equipmental thing and art thing are shaped by human hands, one must conclude the following: that the equipmental thing is both self-contained and mere (though not self-sufficient): that the mere thing is, in being mere, self-contained (and in its mereness, self-sufficient): and that the art thing is mere (derived of base materials), self-contained (complete within itself), equipmental (manipulated and useful) and self-sufficient (not requiring of use) (**Table 13**).[458]

Mere Thing	Equipmental Thing	Work
Self-contained	Mere	Mere
Self-sufficient	Self-contained	Self-contained
		Equipmental
		Self-sufficient

Table 13: Heidegger's Ontological Classification of Things

[457] Thomas S. Palin, "Something and Nothing: A Consideration of the Ontology of Painting", 26.
[458] Ibid.

Heidegger writes:

> So the piece of equipment is half thing since it is characterised by thinglyness. Yet it is more, since, at the same time, it is half artwork. On the other hand, it is less, since it lacks the self-sufficiency of the artwork. Equipment occupies a curious position intermediate between thing and work—if we may be permitted such a calculated ordering.[459]

To Heidegger: "the thing is not merely a collection of characteristics, and neither is it the aggregate of those properties through which the collection arises".[460] This serves as a challenge to Greenberg's optical primacy, and to the assumed integrity of the art object in respect of its component parts—parts that alone and together constitute what Fried termed shape.[461] However, it sits more comfortably with Krauss's notion of the work as *apparatus*, and with Bois's backing of process as *technical model*. In both of these cases there is a degree of ambivalence as to whether the work's function is a result of its constitution, or else that its constitution is a result of its function.[462]

2.3: The Presumption of Presence

Heidegger places presence within a tradition that emerged out of the ancient Greek conception of the, "being of beings".[463] An orientation towards *core* is responsible, so Heidegger contends, for the search for essence in the form of substance.[464] Bois's assertion as to modernism's search for, "pure *parousia*" would serve as an example.[465]

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[459] Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", 10.

[460] Ibid., 5.

[461] Consider Fried's notion of *presentness* as that which is mobilised by shape (*Chapter 2: 3.3.2*). Consider, also, Greenberg's invocation of Kant. Fried, in his later work, engages with Heidegger, arguing that the photograph deals primarily with the present-at-hand (usually taken to be the subject aspect of the photograph), unable as it is to deal with one's practical absorption in the world (the ready-to-hand): the result of the laboured object of painting. Jeff Wall (1946-), however, through methods of staging and re-enactment is, in Fried's analysis, able to have photography aspire to the condition of painting (*Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before*, 2008).

[462] Which would appear to be in keeping with the logic of the hermeneutic circle.

[463] Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", 6. A conjecture that there exists a base around which properties accumulate, with the result that things emerge as discrete units with apparent truths of their own.

[464] *Core* is that which sits at the heart of things. This supplied an underpinning for the subject-object dualism of René Descartes (1596-1650). Descartes is most commonly considered to be the father of modern Western philosophy, for his *Meditations*, 1641. Dualism refers to the notion of physical and mental extension—in short: that the body is material and the mind (and/or soul) is immaterial, and thus the mind is seen to operate by different laws to the body. Conversation between these spheres is supposed to take place through the pineal gland. Although this has been thoroughly refuted by later testing, the mind-body problem has occupied a large part of philosophical thinking since Descartes.

[465] Yve-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model*, 230.

Thus, things exist, and in their relational mode of being their origins can be inferred—works *with* things: neither the cause of a cause, nor the effect of one, the work is shackled to and, at the same time, free of other things.[466] So where does being reside? To Heidegger, asking *where* serves only to deny the threefold structure of the time, established in *Being and Time,* and reinstates presence as location.[467] Heidegger frames the question thus: *How it is?* This *how* is interminably temporal. It is the temporal, non-objectual nature of being that permits a conflation of thing and event—they are as one. A thing's thinglyness is forever a situated thinglyness.[468] George Steiner, in addressing the foundational nature of Heidegger's thought, writes that: "[t]o inquire into Being is not to ask: What is this or that? It is to ask: What is *is* […]?"[469]

2.4: The Comportment of the Work: Van Gogh's Shoes

Comportment is specific to the thing in question.[470] The art thing comports itself differently to the non-art thing. In respect of *A Pair of Shoes* (**Fig. 4B**), how is it that the painting of the shoes functions differently to the shoes themselves? One must consider what the shoes themselves do, and to whom? To the peasant who wears them, the being of the shoes – their usefulness as equipment – is known through wearing. The peasant knows this, "without observation or reflection".[471] The equipmental character of the shoes becomes known *in actu*. They are reliable: they wear and decay. In the process, they reveal their mode of being.[472] This *activity of shoes* serves not Van Gogh, in his painterly labours – as Hugh Silverman points out – but the peasant-wearer.[473] Heidegger recounts the gruelling slog of this life in evocative detail.[474]

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[466] Consequently, Heidegger's vocation is one of redirecting the search for essence (as substance) towards the search for being (as *formed* existence). Attempts to locate the meaning of the art thing are thus misguided – such as: Fry's principles of design, Greenberg's picture plane, Rosenberg's subject, or Fried's conditions of encounter.

[467] *Already-in*, *amidst-things* and *pressing-towards*.

[468] In situ, as art thing, the thing comports itself as itself and in so doing bears witness to itself.

[469] George Steiner, *Heidegger* (Glasgow: Harper Collins, 1978), 153. Consider the difference between Fried's notion of time and Krauss's (*Chapter 2: 3.4.1*).

[470] To how it is that being shows itself in the particularity of its being (as occurrence).

[471] Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", 14.

[472] Being is not necessarily seeing, though seeing is *of being*. In short: for the peasant, they are, for the most part, invisible.

[473] Hugh J. Silverman, *Textualities: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 136.

[474] A world he knew very well, from his early years in Messkirch (Baden), and also from his later times in Todtnauberg. Silverman (*Textualities*, 137), in revisiting the Heidegger-Schapiro-Derrida debate, is nevertheless skeptical of Van Gogh's knowledge of peasants, at a time when the painter was living in Paris. He had, however, by this time, experienced the extreme poverty of miners on the Borinage, in Belgium. Therefore, he certainly knew of the realities of toil.
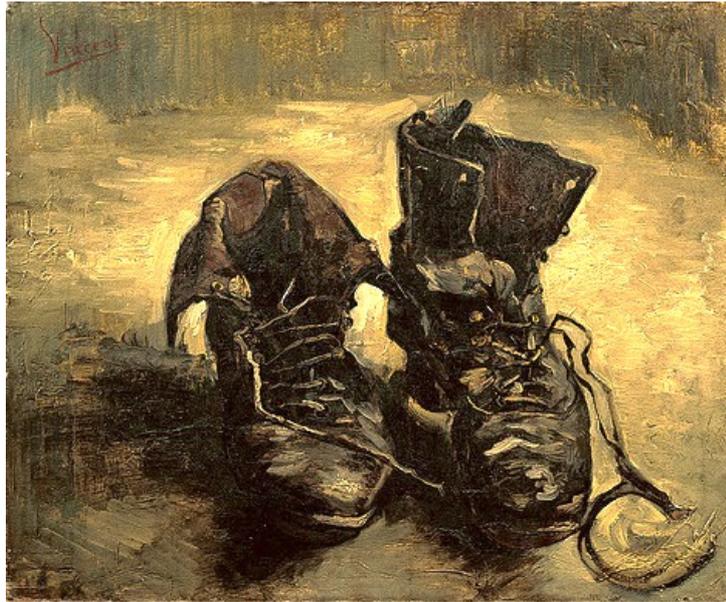
Fig. 4B

The life of the shoes – the antithesis of what Graw calls *liveliness* – attains visibility in the painting of the shoes. Heidegger knows this not from living with peasants, or from re-staging the wearing of the shoes, or else from scrutinising their decay.[475] The scientific method is, to Heidegger, a taking oneself away – adopting a position of objectivity – which obscures being.[476] *To know* is to have what is knowable become knowable in spite of the deliberation of one's address. What is known, here, is known *through the work*, and could not be known – as it is known – otherwise.[477] The being of the shoes – their equipmentality – has become visible.[478] To Heidegger: "[t]his painting spoke. In the vicinity of the work we were suddenly somewhere else than we usually tend to be, […so the] artwork let us know what the shoes, in truth are".[479]

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[475] The painter's life veiled beneath the life of the subject of the painting.

[476] It would be correct to assert that Heidegger shows a degree of ambivalence to science (as it came to be understood within the modern period), which becomes modified and more nuanced in *The Question Concerning Technology*, 1954. Here, Heidegger writes of Man's role in revealing what it is that science and technology become, as, in effect, forms of activity. Earlier, in his infamous rectoral address (Freiburg, 1933), titled: "The Self-Assertion of the German People", Heidegger spoke of the power of science to shape the German university. This, however, was the *essence of science* (its sense drawn from its ancient manifestation), commensurate with the entirety of Man's knowledge and spiritual endeavours in unison.

[477] Heidegger refutes the notion of self-projection, as this would require the formulation of a projection independent of that upon which one wished to project (presumably, subject to its own determination of being)—one would have to, in effect, conjure an origin outside of the work itself, then bring it to the work from whence it came.

[478] Equipmentality is what sits beside utility, and utility is that which we know of the shoes from bearing witness to them.

[479] Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", 15. For a detailed consideration of the relationship between aesthetics and truth, see: J. M. Bernstein, *The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation*

2.5: Disclosure and Concealment

The painting permitted a disclosure of being, though not its own. Mere and equipmental beings, having no recourse to conceal, have no recourse to disclose. The work, though never less than this, is also something more.[480] In disclosing the being of that which it is not (the shoes), the work foregrounds the particularity of its being as an absence of being—its own. The ontological determinacy of the work presents itself as a lack of ontological determinacy (its being is concealed as it discloses the truth of the shoes). In disclosing, the work comports itself as *other*. Paskow describes how: "each revealing […] involves at the same time a concealing".[481] For Osborne, Heidegger's ontological model: "whilst philosophically *anti-aesthetic*, is so in the name of a Romanticism of Being, to which *art* is appended as an original appearing".[482]

2.5.1: Double-Edgedness

In disclosing the equipmental nature of the shoes, the painting's concealment is double-edged. Both process and object become subsumed in the process of disclosing the truth of the shoes. The medium has become equipmental in its transition to manipulated thing.[483] As paint and canvas it is manipulated, having once been mere.[484] In operating as visual language it becomes equipment. No longer is it a malleable, coloured substance able to adhere to other substances: it is now a latent activity: both a picture and a thing—in the world *as* meeting, and *in* surface. To Heidegger, the *mere* is something close to a stopping short of the character of serviceability. To become operable, disclosure and concealment are requiring of what amounts to a form of ontological weighting. The painting as a work of art can reveal the truth of the shoes,

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from Kant to Derrida and Adorno (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992). Heidegger writes evocatively about the dark opening of the shoes, the stiff heaviness and the slow trudge (Laurie Schneider Adams, *The Methodologies of Art*, 170). There is a reflection of this in T. J. Clark's description of Courbet's *Stonebreakers*, in *Image of the People*, 79, where he employs terms such as: pressure, thickness and gravity.

[480] By *invisible*, Heidegger means something approximating *non-active*, as opposed to *inactive*, which carries with it a latency: in the sense of seemingly being *about to act*, or of presenting *the possibility of action*. By *something more*, he means something like *not less than the base conditions from which base conditions are understood*.

[481] Alan Paskow, *The Paradoxes of Art: A Phenomenological Investigation*, 30.

[482] Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not At All*, 116.

[483] Paint is a composite of pigments (as granular solids), a binder (to allow the paint to cohere and to form a film) and usually an extender (to increase, dilute and/or modify properties). In isolation, all are *mere*. Assembled, the paint occupies a position between mere and *equipmental*, as pre-equipmental (having the propensity to become equipmental *in the painting*). The individual substances in isolation (prior to becoming paint) have pre-equipmental potential, too, though of a non-painterly orientation. As the vehicle of painting (in/as painting) paint becomes fully equipmental/ontologically capped.

[484] Natural materials that become paint and canvas.

yet the shoes cannot reveal the truth of the painting. Unlike the painting of the shoes, the shoes themselves, though they share with the painting the qualities of mereness (and therefore self-containment), are not, as equipmental thing, self-sufficient. And so, what is it that the work of art concerns itself with? Heidegger's answers position the essay as an attempt to move beyond the limitations of Kantian aesthetics.[485] For Heidegger, truth had hitherto belonged only to logic, leaving beauty to aesthetics.[486]

Heidegger is not advocating social realism.[487] This would be to align approximation with truth (as Krauss did in her analysis of the index), to determine that the closer something comes to something else, the more like it it is, and the more it can lay claim to being able to disclose its being. In painterly terms, this would amount to being sceptical as to photorealism's propensity to arrive at the truth of a bottle of ketchup through processes that allow the artist a high degree of verisimilitude.[488] Disclosure has nothing to do with reproduction, or with techniques that allow for a superficial proximity to a given source. He ends *Part 1* of the essay with an appeal to consider what it is to which a Greek temple must correspond in order for it to disclose its truth.

2.6: Earth; World; Medium

The origin of the artwork is art. But what is art?[489]

Part 2 moves away from painting towards the Greek temple (**Fig. 4C**) and its status as a work, yet nevertheless provides support for the notion of the work as a positioned

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[485] Eva Geulen (1962-), in *The End of Art: Readings in a Rumour After Hegel*, considers Heidegger to have assumed a reciprocal relationship to exist between art and truth, and thus the artwork essay becomes an attempt to escape the pull of a singular aesthetics. Costello, in "Greenberg's Kant and the Fate of Aesthetics in Contemporary Art Theory" deems Kant to have required of the artwork only that it, "expand ideas in imaginatively complex ways". Truth, then, to Kant, would amount to something approximating the sensory retrieval of the possible.
[486] Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", 15.
[487] Not to be confused with Stalin's Socialist Realism. Social realism was a far broader international movement, spanning much of the twentieth century (with earlier and later examples too), wherein the plight of the working poor is depicted in great detail and with varying emphases on hardship, humility and authenticity.
[488] Photorealism (hyper-realism), in painting, refers collectively to the works, from the 1970s, of Chuck Close (1940-), Robert Bechtle (1932-), Audrey Flack (1931-), Richard Estes (1932-), Ralph Goings (1928-), and others, and concerned itself (technically at least) with methods of obtaining microscopic detail and extreme levels of verisimilitude. Goings depicted Californian diners and ketchup bottles.
[489] Ibid., 19.

thing whose meaning is rooted in its *alongsideness*.[490] Heidegger presents the paradox of a work of art opening up the space to which it will subsequently belong, yet at the same time having to accommodate its varied relations to other things. The shift in emphasis – from the painting of the shoes to the temple – appears designed to cement an understanding of how it is that truth can show up and also provide a context for the work. According to Michael Inwood, Heidegger does so: "partly to distinguish his own view from the view that art is imitation: the temple is not representational".[491]

Fig. 4C

Moreover, in the case of Van Gogh's painting, this showing up evaded – in his earlier analysis – such a detailed consideration, and we find that: "[a]s long as we supposed the reality of the work to lie primarily in its thingly substructure, we went astray".[492] To demonstrate how a work both produces and gathers truth to it, Heidegger engages in an analysis of that which, in normal conditions, cannot move—namely: the Greek temple.[493] The temple, in: "hold[ing] its place against the storm raging above it, […] first makes the storm visible in its violence".[494] It is clear, here, that Heidegger is reversing the terms whereby we come to know, in a manner akin to my earlier example of Michelangelo's *David*.[495] Thus, light is brought to light through reflecting

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[490] It is helpful to consider that Heidegger distinguishes between object-being and work-being, and, in so doing, provides a foundation for the notion of a medium with physical extension and linguistic possibility. Object-being denotes objectification – the result of a bringing about of various forms of dislocation – and work-being points to the work's potential to disclose (in language).

[491] Michael Inwood, *Heidegger: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 118.

[492] Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", 18. This is something close to material.

[493] Ibid., 20.

[494] Ibid., 21.

