

Transitional Acts: Suspension and Materiality in the Event



# TRANSITIONAL ACTS: SUSPENSION AND MATERIALITY IN THE EVENT

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DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PHD).

## Attestation of Authorship

I declare that the following submission, to the best of my knowledge and understanding, contains only material that I have written, other than referenced material explicitly acknowledged from another source, and does not contain material that has, to a substantial extent, been submitted for another diploma or degree in a university of higher learning.

Jill McIntosh

25 July 2023

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Figure 2, Charcoal and chalk in the bath, Jill McIntosh, *Untitled*, 2021, photograph

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Attestation of Authorship, 3

Acknowledgements, 4

Table of Contents, 6

List of Figures, 7

Abstract, 12

Introduction, 14

The Exhibition – title – *Transitional Acts – Suspension and Materiality in the Event.*

## Chapter 1 —

Suspended Within the Event, 21

1.1 Water and Charcoal, 21

1.2 Walking in a Field, 25

1.3 In-Act, 34

1.4 Enfolding, 38

1.5 Fluid Suspension, 43

## Chapter 2 —

Undertakings, 50

2.1 Metaphor as a Strategy, 50

2.2 The Work of Art, 55

2.3 Seriality and Shifting, 58

2.4 The Shudder of the New, 64

2.5 Binding, 66

## Chapter 3 —

Dark, Fluid, Light, 69

3.1 Affective Resonances, 69

3.2 Semblances of Water, 71

3.3 A Bath and A Pond, 79

3.4 Suspension in Perception, 86

3.5 The Minor, 90

3.6 Dark Affects, 94

3.7 Hesitation, 104

## Chapter 4 —

What Matters?, 108

4.1 Permeation, 108

4.2 Unbounded Domain, 114

4.3 The Material Turn, 118

4.4 Dispersal, 120

4.5 Materiality and Suspension, 132

Conclusion, 136

Bibliography, 147

# FIGURES

- 1 Jill McIntosh, *Untitled*, 2021, studio photograph, cover
- 2 Jill McIntosh, *Untitled*, 2021, studio photograph, page 5
- 3 Jill McIntosh, *Bath*, 2021, studio photograph, page 13
- 4 Jill McIntosh, *Dust*, 2021, charcoal, water on paper, 1040 x 1520mm, page 22
- 5 Jill McIntosh, *As Loam III*, 2021, charcoal on water, 1040 x 1520mm, page 23
- 6 Francis Alÿs, *Pebble Walk*, 1999, photograph, Tate Modern, London, overall display dimensions variable, page 26
- 7 Jill McIntosh, *Fluid Suspension*, 2020, exhibition, Gallery 3, Auckland University of Technology, page 27
- 8 Jill McIntosh, *Fielding*, 2022, exhibition, Gallery 3, Auckland University of Technology, page 29
- 9 Tania Kovats, *Sea Mark*, 2012-14, glazed ceramic tiles on board, 1820 x 2400mm, page 31
- 10 Jill McIntosh, *Field III*, 2020, chalk pastel and acrylic paint on canvas, 1000 x 1000mm, page 33
- 11 Jill McIntosh, *Dark Matters*, 2021, charcoal dust on paper, 1040 x 1520mm, page 36
- 12 Jill McIntosh, *Suspension III*, 2020, pastel and acrylic paint on paper, 1520 x 1040mm, page 39
- 13 Jill McIntosh, *Fractals and Slippage I*, 2022, charcoal, on paper, 1200 x 1000mm, page 42
- 14 Jill McIntosh, *Suspension II*, 2020, chalk pastel, acrylic paint on paper, 1040 x 1520mm, page 45
- 15 Jill McIntosh, *Field II*, 2021, chalk pastel and acrylic paint on canvas, 1000 x 1000mm, page 46
- 16 Jill McIntosh, *Matter – I*, 2021, charcoal on paper, 1040 x 1520mm, page 48
- 17 Jill McIntosh, *Outside In Me*, 2022, pond with plants, 2000 x 1000mm, page 53
- 18 Jill McIntosh, *Outside In Me*, 2022, photos of installation, page 53
- 19 Jill McIntosh, *Fields of Matter*, 2022, charcoal on paper, 1200 x 900mm, exhibited in *Fielding*, page 60
- 20 Jill McIntosh, *Untitled*, 2021, charcoal on paper, 1000 x 3000mm, page 61
- 21 Studies for *Transitional Acts* exhibition in the studio, page 63

