
VISUAL DOCUMENTATION

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PAINTING *of* TIME

DURATION EMERGENCE SENSATION

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Introduction

This document provides visual documentation of the exhibition that I curated of my painting practice undertaken for this PhD research, and that was examined at completion of the project. A discussion of the ecology within which these paintings have emerged can be read in the exegesis document lodged in the AUT University library—also available online at this library’s site for Research and Theses: *Scholarly Commons* [<http://aut.researchgateway.ac.nz/handle/10292/9020>]. The project abstract is copied below. The illustrations in this document are included in the exegesis document, along with images of other paintings made during the tenure of the study.

The exhibition was held at St Paul St. Gallery Three. 17 February–1 March 2014.
39 Symonds St., Auckland Central.

Abstract

‘Painting *of* time: duration, emergence, sensation’ investigates a methodological conundrum where a painter is unable to orientate painting towards its objective, because the object of ‘pursuit’ is the *absolutely new* whose terms will emerge only as they are created in a future. The absolutely new, which is not a recombination of extant qualities but a *difference in kind*, can be neither preconceived nor recognised when it emerges, and so the dilemma for a painter is not only how to conduct painting, but also how to decide when painting should finish. Problematically, the orientation needed is towards the future, and so a trajectory for painting could only be conceived retrospectively once it is already possible, and so is redundant. This conundrum is a legacy of Modernism and its *avant-gardes*, where an ideology of progress mandates the creation of the new as the purpose for contemporary art practice, especially within Western understandings of practice, so that painting’s given aim is to create a *new* image that will lead to new directions in art history. If responsibility for creating the new lies with the painter, how could invention be conceived as happening, and what are the implications for method in painting?

This study explores, through practice and theory, how painting conducts invention. Henri Bergson’s method of intuition is employed in order to examine the terms of the problem, to reveal that the conundrum results from confusing heterogeneous time with homogeneous space. By bringing image, perception, matter, and memory together into a conception of time as duration, Bergson distinguishes *discontinuous measured time* from the *continuum of qualitative change* that is the living experience of duration. The study finds

that it is in this qualitative change that the new emerges, in the virtual and actual movements that constitute a *differing in kind* of psychic states intensive to a painter. Here invention happens unpredictably, unaccountably, and continuously. What a painter ‘pursues’, then, is a *no-thing* that Bergson calls *everything in a work of art*, and which *creates itself as form*. This radical discounting of the material aspect of painting by reframing it in duration dissolves the temporal conundrum, and also absolves a painter of responsibility for invention. In this ontology of becoming, painting emerges continuously as an intensive image-of-emergence, so that the question coming out of the study is: *Does painting happen?*

Painting, however, is a process of both temporal *and* spatial emergence. In exploring how a painter manages to negotiate between the dual and incongruent realities of time and space, Gilles Deleuze’s notion of a *crystal image* provides a means to conceive how emergence, the becoming-image, is in both intensive and extensive movements. Bergson’s philosophy is brought together with Jan Verwoert’s conception for how painting is conducted as a process that has no preconceived outcome, but where criteria for decision-making emerge as painting proceeds. A logic of latency and retroaction in painting, developed by Verwoert as a rationale for such emergence, is investigated for its potential to evade teleology, retrospection, and representation—and so to mitigate the dilemma that opened this study. As an approach taken to painting, Deleuze’s notion of a process of clearing givens and creating compounds of sensation is explored in practice, where an image-of-emergence coming out of chromatic and achromatic sensation creates affects and percepts that inform decision-making about what action to take next in painting.

The exegesis, in three chapters, engages initially with an understanding of Bergson’s ontology of duration, image, and movement, as well as his method of intuition. A second chapter engages a critical account of late twentieth and early twenty-first century engagements with *avant-gardism* in light of a Bergsonian temporality. The third chapter engages my painting practice in detail in light of Bergson’s understanding of nuance and Jan Verwoert’s understanding of emergence. The thesis aims at finding a synthetic moment between nuance and emergence that seemed essential to my research-through-painting.

