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## Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except were explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or institution of higher learning.

Olivia Barnes

18th November 2012







## Acknowledements

My sincerest thank you to everyone who has taken this journey with me. I could not have done it without you.

Ian Jervis - your guidance, amazing amounts of endless knowledge and generosity of thoughts has been invaluable.

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Mum - I love you so much. Thank you for everything - all the hugs, late night coffee and motivational talks.

To all my friends and family - you are my strongholds.

I appreciate and value each and every one of you. Thank you for the support, love and inspiration.















This is a practice-based project with accompanying exegesis (constituted of 80% practical research and 20% written research).







Metamorphoses: reflections on a material world explores the world in motion – a world in perpetual change. We usually negotiate this world through engaging with a complacent register of everyday surrounds and extant signs, remaining unaware of the fundamental, often slow or subtle, change in all aspects of this shifting world – both its material nature and the concepts we hold of it. The project draws focus towards familiar perspectives we bring to bear on things that we might pass-by in an everyday encounter, or on which the eye might come to rest without expectation, having no question to ask, no work to do. Painting is employed in this project as a means of revitalising or re-orientating these perspectives. In turn, re-energising the eye, refreshing the utterly and exhaustedly familiar, and regenerating receptivity towards change inherent in all things, including ourselves. I explore how the image-ness of the world is distanced from our experience because we habitually translate it into indexical signs – into another language. Painting here explores how it might generate moments of vision where we encounter images more immediately though affective experience, and where affective response might reconstitute our conceptualisation of everyday things as they metamorphose through different durations of time. That which may initially have been perceived as inert or fixed, might now flow into new channels of feeling and thought.





## Section 1 Introduction

This study, Metamorphoses: reflections on a material world, comes from a fundamental interest in a world which is in constant change – not only through processes of cosmic, geological, and biological evolution, but also through our own changing perspectives on the world; our own conceptualisation of it. When I approach thinking about the world, I think of it as being made up of multiplicities of factors, all interacting and connecting endlessly with extended territories of thought. Our habit of engaging with the world, where we negotiate our way (our passage) through a continuous flow of subconscious exchanges and automatic responses, tends to leaves us unreceptive to connections which are subtle, slowly changing, or which do not have immediate functional value. I am a painter, and painting offers an arena where exchanges between seeing and thought are slowed for both artist and spectator. I am interested in how the experience of the painted image may go beyond a complacent reading, exploring and re-orientating connections with familiar perspectives of the world. Familiar relationships are re-mapped and familiar things are reconfigured through painting – both by invention and translation into the painted image. Although these painted images may resonate with familiar images held in memory, my intention is to resist a direct conflation between historical sign and the image-signs emerging through painting. These paintings explore and create sign slippages, as new perspectives develop through the emergence of the painted image. As a field of scrutiny the painted image extends beyond the apparent optical 'facts' or figurative references it might invoke. This creates a degree of separation and furthers moments of quietude. Paintings ask the spectator to invest time in order to become sensitised – aware and receptive to the image, through both intellectual and emotional registers. They may realise what was initially perceived as inert or fixed is part of fluid process of change. I attempt to recharge the everyday, re

In composing this document, I come to it thinking about my own change. I look back at all the shifts that have transpired. Caught up both intellectually and emotionally, progressions of change were imperceptible in the instant they were occurring. As I slow my thoughts in reflection, my own relationship with the world and the ways in which I engage with everyday environments becomes perceptible. A matrix of ideas generated in these interactions, filtrates and interconnects with my art practice.

Metamorphoses: reflections on a material world is comprised of two main sections. The first is a chronology of paintings. It begins with two works from the Bachelor of Visual Arts graduating exhibition. I include these as a reference to where this journey has come from and note that these are not part of a separate inquiry, but are works that initiated and proceed to inform the two year journey succeeding their making. With the principle mode of this investigation taking form from my visual engagement with the world, the first section is visual documentation of thinking through painting in a continuously evolving exploration.

The section of text that follows is a textured account analogous to the encounter of thoughts and the interaction between thoughts that has occurred over the duration of the project. Here, I step aside from the path and reflect upon the multiplicity of factors propelling the journey; imperceptible as I travelled through. It invokes fundamental connections between dynamics within painting and life, and highlights different mo



dalities of being in the world, often overlooked. Paragraphs within this section transition between an account of a journey to the beach and the digressions of thought this journey catalyses. Images are also interwoven with the writing, but not all are referred to directly, providing a space to kindle the reader's own reflections. I wish to exclude extraneous dialogues that may draw connections to the material nature of the paintings as physical objects. In this, images of my own paintings within the body of text are cropped to the paintings edges to focus on the immediate nature of the painting primarily as an image.

The entirety of this exegesis brings together thoughts and feelings in reflections on things past. Perspectives of factors open and extend through numerous networks, intertwining and filtering into works yet to come; creating new connections weaving the complexities of life.