- 22 Jill McIntosh, Drying the charcoal dust prints in the studio for the exhibition *Fielding*, March 2022, page 66
- 23 Jill McIntosh, Assemblage of charcoal samples for RM Gallery installation, 2020, 1500 x 1500mm, page 67
- 24 Jill McIntosh, *Suspension I*, 2020, pastel chalk and acrylic paint on paper, 1520 x 1040mm, page 66
- 25 Marie Shannon, *Upstairs Window*, 2021, archival digital inkjet print, 577 x 760mm, page 73
- 26 Marie Shannon, *Sleeping Near the River*, 2021, digital video still, page 74
- 27 Roni Horn, *Still Water (the River Thames for Example)*, 1999, photo lithograph on paper, 700 x 1055mm, page 75
- 28 Roni Horn, *Vathasafn/Library of Water*, 2007, photograph of installation, dimensions variable, page 76
- 29 Olafur Eliasson, *Beauty*, 1993, installation, spotlight, water, nozzles, wood, hose, pump, dimensions variable, page 78
- 30 Jill McIntosh, *Fields of Matter*, 2022, installation, page 80
- 31 Jill McIntosh, *Thought in Act*, 2022, charcoal and dust on water, (detail), pond, 2600 x 1250mm, page 81
- 32 Jill McIntosh, *Fielding: Active in Variation*, 2022, yellow gel on window, photograph from exhibition, page 81
- 33 Jill McIntosh, *Fielding: Thought In Act*, 2022, dust, debris and moth on water, (detail), photograph from exhibition, page 82
- 34 Jill McIntosh, *Untitled*, 2006, spray paint on water, 3000 x 3000mm, page 82
- 35 Jill McIntosh, *Untitled*, 2020, charcoal, graphite, debris in stainless steel tank, 2600 x 1250mm, page 83
- 36 Jill McIntosh, bath tub experiments in the studio, 2021, page 83
- 37 Jill McIntosh, *Light on Water*, 2022, flexi glass, water and plant, 500 x 600mm, page 84
- 38 Jill McIntosh, *Light/Water/Life*, 2022, installation pond, 1500 x 2500mm, page 84
- 39 Mariele Neudecker, *400 Thousand Generations*, 2009, multimedia installation, page 85

- 40 Mariele Neudecker, *And Then The World Changed Colour; Breathing Yellow*, 2019, mixed media: glass, water, salt, plastic, 636 x 566 x 1685mm (plus plinth), page 85
- 41 Lydia Ourahmane, *Barzakh (Limbo)*, 2021, views of installation at SMAK, page 91
- 42 Oscar Muñoz, *Narciso en proceso*, 1996/2007/2012, coal dust over water, paper and plexiglass – 9 pieces, 500 x 500 x 100mm, page 90
- 43 Richard Serra, *Ramble Drawings*, 2016, dimensions variable, page 98
- 44 Colin McCahon, *Black landscape*, 1965, paint, board and mixed media, 600 x 600mm, page 99
- 45 Ralph Hotere, *Drawing (Ko Wai Koe?)*, 1977, lacquer, ink and pencil on paper, 720 x 520mm, page 100
- 46 Ralph Hotere, *Black Phoenix*, 1984–88, Port Chalmers, charred wood, installation, dimensions variable, page 102
- 47 Jill McIntosh, *Uncertain Spaces*, 2022, installation, pond measures 1000 x 800mm, page 104
- 48 Jill McIntosh, *Uncertain Spaces Video Loop*, 2022, page 104
- 49 Jill McIntosh, *Black Field*, 2020, acrylic paint and charcoal, 1000 x 5000mm, page 106
- 50 Jill McIntosh, *Black Field II*, 2020, acrylic paint and charcoal, (detail), 1000 x 5000mm, page 107
- 51 Agnieszka Kurant, *Chemical Garden*, 2021, sodium silicate, copper, nickel, cobalt, chromium, manganese, iron and zinc salts, (detail), dimensions variable, page 110
- 52 Tania Kovats, *Evaporation (Blue) 23*, 2014, ink and salt, sea water evaporated salt crystals, framed 2100 x 1700mm, page 112
- 53 Jill McIntosh, *Untitled*, 2019, pastel chalk, charcoal and acrylic paint on paper, page 113
- 54 Antony Gormley, *Host*, 2016–2019, installation, dimensions variable, page 115
- 55 Jill McIntosh, *Matter as Loam II*, 2022, charcoal paint and water on paper, 1040 x 1520mm, page 117
- 56 *Les Immateriaux*, 1985, Paris, curated by French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard and Thierry Chaput at the Pompidou Centre, page 119