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The Exhibition

[The exhibition had no pre-scribing title.]

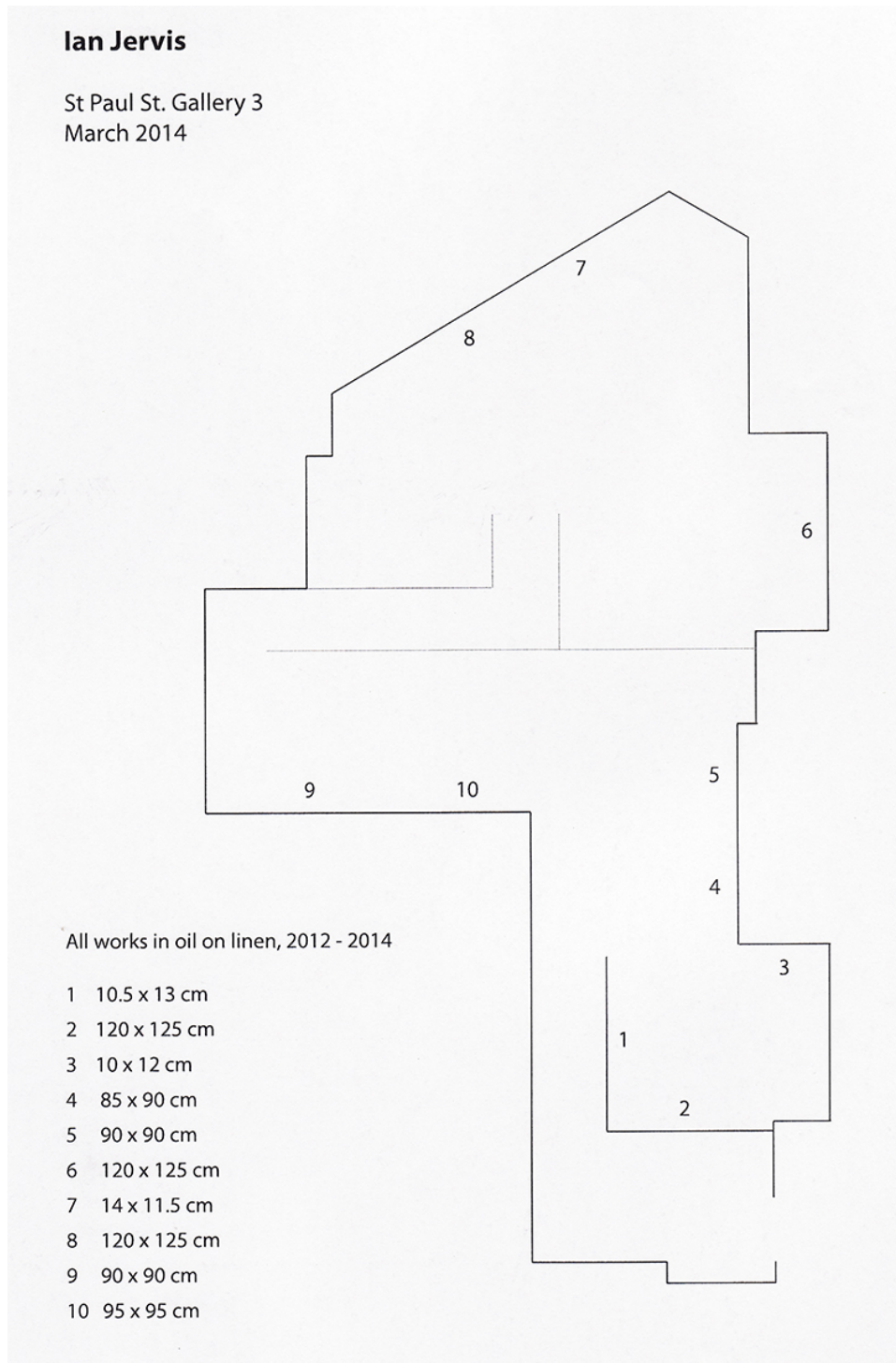


Figure 1 Map of exhibition layout.