[495] Again, so as not to presume presence in advance of knowing (the truth of work and world).

stone, and air through the towering of the building.[496] Heidegger calls this *earth*, and the process of *coming forth*: "lights up that on which Man bases his dwelling".[497]

> Standing there the temple work opens up a world while, at the same time, setting this world back onto the earth which itself first comes forth as homeland. […] We will get closer to what *is* if we think everything in reverse.[498]

In the case of the temple, as a work, it functions to make God visible—not to paint a portrait of God, but to allow for his presence. As such, the work of the temple and God become synonymous. God is not *in* the work, but the work *is* God.[499] To demonstrate his conception of what he terms *world*, Heidegger uses the example of the setting up of a painting for exhibition.[500] Setting up, he contends, brings with it a, "sense of dedication or praise".[501] This dedication or praise is what is earth, and, in the instance of the work, has been set forth by the *work-being* of the work. In so doing the work sets up a world (wherein objects are never there merely to be looked at); for world is, consequently, to Heidegger: "that always non-objectual to which we are subject".[502]

This, Heidegger asserts, is, "what a work does".[503] *World*, newly established, has thus been constituted through *earth*.[504] World encompasses all of human relations, and circumvents an objectification to which earth, alone, attests. Only when the work

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[496] In displacing meaning in this manner (light known through reflecting stone), Heidegger appears to chase his tail, warranting the question: What of reflecting stone? The dissolution of the distinction between noun and verb – the result of a phenomenological conflation of space and time – serves to dispel such a criticism, in so far as reflecting stone is to be understood as a process only, not a thing as such.

[497] Ibid.

[498] Ibid.

[499] In the sense that the meaning of God is framed by the conditions pertaining of God. More broadly, to invoke the magical is, in part, to subdue the rational impulse in favour of the irrational. In a post-industrial information age, that which opposes or seeks to short-circuit an over-determined, mechanistic message seems desirable. Yet to seek out *unknowing* (to bring forth the supernatural) is not, in itself, a denial of Enlightenment thinking. In its appeal to possibility, process and ritual, magic becomes a strategy to rethink anew one's connectedness to material, technology, language and change.

[500] World is not a collection of things that are-present-at-hand (within the purview of one's compass—to be examined).

[501] Ibid., 22.

[502] Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", 23. Paskow (*The Paradoxes of Art*, 28) presents earth as unknowable, and world as a cultural and temporal term. It could be said of Heidegger's philosophy that he turns nouns into verbs.

[503] Ibid., 22.

[504] Michael Inwood, *Heidegger: A Very Short Introduction*, 119. This state of affairs resembles the relationship between the mere and equipmental in respect of the earlier example of Van Gogh's painting.

becomes dislocated from its surroundings by time or misunderstanding (or actual relocation) does it lose its power to disclose and become a passive object—to be pointed at.[505] To point at earth without world could be likened to pointing at an object without a subject – a form without content – yet not because one happened to conceal the other, but because, in the instance of pointing, there wasn't another to conceal.

2.6.1: Dual-Disclosure

Heidegger establishes a situation whereby the work discloses the truth of what it is as a dual disclosure (it *sets forth* the earth and *sets up* a world). This disclosure is a form of knowing, which makes it phenomenological and subjective.[506] Moreover, Heidegger's supposition points towards a complex notion of medium that is bound-in to the work of art as it is *in* and *of* the world, whilst at the same time foregrounding its constituted identity as distinct from it. This comes close to Bois's notion of painting as *technical model*, in so far as the being of painting amounts to more that its resting form. Paradoxically, this would be akin to having a painting's surface visible alone, without or alongside its subject.[507] In philosophical terms, it could be thought of as having Wittgenstein's duck and rabbit (**Fig. 4D**) co-exist peacefully in the knowledge that each is dependent on the other for its form, even when hidden from view.[508]

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[505] Consider in relation to Krauss's objection to Greenberg's insistence on pointing (*Chapter 2: 3.4*).

[506] Here, subjective does not mean having or forming an opinion. On the contrary, subjective refers to the condition of being only subject to one's experience.

[507] To show the surface as a distinct aspect *alongside* the subject is surely impossible in any practical sense (of brush marks that do or do not depict). But the look of separation between them can be brought off by a clever manipulation of effects and the right choice of subject, so as to have the appearance of a tactile surface floating above the subject – as if looking at a screen – leaving the subject to appear surface-less, i.e., photographic. See: "Depiction and the Golden Calf", 1987, by Michael Podro (1931-2008), where he examines the painting *The Adoration of the Golden Calf*, 1633/4, by Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665), and also the work of Frank Auerbach (1931-).

[508] Wittgenstein was certain that the seeing of one at the expense of the other was not the result of an interpretive deficit on the part of the viewer/reader. In other words, here is an example of a visual language (the picture) offering multiple meanings without the viewer engaging in interpretation—nothing is concealed. In his critique of representation, in *The Ister Lectures*, 1942, Heidegger questioned the legitimacy of metaphor and allegory. If the Greeks were, through their surviving texts, present to Hölderlin, then they were so as a result of a form of resistance to a representational or allegorical impulse. Such tropes, according to Heidegger, maintain an unwelcome gap between the text and that which the text represents. In addition, there is a correlation between Heidegger's notion of inauthentic interpretation as *non-intrusion* and Joselit's notion of the indescribability of works. Also, compare to the socio-Christian assertion of Tolstoy (Count Lev Nikolayevich, 1828-1910), that, "artistic works cannot be interpreted". Leo Tolstoy, *What is Art?* (London, New York, Toronto, Ringwood, Auckland: Penguin, 1995), 94.
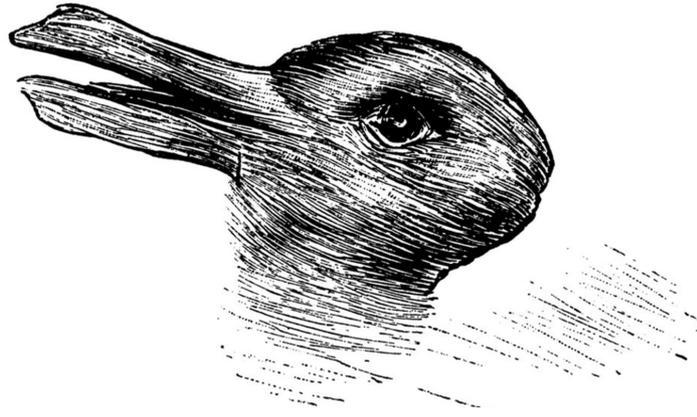
Fig. 4D

Within Heidegger's hypothesis the medium becomes foregrounded as that which can be mapped onto the spaces or joins between a well-trodden series of dualisms: word and image, object and subject, means and message, conceptual and non-conceptual, nature and convention, drawing and painting, time and space, etc. Being neither object or subject nor form or content: medium eludes position. Thus, in situating itself indeterminately between object and subject, form and content, the medium draws fire from both sides. In its *inbetweeness* it establishes the being of that which either side positions it. Its equipmental being is, therefore, to be inferred from that which becomes positioned, through the particularity of the form of its disclosure.

2.7: Worlding: Holding and Shaping

"By the opening of a world, all things gain their lingering and hastening, their distance and proximity, their breadth and their limits".[509] Worlding is a finding of space within the already spacious, and the work is that which: "holds open the open of the world".[510] Worlding denotes dwelling—the way in which inhabiting the world takes shape. It is a human world of houses, tools and all that permits living.[511] Melville draws attention to Heidegger's use of light and shadow as a metaphor for concealment.[512] In respect of painting, this can be understood as akin to the dwelling of a subject within a surface, or else a surface within a subject.[513] Heidegger points to

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[509] Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", 19.
[510] Ibid.
[511] Michael Inwood, *Heidegger: A Very Short Introduction*, 119.
[512] Stephen Melville, *Becoming Medium*, 2013. That, in sense, the visible is present as an absence.
[513] The implications of worlding are explored in greater detail in the third section of Heidegger's essay. In *A short History of Modern Philosophy*, Roger Scruton (1944-) describes Heidegger's work, somewhat unflatteringly, as: "like spectral visions in the realm of thought; vast, intangible shadows cast

how it is that the work becomes operable within the context of *Dasein*, aesthetics, poetry, history, and in respect of Hegel's notion of an end to art.[514] This period marked the beginning of a shift in Heidegger's thinking, later referred to as *die kehre*.[515]

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by language", though he also acknowledges the formidable difficulties of his thought. Roger Scruton, *A Short History of Modern Philosophy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 274.

[514] Hegel first lectured on aesthetics in 1818. His manuscripts, on which the lectures were based, are now lost. Transcripts of the lectures were made by students in 1820/21, 23 and 26, and have been published, though, as yet, only the 23 series in English.

[515] *The turn*: a re-tiring of modernity. Distinctions between early and later Heidegger draw on perceptions as to the extent to which, in the later works, he abandons the vestiges of the human subject, to be replaced by a historicised notion of being. Thinking – as activity – becomes of central importance from the time of *die kehre*. The turn marked a shift towards a consideration of ordinary experience and away from subjectivity, which, by his own admission, the concept of *Dasein*, as outlined in *Being and Time*, had failed to fully dispel. Moreover, in his later thinking, Heidegger resituates the concept of dwelling—a poetic habitation offers the path to knowledge and truth, and thinking poetically becomes a means of finding access. In "The Origin of the Work of Art", such disclosure is the obverse of concealment. Later still, Heidegger reversed the terms of the debate, see: *On Time and Being* (New York, San Francisco and London: Harper & Row, 1972). Nevertheless, Heidegger remained steadfast in his belief in the central question of *Being and Time*, namely: to understand the *sense* of being—his method of thinking in reverse about reversal necessitated beginning at the end, but not stopping there. This is a short summary of Heidegger's later thinking, dealing with, as Peter McCormick (birth date unknown) puts it: "the paradoxical relationships between philosophical reflection as a necessary historical phenomenon and philosophical reflection as a historical attempt to set necessary limits on the phenomenon of contingency" ("Heidegger, Politics and the Philosophy of History", 1980).

Part 3: Heidegger and Hölderlin: Forestalling Ends

> But he seems almost
> Reversing and
> Must come, I think,
> From the East
> And much
> Might be said about that. And why
> Does he cling to the hills so? The other,
> The Rhine, went off
> Sideways. Never for nothing
> Do rivers run in the drylands. […][516]

3.1: Aesthetics and World Picture

Two years after the artwork essay, Heidegger clarified his position on aesthetics
within a broader consideration of the relationship of the activity of science to an
understanding of being. Heidegger presents aesthetics as the third of five distinctions
in respect of the modern world. Within the framework of aesthetics, the work becomes
an object of subjective experience, and art becomes an expression of human life.[517]
Subjectivisation, Heidegger argues, is responsible for an objectification of that which
sits outside of the subject (as other), namely: the object. Heidegger roots the being of
the modern – by which he means a grouping of discernable preoccupations – in Plato's
positing of *idea* as separate from the object to which it attests. This, in turn, provided a
shape and legitimacy for Cartesian dualism. Finally, the Enlightenment loosened a
societal commitment to the gods, and the age of industry subsequently commenced.[518]

This epistemological shift brought with it the scientific method. With *the subject* now
the ground of being, speculation took the form of considerations as to what the subject
might *represent*. Science begins, from the eighteenth century, to engage in extended
anthropologies—studies of Man's studying of objects, rather than a study of objects.
Within the visual arts this reached its zenith in the period from the late nineteenth
century to the middle of the twentieth, during a period when placement became

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[516] Friedrich Hölderlin, *The Ister*, lines 41-50, trans., David Constantine, in *Friedrich Hölderlin:
Selected Poems* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1997), 63.
[517] Reflection, science, aesthetics, culture, the loss of the gods, etc. Martin Heidegger, "The Age of
World Picture", in *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Frankfurt:
Vittorio Klostermann GmbH, 1950), 116. Consider in respect of socially oriented critique.
[518] Ibid., 116-135.

central.[519] Science brings with it methods that serve to establish its legitimacy and to frame it accordingly.[520] Heidegger calls this *world picture*—a systematisation of representations thrown up by positing *idea* in opposition to *thing*—not a picture of the word, but *the world as picture*; though he allows for adjustments, stating that: "[t]he fact that whatever is comes into being in and through representedness transforms the age in which this occurs into a new age in contrast with the preceding one".[521]

3.1.1: Paul Klee: Seeing Being

To conceive of the being of *the modern* in painting meant to attend to the concerns of modern painting as it is in the world—the world of mechanisation and industry, mass communication and a burgeoning of global capitalism. Though modernism oriented itself towards the future – seeking to establish itself in opposition to the past – there were, nevertheless, several important contemporary painters whose work shared a concern for foundations, and for history.[522] Within writing, too, there is a surprising forerunner to Heidegger's notion of groundedness and worlding, and it comes in the form of Klee's celebrated *Pedagogical Sketchbook* of 1925, in a brief note towards the end of the book, where Klee considers the directedness of drawn arrows. He writes:

> Thought is the mediary between earth and world. The broader the magnitude of his reach, the more painful man's tragic limitation. To be impelled towards motion and to not be motor. Action bears this out.[523]

To Klee, who stressed directedness in schematic form, drawing was a thing in flux, always commensurate with action.[524] In the 1930s Heidegger was known to have expressed a keen interest in writing about Klee's later works, in what would have been

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[519] As evidenced by the works of Riegl and Wölfflin, in respect of object/work within period/place.
[520] Consider Foucault's notion of *discourse*, outlined in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 1972, and *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 1975. Here, Foucault contends that discourse brings about disciplinary structures, which subsequently serve to legitimise societal practices.
[521] Martin Heidegger, "The Age of World Picture", 130.
[522] Marc Chagall (1888-1985), in Russian folk tales; Chaim Soutine (1893-1943), in Rembrandt; Maurice Utrillo (1883-1955), in the streets of Montmartre; de Staël, in the trace of place, and the possibilities of abstraction; and Paul Klee, in music, myth and machine.
[523] Paul Klee, *Pedagogical Sketchbook* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), 54.
[524] Consider in respect of Klee's well-known dictum, in which he defined drawing as taking a line for a walk. This idea of action is not to be confused with Rosenberg's exegesis. Rosenberg's *action* draws from the artist in the studio, whereas Klee's denotes an internalised relationship among elements in the work—a dynamic of internality.

a second part to the artwork essay.[525] Unfortunately, however, this did not come to pass. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Klee was one of the few contemporary artists to whom the philosopher paid attention (George Braque being the notable other, though in Braque's case this surely rested on Heidegger's perception of Braque's deep embeddedness in the manual processes of painting).[526] One can only speculate as to the source of Heidegger's attachment, although Klee's paintings do present varying manners of *inbetweenness*, and are difficult to position.[527] Dennis Schmidt claims that Klee offered Heidegger the hope of a visual form to his thinking—thinking that, in its archaic animation and inter-directedness, began *with* the painting, and ended *of* it.[528]

3.2: Preservation and Poetry

In *The End of Art: Readings in a Rumour after Hegel,* Eva Geulen, in considering five key incarnations of endist debate – in Hegel, Nietzsche, Benjamin, Adorno and Heidegger – pays attention, in the last two chapters of the book, to Heidegger's understanding of the form and language of Hölderlin's verse in respect of what is taken to be its content.[529] In Heidegger's analysis, as with the works of Klee, this form, so Geulen argues, functions to compel a method of knowing that *arises from* rather than being *imposed upon* the work. Heidegger lectured extensively on Hölderlin in the middle period of his career, at a time of ultimate strife, and Geulen addresses the impact of his encounters with the German poet of rivers on the course of his thinking,

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[525] This would have addressed current artworks and the advent of modernism in the visual arts. Klee's work interested prominent German thinkers of this time, including Walter Benjamin. In his "Thesis on Philosophical Thought", 1940, Benjamin wrote: "A Klee painting named *Angelus Novus* (**Fig. 4E**) shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned towards the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe that keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead and make whole again what has been mashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly compels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress", 249.

[526] Braque (George, 1882-1963) developed the process of collage, using it earlier than Pablo Picasso (1881-1973). Throughout his life, Braque was a great experimenter with surfaces. With regard to Klee, Derek H. Whitehead (birth date unknown) has written about Heidegger's encounters with Klee's work. See: "Martin Heidegger's *Technites*, Paul Klee's *Gestalt* and *starting from the very beginning*", n.d., accessed March 22, 2017, http://castle.e iu.edu/~modernity /whitehead.htm.

[527] These small paintings – sometimes illustrative, humorous, learned and of the past, at other times radically abstract, intuitive, savage and of the future – retain mysteriousness: almost an animistic desire to keep hold of the source of their secrets.

[528] Dennis J. Schmidt, "Between Word and Image: Heidegger, Klee, and Gadamer on Gesture and Genesis" (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 187.