- 57 Jill McIntosh, *Outside in Me*, 2022, aluminium ponds, seaweed and plants in water, page 121
- 58 Tue Greenfort, *Tamoya Ohboya*, 2017, stainless steel table, Aurelia aurita, aquarium technique, single-channel video projection of Chironex, perspex panel, page 123
- 59 Jill McIntosh, *Fielding*, 2022, close up of charcoal dust that has drifted, photograph from exhibition, page 124
- 60 Nina Canell, *Blue (diffused)*, 2014, medium unknown, page 125
- 61 Jill McIntosh, *In Search of Dust Motes*, 2023, photographs, dimensions variable, page 126
- 62 Jill McIntosh, *Fielding*, 2022, dust falling and drifting, photograph from exhibition, page 127
- 63 Wireframe scans of charcoal and 3D prints, by Jill McIntosh, Dr Carl Douglas, and Matthew Davis, 2022. Photos by author; digital images by Dr Carl Douglas, wireframe prints 420 x 594mm, 3D prints 280 x 270mm, page 128
- 64 Richard Long, *White Water Line*, 1990, installation, Tate Gallery, London, dimensions variable, page 130
- 65 Jill McIntosh, *Untitled*, 2020, close up photograph of floating material in exhibition, page 131
- 66 Jill McIntosh, *Field I*, 2021, chalk pastel and acrylic paint on canvas, 1000 x 1000 mm, page 135
- 67 Jill McIntosh, *Transitional Acts*, 2023, installation, Ngutu Kākā Gallery 2, Auckland University of Technology, Te Wānanga Aronui O Tāmaki Makau Rau. Photo V. Baldwin. Reproduced with permission, page 143
- 68 Jill McIntosh, *Somatic Inference*, 2023, stainless steel, water, graphite, charcoal, chalk dust, pump, dimensions variable. Photo V. Baldwin. Reproduced with permission, page 143
- 69 Jill McIntosh, *Relational Flow*, 2023, vinyl on glass, 3700 x 1500mm. Photo V. Baldwin. Reproduced with permission, page 144
- 70 Jill McIntosh, *Black Rift*, 2023, intaglio print, Charbonnel ink on Lanaquarelle paper, 1060 x 750mm. Photo V. Baldwin. Reproduced with permission, page 145
- 71 Jill McIntosh, *Particulate Matter*, 2023, plastic filament 3-D print, 280 x 270mm. Photo V. Baldwin. Reproduced with permission, page 145

- 72 Jill McIntosh, *Chalk Suspension*, 2023, pastel chalk and acrylic paint on canvas, 1200 x 1820mm. Photo V. Baldwin. Reproduced with permission, page 145
- 73 Jill McIntosh, *Shifting Field*, 2023, charcoal on Lanaquarelle paper, 3600 x 1600mm. Photo V. Baldwin. Reproduced with permission, page 146