2010

















Top left Top right Bottom left Bottom right

Olivia Barnes Painting #35 2010 Oil on linen 150 x 215mm Olivia Barnes Painting #37 2010 Oil on linen 150 x 215mm Olivia Barnes Painting #40 2010 Oil on linen 150 x 215mm Olivia Barnes Painting #41 2010 Oil on linen 150 x 215mm











2011











Top left Bottom left Bottom right Olivia Barnes Painting #51 2011 Oil on linen 350 x 400mm

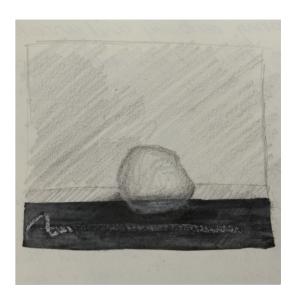
Olivia Barnes Painting #52 2011 Oil on linen 350 x 350mm

Olivia Barnes Painting #53 2011 Oil on linen 300 x 350mm















Olivia Barnes (Drawing studies) 2011













Top left Top right Bottom left Bottom right

Olivia Barnes Painting #54 2011 Oil on canvas 200 x 250mm Olivia Barnes Painting #55 2011 Oil on canvas 200 x 250mm

Olivia Barnes Painting #56 2011 Oil on canvas 200 x 250mm

Olivia Barnes Painting #57 2011 Oil on canvas 200 x 250mm

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Top left
Top right
Bottom left
Bottom right

Olivia BarnesPainting #582011Oil on canvas200 x 250mmOlivia BarnesPainting #592011Oil on linen200 x 250mmOlivia BarnesPainting #602011Oil on linen200 x 250mmOlivia BarnesPainting #612011Oil on linen200 x 250mm











Top left
Top right
Bottom left

Olivia BarnesPainting #622011Oil on linen200 x 250mmOlivia BarnesPainting #642011Oil on canvas200 x 250mmOlivia BarnesPainting #632011Oil on canvas200 x 250mm





Olivia Barnes Painting #58, Painting #56, Painting #54, Painting #57, Painting #55 (studio installation) 2011

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Top left Top right Bottom left Bottom right Olivia Barnes (untitled experiment) 2011 Oil on canvas 300 x 400mm Olivia Barnes Painting #65 2011 Oil on canvas 300 x 400mm Olivia Barnes Painting #66 2011 Oil on linen 300 x 400mm Olivia Barnes Painting #67 2011 Oil on canvas 300 x 400mm











Olivia Barnes Painting #71 2011 Oil on linen 300 x 350mm









Top right Bottom left Bottom right

Olivia Barnes Painting #67 (detail) 2011 Olivia Barnes Painting #71 (detail) 2011 Olivia Barnes Painting #71 (detail) 2011







LeftOlivia BarnesPainting #722011Oil on linen300 x 350mmRightOlivia BarnesPainting #732011Oil on linen300 x 350mm

















































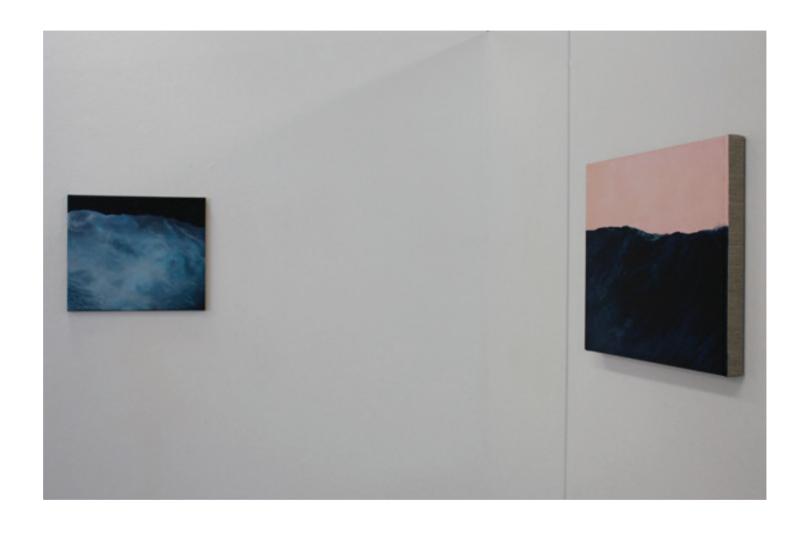












Olivia Barnes Painting #76 and Painting #74 Studio installation



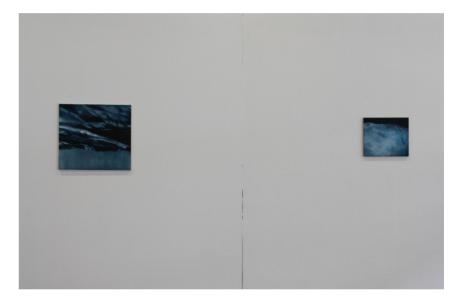












Left Olivia Barnes Painting #79, Painting #77, Painting #74, Painting #75 (installation) 2011
Right Olivia Barnes Painting #81 and Painting #76 (installation) 2011









LeftOlivia BarnesPainting #822012Oil on linen200 x 250mmRightOlivia BarnesPainting #832012Oil on linen200 x 250mm









LeftOlivia BarnesPainting #842012Oil on linen200 x 250mmRightOlivia BarnesPainting #852012Oil on linen200 x 250mm





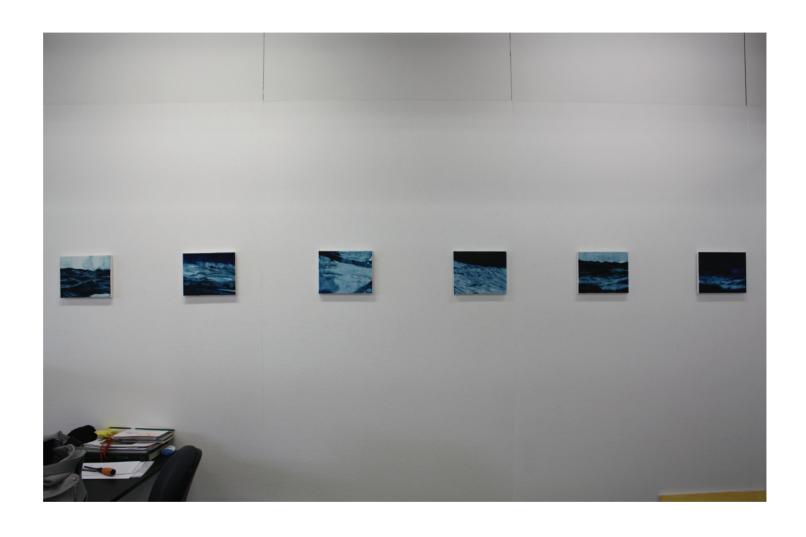






LeftOlivia BarnesPainting #862012Oil on linen200 x 250mmRightOlivia BarnesPainting #872012Oil on linen200 x 250mm

