[529] Ezra Pound (1885-1972) considered *content* and *music* to be to two roads of poetry—to subject matter and versification respectively.

and on his theory of origins.[530] Coming either side of "The Origin of the Work of Art", these lectures frame the point at which, for Heidegger, having learned the lessons of Hölderlin's *inspired unreason*: "philosophy abdicates in favour of poetry".[531]

Fig. 4E

With Heidegger's poetising of philosophy comes the: "demotion of the production of art […] in favour of its preservation".[532] Demotion amounts to an extension of the possibility of art—a form of insurance that, to borrow a phrase from Robert Browning, its, "reach will exceed its grasp".[533] In *Hölderlin's Hymn: The Ister*, Heidegger attends to what is a rather short poem.[534] To David Nichols, these lectures mark a significant

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[530] Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1850) was born the same year as Wordsworth. He studied theology at the Tübinger Stift, where his fellow students included fellow Swabians, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) and Schelling (Schelling he had known from school). It has been suggested that it was Hölderlin who brought to Hegel's attention the work of Heraclitus (c. 535 – c. 475 BC), and the union of opposites, which would form the basis of the dialectic. Heidegger lectured on Hölderlin in 1934/5, 1941/2 and 1942. The first series was titled *Hölderlin's Hymns Germania and the Rhine*. Hölderlin offers Heidegger a means of displaying his ontological hypothesis (almost of seeing it in action), and, from the mid-1930s, an understanding of poetry becomes, to Heidegger, the primary route to a fuller understanding of being. Heidegger's Nazism is not the subject of this work.

[531] Eva Geulen. *The End of Art: Readings in a Rumour After Hegel*, (California: Stanford University Press, 2006), 136. Paskow (*The Paradoxes of Art: A Phenomenological Investigation*, 31) sees Heidegger's later writing as akin to the poetic essays of Rainer Maria Rilke (1975-1926). *Inspired Unreason* is a phrase used by George Steiner, *Heidegger*, 142.

[532] Eva Geulen. *The End of Art: Readings in a Rumour After Hegel*, 124.

[533] Robert Browning, *Andrea del Sarto (The Faultless Painter)*, from *Men and Women*, 1855.

[534] Seventy-two lines. Heidegger also addresses Sophocles' *Antigone* and the mechanisms of Greek tragedy. *Hölderlin's Hymn* was Heidegger's second Hölderlin lecture series.

shift in the orientation of his thought, from a Nietzschean interest in the will to power, to a pastoral consideration of how poets can provide dwellings.[535] Nichols writes:

> In the Ister lectures, Heidegger focuses upon the different ways in which *Dasein* takes residence within its historical situation. Greek tragedy demonstrates how human beings are always trying to make themselves at home without ever fully accomplishing this goal. They occupy the uncanny (*unheimlich*) status of extraordinary beings among ordinary appearances, always estranged from the larger framework of beings, never able to completely fit into its structure. The Greeks recognized this strangeness in other beings as well, through the extraordinary revealing made possible by the gods.[536]

To be German, for both Hölderlin and Heidegger, meant to be rooted in what it meant to be Greek, and Nichols points to Hölderlin's understanding of poetry as a process of uncovering truth. To poetise is, therefore, to challenge the prevailing gods, and to seek to make unity with them through a tragic alignment—to maintain the particularities of difference (conflictedness) within the very fabric of that which permits it visibility.[537]

3.2.1: Calling forth and Attending to

Heidegger opens the analysis with an etymological scrutiny of the word *hymn*, which he derives from the Greek *hýmnos* (from *hydeō*), meaning song of praise *for the gods*. By praise, Heidegger is referring to *a calling forth* rather than *a calling to*: and that which is called forth – the work/poem/temple – remains, in its openness, to be attended to. The lecture proceeds to attend to Hölderlin's poem *The Ister* and, in attending, to preserve its being. In determining the conditions into which the work becomes operable as a work (and thus countering the scientific, deterministic implications of production), the work also serves to inaugur the means of its own form of preservation, as, to Heidegger: "a work is only a work when held in preserving".[538]

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[535] For being to occupy. *The will to power* first appeared in *The Wanderer in his Shadow*, 1880, and then in *Daybreak*, 1881.

[536] David Nichols, "Antigone's Autochthonous Voice: Echoes in Sophocles, Hölderlin, and Heidegger", 2009, accessed September 29, 2016, http://www.iwm.at/publications/5-junior-visiting-fellows-conferences/vol-xxv/antigones-autochthonous-voice/#_edn 4.

[537] Heidegger sometimes uses the terms *gods* to represent what he referred to as macro-paradigmatic works of art. To him, fundamentally transformative works, like the Greek temple, or tragic drama, would sit in this category. Paintings or poems would constitute paradigmatic works. The micro-paradigmatic classification denotes something approximating a coming to awareness of things that matter to us.

[538] Eva Geulen, *The End of Art: Readings in a Rumour After Hegel*, 124.

Preserving, in this context, means to take note of – *a noticing in attending* – rather than *to look after*. What Geulen appears to imply, is that Heidegger's origin – in all its layered complexity – is designed to point not to the truth of the work of art, but to the truth of the preservation of the work of art (that the work's truth, as outlined in *Part 1*, is a second-order effect realised alongside a more fundamental preservational primacy). Preservation, here, can be thought of as a mode of being operable through the medium of art (though not necessarily through the particular art form's medium), whose function serves to support the perpetuation of works and, therefore, of truths. Having been called forth, the medium, then, ensures that the work is attended to.

3.2.2: Modes of Preservation

Modes of preservation vary as they take on different forms, to the point where even neglect is couched in the affirmative.[539] All that attests to the work is, to Heidegger, in the service of preservation. Aside from the more obvious forms of institutional *enframing*, language offers a means whereby the work's truth might be conserved and *held*.[540] Why, then, does Heidegger go to such lengths to foreground the preservational aspect of the work? The answer, to Geulen, is in order to expose modernity's ontological modality – something that modernism is/does (in an epochal sense), and in distinction from the past – from which the work draws, and to which it returns.[541]

> The problem with all conceptions of modernity so far, including any reflexive, second modernity, is that in the face of their inevitable disillusion about their own powers of innovation, they seem condemned either to confess in melancholy or embarrassed tones their own derivativeness or […] to invoke that derivativeness as restoration.[542]

The central paradox of the artwork essay, to Geulen, is that whenever Heidegger commits himself to a beginning, he invokes an end.[543] To counter this is to conceive of

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[539] Modes of preservation that arrive as a result of the disclosure of the truth of the work, Heidegger considers *ownmost*. Neglect, too, derives its understanding from (in relation to) the being of the work.
[540] Heidegger developed the concept of *enframing* (*Gestell*) in *The Question concerning Technology*, 1954, to denote a framework or structure that lies beneath technology. Heidegger's use differs from the more common use of *framing*, in that *Gestell* implies an active component that is integral and perpetual to technology's being.
[541] Ibid., 126. The detail of this modality is outlined more fully in Heidegger's "The Age of World Picture".
[542] Ibid. There is a reflection here of Bois's notion of mourning (see: *Chapter 2: 4.1.1*).
[543] An origin.

an origin as something that is retained. And so, preservation is requiring of a means of maintenance: as not to preserve is to relinquish being—to have Nietzsche's abyss stare back at you.[544] To retain an origin through the work is to affirm (to ensure that origin is *established by* the work). This would be as if a reader of a book were to come in at *Chapter 2* and infer the events of *Chapter 1*. In retracting the origin, through preservation, Heidegger relinquishes the end. To continue the analogy: the reader would approach the final chapter to discover it missing, only to realise that in the course of the work he had uncovered the necessary clues as to how to write it.

In sum: preservation is the preserve of poetry. Metaphysics is that which is to be overcome in order to discover the truth of what is. *What is* is, in a sense, what is possible—a conflation of what has been and what is to come. From this position – here, loosely sketched – Heidegger, in the *Hölderlin Lectures*, sets out to demonstrate the means whereby the truth of the ancient Greeks might become visible in Hölderlin's poetry. Heidegger is resistant to that which allows a gap (temporal, spatial or linguistic) to emerge between what the Greeks were and what they are in/with Hölderlin (and, by extension, himself), and posits a form of mutual kinship: for the reason that a space allows room for the imposition of inauthentic interpretation.[545] To Heidegger, for Hölderlin to licence access to the truth of the Greeks requires language to relinquish its more familiar tropes and habits—to desist, or simply take a rest.[546]

Therefore, distancing devices – simile, metaphor and allegory – are held to be synthetic, and serve as symbolic stand-ins (in seeming to get close they push away). This acts as an assault on the fundamental presumption of representation—the belief, underpinning all linguistic models, that one thing can approximate or stand in place of another. Steiner describes it as an attempt to have: "simple, naked words enter into, generate a construct, a music of thought, of insight into the meaning of life which are, literally and demonstrably, *inexhaustible*".[547] And so, if the Greeks are, through

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[544] From "Aphorism 146", *Beyond Good and Evil*, 1886.
[545] Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn: The Ister*, trans. William McNeill and Julia Davis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996). Inauthenticity equates, here, to external imposition (wish-fulfilment).
[546] The idea of resting has important implications for painting, particularly in respect of the Rosenbergian notion of painting as action, in that the work's static form bears the stigmata of its active establishment.
[547] George Steiner, *Heidegger*, 144.

surviving texts, present to Hölderlin (and both Hölderlin and the Greeks to Heidegger), then they are so as a result of a correspondence that remains, at least in Heidegger's works of this time, unspecified.[548] This, ultimately, amounts to a sustained mode of resistance to a hermeneutic impulse arising from metaphysical speculation that, to Heidegger, serves only to open an unwelcome and widening gap between the text and that which the text is seen to represent. Thus, it is the very distance of the mechanism permitting access to the ancient Greeks that serves to ensure their nearness.[549]

3.3: Double-Directedness

Hölderlin's understanding of the river is key. When Geulen writes that Heidegger's interest in the river in Hölderlin's poem stems from its double-directedness, she does not mean to imply that it flows both ways. Hölderlin's account of the Ister does not emphasise direction as such (or a directedness that points to the meaning of the river being determined by its final resting place).[550] Instead, the meaning/being of the river in/as the present draws from both its source (far away) and its destination (seaward), which, in turn (and assisted by its tributaries), establishes it as river (**Figs. 4F, 4G**).[551] In drawing from both source and destination, Hölderlin maintains the river as, in essence, a static thing in perpetual flux—the river can never reach its end, nor can we witness its beginning. In Geulen's analysis, the river parallels history (and history the river), but in reverse—"he seems almost reversing".[552] To Hölderlin, events, too, seem held between, and defined by, the particularity of their destination and their origin.[553]

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[548] As might be expected, if one is to follow the logic of Heidegger's thinking: in particular, his critique of presence, which the resolution of a given solution would contravene.
[549] Eva Geulen, *The End of Art: Readings in a Rumour After Hegel*, 126.
[550] Ibid.
[551] Including: the Indus, the East, the Alphaeus, the other side, down there, and the Isthmus.
[552] Friedrich Hölderlin, *The Ister*, lines 41-41.
[553] This alignment or double projection appears close to Heidegger's *clearing* (*lichtung*), and illuminates the being of the medium also. After all, medium is but a thing in flux: positioned as *equipment* between its source as thing (formerly *mere* material) and its destination as *work*—between object and image, means and message, form and content, and subject and surface.

Fig. 4F

Fig. 4G

It is important to keep in mind the distinction between subject and surface within modernist criticism, which assigned an autonomous, atemporal identity to both language and material, and serves to confine each to a position of periodic absence through a posited engagement with the other. In short, and in following Mitchell, to be a painting is to know something of the artifice of painting, within whose confines both language and material subsist. In following Heidegger's logic, the medium's equipmentality amounts to its propensity to act as a horizon of being—a meeting place

where surface and subject rendezvous. Here, both are maintained in situ—as the work. In the work's subsequent disclosure, the medium is thus concealed *as work*.[554]

3.3.1: Language and Event

But how does it accomplish this? In respect of both the end of art thesis and the medium of painting, the intrusion of language generates a layer of complexity—the end of art is a written thesis, and painting, too, operates within linguistic structures. Geulen's alludes to a problem that arises out of a sense of distance between *event* and *language of event*. The assumption that language *refers to* or *arises out of* permits language to follow or trail, and to trace what will become – in language – a series of sequential, ordered events—in short: language plots history. Or, to see it another way, history structures the language that follows it and establishes it *as* history. Thus, the relationship is reciprocal. Language comports itself *in* and *as* history, and vice versa. So, if language is *of* or *with* the medium, then where does the imbrication lie?

3.3.2: Rumour: Non-Event

Hegel naturalised the linkage of language and event: To him, there was only *totality*: a composite of regulating moments, which, in respect of medium, played itself out – one thing after another – with distinct mediums driving the shape that the individual arts came to assume.[555] The end of art thesis is not, in fact, a moment as such (in that it amounts to something that has happened…in the world), but attests to a theoretical possibility—it thus appears in performative guise, as language of a non-existent event: one that cannot exist if the thesis is to maintain its meaning as *end of art thesis*.[556] This paradox relieves language of historicism and points to Hölderlin's employment of rumour.[557] To Heidegger, rumour amounts to that which permits an irresolvable

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[554] Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not At All*, 204.

[555] Hegel, in *Becoming Medium* (Stephen Melville, 2013). Event produces language that, in turn, situates event *in* language *as* thesis. The partiality of times is only partial in respect of what is to come, not in the sense of something being missing.

[556] J. L. Austin (1911-1960), in *How to do things with Words*, 1962, distinguishes between performative and constative utterances. Performative utterances can be neither true nor false. Constative utterances describe an action, object or event, and can be true or false, as there is the possibility to disprove them. For example, Emily says: "I promise to do my homework", and, in so doing, *performs* the promise irrespective of whether Emily in fact completes her homework. This is, therefore, a performative utterance, as even the non-completion of the homework will not contradict the utterance itself. Austin uses the example: "I now pronounce you man and wife", spoken in the course of a wedding ceremony, as a common example of a performative utterance.

[557] Geulen reminds us that Hegel's lectures were transcribed by his students. Therefore, from the off, they were determined by rumour.

dislocation between actual event and language of event. As Michael Belshaw puts it: "a rumour is reliant on a simulacrum—it has no recognisable origin, and its repetition is always a repetition of a repetition; which is to say it is always *out of joint*".[558]

3.4: And Medium

Here, it is useful to distinguish between medium as material and medium as something else. As material, medium's meaning is paint (a designation that takes into account extensions to the material, that serve with/as paint to establish the composite nature of the work), which provides a means of location—the work can be pointed to as *of the material of paint*.[559] In painting, also, language appears to trail, though behind paint, which it follows and establishes as medium. Paint assembles and – as medium – is assembled by the image that shadows it. As we have seen with Newman and Rauschenberg: Newman's work deploys the medium of paint – through the confluence of material and language – whereas Rauschenberg deploys only material.[560] As medium, paint re-deploys its materiality, but in the process of becoming a work.

3.4.1: The Equipmentality of Medium

Medium's concealment behind the work's *subject* (by/through the *surface* of the work) is partial—amounting to one half of the dual course of disclosure. The medium's equipmentality must also become visible, and through the reciprocity of the process— that of the medium's concealment behind the work's surface (by/through the subject of the work). By this, I mean to suggest that the subject, thus construed (from out of the surface), and having been disclosed through the work, acts to disclose the hidden hemisphere of being from which its disclosure has been constituted (initially concealed within its primary act of disclosure—that of the equipmentality of the shoes).[561] Thus, the disclosure of the equipmentality of the shoes is also the disclosure

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[558] Michael Belshaw, *Readings in a Rumour of the End of Art* (Leeds: Workshop Press, 2012), 11. Jacques Derrida, S*pecters of Marx: The state of the debt, the work of mourning and the new international* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993). Derrida invented the term *hauntology*, to describe a lack of origin or presence (and of an end too), as a state of perpetual ontological disjunction—a ghost, neither present or absent, dead nor alive. Serving as a response to Fukuyama's assertion of the end of history and the triumph of capitalism, Derrida redeploys a line from *Hamlet* (William Shakespeare, 1564-1616): "the time is out of joint".
[559] Common extenders include: wax, plaster, sawdust, sand, cement, glass, ceramic and paper.
[560] Michael Belshaw, email, 2017.
[561] The truth of the equimentality of the shoes takes precedence over the truth of the equipmentality of the medium, as a result of the work's higher ontological ordering. As work, and to stay with Heidegger's example, it bears on both the equipmentality of the shoes and the equipmentality of the

of the equipmentality of the medium of paint, in accordance with the established ontological structuring of the work (**Table 14**). If, according to Heidegger: *in the artwork, the truth of what is has set itself to work*, then it is perhaps applicable to suggest that in painting, truth is work and medium of work setting themselves to work.