# ABSTRACT

The making of a new artwork emerges through potential and process within the ‘event.’ It results from a trajectory that may be interrupted or delayed, but continues moving and varying perpetually.<sup>1</sup> Particulate and fluid matter move continuously and permeate our world. Rain falls and flows into streams; streams become rivers and run into the sea; seawater evaporates and descends again as rain. This rain nourishes trees that grow in the earth and eventually decay, feeding new seedlings. Matter has what Jane Bennett calls “vitality,”—an energy that ruptures from an event opening new possibilities and new relationships.<sup>2</sup> Vitality and agency in material allow for complex and fluid changes in art making and this energy reveals potential, affect relations, sensation, and duration. Art is both time as it moves and time as it is held.

In working with particulate matter and fluidity in this project—specifically carbon and water—I consider how continual emergent events are experienced through material change and how the suspension of material through duration and inevitability unfolds with shuddering newness. At the time of making, there is a hiatus or moment of uncertainty that is experienced as suspended movement. I conceptually map this experience onto the suspension of particles floating in a medium. As the artist immersed in the perception of this suspension, my thoughts and sensations are left hanging, unable to find stable ground, and are led by the quality of darkness and intensity of affect. By lingering in this indeterminate material state, I evoke time, change and the transience of our world. This practice-led research centres on the experiential, conceptual, and material state of suspension—on the floating, transferring, and binding of saturated material.

This project finds simultaneous occurrences that are significant in relation to the practices of artists Tania Kovats, Roni Horn, Nina Canell, and Tue Greenfort in their use of elemental materials—particulate matter, water, light, and air—and their exploration of the relational interconnection with our threatened planet. Enfolded in the research are the artworks of Marie Shannon, Ralph Hotere, Lydia Ourahmane, Agnieszka Kurant and Francis Alÿs who reflect on memory,

<sup>1</sup> Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 6.

<sup>2</sup> Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), viii.

intimacy, darkness, space and continuous events in the temporality of our lives. This research is non-linear where multiple logics of reasoning and reality exist simultaneously. My methodologies of shifting and suspension respond to sensation, events, and semblance. They are situated within post-structural and post-qualitative methodologies, by exploring the complexities and the opening of questions in approaching art practice.



Figure 3, Jill McIntosh, *Bath*, 2021, photograph.

# INTRODUCTION

*Transitional Acts* contributes to the greater discourse on materiality and fluidity in hybrid and relational art practices and examines how suspended particulate matter illuminates affective states within the artist and the encounter. My aim is to extend existing research into art making events where the agency of matter, semblances and affective resonances arise by explicating particulate matter as minute, interconnected and suspended. This is within a condition of flux—through liquids, solids, gases or the performative actions in art making. These particles can be flecks, marks, dots, stains, smudges, atoms, or traces of residue. Matter is inescapably relational, often light and mobile, and can invisibly occupy and negotiate spaces. In this creative practice research inquiry, the condition of suspended particles in a fluid or medium, is an analogy for the flux of our unsettled world.

In this exegesis, I have interpreted these conditions of flux and suspension through the concept of an *event* as used by Brian Massumi and Erin Manning.<sup>3</sup> Massumi and Manning describe an event as not just an occurrence in time but a situation where interrelations and time is manifested, and I understand my artmaking as an event. In the studio, I apply particulate pigments: wiping these back, transferring some of the pigment to another substrate, disseminating particles in binders or on fluid. I build up a surface and abrade it, while charcoal, paint, dust, and debris crumble and are swept from the studio floor. This particulate matter merges my practice with daily life, combining and permeating my environment and my own body. Small particles that exist in change and indefinite duration are full of possibilities. They catch in the wind, return from dusty corners, rising, gathering and dispersing through casual events intended and unintended.

This project also draws on new materialist theory and on processual philosophy.<sup>4</sup> British art writer Petra Lange-Berndt suggests that “materiality is one of the

3 Key references are Massumi and Manning. The term ‘event’ originates in the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead and the concept of ‘nature’ with William James. These terms have been critical in the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari.