Olivia Barnes Painting #89 2012 Oil on linen 200 x 250mm





Olivia Barnes Painting #90 2012 Oil on linen 200 x 250mm















Olivia Barnes Painting #92 2012 Oil on linen 200 x 250mm



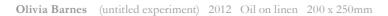
























































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Olivia Barnes Painting #102 2012 Oil on linen 340 x 400mm







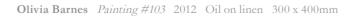
Olivia Barnes Painting #102 (detail) 2012













































































































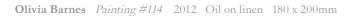




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Olivia Barnes Painting #115 (detail) 2012



















The following images are form the final installation of paintings shown in the gallery site 'TestSpace' as part of the Art and Design Graduating exhibition in November 2012.

The entirety of the installation of paintings was set up to act as a continuously evolving exploration both of my artistic enquiries within my practice and of the spectators' perspectives as they negotiated the space. I attempted to set up a layout where couplings or groupings of works strategically encouraged exchanges of feeling and thought to develop between the works as the spectator experienced one image and then the next, navigating their way around the installation.

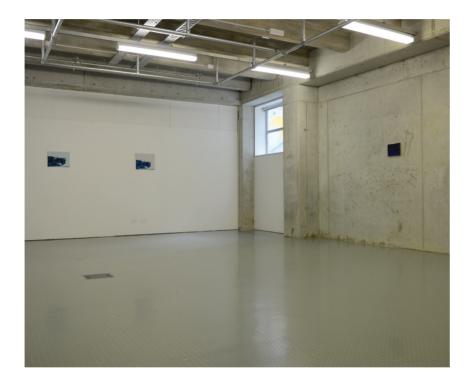
I was interested in the subtle pushes and pulls that would occur in experiencing each of the works and how different orientations offered in individual paintings might extend when brought in the spectators mind to their experience of the next image. I attempted to generate an ever shifting experience where perspectives would continuously evolve down multiple trajectories, never resting to be locked into a wider singular narrative of the collective of exhibited works. I wanted the spectators' investment of time to propel the process of change, to regenerate and re-orientate what may initially have been perceived as familiar beyond the apparent facts of the image into new channels of feeling and thought. The architecture of the space also lent itself to this. Separated from other student's works, the room offered a space that was quiet and reflective and promoted an extended time of viewing.

Through the ordering and the layout of the paintings, flows and breaks in perspectives unfolded and collapsed creating no resolve or definition within the body of works. Rather, collectively the works opened up a site where one might be pulled in or pushed out, a painting might be macro or micro, coming into existence or going out of existence. Some paintings may have seemed to be depicting an instant of matter condensing into solid form; the beginning of time (see *Painting #105*). Yet, other forms may have contradicted this, appearing to collapse into themselves; slowly slipping away before one's eyes (see *Painting #113*, *Painting #114*, *Painting #115*). Between each image, each coupling or grouping, and the exhibition as a whole, rhythms continuously re-orientated and regenerated what had gone before. The exhibition set out to create an arena of constant change, not only in the evolution of the images forms, but in the spectators own changing perspectives and conceptualisation of it. What might have been perceived as fixed or inert in the initial moment of viewing then developed and extended across time and space, never the same from one moment to the next.

















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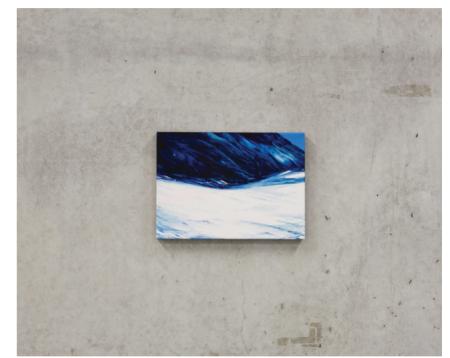










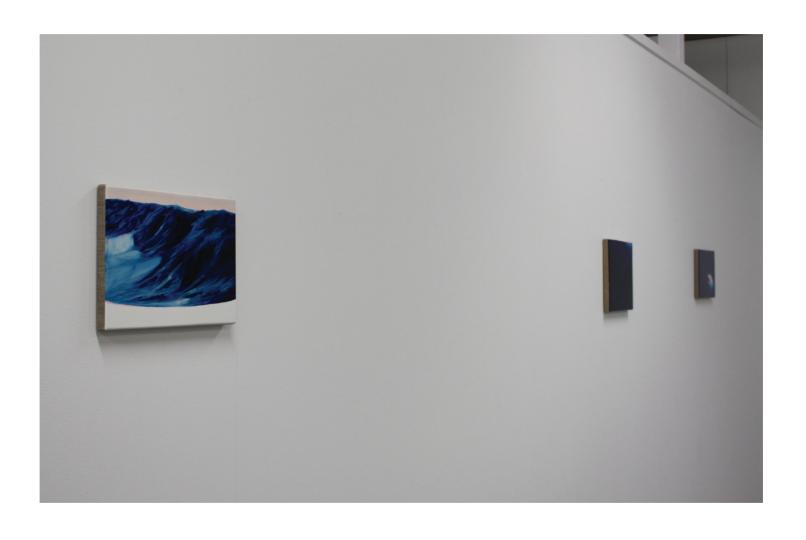


Olivia Barnes Installation AD12 November 2012













Olivia Barnes Installation AD12 November 2012





The lap of the tide extends its wetness across a shell, and for an instant, features that would otherwise have gone unnoticed are highlighted. Small stones, smoothed from years of erosion, rest in slight dimples of sand. Temporarily reflective planes of sea stranded in rock pools re-orientate familiar surrounds. Irregular lines of sea-foam trace reaches of waves that rolled in prior to my arrival.