<div style="border:1px solid black; background:#cceccc; padding:1em;">

Disclosed as surface through subject—**MEDIUM**—Disclosed as subject through surface

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Table 14: Disclosure of Medium's Equipmentality

The dual disclosure of the work's truth and the equipmentality of the paint amounts to: *being at work in the service of truth(s)*—doing what it is that work and paint do. What it is that *paint as medium* does comprises of little more than being a painting. I don't mean to suggest partiality or lack: merely that paint, as medium's vehicle, is also its limitation.[562] Paint is not worn or eaten, providing neither warmth nor sustenance.[563] Its usefulness is to be found in its malleability and movability—in its mercurial fittedness for transformation: its vehicular characteristics and chimeric potentialities. Medium becomes operable as/through paint, in its move from the mere to the equipmental, and again in its move from the equipmental to becoming bound up in/as a work. In this light, the medium of painting, as Saunders's suggests, arises out of the redeployment or mobilisation of material.[564] If language speaks, then painting paints.

To clarify: the equipmentality of the shoes is disclosed through the painting (the work). However, to assert that the equipmentality of the paint is disclosed through the work of painting feels like both a tautology (a painting is a painting) and an assertion of painting's autonomy (in that a painting seems, here, not to require an outside).

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medium in its transformation from mere material. Unburdened of the weight of the shoes, it must divest itself of the medium in order to retain a neutral charge—a prerequisite if one is to present an active ontological model free of the presumption of presence.

[562] As with Heidegger's example of the peasant – who simply knows of the usefulness of the shoes from wearing them – an equivalent must be found for the truth of the medium (a specificity particular to the medium's form of equipmentality) in order to legitimise the truth/knowledge to which the *subject* of the work's disclosure attests.

[563] In painting, that is. And, if/when it is, then the possibility of painting is extended to include such situatedness, and new limits might be drawn up. However, novelty, alone, is not an extender of painting's possibilities.

[564] Matt Saunders, "Thread, Pixel, Grain", in *Painting Beyond Itself*, 174.

Nevertheless, this is inaccurate; as such a supposition fails to account for a fundamental division within the work. For *A Pair of Shoes*, there is clearly an outside—the peasant working in the field.[565] And for the painting, a division also exists, but it is a division between the processes of painting and the stasis of its object. The stasis of the work's object belies its processes, serving, in the process, to activate the paint's latent equipmentality. Once activated, the paint (as material) sublimates itself through the work and becomes invisible (concealed) in the course of positioning the work as work. The equipmentality of the paint itself is then disclosed through/as the painting, for the simple reason that there is nowhere else for it to be disclosed.

3.5: Caesura: The End of the End—Painting in the Contracted Field

> This one contents himself;
> But rock needs gashes
> And the earth furrows
> Or how should we plant and dwell?[566]

Transformation and malleability comprise only the more materially manifest facets of the medium's equipmentality: of interest chiefly to the maker of the work, or to one concerned with the work's construction. There is something more. What of the receiver of the work? In Latin, the term *caesura* denotes a pause or break between words in musical or poetic composition; marked out in written notation, or evident in performance.[567] Integral to the work, the caesura acts to structure the line, and so provides the verse with its formal particularlies. Hölderlin employs this device, as did the Greeks, investing metrical and rhythmical cadence with its specificity and sense, in order to, "name[…] what is holy".[568] The caesura serves as an enabler, too, as, within the structure of Greek tragedy, it redirects and reminds.[569] Thus, the caesura occupies an odd position within writing and speech—being both absent and passive (a gap) and present and active (integral to what has been and what is to come). In permitting the

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[565] That which is outside, and whose truth the work services.
[566] Friedrich Hölderlin, *The Ister*, lines 67-70.
[567] Meaning *to cut*.
[568] George Steiner, *Heidegger*, 146. One example of which is the chorus in *Antigone*: The chorus acts as narrator, determining how the audience can/should react. Additionally, the chorus can interact with the players and assist in the determination of occurrences.
[569] The chorus also functions to underscore past events, and to point to those still to come.

positivisation of nothingness (a *holding open*), the caesura negates the possibility of absence and resolution.

In Hölderlin's work, as with Greek tragedy, the caesura, in suspending the action, suspends the abyssal void. On the necessity of the retention of disruption in tragic poetry, Nichols writes:

> Tragic poetry houses and sustains the essential negation of human experience in a way that funnels that emptiness, as a tragic transport, toward the direction of a particular fate. Poetry serves as the measure of an encompassing whole—the place where the poet envisages the entirety of an experience.[570]

And so, Hölderlin, in both his theoretical work and his verse, seeks to maintain the prospect of wholeness, though in contradiction to Hegel. Hegel's wholeness arises from the restorative resolution of difference, through the synthesis of thesis and antithesis.[571] Hölderlin, on the other hand, seeks to preserve differences – the discrete graininess of things – through the formal mechanism of the caesura—*in* the work. Such maintenance serves to ensure the sense and particularity of occurrence.

What, then, of the notion of an end…of art, and of medium? If event – in Hölderlin's case, the course of the Ister – is requiring of an origin and a destination (the Black Forest and the Black Sea) to establish it as river, then the end of art thesis, too, is requiring of an origin and a destination, which it must maintain if it is to retain its meaning as end of art thesis.[572] Within German metaphysics (and art historical discourse) the end of art draws from Hegel as its source, and the fabled end of art as its destination. With both ends buffered by rumour (Hegel, by means of his rumoured pronouncement, and the end by virtue of its rumoured expectancy), the thesis is uncoupled from the events it is ordinarily taken to chart. Here, rumour acts as caesura.

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[570] David Nichols, "Antigone's Autochthonous Voice: Echoes in Sophocles, Hölderlin, and Heidegger", 2009.

[571] This formulation of the dialectic in fact came from Johann Fichte (1762-1814).

[572] *The Ister*, directed by David Barrison and Daniel Ross, 2004. The film journeys upstream to the source of the river. Bernhard Stiegler (1952-), Jean-Luc Nancy (1940-), Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe (1940-2007), and others reflect on: time, war, poetry, home, technology and National Socialism. Stiegler argues that Man and technics are indissociable (*hominisation*…technical living), and that, for most of what amounts to human time, there was no awareness or sense of the technicisation of being (2004).

In so doing, the end of art attains freedom and endlessness (through its bondedness to that which frames it) and, in the process, becomes a rumour of itself.

3.5.1: And Painting

Within this formulation the medium carefully cushions its captives: at one end, the mere thing (as origin), and, at the other, the work's functionality in language (as destination). Thus, in disclosing the equipmentality of paint as medium, the medium discloses a second tier of equipmentality—as a double caesura.[573] The caesura's equipmentality functions as partition, connecting the work's mereness to its station *as work*, and doing likewise with its language—with what Heidegger calls its, "allegory and symbol".[574] Harnessed against the backdrop of a reversal of history (a history that Melville has likened to a stirring up of sediment), the medium harnesses its harnessers – mere thing and language – in a three-fold embrace, as *artwork*.[575] As caesura, the medium is retained as two absent presences: neither wholly material nor wholly linguistic. As the *gashes and furrows* of painting, the medium repudiates assimilation (into either language or material) and permits *planting* and *dwelling* (as both language and material).[576] In resisting resolution, the medium – in the stasis of its mobilisation – acts to safeguard nothing less than the perpetual preservation of painting (**Table 15**).

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[573] To be thought of as two positivised suspensions, or gaps.

[574] This gets around the false differentiation, identified by Richard Wollheim in *On formalism and its Kinds*, 1995, between the syntactic (formal) structure of a painting and any linguistic counterpart (a vocabulary of language that refers to the world). Wollheim, here, deals with Bois's comment, at a seminar organised by The Museum of Modern Art in New York, 1989 (in the aftermath of the Picasso-Braque exhibition), that painting sometimes functions like a language and sometimes functions not like a language.

[575] Stephen Melville, *Becoming Medium*, 2013. In this, he follows the lead of Heinrich Wölfflin. Remember, to Heidegger, the past becomes knowable as/through the artwork, not in advance of it.

[576] Friedrich Hölderlin, *The Ister*, from lines 68-69.

Thing Origin	Medium **Caesura** Equipment	Art Work	Medium **Caesura** Equipment	Language Destination
Mere		Equipment		Work
Black Forest		River Ister		Black Sea
Hegel	Rumour **Caesura** Equipment	End of Art Thesis	Rumour **Caesura** Equipment	End of Art

P   A   I   N   T   I   N   G

Y   R   O   T   S   I   H

Table 15: Ontological Positioning of Medium as Caesura

Chapter 5: On/Of Recent Practice

Part 1: Introduction

Between September 2016 and August 2017 I painted from the RCA research studio in Battersea.[577] Initially, I continued to work on oak panels – under 25 cm in any direction – that were begun elsewhere (**Figs. 5A, 5B**). Additionally, I stretched several canvases of varying sizes. These works appeared, at this time, to mark an end to the body of works referred to in *Chapter 1*: one reached, perhaps, by the logic of painterly possibility. What I was attempting and what I could do in the manner of attempting it had, to me, become mutually excluding (**Fig. 5C**).[578] Either the works were forced and unconvincing, or else they roamed freely without censure. I grew too aware of what the paintings could be – and of the steps taken to get them there – and yet seemingly not conscious enough of the needs of individual works (of what the work appeared to do and how that doing shifted). I decided on a different approach.[579] In March 2017, I began to paint on aluminium, suspended from the wall with a gap of 2 cm (**Fig. 5D**). These are sheets of picturing paint.[580] Also, with the works on wood now numbering more than one hundred, my attention shifted to reconsidering methods of display.[581]

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[577] The seventh studio I have occupied since this project began.

[578] The result of too deliberate and clean a polarisation of material and language.

[579] The registration of mark on surface is the baseline of painting. To change it is to change all else.

[580] Sheets have thickness too. With the ratio between paint and support changed, the surface's presence alters. See: Mick Finch, on thickness, from "Supports/Surfaces: Contexts and Issues", 1999 (considered in *Chapter 2: 3.3.2*).

[581] The idea of the French Salon (in miniature) interests me, in that this method of hanging offers distraction (*all-overness*) through the employment of close grouping. It also positivises the wall as a form of irregular grid, and positions each work as both complete and incomplete, in that it becomes impossible not to make connections either side (or else above and below) an individual work. This links to the idea discussed in *Chapter 1, Sections 2.3 & 2.10*. No single work is burdened by being *the work*, and so completion is deferred (though I hope, at the same time, that many of the works have an absorptive quality that defines them individually within the group). Also, edges, sides and joins (the material aspects of the paintings in opposition to their pictures) become a bigger deal visually. A sense of connectedness and apartness, of absent middles and things unseen, of action off stage left and right, and of representations dissolving and forming becomes central to the works.

Fig. 5A
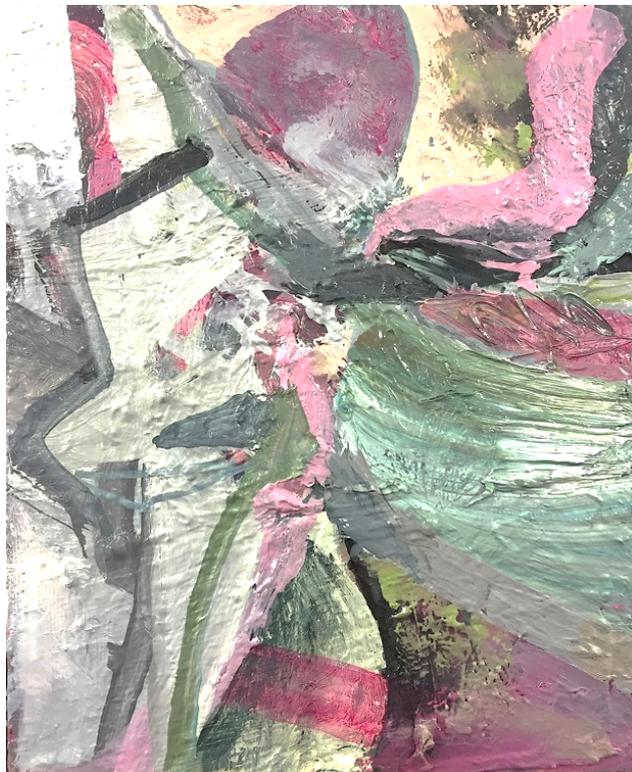
Fig. 5B

Fig. 5C

Fig. 5D

I toyed with the possibility of ending this thesis with a conclusion that would follow on from *Chapter 4*, leaving the paintings to, as it were, speak for themselves. Ultimately, this appeared unsatisfactory. Not only did it seem increasingly necessary to, in some form or other, attempt an account of the recent work *in writing*, but also, it felt inadequate to leave a theoretical hypothesis ungrounded: by which I mean untested in respect of the practice which brought about this study in the first instance, and on which its success, in large part, rests.[582] Additionally, the conditions of my practice had changed, and in a number of ways. The solution: a bridge between Heidegger and the end (of this thesis), and one that tackles some of the difficulties in addressing the medium outside of the particularities of encounters with paintings. This chapter thus attests to a desire to read between the lines of painting, or to write around its material and linguistic particularities—to remain open enough to say what remains to be said about painting's medium – within the parameters of this inquiry, and without stepping on the conclusion's toes – and yet refrain from extending beyond the perhaps more obvious limitations of what a *writing about medium specificity* is required to be.[583]

Part 2 begins by introducing the processes involved in the recent works on aluminium, seeking to extend the positioning of my practice – that began in *Chapter 1* – in respect of the activities of the past year. I will consider differences that arise between the experience of *writing in painting* and *painting in writing*, through an account of the use of word and picture in painting.[584] Here, I wish to further explore the interrelationship of language and form—of reading and seeing, and to extend – practically, *as writing* – the investigation into the connectedness of medium to picture undertaken in *Chapter 3*. To *be with a painting* is to ascribe to painting its medium aspect—to see that which is not *shown* in the showing of what is. *Part 3* attempts to play out the relationship of formal particularity to meaning through a simple written exercise. Hence, *Part 2* is subsequently retold, and offers a written correspondence of its *content*, shaped otherwise. I seek to demonstrate a sense of equivalence and difference.[585] Form and content are non-divisible. Formed differently tells differently,

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[582] See: *Chapter 4*, *Introduction*, regarding the necessity of mapping ideas against the experience of works.
[583] Which also encompass that which it cannot be, namely: a demonstration of painting's medium.
[584] Which more typically involves the incorporation of reproductions of paintings.
[585] In regard of the difference from one telling to the next, and equivalence in respect of the addressing of mutual subject matter.

and inversely. Thus, in offering a retelling of what has been told, the particularities of *Part 2* are thrown into relief. *Part 3*, then, functions in respect of *Part 2*, as associate.

Finally, *Part 4* presents my recent practice. However, this presentation lacks any descriptive commentary, and consists only of headed labels that link to photographic reproductions of selected paintings. The model of medium constructed in *Chapter 3* and *Chapter 4* determines that works attain their specificity *as equipment* – through a confluence of picture and material – and in accordance with the particularity of discrete conditions of encounter.[586] As such (especially with this as the very subject to hand), a *writing about* would sit outside of the action, adding story only: or else stand as writing-picture (not painting-picture).[587] By this I mean to suggest that, at this juncture (having explored an art historical and theoretical positioning of the medium across three of the four previous chapters, building a case in support of the conclusions I have arrived at), to seek to account for the medium aspect of individual or collective works through descriptive or analytical prose sits counter to the thrust of the argument I wish to make, namely: that the medium aspect of paintings is dependent on one's encountering the linguistic and material particularities of painted works in situ.[588]

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[586] With the polarity of language and material read backwards; one result of the work's multiple disclosures. Here, the terms *picture* and *material* are more appropriate than Podro's preferred terms – *subject* and *surface* – in that they allude to fundamental painterly concerns, allowing for both thickness (of surface) and forming (of picture).

[587] Thereby demonstrating its own form of medium specificity. The specificity of story – in writing – opens another line of enquiry: one that seeks to examine the particularities of linguistic convention and various figures of speech.

[588] If the medium of a painting is at all to be understood through photographic reproduction, then it must be the case that one possesses an awareness of painting prior to encountering its reproduction.

Part 2: Writing Medium

> To paint, to push, to draw, to smear, to press,
> Before, behind, prolong, impede, caress.
> Enlist, resist, desist; on picture rest,
> Begin again, from whence it came, redressed.
> Grey-green, grey-blue, blue-blue, drew through anew,
> In landscape, seascape, dreamscape, still life too.
> Moved on from, gone, there-still, there-where implied,
> A surface-image, image-surface dried.