The following (edited) text is taken from the exegesis, Chapter 3 *Of Painting* :

Criteria for selecting works for exhibition out of a larger body of work undertaken during candidature, and for curating the exhibition, emerged as currents of response started to resonate in and between certain works, and to emerge as rhythms of colours and forms, flows and deformations. These qualities, emerging now in an ecology of a gallery site, came out of processes of shifting and sorting, ruminating and editing, trying to encounter material nuances rather than objects in space. None of the works was selected to demonstrate a 'point', nor does the exhibition present a polemic, though inevitably a point-of-view emerges along with a formal logic of sense. What I saw emerging in the exhibition were sensations of aliveness—rather than a *demonstration* of painting as creative evolution. This is *élan* in the individual and collective resonances and rhythms of sensations coming from individual works, and in the interplay between these qualities within memory and perception, and in the duration of their play as it emerged in my changing psychic states. This was the preliminary and provisional work in setting up the exhibition. It involved looking, walking through the locale, encountering different viewpoints, experiencing changing light conditions, hearing sounds from outside, movement and change, and bringing all this into the internal crucible of emergence. In this, I was testing the exhibition's potentials.

The exhibition and works were not titled. Notwithstanding an *objectification* of painting entailed in empirical description, an exhibition map also gave the dimensions for each work, as well as indicating that each was in oil paint on linen, made within the past two years. During the process of painting, each work emerged in unaccountable interaction between sensation, memory, and matter, and they are considered to be still emerging in the perception of spectators, including my own perceptions. Reference in the work is therefore to unpredictable emergence, and to the continuance of that emergence.

This gallery site is a spatially eccentric and visually active volume that features differing floor levels, with pipes, ducts, nooks, ramps and railings, and recursions. This ecology of *utility* hosts a residuum of Modernism, where sections of plain white wall are installed with the po-faced rectitude of strict geometries. At their margins we find remnants of another past, where architectural features refer to the turn of the twentieth century, when a nascent Modernism had hardly touched what was then home for a medical practitioner and his family, a building designed for generous if conventional living. Despite the busyness of this site, much of it has suffused light, and there is an overall quietude inside that stands in contrast to the movement, change and life that surrounds it outside. There is, for example, a continual in-flux of light coming from reflections and the changing day, and there is a flux

of sound and vibration from passing vehicles, and the diurnal and seasonal flux of passing pedestrians and student volleyball players in the next-door hostel courtyard. The consequence is that experience of these paintings is permeated by all manner of sensations and memories, so that these paintings are not abstracted or divorced from life, but actively engaged in life. With their exuberant colours, they are no wallflowers.

On entering the gallery up a ramp, a long-reaching view opens to a pair of adjacent works at its end, one large and one small. There is an evident question or tension in the relationship between the two works—a difference in degree with respect to scale, or quantity of painting, quantity of paint—a difference one can easily convert to ‘amount’ of creativity or even *value* of a work in general. The clichéd response is for the small work to be seen as a supplement to the larger, or as subsidiary in the nature of a preparatory study for the larger. However, this scalar hierarchy is contraindicated by the allocation of an equivalent field to each of the works, as if the relationship was complementary—counter-actuality yet still within a play of difference-in-degree. It is the smaller work that forces a shift in viewing distance, and so induces interplay between the works that can only take place in memory, and so dissolves the hierarchy: opening onto, now, a nuanced affect of difference-in-kind. Each work differs in itself, from itself. This interplay between a micro and macro is repeated at the near end of the gallery. Otherwise, the paintings have been placed so that they act *individually* but interact collectively, and so that they exercise a spectator’s perception and memory. That is to say, we recognise how a plane of consistency constitutes the works in a plane of immanence, works that also are encounterable as a plane of relations and essentially, as works of art, as a plane of composition, or bloc of sensations. Necessarily, in writing on this exhibition, we shuttle between a logic-of-sense, constituted in concepts and functions, and a logic-of-sensations proper to the work of art.