These things are never the same from one moment to the next. The beach and its forms are continuously regenerating through actions and events occurring long after I leave, just as I am continually a different person bringing new thought and new experiences. Even in the instant after the shutter captures each image things have changed. The photo records a point in time, fractured from the surrounding field in an instant faster than the blink of an eye. But by excluding extraneous information that would normally influence the way I view things, it can never encapsulate the experience of being there at that moment. The photos become samples that serve as reminders. These images are combined with those held in memory, and each time I come to them I see something different. They operate as catalysts that extend and evolve beyond the apparent facts of the initial encounter, recreating new experiences with potential for further.

"Thinking is always experiencing, experimenting, not interpreting but experimenting, and what we experience, experiment with, is always actuality, what's coming into being, what's new, what's taking shape" (Deleuze, 1995).



Figure 1



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On a weekend morning in spring, earlier than I would normally wake, I choose to go to the beach to experience things literally in a new light. I am aware the light at dawn in particular, and a couple of hours afterwards, often offers the best conditions and qualities for photographing - unlike any other time of the day. The darkness of the night currently lingers on, but soon the inevitable rising of the sun will ensue, stretching a film of light over the surrounding scapes. I begin to reverse my car out of the driveway in a flow of automatic actions and responses so familiar they incur almost no thought. I know intrinsically the angle my legs need to be to swing them into the car, the amount of pull on the handle to close the door without slamming it, the pressure my foot has against the brake pedal and its gentle release that allows the wheels to slowly begin turning. In my inattention to these and other habitual navigations I am not completely aware of, I have managed to reach for and secure my safety belt, put the key in the ignition, shift the gear into reverse, release the hand break, and before I know it, almost without thinking, I am half way down the drive and then, at the end.

Before my tyres reach the thin kerb edge I anticipate the usual "kadunk, kadunk" as they roll over the small difference between the driveway and road. The simple contrast of heights separating the before and after of this bump has a strange agency. Having experienced it countless times, I am both desensitised and hyper-sensitised to the disparity. It is an occurrence so normal my complacency could have me easily disregard the event as barely worth registering. Yet, if for some reason one day this familiar moment should not occur, and my tyres smoothly transitioned from drive to road, I suspect it would trigger a disorientating sensation.

In *The Neural Interface*<sup>1</sup>, Norman Bryson (2003) writes an introduction to Warren Neidich's essays, in which, Neidich presents a rethinking of phenomenology through his knowledge in cognitive neuroscience. Neidich gives prominence to how we come to primarily know the object, not in the instantaneous recall of a singular textual meaning from the signifier, but rather through "the pathways of connections that are built up through interaction between brain and the outside world" (p2). A firing of neurons codes each different thing in the world in a different configuration, and if repeated regularly, these networks become strengthened and then stabilise as Bryson notes, as "apple," "table," or "hand" (p2). Bryson continues discussing Neidich's ideas, stating:

"The radicalism of neuroscience consists in bracketing out the signifier as the force that binds the world together: what makes the apple is not the signifier 'apple' (though this, too, may play an important role in the process of reality building), but rather the simultaneous firing of axons and neurons within cellular and organic life. The level of the ground of being, or of the real, shifts from the signifier to the neural configuration, the orchestration of myriad plays of lightening across the ramifying branches of the brain" (p3).



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The Neural Interface by Norman Bryson. This essay was published in Blow-up: Photography, Cinema and the Brain, Essays by Warren Neidich, with an introduction by Norman Bryson, D.A.P. and the University of California, Riverside, USA, 2003.



I liken Neidich's ideas to my anticipation of the drives edge. Normally vagueness washes these familiar surrounds. But anticipating the kerb edge, I now generate a conscious awareness of its agency. I borrow its form from an accumulation of past experiences, and a split second before the moment actually occurs, I feel its affect within me.

I think about *Painting #90.* Moments in this painting may initially seem locatable. The blue matter could be a shelf of some form of material composite, fractured from a larger body. But are we looking at something large or small? Is it deteriorating or coming into being, unfolding into something more? It refuses to directly reveal what it might be, and becomes an element that, while small, has agency in activating the image. Similarly, the pink corner hints at being a section of sky, but if it is, what sort of atmosphere is this, and where might this experience be? This pink does not quite seem to be that of a sunset, nor does it correlate definitively to ones knowledge of things in the world. It casts back into uncertainty what this blue composite could be, and in turn the synthesis of the entire image is questioned. The slight shifts in familiar perspectives are enough to agitate a succinct reading and prevent complacency or paralysis of the image setting in.







Most days, I would have to be extra vigilant of other cars, waiting for and timing a gap in the traffic before I fully reverse onto the road. But the early morning sees the street quiet and stilled from action of the previous day, action that will increase and fluctuate at certain points, until once again the night brings tranquillity. As I begin to routinely swing my car out of the drive, the trajectory of my path is disrupted by something unusual, and in an instant familiar habit is jolted from complacency to a conscious registering of this setting. The unanticipated intrusion of this chance encounter shifts the dynamics of thoughts and actions, and instigates a plethora of connections to follow.

What is this thing? In an instant I note and compare its barley lit form in quick succession to images of 'cat', 'coat', 'blanket', 'box'. A box; squashed, sodden and slumping. Weighed down against the road with moisture of overnight rain swelling its fibres. It is no longer a box. The once rigid structure has been reduced from being functional, transformed from cardboard even, into a soggy mass of material with no use. Not a box, nor cardboard. Not this, nor that, but a thing. It leads me to think of Derrick Cherrie's sculpture titled *Retroflex* (1988-1990).