2.1: Works on Aluminium

My method of painting involves planning and intuition. I paint, and use what it is that I paint to advance the painting.[589] In concerning myself with material and language, I seek to bring about meetings on surfaces: pictures are unavoidable and must, therefore, be welcomed. I apply paint directly, and without too much concern about rightness, placement or resolution. As a pictorial structure emerges, I begin to make sense of spatial relationships, tonal values and the play of shapes and marks. I come into contact with the surface of a work and take account of what it does and how it informs the movement of material. I work off a ground of zinc white, in part to re-introduce a slipperiness lost during the priming of the metal surface with acid etch primer (which roughens the metal for greater cohesion), but also to ensure that colour is lifted—zinc is a low intensity white, creating heavier tints more slowly than titanium white.[590]

2.2: Exposing Medium

The shift to working on an aluminium support has been indicative of more than a desire to exchange one surface for another (for the sake of it, and irrespective of likely changes that such a shift might bring about in respect of questions of medium). In painting – and very practically (not theoretically), to disclose the nature of a surface is to conceal it—a support's surface becomes *surface in painting* by being covered in paint.[591] Moreover, there have been consequences, notably: the shift in palette, from cooler greys to more luminous and vibrant arrangements containing a variety of pinks,

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[589] To advance, here, is to change for the purpose of making more of.
[590] Lifting, in this context, means pulling through (material pigment through material pigment).
[591] Or by its adjacency to surfaces covered with paint (consider in respect of Johns and Rauschenberg, and, in particular, their incorporation of non-painted objects).

purples, greens and oranges—colours more immediately realised and at greater risk from prolonged reworking. My rationale in this regard was simple: to showcase the fundamentals of painting – the formal, the material, and the linguistic (**Fig. 5E**) – unadorned: resolved or else resolving.
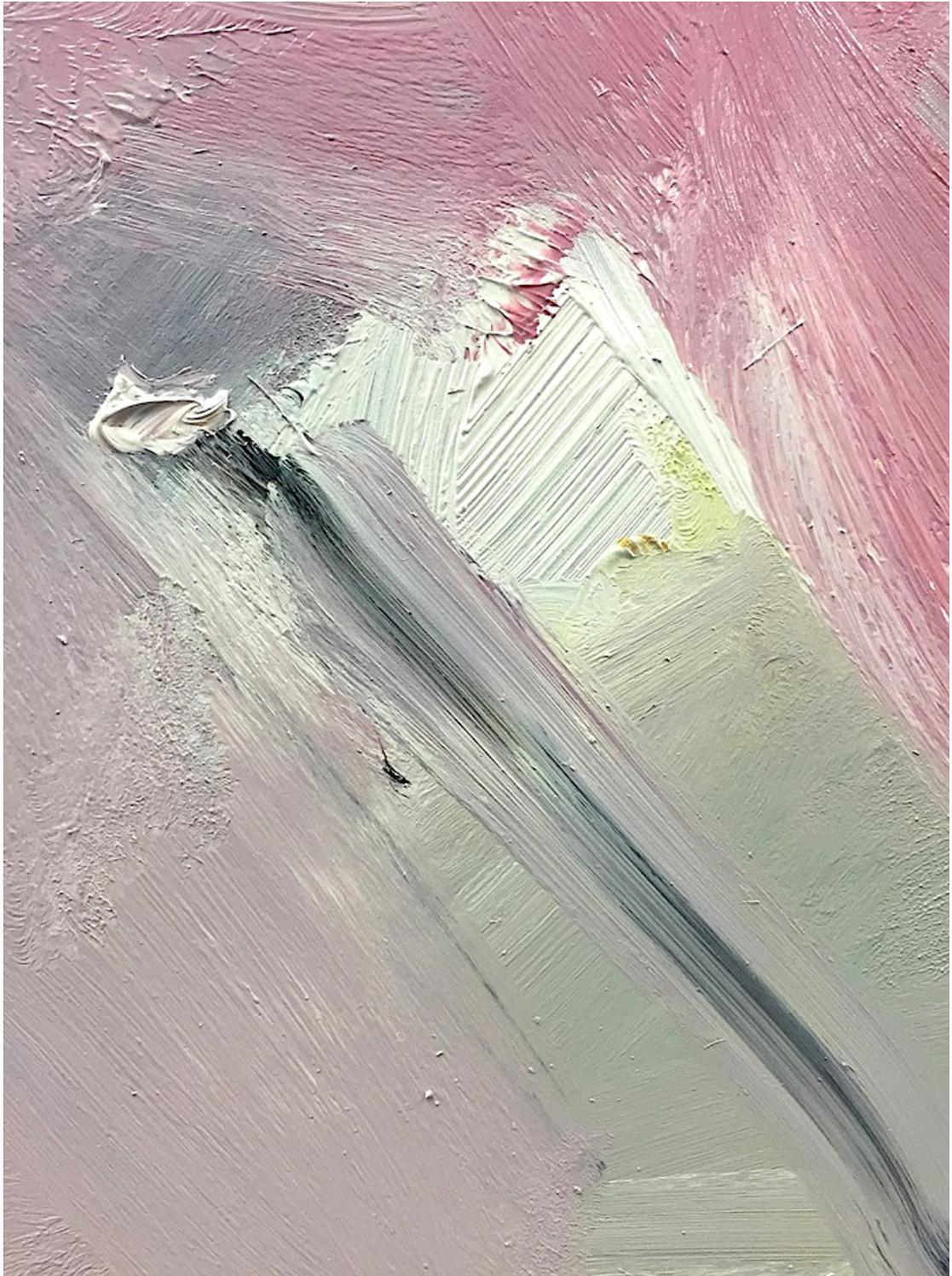

Fig. 5E

I have addressed the following areas of practice: **The edge**: in small works, the edge is prominent. I wanted, here, to re-think the relationship of surface to edge in light of my exploration of the material constituents of the painted object. Joining wooden supports had raised my awareness of the edge's significance. To downplay the edge – or at least to negate its propensity to distract – is to foreground the surface, and vice versa.[592] **The surface**: in being newly foregrounded (in having its usual counterpart restricted to 2 mm), the surface is thus permitted a more singular mode of being, allowing the skin of the painted film to attain a primacy. **Paint in and of itself**: impossible, owing to the intrusiveness of pareidolic possibility.[593] However, in so far as I can cutback on distractions, the reduction of layers of painted material to one – established wet-in-wet – permits me to consider paint (in its transference from a liquid to a solid state) at its most immediate. The elimination of subsequent skins, common in my works (especially those on wood) up to this point, is a strategy to expose surface, or to contend with its limits. Medium has no form of expression. Medium is the expression of form. Form *mediums*.

2.3: Writing in Painting

My interest in painting stems from how it is that paint serves to construct language, not how language opposes a concern for pictorial space. This seems like a small distinction, and yet on it hinges a large part of this investigation. To write is to picture, and picturing in painting is constructed from painterly structures that sit on/as surface. I am not addressing qualitative matters here, for this is not an inquiry into aesthetic and/or ethical judgements in and of themselves. A more pressing concern has been the extent to which medium is *pictured*. I have incorporated all or part of the words *paint* and *painting* in some recent works, with these words chosen for their proximity to painting: as words, they designate the work's constitution: as letters they sit spatially within the schema of the work—as pictures (**Fig. 5F**). Writing can be used to overcome painter's block. It can bridge the work's space and sit atop of its image, foregrounding the *underneathness* of surface. It has material and optical extension.

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[592] Though edge is also surface, owing to relative thickness, I define it, for this purpose, as *all that is not the front face of the work*. See: Mick Finch, "Supports/Surfaces: Contexts and Issues", 1999.
[593] For a definition of pareidolia, see: *footnote 423*.

Fig. 5F

Specificity denotes belonging uniquely to a particular subject or thing. Is medium a subject or thing? Here, it is. It is conceptually frameable, relatable to other subjects, and able to be historicised within artistic and philosophical discourses. It connects to what I do in the studio, but is not what I do. As a noun it designates the malleable material from which paintings are constructed. It denotes other substances, too, but appears not to cover the tools for making paintings, nor the supports on which the material of paint rests (at least not as a painted work). This is what medium as material means. I have sought, in this work, to present medium as something else. Here, I am writing about medium and its positioning, and, in so doing, I hope to test my claim that medium is structurally bound up in the confluence of language and material: the former knowable through the latter, and the latter through the former. In following Heidegger's lead, separations come after the fact: thus, language names its locality.

2.4: Painting in Writing

For writing to distract from painting is for it to oppose painting's picture. As image, it sits *within*. As opposition to image, it breaks with the pictorial and the material and opens up its own abstract space, which, according to Lessing's famous hypothesis, is

nevertheless temporal.[594] To see medium, is to have medium become operable as a result of linguistic functionality in situ. Grounded – based – beached—the structure of words serves to structure the structure of words. In painting, writing operates as *other*. It is made concrete. In writing, painting operates as an*other*, in so far as it is added to writing. Painted passages *with words* cloak language, making themselves present *as distraction*. They hint enough at picture to picturise the words: to situate the word *as form*. Thus, the painting showcases the word as word—its wordiness and wordedness.

It is possible to re-write Heidegger's hermeneutic circle to accommodate these ideas, and to position them as constitutive in respect of medium's formulation. In sum: the work-world of a painting sits in relation to a painting's surface-subject, which, in turn, sits in relation to it, and also to a painting's probable activities, namely: painting and/ or writing. All three designations depend on the other two for their sense (**Table 16**).

Table 16: The Medium Circle

To be medium is to be other than language. To be medium is to be other than activity. To be medium is to be other than that which language names as material, or which names painting as endeavour. It is to be this unsatisfactorily named thing (*please don't take this use of thing to designate an entity with material properties/physical extension that waits in the world to be named*) and language.

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[594] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön: An Essay upon the Limits of Poetry and Painting*, trans. Edward Allen McCormick (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press), 1962.

Part 3: Writing *Part 2: Writing Medium*

Prior to the first numbered heading there is an eight-line verse in rhyming couplets, structured as iambic pentameter. The verse relates the making of a painting – its activities and thought processes – and refers to the genres of painting that serve, subsequently, to circumscribe it. It attests to the temporal and spatial aspects of a work – including material and cognitive shifts – and to its status as a wet and dry object.

3.1: Works on Aluminium

The text begins by describing a working method and how it is that the painter uses painting to promote the making of a painting. The writing presents its key concerns – language and material – and the entanglement of these within painted works. There is a section that deals with structure and placement, before foregrounding a lack of authorial concern for an initial rightness. The employment of an acid etch primer – and the roughness it gives rise to – is held responsible for to the use of a zinc ground—to overcome the rough texture and re-introduce a slippery surface. The helpful properties of zinc white are subsequently contrasted with the unsuitability of titanium white.

3.2: Exposing Medium

The text states that the move to aluminium amounts to more than a desire to exchange one surface for another, though a reason is not given, other than it not being the result of a whim. Subsequently, painting is seen to reveal surface, and vice versa. Changes in colour use and tonality are deemed to have been an outcome of this shift, and there is ambiguity as to whether this was part of the rationale or else a fortuitous result. Then, it is discovered that there is indeed a rationale for change, and it links to the impact of repeated reworking on the brighter colours, but is, in fact, centred on the desire to showcase the medium stripped of its earlier artifices. This paragraph concludes by offering three areas of practice for particular consideration. These are: the edge, the surface, and the idea of painting in and of itself. The key words are emboldened.

Subsequent to the list, a new paragraph begins. *Point 1* describes the relationship of the surface to the edge, and the reduction of thickness brought about by the aluminium: thus changing the ratio and reducing distraction. *Point 2* relates the newfound immediacy of the skin of the painting: the result of its relationship to the

thickness of the edge. *Point 3* informs the reader of the impossibility of non-linguistic painting: owing to pareidolias. Distractions can, it appears, be downplayed through the employment of more immediate processes – wet-in-wet and the reduction of layers – which expose the surface in drawing attention to its role in grounding the paint. This is considered a limit to painting. Three sentences declaim the relationship between form and expression; between medium and expression; and between form and medium.

3.3: Writing in Painting

The first paragraph details the construction of language in paint, and voices how it is that language opposes pictorial space. This is deemed central to the subsequent investigation. Writing is described as picturing in painterly structures that constitute a surface. Qualitative matters are taken, here, to be an aside—which include ethical and aesthetic concerns. At stake is whether language serves to picture the medium. The words *paint* and *painting* have been used in the paintings themselves, for both formal and linguistic reasons. There is a reminder, also, that words – as letters – have spatial extension and, consequently, sit as pictures too. Writing is described as a solution to painterly difficulties – painter's block – in so far as words can sit on top of images. This shows off the image as a surface and, therefore, as both material and optical.

Specificity is defined as *belonging to*. The writing offers commentary on the nature of medium specificity, and on the frameability of the subject itself: medium can thus be approached and discussed within discourse. Medium connects with what the painter does, but is not what he does. Medium is paint and other things too. However, as a label, it is not the tools of painting, or the surfaces to which paint is applied. Medium is something else, and, in writing about medium, the author hopes to test his claim that medium is bound to linguistic possibility and structural form: operable reciprocally. The division of form and content comes after the fact: in language. In following Heidegger, languages names its placement in the world. Placement permits its naming.

3.4: Painting in Writing

This tells of the relationship between distraction and image in painting. Lessing's opposition of space to time points towards a temporality of writing, as it occupies an abstract space between the material and the optical. Medium draws in words, according to the logic of Heidegger's hypothesis. Grounded in painting, words are

additive—adding to picture. Paint's *alongsidedness* distracts. In pointing to pictures, painting makes pictures of words. Therefore, the word's equipmentality is *shown*.[595]

Next is a circular diagram, of 7-8 cm diameter, labelled *Table 16: The Medium Circle*. This contains three equal sections, separated by small gaps. Three pale blue arrows circle their exterior. The sections are coloured: Red, blue and yellow. Red is at the top left. Blue is at the top right. Yellow is at the bottom. The red section contains the words *Paint-Write*, in yellow. The blue section contains the words *Surface-Subject*, in red. The Yellow section contains the words *Work-World*, in blue. The final section asserts that medium is more than language, and more than that which language names as material. That which it named is not revealed. *To be medium* is repeated. The author expresses a wish not to have the word *thing* taken to mean an entity with properties.

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[595] Consider Wittgenstein's sense of the difference between showing and saying. In the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, he set clear limits on the latter in respect of the functionality of language. In the only recorded comment he made about Heidegger (1929), Wittgenstein acknowledged that he knew what Heidegger meant when he spoke of being and angst, against the boundaries of language.

Part 4: The Paintings

The period of working from a studio at the RCA lasted one year. All of the works on aluminium come from this time. Unlike those on wood, and, owing to the need to maintain the paint's wetness, I worked on individual paintings in sequence. None of the works were rotated in the making (all had their up and down determined in advance). Also of note, in consideration of differences, was the fact that I did not use extremely thinned paint, the result of having to work on the panels vertically rather than horizontally: a logistical consideration and also an attempt to promote opacity.[596] The following are a selection from the works produced during this period of time. **Figs. 5K, 5L** show groupings of works on hardwood, from the period 2010-2017.[597]

4.1: (**Fig. 5G**)

Fig. 5G

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[596] A small limitation to the possibilities of illusionism, brought about by a denial of transparency.
[597] See: *Chapter 1* for details the context and approach to this body of work.

4.2: (Fig. 5H)

Fig. 5H

4.3: (Fig. 5I)

Fig. 5I

Fig. 5J

4.5: **(Figs. 5K, 5L)**

Fig. K

Fig. 5L

Conclusion

I set out to explore medium specificity with regard to the practice of painting. To circumscribe the enquiry meant to position my practice in respect of material and linguistic particularities, and also to chart a path through the dominant theoretical discourse from which the notion of medium specificity emerged, and to consider the implications and effects of new concepts, but also of amendments to older ideas.[598] The process of grouping and sequencing has necessitated omissions. As such, this work makes no claim to provide an overview of formalist-oriented thinking.[599] Nor is there an attempt to moor Greenbergian discourse within a broader cultural expanse.[600] If formalism has provided a systematic method of advance – in the form of a host of concepts and phrases – then its usefulness, now, is wedded to its propensity to comment on the condition of painting(s) today, and to thereby test its claims.

The central aim has been to identify what is meant by medium – in painting – and to consider, too, the workings of theoretical models that either dispense with medium as a discrete concept, or else downgrade its significance. I would like, moreover, to have shed light on my own work, and on painting practices more generally: and, in the process, to have problematised announcements as to painting's end. This has not been an effort to demarcate a privileged space for painting. My objective was simply to demonstrate the deceptive ease with which painting is partially positioned, with the particularity of its bearing becoming lost to generalisation.[601] I have sought, also, to provide a ground on which to understand painting's object and processes, and, in so doing, to differentiate useful contextual frameworks from those that sanction stories.

The problem of materiality troubled formalist thinkers, from Riegl to Greenberg (that flatness is never flat, and surface is always of). Fried's sidestep – the entrenchment of

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[598] Intervals include those at important historical moments, but also take into consideration intervals in practice (in the act of practising), when the alignment of an idea with a moment of painting means more than at another time.