4 Key theorists are the process philosophers –as well as New Materialist philosophers Jane Bennett, Karen Barad, Rosi Braidotti, Astrida Neimanus, Stacy Alaimo and Alan Marder.

most contested concepts in contemporary art and is often sidelined in critical academic writing.”<sup>5</sup> Materials change, are transformed, and are full of potential and possibilities, including the possibility of contention. Lange-Berndt suggests that “it is only now that the amount of research which still needs to be done in transcultural investigations of the field is becoming apparent.”<sup>6</sup> Philosopher Judith Butler proposes that we “return to the notion of matter, not as site or surface, but as a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity and surface we call matter.”<sup>7</sup> The material exploration of fluidity, suspension, sensation and perception reveals a hiatus and an ecology of interaction between the artist, process, artworks and environment. I draw parallels between my artistic media, and the Anthropocene world of extreme weather patterns, floods, dust storms, forest fires, and microplastics.

Charcoal is of particular interest to me in my art practice. Charcoal is carbon, which like water (a compound), is one of the most widely found substances on earth. Charcoal is a by-product of waste from our timber industry, naturally occurring or from human activity. Within the cyclical movement of matter, it manifests itself as a solid, a powdered dust, as liquid paint, charring on timber, burnt remains, soap, and smoke.<sup>8</sup> The transformation of charcoal dust, reflects our world of constant change, shown through conduction and evaporation, with qualities of rhythm, motion, waves and shifts. Our bodies are approximately 99.1 percent “carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, calcium and phosphorus.”<sup>9</sup> The climate crisis has highlighted for us how we are pervaded by the material conditions of this world and are changing ourselves, as we change it. We live

5 Petra Lange-Berndt, ed., *Materiality: Documents of Contemporary Art* (London: Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, 2015),12.

6 Petra Lange-Berndt, ed., *Materiality: Documents of Contemporary Art* (London: Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, 2015),14.

7 Judith Butler, “Bodies that Matter,” in *Materiality*, Documents of Contemporary Art, ed. Petra Lange-Berndt (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2015), 120.

8 “Charcoal is traditionally made from thin peeled willow twigs which are heated without the presence of oxygen. This produces black crumbly sticks, which leave microscopic particles in the paper or textile fibres, producing a line that is dense at the pressure point, but more diffuse or powdery at the edges. The overall result is less precise than hard graphite pencils, so charcoal is suited to freer studies. Charcoal smudges easily and is often protected with a sprayed fixative.” From the Tate Art terms. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/c/charcoal#>

9 Bill Bryson, *The Body: A Guide for Occupants* (London: Penguin Random House, 2019), 2.

in and through materials, suspended amongst them. Indeterminacy can be a suspension—not knowing which way is forward or up, or where the possibilities and potential lie. This project examines practices that intersect with our social, geo-cultural and political arenas. Events and artworks will be unpacked alongside social and environmental occurrences.

In considering how artmaking reflects ongoing concerns within the fields of environmental, social and diversity politics, I look to the writings by philosophers Karen Barad and Rosi Braidotti who have written comprehensively on views of identity, gender, and humanity investigating affective and fluid intersections between materials, methods, environment, politics, philosophy and sensation. Butler suggests that “the classical association of femininity with materiality can be traced to a set of etymologies which link matter with mater.”<sup>10</sup> In 2023 I attended a masterclass with Braidotti who discussed posthuman philosophy as a move away from perspectives of masculine anthropocentrism. Approaches have arisen that place non-human existence—planet, material and all living beings—as equal in significance, no longer holding humans at the centre. This material turn has opened new social, political, cultural; and environmental perspectives. By viewing all existence and all matter as having agency, a wider consciousness arises. Materialist philosopher Jane Bennett has reintroduced theories around vitalism: “agentic contributions of nonhuman forces”<sup>11</sup> into critical discourse in her book *Vibrant Matter*. She proposes a *new materialism*, where the human is decentred from the narrative of the world, and human and nonhuman agents are acknowledged as existing on the same continuum.<sup>12</sup>

This creative practice thesis is an adventure into, rather than a pathway through, these areas of thought. It does not aim to establish a theoretical framework or demonstrate the validity of philosophical ideas. Instead, it assembles ideas, reflections, and processes as active participants in the experience of art-making and artistic encounters. This means that I focus on interconnections,

<sup>10</sup> Butler, “Bodies that Matter,” in *Materiality*, 121.