Here, Cherrie makes an in-between object that could be thought of as being simultaneously domestic and industrial, functional and functionless. Parallel steel handles, grafted to a pink slouching, mattress-like form, are similar to those used to hoist oneself from a pool. But in this context, separated from and presented outside of how one might be accustomed, they can only be references to a function they can no longer perform. Combinations of contradictory elements accumulate and defer readings of the work. We are presented with evenly spaced, buttoned dimples, like those on a couch or mattress, yet this limp denture pink, oval object, propped up between wall and floor, resists being fully rationalised or reduced to a singular perspective. It hovers between multiple perspectives, paradoxical in nature.

I bring thoughts of *Retroflex* back to this thing struggling to retain form in the middle of the road. Both objects perform 'double exposures.' Schwenger (2006), states that in a double exposure "there is an uneasy flicker between two versions of worldhood, more disturbing than if either version prevailed" (p54). Both Retroflex and this box operate concurrently through multiple articulations of being. There is a disconcerting affect in elements that do not seem to belong together, and do not definitively declare a straightforward being.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Peter Schwenger (2006), describes Marcel Duchamps work *In Advance of The Broken Arm*, as having a "double exposure" (p54), caught in an oscillation between being both thing and object with instrumentality. Stating, in reference to Duchamp's work, it is not "pure" art nor purely a tool (p54).



This image has be removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons

Figure 3. Derek Cherrie Retroflex 1988-1990 Leather, polyurethane foam, stainless steel handles, waste fitting and zip

On any given day there are countless paths of people going about daily routines and journeys. It is inevitable there will be instances of overlapping or intersecting of these trajectories, whether one is consciously aware of it or not. These moments have bearing on things yet to occur, just as this box does. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Gauttari (1991) might say it is part of a rhizomic network of complexities in constant motion. It is not fixed or static, separate or self-contained. Exchanges, such as this exchange between myself, car and box, make up part of a mapping of varying intensities across different levels of consciousness. It is one of many points of transformation occurring indeterminately at any one moment and endlessly throughout a lifetime. This box is something that is strangely surprising in its aesthetic allure. It creates a point of intensity in the course of my morning and generates perspectives and connections that otherwise would not have been drawn upon. In this, I proceed with an adjustment in the way I am now looking at, perceiving and thinking about my surrounds.



Our map of the world is constantly changing. As new connections are formed, our orientation shifts. "The map is open and connectable in all its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, p12).



Figure 4

I continue to drive, opening my receptivity to things I might normally pass by in a strategy of navigating my surrounds with ease. As I turn corners and make my way along familiar streets, my thoughts unfold through a myriad of visual signs. I notice the specific green colour the local park's fences and public toilet block are painted. (A colour that all council owned property seems to be painted). I register the different styles of power poles and note how I have never really specifically given any attention to particular elements that might make one different to another. Normally, multiple images might combine to form a general idea of a power pole. Now, looking at them, I distinguish specific differences between their ages, styles and functions. There are wooden ones, steel ones and concrete ones. Some support power lines while others bear streetlights arching over the road. Some are marked and marred from now absent posters of garage sales past. No two are the same.



I bring my eyes to the road markings. What seems to be a simple act of driving requires me to navigate through a welter of signs. Once learnt, it is difficult not to reduce things, so familiar, to a semiotic reading. The dashed yellow lines spaced at regular intervals down both sides of the road tell me they are no parking zones. The red octagonal road sign framing the four white the shapes S T O P signify, at the intersection I am coming to, I must slow, come to a complete still and check for potential traffic before proceeding.

As I round the corner I am immediately alerted to road works ahead. Orange cones with reflector strips line both the sides and centre of the road. A succession of signs instructs me to reduce my speed and be wary of loose chip seal, and informs me there is a detour ahead. I slow. The tar seal has been stripped back creating a dip in height from the normal road level. Here, road aggregate otherwise concealed, is exposed and the usual smoothness of the surface is now rough and irregular. Although it is only a slight change, my tyres have a different traction on this surface than what I am used to, and I can no longer rely on habitual knowledge of this route. I consciously make shifts in what I am accustomed to in order to navigate the difference.



Figure 5

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I proceed with the diversion following roads lesser travelled. Upon rounding a corner, I am subtly surprised to come across a road I haven't been down for years. Before I am completely aware of curiosity compelling me on, I indicate and make the turn. The steady downwards gradient and gentle rhythms in the road become known once again as I instantly recall and respond to the familiarity of the environment; trees, hedges, fences, exteriors of houses, colours and materials. Despite small variables one would expect over time, these things still register correspondence to images held in memory. The textures of the environment hold me as dormant pathways are retraced and re-activated.

I linger, caught in a moment of in-betweeness. Recollections of experiences, people, and things are brought to consciousness. Images of the cedar letterbox and brass numbers return to me. The arduous walk up to the bus stop returns. My dad unpacking his work van returns. I return. But a shadow of time has created a strange cognitive dissonance and, although I feel connected to this place, I simultaneously feel estranged. This once familiar ground has become odd in an inescapable metamorphosis through filters of time. Time distances and reframes my memories and I can no longer reach an accurate depiction of these things in my mind. Myself to myself is a mystery – now obscured by new knowledge and experiences.

I hang two paintings, made a year apart, next to each other. I happen to have them both in studio. Despite the time that separates their making, there is an unexpected reverberation between them. Elements from either one reflect between the images, creating an exchange that seems to collapse time and narrative.