[599] With the exception, perhaps, of Fry and Bell, none of the writers whose works have been addressed in this study would have classified themselves as wholly formalist. Indeed, many openly and repeatedly opposed what might be taken to be formalism's narrowest approaches to understanding the meaning of works.

[600] Something Caroline Jones has already done, and recently, in *Eyesight Alone*.

[601] Subject, that is, to the vagaries of the post-medium condition, where all distinctions dissolve into nothingness.

the conditions of encounter (determined by the work) – served to reframe the debate. However, if that which is required to compel conviction is wholly *of the work* – through its denial of audience (the result of presentness) – then the reverse must be the case, namely: that the presence (objecthood) of the non-work (in its embrace of audience) is wholly *of the non-work*. If *to be of* opposes *not being of*, then *to not be of* is a recognition of connectedness too—to the *not of*, and to the non-shape. Therefore, it follows that Fried's deployment of shape – as something that *belongs to the work* – stands in opposition to an idea of non-belonging shape as belonging to the non-work. This, however, is contradictory.[602] Also, the conflation of site and encounter (sites are locations, encounters are dialogues) does not address the central issue of causality— the link between *belonging to* and *grace*. In other words, how do belonging-shapes promote a belonged-to mode of address, other than through belonging? Without a physical notion of medium to hang on to, Fried languishes in Plato's Cave, in need of a temporal glue to cement the particularity of one's comportment to its presumed cause.

The reimagining of the medium – by Krauss and, later, Bois – is also burdened, yet by its refutation of Fried's idealist space.[603] In seeking to disconnect the artwork from its utopian conjectures, Krauss wrests it from its hiding place and drags it headlong into the world of things. In her attempts to protect the work – whilst still affording it distinctions – she erects a holding bay—a serviceable space between work and world that functions to shield the former from the latter through what amounts to dialogic buffer across a contiguous border. In disavowing the dislocation of form from content, through the notion of apparatus – a confluence of structural tributaries – Krauss is compelled find an alternative method of resisting the dissolution of the work into the mundanity of the everyday (apparatus is no more protected than flatness is from dissolution, yet it takes longer to dissolve). This she does by positing a form of

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[602] This appears as if it can be countered with an assertion that non-belonging shape doesn't belong. However, to assert this is to deny shape its connectedness not only to the work, but also to the world.
[603] Krauss's initial objection to medium specificity, it is worth restating, lay in its taintedness within a Greenbergian framework that, to her, unjustifiably promoted *purity* and *flatness* as protectionist devices. See: James Meyer's "The Writing of Art and Objecthood", in *Refracting Vision*, eds. Jill Beaulieu, Mary Roberts and Toni Ross (Sydney: Power Publications, 2000), 83-85, for a detailed consideration of the difference between Fried's and Krauss's notions of time and space.

lubricated imbrication, with both spatial and temporal equivalence—in the aftermath of a meeting of a snail and a pane of glass, the glass leaves no trace of itself.[604]

Medium specificity results from the desire to root meaning in internal particularities—in the *in* of the work.[605] The advent of modern media – with its exponentially expanding proliferation of forms of information – has cast doubts on assurances as to meaning's location—of the role played by the ingredients of the work in respect of its import.[606] More recent thinking about medium denies it a stable sense of substance (and/or essence), situating painting within networks of interconnecting ideas: some re-tread a modernist past, while others speculate on the role of the maker; or on the impact of technology; or on the joins between *a now* and *a then*.[607] My wish, then, is to have established practical and philosophical grounds for a reconsideration of the terms of these and related debates, and for the re-application of formalist and Heideggerian terminology. I propose that a phenomenological model avoids some of the difficulties of other approaches and affords an opportunity to ground an understanding of medium specificity – and the conditions from which judgments on the characteristics of a painting are made – in the immanent circum*stances* of one's intentionality.[608]

Philip Guston declared that: "we are image-makers and image-ridden".[609] In a painting, however, the means by which an image takes shape, the material from which it is fashioned, and the final form of its fashioning are all bound to showing.[610] Through a demonstration of the partiality of a wholly material or else wholly linguistic model of painting, I have shown – *as* painting and *in* writing – that the image-aspect of a painting is never free of its painterly constructedness, nor the material unburdened by its inclination to conjure an image. A painting's subject is *in* and *of* its temporalised

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[604] Here, the snail is the work. In reflecting on the achievements of Fried and Krauss (at least in this particular area), I feel compelled to comment on what I can only describe, in respect of Fried, as a deep sense of close-knitted yet ultimately magnificent failure, and, in respect of Krauss, of some dazzling – rhizomatic and overstretched – successes, achieved at the cost of a certain poetry of possibility.

[605] What Krauss refers to as, "a pointing to itself" (*Under Blue Cup*, 4).

[606] Photography, then radio, film, television, video and the Internet.

[607] Ewa Lajer-Burcharth and Isabelle Graw, *Painting Beyond* Itself, 8.

[608] One's *directed-towardsness*. Intentionality (from the Latin *intentio* and *intendere*, meaning: *the state of being directed towards*). It was used in philosophy by Franz Brentano (1838-1917), who greatly influenced Husserl.

[609] Transcript of a panel held in March 1960, at the Philadelphia Museum School of Art, in *Abstract Expressionism Creators and Critics*, ed., Clifford Ross (New York: Abrams Publishers, 1990), 61.

[610] The picture-process of painting…always novel, yet of the past…and pressing towards.

object, whose surfaces face outwards. Thus, as Finch implies, in his liminal positioning of the Supports/Surfaces group (in respect of Greenberg and Minimalism), language is not a bridge to the materially manifest: it is materially manifest.[611] Imagine no depiction, and no materials too. Painting pictures pictures painting.

In terms of my contribution to knowledge, I would hope – in practice and theory – to have shed light on the complex connectedness of medium specificity to notions of time, object-work, practice, history, picture, place and encounter. In mapping Heidegger's ontological ordering – and the caesura – onto the materials and processes of painting, the equipmental structure of the medium can become visible as a form of functionality, which discloses and conceals in the course of shaping a painting's present.[612] That a painting is the result of concerns that predate it, need not, in itself, diminish the centrality of the object to which meaning is subsequently ascribed; yet it can stall the process of disclosure, at times when *concerns* are projected onto the work.[613] At such times, the painting is, in its cloaked condition, *a thing to be seen to be*.[614] Painting is too often talked around; burdened by the requirement of answering— of pointing elsewhere. Such a demand misses the point, namely: that each occurrence of painting stands not as an invitation *to ask of*, but as an instance of affirmation.[615] In its limitations, a painting acquires its identity as a performer of possibilities. Thinglyness is ubiquitous to the world, and painterliness is ubiquitous to painting.[616]

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[611] Mick Finch, "Supports/Surfaces: Contexts and Issues", 1999.

[612] It is important to consider, at this juncture, that, to Hölderlin, the caesura amounted to nothing less than a tear in the fabric of representation itself.

[613] By projected concerns, I mean the intrusion of contextual impositions. These concerns include: the life and times of its author, and his intentions. Spectatorship invokes the post-dated too. See: Adrian Forty, *Objects of Desire: Design and Society Since 1750*, 8. To A. J. Ayer (1910-1989) – and the Logical Positivists – that which is true, is so only if a sense of what it would be to establish a proposition as false is also present (*Language, Truth and Logic*). However, this assumes truth to be measurable, quantifiable and ultimately verifiable. To Heidegger, verifiability comes after the fact, as something one might choose to pursue with one's situatedness in the world, rather than something one requires in order to shore up one's sense of truth.

[614] In effect, at the mercy – for good and ill – of one's storytelling capabilities. With the Greek temple, Heidegger deems this state of affairs possible by, among other things, a physical dislocation from site. In painting, cloaking involves theoretical and/or historical marking, which serves to *hide in revealing* (explaining).

[615] Consider in relation to what Joselit calls *staging meaning*, in "Marking, Scoring, Storing, and Speculating (on Time)", 2013, in *Painting Beyond Itself*, 11.

[616] Not a painterliness derived of gesture, handling or rich impastos, but simply a painterliness drawn from the sense of a work being a painting, and consequently not being that which is not a painting.

To become attentive to the painted object is to become receptive to its material and temporal extensions. It is to understand that content is, in fact, formed *by*, *through* and *as* media and processes. Therefore, medium is less a quantifiable property than it is a phenomenological foundation that licences moments of disclosure. To embrace uncertainty as to the medium's designation is to remain open—to know a painting as both an *is* and an *as*.[617] It is *as medium* that a painting attains its particularities and shortcomings: its distinctions and possibilities. To take both feet out of the river is to no longer be in the river—it is to rest outside of painting's reach. To point to a work is to point to or at its residual material and ideological constraints. This *pointing to* is also, however, as Krauss stated in her critique of Greenberg, a pointing through or past: past that which is pointed to – past the *presence* of Graw's absent author – to delineate a moment of iteration on the horizon of being.[618] I end this with an appeal to connect with what painting can be, through extending one's awareness of what it has been. For only in unknowing the stasis of a painting's *now* is one able to mobilise its workings, to come to a fuller understanding of the truths of its medium specificity.

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[617] W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*, 17. There is an interesting parallel to be made with Keats's concept of *Negative Capability* (Man's embrace of the Penetralium of mystery). Keats capitalises both *negative capability* and *penetralium*. In *The Letters of John Keats: Volumes I & II*, ed. H. H. Rollins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 193-4.

[618] Isabelle Graw, "*The Value of Liveliness*", in *Painting Beyond Itself*, 81. In the closing sections of *The Paradoxes of Art*, 242-243, Paskow criticises the pervasive notion that theory is that which allows one to see through one's untutored apprehensions in search of knowledge: on the grounds that, to *see through*, is to *see through ourselves too*…and to end, therefore, with/at nothing.

Word Count: 39883

Total document: 72066

Appendix 1

Motifs used in my paintings since 2010.

Aqueduct

Arch

Arm

Asteroid

Balloon

Bark

Basket

Beach

Bin

Bird table

Blind

Blood

Blossom

Boat

Bowl

Bowling green

Boxer

Branch

Breast

Brook

Bridge

Bucket

Bush

Buttocks

Cactus

Canal

Castle

Cat

Chimney

Chrysalis

Cigar

Claw

Cliff

Cloud

Cockerel

Container

Cooling tower

Cow

Cowboy

Crow

Cup

Curtain

Dinosaur

Diver

Dog

Dome

Door

Dress

Eye

Face

Feather

Fence

Field

Finger

Fire

Firework

Fish

Flower

Foot

Fort

Frame

Fruit

Glass

Gondola

Goose

Gorge

Greenhouse

Hair

Hand

Handle

Hat

Head

Hedge

Helmet

Heron

Hill

Horizon

Horse

House

Hut

Hydrant

Insect

Ladder

Lake

Land

Lava

Leaf

Leg

Letter

Lighthouse

Luggage

Lunar rover

Man

Map

Mask

Monk

Monster

Monument

Moon

Mountain

Mushroom

Necklace

Number

Organ

Pail

Palm

Path

Penguin

Penis

Pigeon

Pipe

Plant

Poplar

Post

Pot

Profile

Punch bag

Pylon

Rail

Ribbon

Road

Road sign

Rock

Rocket

Roof

Rope

Rotunda

Saddle

Sea

Sea horse

Sea lion

Shadow

Shed

Ship

Shoe

Shrub

Silver birch

Sky

Smoke signal

Snow

Soil

Stile

Street lamp

Sunset

Swan

Table

Tail

Television

Tent

Toadstool

Toilet

Tornado

Toucan

Train

Tree

Tree stump

Urn

Van

Vase

Viaduct

Volcano

Wall

Watering can

Wave

Web

Whale

Wig

Window

Wire

Woman

Word

Worm

Zeppelin

Appendix 2

This section provides two things. First, a glossary of four key terms – terms used by Clement Greenberg in the construction of his framework of thought – and, secondly, a short account of the emergence of medium specificity within formalist discourse.[619] The concerns of *Chapter 2* of this thesis, and, moreover, of many of the theoretical positions that have arisen as responses to Greenberg's thinking – as refutation, endorsement or extension – result, in part at least, from certain assumptions as to what it is that is meant by the following terms – *Medium*, *Medium Specificity*, *Flatness* and *Opticality* – offered here in the order in which they appear within Greenberg's published writings.[620] The lexicon for this area of discourse is especially important, and more recent additions to its body of terminology – terms devised by Yve-Alain Bois, Isabelle Graw, David Joselit, and others – require familiarity with earlier ideas to acquire their particular sense.

1. Glossary of Greenbergian Terms

Medium

Generally, a medium describes an intervening substance through which forces are transmitted, or impressions left. It also denotes a means of doing something. It is in "Towards a Newer Laocoon", 1940, that Greenberg first mentions the material of paint.[621] He writes that, in the middle of the seventeenth century the physical medium of paint was cheap and mobile.[622] By this time, artists had acquired enough of a command of the material to: "annihilate it seemingly in favour of illusion".[623] And so, an opposition thus emerges between the physical stuff of paint and all of the other

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[619] It is useful here to make a distinction between *term* and *concept*. Term is lexical, denoting *the naming of*, and concept is *what is held to be an idea*, and therefore brings with it a cognitive dimension. However, within Greenberg's writings, this blurs, and what is named tends to denote a complex structure of thought.

[620] In the case of *opticality,* though the term itself is unused in his earliest writings, that which it designates – its sphere of operability – is nevertheless made clear.

[621] Yve-Alain Bois has commented on Greenberg's increasing indifference to the actual stuff of which paintings are made. Yve-Alain Bois, "Whose Formalism", 1996, accessed April 14, 2018, https://www.mu tualart.com/Article/Whose-formalism-/6B323BBF31A195F8.

[622] Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoon", in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 24.

[623] Ibid.

things that a painting has or does.[624] This, then, permits Greenberg to write of a transference of emphasis (in painting from this period up until the middle of the nineteenth century) – from medium to subject matter – with, correspondingly, a desired suppression of what he terms "the role of the medium"—of what it is that the medium might do or be, given the chance.[625]

Medium Specificity

A distinction between *medium* and *medium specificity* begins to emerge, in Greenberg's writings, in *Section V* of "Towards a Newer Laocoon", when he states that: "Painting and sculpture can become more completely nothing but what they do […], they *look* what they *do*".[626] Here, what they do is provide a particular sensation. Moreover, painting is seen to emphasise not only its medium, but also its medium's specific difficulties.[627] In following Lessing's example, these difficulties are seemingly spatial (as opposed to being temporal), which, in the case of Lessing, served to underpin his most famous distinction, between poetry and painting.[628] Greenberg, in looking to music for a sense of purity – the result of its abstraction (freedom from subject matter) – found, for painting, an apparatus on which to engineer a retreat from the imaginary and the literary towards the self-referential. To Benjamin Buchloh: "[t]he formalist concept of *self-referentiality* had been a theoretical prescription which art until around 1965 had to abide".[629]

"To restore the identity of an art the opacity of its medium must be emphasized. For the visual arts the medium is discovered to be physical".[630] This notion of restoration is interesting, and, to Greenberg, ensured that medium specificity carried with it a

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[624] This can be considered the moment that, for Greenberg, subject matter takes secondary importance.
[625] Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoon", 25. This suppression is brought about, in large part, by Romanticism, the result of its appeal to the imaginative as method of retreat, in opposition to the seen. Thus, for Greenberg, modernist painters strove to overcome this state of affairs and return the medium to visibility.
[626] Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoon", 34.
[627] Ibid.
[628] In its spatiality, the medium of paint is a suitable grounding to accommodate the spatiality of pictures.
[629] Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975*, 12.
[630] Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoon", 32. Interestingly, Greenberg claims that the medium of poetry is psychological (sub or supra-logical) – appealing to general consciousness rather than intelligence – which draws him, in respect of poetry at least, somewhat closer to Krauss's later notion of *apparatus*.

sense of *returning to* and *freeing from*, in pursuit of a purified form of painting.[631] Michael Fried and Rosalind Krauss would later take up the seeming ambivalence as to a temporal component to the medium's specificity in respect of how it is that a work is received. This would involve the consideration of shape as medium, and distance as method.[632]

Flatness

Within Greenberg's texts, *flatness* denotes something other than the property of having a level surface, and is not to be confused with utter flatness; an impossibility in painting.[633] In "Avant-Garde and Kitsch", 1939, in respect of Picasso's paintings (in distinction from Ilya Repin's works of kitsch), Greenberg writes of the, "impression left by the plastic values [of painting]".[634] The properties of this plastic value are greatly expanded on in "Towards a Newer Laocoon". In *Section V*, Greenberg, for the first time, ties flatness to medium, stating that the: "resistance [of painting's medium] consists chiefly in the flat picture plane's denial of efforts to *hole through* it for realistic perspectival space".[635] To Greenberg, this moment served to rid painting of the stains of both imitation and literature.[636] Later in the essay, Greenberg asserts that: "the pristine flatness of the stretched canvas constantly struggles to overcome every other element".[637]

In "Modernist Painting", 1960, the stressing of flatness is couched in terms of an essential contradiction—the necessity of maintaining the integrity of the picture plane within or above illusionistic concessions whilst retaining a distinction from the world outside.[638] Thierry de Duve has described how this integrity acted as a bulwark against

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[631] The notion of purity caused Greenberg a great deal of trouble, especially its use in Modernist Painting. In later interviews, he emphasised his placement of quotation marks around the term.