<sup>11</sup> Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, xvi.

<sup>12</sup> These ideas have been explored by a number of philosophers and writers, including American postmodern literary critic N. Katherine Hayles, “The Cognitive Nonconscious and the New Materialism,” in *The New Politics of Materialism*, ed. Sarah Ellenzeig and John Zammito (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017).

overlaps, delays and simultaneous perspectives rather than producing a single analysis or reading of process philosophy or new materialist thought. The associated discussion expands on existing understandings of lively matter, agency, environment, sensation and processes in art making. I will navigate an interdisciplinary approach to the work of other artists who share aspects of my fascination with the materiality of suspension, particulate matter, and fluid media; considering painters, printmakers, installation artists and works of environmental and conceptual art.

This research invites attention to the agency of particulate matter as inducing hesitation within the field of time and space. Hesitation can be conceived as a suspension, as it is the hesitation to act or to pause, the feeling of uncertainty in an indefinite duration. This project investigates pausing and hiatus, the continual reimagining of the unlimited, the unbounded, the prior and the subsequent suspending of particulate matter, through binding and floating. Hesitancy implicates conditions of indecision, inaction, suspension of the facts and the delaying of intentions, interruptions and breathing spaces. As in all events, the hiatus can be related to a course of action and an artist's intentions in relation to indecision, relationships and actions. I have particularly in mind the reactionary inaction over rising sea levels and the suffocating contamination of our air. Indecision is reflected in the particulate matter that circulates in our lived environment, and there is flux in the shifting of particulate matter and in this perpetual change. Working with fine particles and fluids requires being put on hold, to be held in the moment and move with the fluctuations of the day.<sup>13</sup> An event exists in duration where an act has no definable value, and a condition cannot be detected or found to have a cause. This is the suspension of agency, action, or thought which can be imagined in terms of uncertainty and indeterminacy.

Karen Barad, in her book *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, suggests that matter “does not refer to an

13 Brownian motion, is the erratic random movement of microscopic particles in a fluid, from the Oxford Dictionary.

inherent, fixed property of abstract, independently existing objects.”<sup>14</sup> She writes that matter is formed by many molecules and atoms in a magnetic relationship. This relationship forms an active entity. It exists because of its use and function alongside other material and can transition to other forms. This new materialist view has matter always in the process of becoming. Barad says “matter is a dynamic intra-active becoming that is implicated and enfolded in its iterative becoming.”<sup>15</sup> This is emergent lively material that exists in fluid suspension. Barad and Braidotti, both attend to the overall encompassing conceptions of the universe alongside understandings of the smallest atom in physics, environmental and social commentary, and feminist theory. A similar conjunction is found in the work of Astrida Neimanus who repositions our lives and humankind as fluid, having a fishy heritage and part of the complexity of an oceanic ecosystem. Jane Bennett and Michael Marder give accounts of dust and the liveliness of matter that have cast a new light on the particular materials of my practice.<sup>16</sup> Along with Manning and Massumi, these writers have opened spaces for the water, material, and the weather to pass through me. Each offers insights into the suspension of particulate matter, the suspended nature of artmaking, the suspended conditions of perception, sensation, and thought, and the suspended condition of the world.