I arrive at a junction. Do I pursue my curiosity into what our old house looks like now, re-encountering all the things my senses once coded, to have them unfold and shift through the time that has gone by? I feel an almost overwhelming need to dwell on memories and images of the past, compelled by the resounding affects of nostalgia this place triggers. This is the road to my childhood home.

"Melancholy slows things, allows for percolation, facilitates solitude and solace for imagination. And imagination makes space for melancholy, they work together to construct the allied experience of nostalgia, reverie, sorrow, shadows" (Bowring, 2008).







Inconsistencies in the logic of *Painting #89* are initially smoothed over by the thoughts one brings to it. At first, it may feel seamless. Over the duration of viewing however, the image begins to evolve under its own terms, revealing incongruences between facets of image and after-image, thought and after-thought. One navigates a complex of affective relations, in which there is a strange, disconcerting quietness. The image surges upwards in an action both tumultuous and calm; obvious and subtle.



Figure 6







In the chapter titled 'The Ethicoaesthetics of Affect', Simon O'Sullivan (2008) discusses the complexities of a gap between stimulus and response in what we feel and read of an artwork. O'Sullivan notes, Art "produces affects. Indeed you cannot 'read' affects… you can only experience them" (p.43). The experience is in the duration of viewing, evolving through multiple elements of affective relations. However it is in the first moments, before the habit of signification kicks in and affect starts to interact with concept, that a pure image-experience might occur. It occurs the moment before the subjectivity of knowledge from the past can be loaded onto the image. A direct effect of viewing opens a gap where that which resonates within the spectator differs from how the world might normally be experienced. The artwork may offer a collage of affective relations, unable to be rationalised within what is familiar creating an opportunity for trajectories to extend beyond the socially constructed. "Art is less involved in knowledge and more involved in experience – in pushing forward the boundaries of what can be experienced" (p. 52).

I know if I allow myself to venture further down the road to our old house and linger, the optimum time of day for photographing will have come and gone before I make it to my destination. So instead I continue to the beach, but it is not long before once again I am interrupted by the strange agency my surrounds have on my thinking. Upon coming to the crest of the hill winding its way down to the beach, I pause.

At this height I am at a vantage point with an ideal view extending down the valley where people still sleep, across the beach, cliffs and waves, to the water stretching out, merging with the sky in an exchange on the horizon. My eye and mind collectively gather scale relations, different textures and colours to add to a compilation of new images in memory. I am particularly drawn to the long shadow sinking down the valley and stretching out from the base of cliffs, sliding its length along the beach and sea. In the dim greyness of light, forms seem to diffuse and slip over margins once holding them separate. A plane of sea corrugated with lines is echoed by the cliffs, rhythms crossing over and folding together, becoming unified.

How would I photograph an exchange such as this one? Would it manage to hold this feeling within its frame? The photo will freeze the slowly evolving rhythms and create clear distinctions between forms. I take a backward glance to my last visit of the beach, allowing its forms and my experience of the place to unfold within memory. A gull comes in and out of my line of sight, sweeping through the air, rising, turning, gliding down and skimming the water's surface with the tip of a wing. I watch the ripples flow and then dissipate into the body of sea. The longer I stay, the more attune I feel to the rhythms of the place; becoming more perceptible to slow changes evolving over time. The tempo of the waves change, livening from the casual pace they held earlier. They reach higher and break more frequently, perhaps in response to a storm out at sea. How would the photograph capture these rhythms, the changes taking place? While the camera might work faster than perception, this could be an instance where mechanical apparatus becomes inadequate.



I continue on my way, morning dreaming. The shadow stretching down the valley is slowly receding. Again, my mind wanders as I imagine the beach, walking across the sand and uniquely marking the once uniform field as its softness gives way under the weight of my steps. Prints would be exposed by the first touch of the days light and then worked over by the gentle lapping of a tide; an action that ceaselessly erases and revives.



Figure 7

Thoughts of a particular canvas I have in studio are invoked. I came in one morning and noticed for the first time a ripple that ran across its once taut surface. The studio lights called attention to the imperfection, conflating the illusion of the painted image with material support. I have considered re-stretching the painting, but for now it remains primarily an object; comprised of pigment, gesso, linen, stretcher frames.



Pulling my thoughts to now, I try to see what is here, to be present to it. I glance at the sky; it has already changed from 20 minutes ago. It reminds me of a Polaroid coming into colouration from an anaemic field. The light that brings the day ahead is colour. As the evening comes, my ability to distinguish colour will fade and everything will become saturated in the inky darkness of night. Currently however, this place is being brought into difference by the light interacting with surfaces of my surrounds. Light is being scattered, absorbed and re-emitted in different ways and at different rates. It reveals different surface qualities and characteristics setting one thing apart from another; drawing them, out from the uniform blanket of night. Seeing the world is dependent on light.

When I look at the world that surrounds me, the things in it, do I look at it as a painter? Do I see things on a different register, for their mass, tone, form or colour? When I look at nature, am I looking for colours, the different things they signify? I might come to know the season by the colours of the leaves, just as I come to know road markings first by their different colours.



Figure 8







I normally mix colours specific to my requirements in the painting of an image. Often this entails creating slight variables with different ratios of the same components. Most of my blues I mix with a speck of Lamp Black and an even smaller speck of Transparent Red Brown; just enough to make it less jarring than pigment directly from the tube. Colours come together to be cohesive in the painted image and relational to the elements of the things they may depict. But what if there was a flicker of fluorescent pink, or I under-painted with that strange highlighter blue colour; colours that wouldn't normally be associated with what it is the image purports to depict? Slight colour flirtations that are just enough to shift how the entire image is perceived.