[632] Distance, here, means distance from the work in respect of what it is that is required for it to become operable as work. See: *Chapter 2*, *3.3.1.1* and *3.4.1* for an analysis of these issues.

[633] The result of both its material's character and its propensity to picture.

[634] Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch", in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 16. Ilya Yefimovich Repin (1844-1930) was a renowned Russian realist painter.

[635] Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoon", 34.

[636] Ibid.

[637] Ibid., 36.

[638] Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting", in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 90.

the sculptural too.[639] Greenberg reminds the reader of the need to exaggerate, claiming that: "[t]he heightened sensitivity of the picture plane may no longer permit sculptural illusion, or *trompe-l'oeil*, but it does and must permit optical illusion".[640] He argues that with modernist paintings: "one is made aware of the flatness […] before, instead of after, being made aware of what the flatness contains".[641] Like Maurice Denis before him, Roger Fry had recognised this, but had not explored its implications in respect of the medium.[642] To Greenberg, it was: "the stressing of the ineluctable flatness of the surface of a painting that remained, however, more fundamental than anything else to the process by which pictorial art criticized and defined itself under Modernism".[643]

Opticality

Greenberg's emphasis on opticality, which Caroline Jones has described as a positivistic management of the senses in mid-twentieth century America, is central to his project—judgment was response only, and it was *the look* of modernist paintings that supplied the criteria with which to test it.[644] Yet it is the downplaying of other modes of sensory knowledge – in particular, the separation of seeing from touching –

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[639] Thierry de Duve, in *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris, and Montreal 1945-64*, ed. Serge Guilbaut (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1990), 250.

[640] Clement Greenberg, "Modernist painting", 90. Manet, Post-Impressionism and Cubism brought painting's longstanding reliance on perspective to an end. Thus, Greenberg asserted that it was not the recognisable object that had been abandoned by modernist painting, but the type of space; pictorial space superseded fake three-dimensional space.

[641] Ibid., 87.

[642] Maurice Denis (1870-1943) was a French Symbolist painter, decorative artist and writer, who offered an influential reminder of the priority of the integrity of the painting ahead of the concerns of the picture, by asserting that a painting is essentially a flat surfaced covered with colours assembled in a certain order.

[643] Clement Greenberg, "Modernist painting", 87.

[644] Caroline A. Jones's *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg's Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). Support for this came from Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, 1790. Kant identified four reflective judgments: the agreeable, the good, the beautiful and the sublime. It is his concept of the beautiful that is relevant here, which he defines, paradoxically, as a subjective-universal judgment. The judgment that something is beautiful is a subjective one, yet it is made from a conviction that others will agree with it, even though they may not. The beautiful appears to be constructed with purpose, though it serves no practical purpose. This *purposiveness without purpose* serves to establish the beautiful as beautiful, and functions to separate out objects of beauty from those without beauty. Though the beauty that Kant writes of is not contained *within* the object of scrutiny, the object, nevertheless, must be able to be seen to be beautiful, which in turn legitimises its subsequent labelling as an object of beauty. To discern a purposiveness without purpose the beholder must firstly discern no purpose, and, secondly, must retain a position of disinterestedness in respect of the non-purposive object. To respond to a work of art as a result of associations (e.g., red reminds me of home) is to acknowledge agreeableness, and, when intuiting beauty, the agreeable acts only to distract, re-introducing learned responses that short-circuit intuition and undermine the aesthetic.

that became problematic to those who saw the privileging of the optical as a willed reduction of the richness of experience, and as a method of retaining a separation between art and life.[645]

This aside, *opticality* acted, in fact, as something more than an appeal to visual effects. In "Towards a Newer Laocoon", Greenberg asserts that both painting and sculpture, "*look* what they *do*".[646] However, in his subsequent analysis of pictorial space, he does not name opticality per se, although it becomes clear that he is framing seeing within a broader sphere of activity, as that which maintains itself in proximity to the material.[647] In considering the increasing shallowness of the picture plane – a seeing less – as integral to a realisation of the characteristics of the painted support, Greenberg roots an optical primacy in the activity of resisting a conflation of painting and picture.[648] Hal Foster has described the notion of pure opticality as one of the two doctrines (along with Clive Bell's idea of significant form) to which modernist painting pledged allegiance.[649]

In *The Optical Unconscious*, Krauss differentiates, in respect of the formalism of Roger Fry, two types of seeing.[650] *The look that sees* is opposed to *the look that sorts*. The latter denotes an everyday form of *attendance to* (things with which one is familiar), and the former points to what is potentially important about the formal arrangement of things.[651] In effect, this model of seeing and suspending seeing, when combined with flatness and a sense of medium, became that on which Greenberg erected his formalist framework.

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[645] To Alois Riegl, the optic and the haptic were dialectically connected, acting as a method of advance for the arts of earlier times. Michael Fried would adopt this position, too, in respect of modernist painting.

[646] Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoon", 34.

[647] Ibid., 35.

[648] Ibid.

[649] Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: Art and Theory at the End of the Century: Avant-garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 4.

[650] Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 141.

[651] Ibid.

2. Medium Specificity within Formalism

The relation between formalism and medium is a somewhat slippery one – until we get to Clement Greenberg – primarily because Greenberg's formalism, unlike Alois Riegl's, is conditioned by developments in modernist practices, and, unlike Fry's, eschews a notion of design per se. Greenberg envisioned "Towards a Newer Laocoon" as a modern companion piece to Lessing's "Laocoon: An Essay upon the Limits of Poetry and Painting", in which Lessing had defined poetry as a temporal art and painting as a spatial one.[652] However, medium specificity – what Rosalind Krauss referred to as, "a pointing-to-itself" – came late to formalist writing.[653] To understand its nuanced development is thus, in part, to consider both a type of questioning and a locatable period of changing ideas that originated in Austria and Germany before emigrating to Great Britain, then on to the United States. Greenberg, disliking Roger Fry's interdisciplinary reach, re-directed attention from the extrinsic values of design to the intrinsic flatness of the painted object, in opposition to the sculptural.[654] What came to matter was the vehicle itself—not what form evidenced, but how it was. Fry thus failed to ground a workable mechanism for the aesthetic in the conditions of the object itself.[655]

In *Problems of style: Foundations for a History of Ornament*, Riegl, under the influence of Hegel, set out to counter a technical-materialist view of ornamentation, in which formal properties of design in textiles and other areas were deemed little more than a logical consequence of an availability of materials and an application of artisanal processes and techniques.[656] Osborne contends that, for Riegl, form became objectivised as *autonomous spirit*, from which he developed the concept of

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[652] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön: An Essay upon the Limits of Poetry and Painting*, trans. Edward Allen McCormick (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press), 1962.

[653] Rosalind Krauss, *Under Blue Cup* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), 4.

[654] Christopher Reed, *The Roger Fry Reader* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 278-9.

[655] The progressive surrender to the resistance of its medium was, for Greenberg, part of the solution to a form of aesthetic homelessness, evident in Fry, that permitted a creeping indeterminacy to develop between the work as cause and its presumed aesthetic effect.

[656] In the mid-nineteenth century, for the professors of the Vienna School (in respect of painting), form consisted largely of shape, harnessed within a structural framework that sat behind the surface of the work, yet operated through it; and style denoted the particularity or configuration that a work evidenced. Many at the Vienna School worked with museum collections as curators or advisors and developed ideas in response to the objects within their purview. This nearness to the structures of art compelled a specific understanding of the relationships among objects, the consequence of which drew the artwork closer to the response to it.

Kunstwollen.[657] To Riegl, who believed in various modes of stylistic circumscription, a formed unity of practices appealed. Earlier accounts of the development of ornamentation failed to provide a distinct sense of historical interconnectedness, and ignored the causes of continuity.[658]

In *Principles of Art History*, 1915, Heinrich Wölfflin outlined a system of classification designed to facilitate the measurement of visual differences between Renaissance and Baroque works.[659] He produced a series of markers to measure formal developments over several centuries: markers that, through logic and inference, could be used to envisage probable change too—to predict the future course of development based on observable differences from a publically verifiable present.[660] Wölfflin's binaries denoted sequences of formal movement, which could be used to mark differences between religious and historical works that addressed the same theme.[661] These markers placed an emphasis on seeing, whilst ensuring the subjugation of the iconographic possibilities of images, and also of the material through which design became manifest.[662] To Wölfflin, art was a language, with a grammar and vocabulary that, when grounded by historical specificity, permitted utterances in the form of material works. His system made no distinction between the characteristics of discrete parts of works in respect of the whole, to the point where a painting's style is recognisable throughout.[663]

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[657] Riegl envisioned the *Kunstwollen* as a tendency of an age to drive stylistic development in the arts.
[658] Alois Riegl. *Problems of Style: Foundations for a History of Ornament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).
Riegl's analysis drew on an acute attentiveness to stylistic differences, and resulted in the construal of artistic periods – of epochs even – as able to bring with them their own distinct sets of artistic problems, which in resolved form served as starting points for the next, and so on—design compels design from within, in what Friedrich Nietzsche might have termed the *will to ornament*.
[659] Wölfflin's pioneering use of two projectors made formal comparison easier by allowing lecturers and students to point to polarities of difference, so as to provide close readings of objects and images from disparate times and places.
[660] Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art* (New York: Dover Publications, 1932). Wölfflin's works were highly influential, and were translated into English earlier than Riegl's, taking hold more quickly. This was felt first in Britain, then in America, where a greater inclination to pragmatism allowed formalism to resonate more strongly still.
[661] Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*. Wölfflin binaries included: from linear to painterly, from plane to recession, from closed (techtonic) form to open (a-techtonic) form, from multiplicity to unity, and from absolute clarity to relative clarity.
[662] Riegl had conceived of a dialectical interplay of the material and the optical.
[663] Richard Wollheim, *On Art and the Mind*, Cambridge (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press), 201.

Roger Fry was the most influential art critic in the English-speaking world, from 1910 up until the Second World War.[664] In 1906, he discovered the works of Paul Cézanne, an encounter that would change the course of his life and, indeed, the orientation of art criticism thereafter.[665] Fry saw in Cézanne how it was possible to pass from the world that is actual – or appears to be so – to a plastic form of geometrical simplicity, which sat in situ *as design*.[666] In *Vision and Design*, Fry identified what he subsequently took to be Post-Impressionism's gradual break with Impressionism, the result of a withdrawal to earlier values of design and an abandonment of the realism of Monet.[667] This permitted an increased focus on *plastic form*, or formed arrangements *in* painting.

In 1914, Clive Bell presented the idea of *significant form*, declaring nothing outside of the formal properties of an artwork to be of any aesthetic relevance.[668] Whilst this shored up the distinction between form and content, it did little to advance an understanding of the causes of form's significance. To grasp a modernist work, in Bell's analysis, is to discern significance from an arranged conjunction of lines, shapes, tones and colours.[669] Susan Platt contends that Bell promoted feelings more so than Fry, who stressed vision.[670] The English formalism of the Bloomsbury Group was certainly influenced by Wölfflin's ideas.[671] Fry expounded the notion of *classic quality*, to denote an aesthetic attribute common to the best of ancient and modern works, and it was from this point onward that formalism became modern.[672] A

[664] Solomon Fisherman, *The Interpretation of Art: Essays on the Art Criticism of John Ruskin, Walter Pater, Clive Bell, Roger Fry, and Herbert Read* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 2. Establishing a reputation as a Renaissance scholar, through works on Giovanni Bellini, and other of the Italian Masters, Fry contributed to the founding of *The Burlington Magazine*, 1903, which he later jointly edited.

[665] Christopher Reed, *The Roger Fry Reader*. Kenneth Clarke considered Fry to be the greatest influence on taste since John Ruskin.

[666] In 1910, Fry organised *Manet and the Post-Impressionists* at the Grafton Galleries, in London, and followed it with a second Post-Impressionist exhibition in 1912. On show, in addition to works by Edouard Manet and Cézanne, were works by Paul Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh, Henri Matisse, George Seurat and Maurice Denis. This exhibition came several years before the so-called Armoury Show took place in New York, and permitted a British audience access to the flattened, simplified planes of recent French painting.

[667] Which brought with it an undesirable externality – a pointing elsewhere – in Monet's case, to light.

[668] Clive Bell, *Art* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1914).

[669] Bell's inclusion of colour was novel, and rested on the impossibility of perceiving a colourless space, or a formless arrangement of colours.

[670] Susan N. Platt, *Modernism in the 1920s* (Michigan: UMI Press, 1986), 73.

[671] Roger Fry wrote a positive review of Wölfflin's *The Art of the Italian Renaissance*, published in *Athenaeum* in 1903. In 1930 Kenneth Clark delivered lectures at the University of London on the works of both thinkers (Reigl, from the German versions of the texts).

[672] With such distillation an effect of thinking, *classic quality* could be considered a value judgment—the recognition of an a priori truth. Fry stressed the role of the spectator: in the first instance, in the

newfound access to the studio processes of painters – the result of a preponderance of easel painting – ignited great interest in the stuff of painting that, in turn, drew attention to paint's formed correlation with surface.

Yet it would be Greenberg, who, in "Towards a Newer Laocoon" set out to establish a link between the painting's picturing form and its actual material presence in the world. In sharing Fry's inclination to address the now, and also Riegl's desire to perpetuate a series of resolutions, Greenberg, in effect, conflated form and content and abandoned the notion of design (other than as vague support for the idea of compositional rigour), to push the material constituents of painting to the fore. At the same time, and in seeming contradiction, he effectively disavowed the substance of paint (as of importance in and of itself) in favour of a pictorial situatedness arrived at though a particular appeal to the logic of the picture plane.[673]

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honing of an ability to distinguish classic quality from non-classic quality, and, in the second, through a pressure to negate knowledge of lived experience (of all that might interfere), so as to garner an untainted universal resonance. Additionally, with Fry, *form* replaced *style*, with the latter term tending to be used to denote the signature mannerism of a painter, or else a characteristic of formal particularity. Furthermore, in conceiving of formalism on the back of the Vienna School, Fry's and Bell's understanding of the characteristics of contemporary French painting (and on the English painting that took up in its wake) rested in large part on translations of academic studies of the works of late antiquity, the Renaissance and the Baroque. Thus, early twentieth century formalism redeployed a toolkit designed to service very different groupings of artworks.

[673] Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoon", 34-35.

Appendix 3

This is a transcript of an email exchange between the author and Dr Michael Belshaw. The conversation took place between 03/07/16 and 11/07/16 and explored a possible distinction between medium and material. The content of *Chapter 2*, *Part 3*, *Section 2.3.2* derives, in large part, from this discussion.

03/07/16 at 11:03 AM

Hi Tom
Here's a puzzle. When Leonardo saw a battle scene in the stains on his studio wall, were those stains material or medium?
Cheers,
Mike

03/07/16 at 6:47 PM

Hi Mike,
I have an answer, though it might not satisfy. And it is this: it depends on whether the stain is taken to be "a work". If the stain is taken to be a stain, then it remains material—it remains a stain.
If the stain is taken to be "a work", then *as work* it becomes operable through the stainness of the stain, and thus occupies the position of medium. As medium, the stain enables the work, whose parameters remain rooted to its particularity as stain (in being taken as work, the work doesn't relinquish the stain, but remains *of* stain...*of material*). To claim the stain *as* a work is to position it both *as* and *as not* a stain in the process of becoming a work.
How does that sound?
Tom

07/07/16 at 11:30 AM

Hi Tom
That sounds interesting, though I need to improve my grasp of Heideggerese. Intentionality is needed for material to become medium. Agreed. But should it be the recognition of an intention – i.e. if the spectator believes the marks to be made with that intention they will appear as medium. Medium is an effect of the social world – not a literal thing like material.
What happens when there is intention, but a different intention? Spot the Pink Panther (attached),
Cheers,
Mike

08/07/16 at 8:39 PM

Hi Mike,

My feeling is that there are two issues here that might be becoming entangled (that of medium and art).