Figure 2 Installation view; towards gallery entrance ramp.



Figure 3 Installation view; centre gallery return.



Figure 4 Installation view; gallery centre.



Figure 5 Installation view; upper level; detail of small work, (10x12cm)



Figure 6 Installation view; upper level.



Figure 7 Installation view; long view on entering gallery



Figure 8 Installation view; painting in lower level (125x120cm); detail of small work, (11x13cm)



Figure 9 Installation view; painting in lower level alcove, (125x120cm)



Figure 10 Installation view; painting in upper level (125x120cm) ; detail of small work, (11x13cm)



Figure 11 (125x120cm)

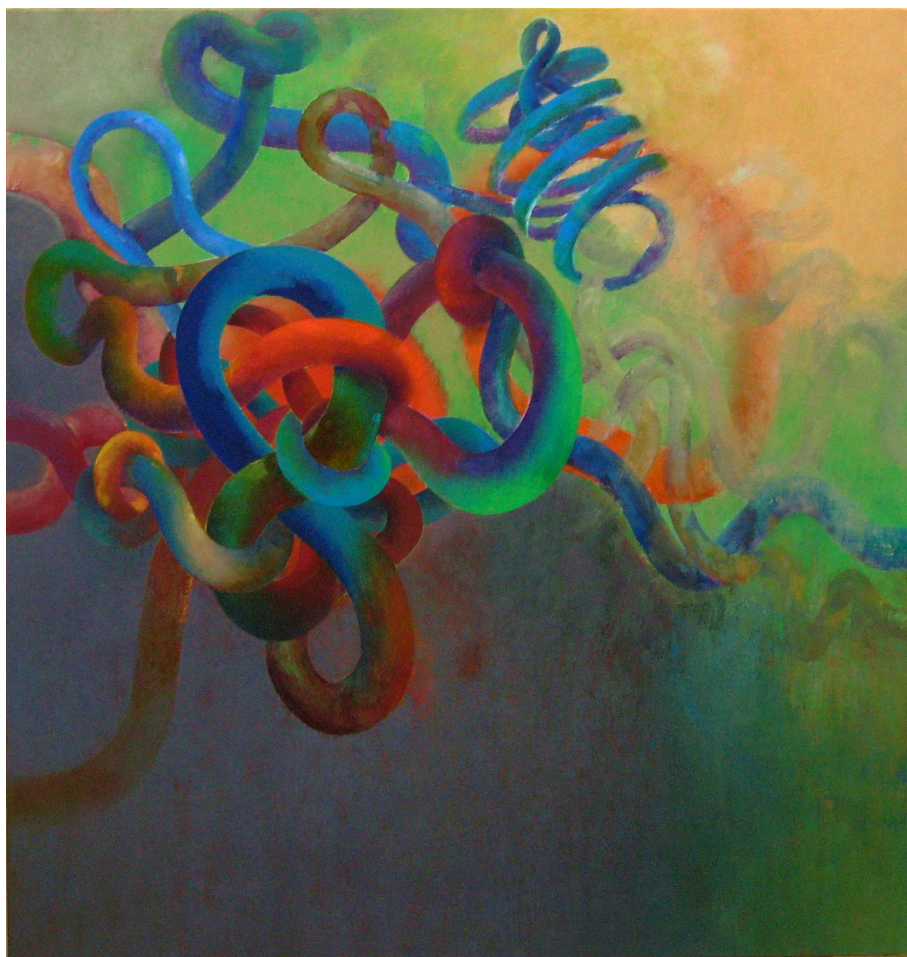


Figure 12 (125x120cm)



Figure 13 (125x120cm)



Figure 14 (85x90cm)



Figure 15 (90x90cm)



Figure 16 (90x90cm)



Figure 17 (95x95cm)



Figure 18 (10x12cm)



Figure 19 (10.5x13cm)



Figure 20 (11x13cm)