My eyes wander and come to rest upon a beech tree, its leaves gently brushing against one another. They have a general 'sameness' that interlaces them together creating the form of a tree gently quivering in the subtle morning breeze. Gravity has its way and a leaf, separated from the collective of others, delicately drifts towards the ground below. For the moment, it has come to rest alongside grasses pushing their way through cracks in the pavement; grey cement contrasted by flags of green, and now, this leaf. Light reflects off each ones surface describing the variables in their textures and colours. My eye moves from one element of the composition to the next. Against the dull grey of the path, the leaf's glossy sheen is exaggerated, more than what it would have been amongst the mass of others. The combination of these different surfaces sets up an awareness in which light accents once familiar things and recreates a whole new world. I am lead to wonder what more this place could have to offer at this time of morning.

The surfaces of Jenna Shin's large-scale wall paintings respond to the shifting of natural light throughout the day. Sections of these patterns, generated and composed from fractal mathematics and the ancient paper folding art of origami, emerge and again merge from the plane of the painting in varying intensities of light and as the spectator moves viewing position. These subtle perceptual shifts draw attention to complexities in the methodically built up surfaces, the variations of tones and different gloss qualities. There is a heightened sense that light is just as equal a part of the work as the physical painting materials.







This image has be removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons

Figure 9. Jeena Shin Fractus Dunedin Public Art Gallery 2011

Awoken and awash with potential; I want to explore this new orientation of textures, colours and spaces this place offers. Everything is vibrant with life and resonates differently compared to any other time of day. Even shadows beginning to form areas of contrast seem to glow. Notes of birds sound out. Flowers imperceptibly unfurl to the days warmth. Dew gathers on blades of grass, capturing and miniaturising the surrounds. But the resonance this dawn light creates is ephemeral. As the sun continues to rise, warm and reveal, the heightened effects this experience entails will diffuse and dissipate, becoming swept with sunlight and returning to normal. Storing images of these intrigues and I continue on my way.

I parallel this experience to Simon O'Sullivan's (2008) account in *The Ethicoaesthetics of Affect* of how art does not necessarily create entirely new worlds, but rather, "utilises the stuff of the world to go beyond that world... it operates on a number of different registers, signifying and asignifying" (p. 67). Just as this environment, in new light, is re-created,



art "presents us with a new composite art encourages us to feel and reason in new ways... [It] holds a particular power, for although it might utilise previous form it does so in a new way and with an eye to that which has not yet been realised" (p. 68). Art gathers things we are already accustomed with and extends them beyond usual or familiar perspectives. It creates new trajectories to points unanticipated, producing "new modes of becoming and new worlds for people yet to come" (p. 68).



Figure 10

When do my paintings become paintings as opposed to references to photographs? Photos make things static; I want to paint things that are mobile – coming into or going out of existence. Painting becomes a means of putting back into the image what the photograph doesn't capture. While the photo initiates a process in a transfer of information, a painting creates a translation of a digital language and extends into new forms. It becomes a painting when it breathes for itself.



I want to paint an image that highlights and shifts what I feel is a complacency in viewing what initially might be thought of as representational imagery. I want to take elements from various images; different scales and subjects; macro, micro, solid, fluid, descriptive, suggestive. All of these factors combining in an initially satisfying, cohesive image, only to have them unravel over the duration of viewing. Areas of the image held back from flourishing detail, others gorging on it. Flowing forward, receding back. Emerging and dispersing through different densities of pigment. Rhythms of marks both steady and irregular; contemplative and intuitive. A multitude of sensibilities combining under no definitive terms of logic where names for things become lost in affect.

As I drive into the beach car park my tires encounter a new traction; this time a loose covering of gravel, shifting my sensitivity to the pressure on the accelerator. With my attention drawn to this gravel, I absent-mindedly park my car. Casting my eye across the surface, I think about the unknown thousands of stones carpeting the lot, the sameness of their textures and grey tones. Each stone is seemingly just the same as the next, yet I am compelled to think about how each one is also completely and utterly unique. The planes of their outer facades have different pores and fissures and come together at different angles to compose their individual forms; all casting a different shadow from the light of the encroaching day.

Thoughts divert to an exhibition I saw in Melbourne of Mari Funaki's: *Objects*. The quietude surrounding the works had a resounding pull that drew me in for closer inspection. The forms and their matt grey-black surfaces seemed to have paused in a moment of self-reflection, as though considering the next phase of movement that would have them calmly transition into a new guise. Although these objects were still, I imagined them folding and unfolding along the same lines, but in different orders or arrangements. My eyes moved between the forms and the shadows they cast, each object perpetually emerging through different perspectives and new orientations of vision and thought.

Stepping out of my car, I incidentally scuff my shoe across the gravel surface, clearing a patch of difference. From a tiny nothing amongst the grit of others, a stone is separated from the sameness of the field within which it was previously indistinguishable. Left in the centre of my attention, with the early morning light accenting its form, I am briefly caught in a moment of indecision. It seems strangely wrong to leave it exposed, and I have an odd inclination to re-scuff the spot it unfolded from in order to recombine it with its comrades. I could leave it and assume a car will roll over the patch, folding it back into the collective. Or perhaps heavy rain will wash them back together again. I linger with my door still open, my thoughts slowly escaping the current dilemma, as I become intrigued by the series of actions and consequences occurring in such a chance encounter. Maybe if I had have encountered this stone an instant later it would seem just as non-descript as the others stones it shares the site





with. But I didn't. I contemplate the slight force of my foot in revealing this stone, and in turn how this force, paired with gravity and the stones weight and shape, made it topple one way and not the other.

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Figure 11. Mari Funaki Object 2008 Heat coloured mild steel

I consider the impetus of the photo I choose to paint from. What compelled me to choose this one above all others? As I open the clip securing a small bundle of A6 images, I fumble with the fastening scattering them across my desk. Some present the full photo; others are only partially exposed, while some lay image side down. Perhaps this small incident will impact the decision I make in selecting one photo instead of a different one. Could it be any other? I could rearrange them to make all the images visible.