1. Medium is not dependent on actual intention (in the sense that the spectator does not need to intuit intention in order to have the stain become medium). The spectator needs only to see the stain as an image (faces in the wallpaper suffice). This *seeing as* probably brings with it the presumption of intention, but maybe not—where the spectator knows the 'image' is simply the result of a natural occurrence, like a rock formation or face on Mars.

2. However, for the work to seen to be art there needs to be a sensed intention (whether there proves to be intention or not, the spectator need to act as if there is). Yet there can be medium and not art (face on Mars, where the rocks become medium and intention is not an issue…but image is).

Yes, I believe that medium is an effect of the social world, in so far as it seems dependent on symbol, image, sign etc. (some form of escape from material), and presumably to have language is to be social.

But I don't think there is a distinction to be made about the accuracy of one intention over another, though definitely not in terms of medium (I can misread Guernica, yet still impute intention and therefore deem it to be art...and in the very act of considering it anything other than material it is medium too).

Tom

11/07/16 at 1:26 PM

Hi Tom

Pretty much agree with all that—an image seen presupposes medium, and art presupposes intention. Without that image one only has spatial effect—a Newman monochrome deploys the medium of paint, a Rauschenberg blank canvas only material?

Cheers,
Mike

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Conferences, Symposia and Public Events

A History of Drawing Symposium. Camberwell College of Arts, London, 2018.

An Interview with Jake Chapman (interviewed by Dr Catriona McAra). Leeds Arts
University, 2017.

Classification Symposium. Leeds College of Art, 2013.

Launch of the *Journal of Contemporary Painting 3.1+2: Painting as Commitment*
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Teaching Painting: A Conference. Manchester School of Art, Whitworth Gallery,
2015.

Permanent Collections (including Sites)

Alhambra, Granada, Spain.

Barcelona Cathedral, Spain.

Birkenhead Central Library, UK.

Bluecoat Chambers, Liverpool, UK.

Casa Batlló, Barcelona, Spain.

Church of Saint Tomé, Toledo, Spain.

Coventry Cathedral, UK.

Edinburgh Castle, UK.

FACT, Liverpool, UK.

Federico Garcia Lorca Museum, Granada, Spain.

Ferens Art Gallery, Hull, UK.

Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, UK.

Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow, UK.

Leeds Art Gallery, UK.

Leeds Arts University, UK.

Leeds Cathedral, UK.

Leeds City Museum, UK.

Leeds Minster, UK.

Liverpool Anglican Cathedral, UK.

Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral, UK.

Manchester Art Gallery, UK.

Museum of Liverpool, UK.

National Portrait Gallery, London, UK.

Park Guell, Barcelona, Spain.

Roman Baths, Bath, UK.

Royal College of Art, London, UK.

Santa Maria de San Salvador Monastery, Cañas, Spain.

Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, UK.

St Martin in the Fields, London, UK.

St Werburgh's Church, Birkenhead, UK.

Sudley House, Liverpool, UK.

Tate Britain, London, UK.

Tate Liverpool, UK.

The Abbey Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, Bath, UK.

The Surgeon's Hall, The University of Edinburgh, UK.

The British Library, London, UK.

The British Museum, London, UK.

The Courtauld Institute, London, UK.

The Dean Clough Galleries, Halifax, UK.

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, UK.

The Folly Museum, Settle, UK.

The Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain.

The Hepworth, Wakefield, UK.

The Louvre Museum, Paris, France.

The Lowry, Salford, UK.

The Mosque-Cathedral of Córdoba, Spain.

The National Gallery, London, UK.

The Orangerie Museum, Paris, France.

The Picasso Museum, Barcelona, Spain.

The Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid, Spain.

The Tower of London, UK.

The Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.

The Stanley and Audrey Burton Gallery, Leeds, UK.

The Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK.

The Victoria Gallery and Museum, Liverpool, UK.

The Walker Art Gallery and Museum, Liverpool, UK.

The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, UK.

The Williamson Art Gallery and Museum, Birkenhead, UK.

The World of Glass, St. Helens, UK.

The Writer's Museum, Edinburgh, UK.

Toledo Cathedral, Spain.

World Museum, Liverpool, UK.

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<u>Exhibitions</u>

Agnes Martin. Tate Modern, London, UK, 2015.

A History of Drawing. Camberwell Space, Camberwell College of Arts, London, 2018.

Aleksandra Domanović: Votives. The Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, UK, 2017.

A Lesson in Sculpture with John Latham. The Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, UK, 2016.

Alice and Anna Art Exhibition. The Brunswick, Leeds, UK, 2016.

Andrew Lister. Leeds College of Art, Leeds, UK, 2014.

- *Andrew Lister & Rosie Vohra: No Two People*. Assembly House, Leeds, UK, 2017.

Andy Warhol: Shadows. The Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain, 2016.

Ann O'Donnell: Modernist Jeweller. Leeds College of Art, Leeds, UK, 2017.

Anthony McCall: Solid Light Works. The Hepworth, Wakefield, UK, 2018.

Aon Community Art Award. The Leadenhall Building, London, UK, 2017.

A Room of One's Own. The Williamson Art Gallery & Museum, Birkenhead, UK, 2016.

Artist Rooms: Joseph Beuys. Leeds Art Gallery, Leeds, UK, 2018.

Becoming Henry Moore. The Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, UK, 2018.

Benedict Philips. Workshop Press, Leeds, UK, 2015.

Bloomberg New Contemporaries 2016. Bluecoat Chambers, Liverpool, UK, 2016.

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Bosch: The Fifth Centenary Exhibition. The Prado Museum, Madrid, Spain, 2016.

British Art Show 8. Leeds Art Gallery, Leeds, UK, 2016.

Caillebotte: Painter and Gardener. The Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid, Spain, 2016.

Canaletto: Celebrating Britain. The Holburne Museum, Bath, UK, 2015.

Caravaggio and the Painters of the North. The Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid, Spain, 2016.

Carol Sowden: Elemental Harnessing. Leeds Arts University, Leeds, UK, 2018.

Cézanne Portraits. National Portrait Gallery, London, UK, 2018.

Chagall: Modern Master. Tate Liverpool, Liverpool, UK, 2013.

Chamberlain, Flavin, Indiana: Found in America. Waddington Custot, London, UK, 2017.

Christina Mamakos. Dyson Gallery, Royal College of Art, London, UK, 2017.

Classic Film Poster Season. White Cloth Gallery, Leeds, UK, 2014.

Classification. Leeds College of Art, Leeds, UK, 2013.

Dee Akhtar, Calum J. Paterson, John Wright. Leeds College of Art, Leeds, UK, 2013.

Delacroix and the Rise of Modern Art. The National Gallery, London, UK, 2016.

Dreamers Awake. White Cube, Bermondsey, London, UK, 2017.

FBA Futures 2018. Mall Galleries, London, UK, 2018.

Francis Bacon: Invisible Rooms. Tate Liverpool, Liverpool, UK, 2016.

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Freya Kruczenyk: Casting Light. Leeds College of Art, Leeds, UK, 2014.

From Selfie to Self Expression. Saatchi Gallery, London, UK, 2017.

Garry Barker: New Territories of the Fifth Dimension. Assembly House, Leeds, UK, 2015.

- *When the past overhauls the present, you will forget that you can't remember*. Leeds College of Art, Leeds, UK, 2016.

Gego: Line as Object. The Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, UK, 2014.

George Shaw: My Back to Nature. The National Gallery, London, UK, 2016.

Goya: The Portraits. The National Gallery, London, UK, 2016.

Ghisha Koenig: Machines Restrict their Movement. The Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, UK, 2017.

Hand in Hand: Abi Moffat, Rosie Vohra and Rufus Newell. Leeds College of Art, Leeds, UK, 2014.

Henri Matisse: The Cut-Outs. Tate Modern, London, UK, 2014.

Henry Moore: Back to a Land. YSP, Wakefield, UK, 2015.

Howard Hodgkin: Absent Friends. National Portrait Gallery, London, UK, 2017.

Ian Kiaer. Marcelle Alix, Paris, France, 2017.

In Dialogue: Made of all Work: Carole Griffiths & Paula Chambers. The Bowery, Leeds, UK, 2016.

- *Curator's Choice: Domestic Front* (Paula Chambers). Leeds College of Art, Leeds, UK, 2017.

Jackson Pollock: Blind Spots. Tate Liverpool, Liverpool, UK, 2015.

Jasper Johns: 'Something Resembling Truth'. The Royal Academy of Arts, London, UK, 2017.

Jim des Rivierès: The Magnificent Moths. Gallery on the Green, Settle, UK, 2017.

Jiro Takamatsu: The Temperature of Sculpture. The Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, UK, 2017.

Joe Legg: Near Source. STCFTHOTS, Leeds, UK, 2015.

John Arnison: Fosse. Leeds College of Art, Leeds, UK, 2015.

Kenneth Armitage: Sculpture and Drawing of the 1950s. The Stanley & Aubrey Burton Gallery, Leeds, UK, 2017.

Leeds College of Art Degree Show 2014, Leeds, UK, 2014.

Leeds College of Art Degree Show 2015, Leeds, UK, 2015.

Leeds College of Art Degree Show 2016, Leeds, UK, 2016.

Leeds College of Art Degree Show 2017, Leeds, UK, 2017.

Leeds Metropolitan University Degree Show 2014, Leeds, UK, 2014.

Leonora Carrington/Lucy Skaer. Leeds College of Art, Leeds, UK, 2016.

Library Interventions: Moving Knowledge. Leeds Arts University, Leeds, UK, 2018.

Light Night. Leeds, UK, 2017.

Louise Bourgeois: Structures of Existence; The Cells. The Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain, 2016.

Making…Making Research. Leeds Arts University, Leeds, UK, 2017.

Maria Lassnig. Tate Liverpool, Liverpool, UK, 2016.

Matisse in the Studio. The Royal Academy of Arts, London, UK, 2017.

Melanie King: First Light. Leeds Arts University, Leeds, UK, 2017.

Nancy Rubins: Diversifolia. Gagosian (Britannia Street), London, UK, 2018.

Nick Sykes: Edge of Winter. Cornerstone Gallery, Liverpool Hope University, Liverpool, UK, 2017.

Norman Toynton: Pegging Reality. Dadiani Fine Art, London, UK, 2017.

NOT too Precious. Temporary Gallery, Duncan Street, Leeds, UK, 2014.

Painting Now. Studio One Gallery, London, UK, 2017.

Paul Klee: Making Visible. Tate Modern, London, UK, 2014.

Philip Lorca diCorcia. The Hepworth, Wakefield, UK, 2014.

Picasso: The 156 Engravings. The Picasso Museum, Barcelona, Spain, 2016.

Reality: Modern and Contemporary British Painting. Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, UK, 2015.

Re:Mastered – MA Creative Practice Degree Show. Leeds Arts University, Leeds, UK, 2017.

Re/Western: Felice House. Leeds College of Art, Leeds, UK, 2017.

Richard Baker: Chroma Reference. Leeds College of Art, Leeds, UK, 2014.

- *Curator's Choice*. Leeds College of Art, Leeds, UK, 2016.

Richard Diebenkorn. The Royal Academy of Arts, London, UK, 2015.

Richard Hamilton. Tate Modern, London, UK, 2014.

Richard Hards: Let's Decant. Chalton Gallery, London, UK, 2017.

Robert Rauschenberg. Tate Modern, London, UK, 2017.

Roy Lichtenstein. Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, UK, 2016.

Salon 001: Tsuyoshi Maekawa. Saatchi Gallery, London, UK, 2017.

Sheila Gaffney: Class Forms. Leeds College of Art, Leeds, UK, 2014.

Shelter from *the Storm: John Sell Cotman*. Leeds Art Gallery, Leeds, UK, 2018.

Show 2015. Royal College of Art, London, UK, 2015.

Show 2017. Royal College of Art, London, UK, 2017.

Sian Rycroft: Viewpoint. Leeds Arts University, Leeds, UK, 2017.

Skin: Freud, Mueck and Tunick. Ferens Art Gallery, Hull, UK, 2017.

Soutine's Portraits: Cooks, Waiters & Bellboys. The Courtauld Gallery, London, UK, 2018.

Temp: Rufus Newell and Sophie Goodchild. Enjoy Project Space, Leeds, UK, 2015.

Terry Frost. Leeds Art Gallery, Leeds, UK, 2015.

The Bloomberg Commission: Giuseppe Penoni. Whitechapel Gallery, London, UK, 2013.

The John Moores Painting Prize 2014. The Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, UK.

The John Moores Painting Prize 2016. The Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, UK.

The Sculpture Collections. The Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, UK, 2018.

The University of Leeds Degree Show 2016, Leeds, UK.

The University of Leeds Degree Show 2017, Leeds, UK.

Thought Positions in Sculpture. Huddersfield Art Gallery, Huddersfield, UK, 2015.

Unfinished. The Courtauld Gallery, London, UK, 2015.

Vera Lutter. Gagosian (Britannia Street), London, UK, 2018.

Wilfrid de Glena. Messum's, London, UK, 2017.

WIP. Royal College of Art, London, UK, 2017.

Wolfgang Tillmans. Tate Modern, London, UK, 2017.

Zsófia Jakab: Beckoning (with Tessa Farmer, Eleanor Morgan and Chloe Briggs). Leeds Arts University, Leeds, UK, 2018.

As Exhibitor

Air Open Exhibition. Air Gallery, Altrincham, UK, 2017.

Art on a Postcard. Soho Review, London, UK, 2015.

Art on a Postcard. Unit London, London, UK, 2017.

Christmas Paper Cuts. Unit 1 Gallery, London, UK, 2016.

Daybreak. Safehouse 1, Peckham, London, UK, 2017.

Free Things. STCFTHOTS, Leeds, UK, 2015.

Fully Awake. House for an Art Lover, Glasgow, UK, 2017.

Housing the Homeless. Hiscox Art Cafe, London, UK, 2014.

New Perspectives in Painting. The Studios Gallery, New Mills, UK, 2013.

139 x Nothing But Good. Park, Wilhelminapark, Tilburg, Netherlands, 2018.

Open Studio. Barkston House, East Street Arts, Leeds, UK, 2013.

Postcards. St George's School, Cologne, Germany, 2017.

Painting, Fo' Show! Lady Beck Project Space, Leeds, UK, 2016.

Paint North. Lady Beck Project Space, Leeds, UK, 2018.

Paper Cuts. Transition Gallery, London, UK, 2016.

Pleasure Islands. ArtWorks Atelier, Salford, UK, 2016.

Reality Removed. World of Glass, St Helens, UK, 2017.

Small World. PS Mirabel, Manchester, UK, 2017.

The Discerning Eye. Mall Galleries, London, UK, 2015.

The Lynn Painter-Stainers Prize. Mall Galleries, London, UK, 2016.

The Marmite Prize for Painting IV. The Tannery Arts, London, UK, 2013.

The Royal Academy Summer Exhibition. Burlington House, London, UK, 2015.

The Royal Academy Summer Exhibition. Burlington House, London, UK, 2016.

The Royal Academy Summer Exhibition. Burlington House, London, UK, 2017.

The Wirral Open. The Williamson Art Gallery & Museum, Birkenhead, UK, 2016.

The Wirral Open. The Williamson Art Gallery & Museum, Birkenhead, UK, 2017.

Three100. Domus Buyer Party, Depford, London, UK, 2017.

Three100. No Format Gallery, Depford, London, UK, 2017.

TLC 2016 Art Auction. The Landmark Art Centre, Teddington, UK, 2016.

Tom Palin. Leeds Arts University, UK, 2018.

Tom Palin: The Tent. The Spotlight Gallery, The Dean Clough Galleries, Halifax, UK,
2016.

Wirral Society of Arts Members' Exhibition. The Williamson Art Gallery & Museum,
Birkenhead, UK, 2015.

Wirral Society of Arts Members' Exhibition. The Williamson Art Gallery & Museum,
Birkenhead, UK, 2016.

Wirral Society of Arts 7th National Open Art Exhibition. The Williamson Art Gallery
    & Museum, Birkenhead, UK, 2014.

As Exhibitor and Co-Curator

Enzo Marra and Tom Palin (co-curated with Paul Kelly and Tony Smith). Cornerstone
    Gallery, Liverpool Hope University, Liverpool, UK, 2016.

Pleasure Islands (co-curated with Robin Megannity and Brian Mountford). 3Space,
    Manchester, UK, 2016.

Still (co-curated with Richard Baker). Studio 24, Leeds, UK, 2014.

Tom Palin: Small Works (co-curated with Geraldine Reardon and Sue Vickerman).
    Gallery on the Green, Settle, UK, 2017.