Divorced from scale relations amongst the collective of others, this once ordinary stone is no longer a small, seemingly insignificant component of a larger body. The intensity of my eyes focus has drawn it to the centre, as if the world were in a vacuum around this point. Its unique features are amplified, and it becomes something large and wondrous. Where the sun manages to wrap its warmth, unique features, specific to this stone, are revealed. At its surface I notice its blemishes; a fleck of white composite, minute pores, a fine fissure that traverses its tall peak, a facade dulled and smooth with age contrasted by what appear to be a freshly broken edge. I try to infer its mass, weight and material makeup, creating connections to things I have previously experienced. I generate a sense of its temperature and different textures, the coolness of its surface that penetrates right through to its centre, the grains of its composition. But what is in there? What is it made of? Bits? Aggregates? Particles?



Figure 12

Particles, inside particles, inside particles. How deep do we go? I read something recently in the news about the discovery of a particle that gives substance or mass to all matter; to this stone, to me. It had been predicted that theoretically it should exist. Now discovered, this thing could potentially bridge a gap in understanding the mysteries of dark matter and dark energy that makes up the majority of the universe. I find it fascinating



we are continually on the edge of a greater unknown, constantly being reminded the world is complex and infinitely mysterious.

With my gaze remaining on the stone, I think about its history. Where did it come from, and what brought it here, bearing weight on this surface? It could be a form of igneous rock, thrown into this area by a volcanic eruption, rapidly cooling and solidifying, trapping minute crystals or air bubbles inside. It could be a form of sedimentary rock, composed of an immensely compact accumulation of minerals and organic particles. What is its structure made from and what could it tell us about its history? While it does not reply to my gaze, I am aware of the history it holds within it. Every stone possesses a differing story of having come from somewhere other than this place. They are continuing on, continuing to become something else, still in process; the whole world is. This stone is not here at the end point of a journey, but at a point of a journey that will continue long after I depart its presence.



Figure 13





My thoughts separate the stone from the surrounding field and suspend it in my imagination as I consider what would have happened had I not noticed it. It could have become stuck in the tread of my shoe, and unbeknown to me, been carried down to the beach onto a new field of difference. Here, against grains of sand it would become something monumental, larger than would have ever been imagined. In this instant where would I be now? Would I still be in this place of extended thinking? I have become diverted and lost in a plethora of thoughts. Thoughts that have managed to slow my journey, but not the inevitable rising of the sun.

Just as the photograph holds a wealth of opportunities that instigate thoughts realized and extended upon through painting, the journey that takes place prior to the conception framing the photographic image may offer just as many.





## Section 4 Concluding commentary

Whatever man makes and makes to live lives because of the life put into it.

A yard of Indian muslin is alive with Hindu Life.

And a Navajo woman, weaving her rug in the pattern of her dream must run the pattern out in a little break at the end so that her soul can come out, back to her.

But in the odd pattern, like snake marks on the sand it leaves its trail.

D. H. Lawrence: Whatever Man Makes, from Pansies, 1929

The Navajo woman casts the threads of her creations away from her, drawing them in again, this time in a new network, in a new form. Similarly, in the moment of painting I extend my thoughts across different terrains, translating them into new medium, inciting new connections. These creations maintain integrity to the original energy that propelled their formation but they are changed. The sand is marked and a trail is left, all is the same but different.

As I come to a point of this document nearing completion, I turn my focus back to my painting practice. Throughout writing and now, a conscious engagement with my everyday surrounds, thoughts and images continuously generates momentum and furthers a constant production of works. In studio, paintings are like rhythms of thoughts flowing over and between one another. Each painting, developed in the presence of others being worked on concurrently, overlaps, informs and interacts with others. They are like thoughts, in constant exchange – never fixed. They come with me into the world as I continue my journey, informed by what has gone, extending onwards to points unknown.



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Front cover page		over page	Personal photograph (Awhitu Peninsula)				
Paintings cover page		gs cover page	Personal photograph (Studio 2010)				
Pg.5 Top left  Top right  Bottom left		Top left	Olivia Barnes	Painting #35	2010		
		Top right	Oil on linen Olivia Barnes	150 x 215mm <i>Painting #37</i>	2010		
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			Oil on linen	150 x 215mm			
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			Oil on linen	300 x 350mm			
Pg. 9			Olivia Barnes 2011	(Drawing studie	es)		
	Pg. 10	Top left	Olivia Barnes	Painting #51	2011		
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	Top right	Olivia Barnes	Painting #59	2011
		Oil on linen	200 x 250mm	
	Bottom left	Olivia Barnes	Painting #60	2011
		Oil on linen	200 x 250mm	
	Bottom right	Olivia Barnes	Painting #61	2011
		Oil on linen	200 x 250mm	
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Pg. 12	Top left	Olivia Barnes	Painting #62	2011
		Oil on linen	200 x 250mm	
	Top right	Olivia Barnes	Painting #64	2011
		Oil on canvas	200 x 250mm	
	Bottom left	Olivia Barnes	Painting #63	2011
		Oil on canvas	200 x 250mm	
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		Oil on linen	400 x 500mm				Oil on linen	200 x 250mm		
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Pg. 45	<b>Olivia Barnes</b> Oil on linen	Painting #98 200 x 165mm	2012		Pg. 58	Olivia Barnes Oil on linen 23	Painting #110 30 x 250mm	2012
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Pg. 51	Olivia Barnes Oil on linen	Painting #104 300 x 400mm	2012		Pg. 64	Olivia Barnes 2012	Painting #114 (	detail)







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