Artmaking is action. This is action in thought, in the making process and in affective relations. I am stepping into the new with my approach to this making. I am setting up the conditions for the event, but I cannot entirely control the outcome. This is the thrill of the new, discovery where the physicality of the material has its own agency, beyond my intentions. My physical exploration of the properties of particulate matter in art processes drives my search for a greater understanding of our world and the inherent multiplicity of our simultaneous existence. I feel the urge to act. The motivation to ‘make’ is a search, though my question is open. The question is—what will happen? This exegesis considers these material imaginings through the definitions of our human and non-human world. It invites a re-evaluation of human relations within our material world as hybrid, porous, shifting, moving boundaries and remapped as an always and

14 Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 151.

15 Ibid.

16 Michael Marder, *Dust* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016); Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*.

already becoming of subjectivities. Questions arise in this project, from my practice and from the current dialogue on our threatened planet, as to how we are repositioning ourselves and redefining our existence as human amid this unstable, lively particulate matter. My work is thus a consideration of the posthuman condition, questions of our humanity, and humankind's vision of its place in this world.

Chapter One introduces the main themes of my practice: the event, field, suspension, fluidity, and semblance. It includes a discussion of a series of my own charcoal prints, chalk field paintings and drawings, and an installation for the collaborative exhibition *Fielding* (St Paul Street Gallery 3, March 2022). I consider these alongside work by artists Tania Kovats and Francis Alÿs. I discuss the spatio-temporality of particulate matter and how, in my art practice—fluid solutions, dusty material and landscapes can become suspensions, caught between moving forward and moving back. In reference to Manning and Massumi's *Thought in the Act: Passages in the Ecology of Experience*, as well as writings by Bennett and Neimanus, I will discuss artmaking within our socio-political fields, the affective qualities that emerge from these fields and how movement is continuous.<sup>17</sup>

In the second chapter, I will describe the 'shifting methodologies' of this inquiry. This is where I problematise the shifting of materials and variation within working in a series. Here I will discuss how I explore metaphor (and the flowing together of literal and metaphorical sense) in my practice. This chapter will discuss seriality in making, as referred to by Brian Massumi, who draws on Gilles Deleuze and the process philosophers. In exploring the concept of suspension, I will discuss the 'binding' of pigment in a medium and investigate the implications of the emergence of new work.

Chapter Three goes on to discuss the affective qualities of darkness and water, with themes of the uncanny and uncertainty, and semblance as a suspension. It investigates doubt and dark moments, indeterminacy, unstable motion and the darkness of carbon. I look at artwork by Ralph Hotere, which I frame in terms of

<sup>17</sup> Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, and Astrida Neimanus, *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).

Moana Nepia's research on the Māori concept of *te kore*. This chapter investigates the work of artists Marie Shannon, Roni Horn and Olafur Eliasson in relation to poststructuralist thought.

In Chapter Four I discuss new materialism directly. This body of thought enables me to present multiple views and the simultaneous fields in a coursing world of process and particulate matter. In considering the presence of particulate matter, this project contributes to the area of research through my experiences as an artist and through the actions of my art making. This chapter investigates new materialist theory and artworks by Nina Canell, Agnieszka Kurant, Tue Greenfort, and Richard Long, among others.

Throughout this thesis, as a reflective pause, I intersperse my discussions with extracts from the poetry of the late American Lebanese poet, painter and art philosopher, Etel Adnan. Adnan's poetry and prose explore similar themes to those in my practice around water, fog, suspension, dark places and the temporality of life. These serve to remind the observer and myself, that art making is not a reflection of the world but embedded in our everyday as in-act and event, in the field around the artist, through and within the artist as she makes.

# CHAPTER 1

## — SUSPENDED

### WITHIN THE

### EVENT

Matter calls for matter, unfolding on hypnotic territory, oozing from the belly though remaining indifferent. It keeps us outside its absolute privacy. So where do we stand? We can drown in it, be dissolved, forgotten.<sup>18</sup>

#### 1.1 Water and Charcoal

In my studio suspended particles of charcoal float on water, forming a skin in a light absorbent and light reflective pattern, (figure 4). The saturation of this matter across the water is uneven so I pierce the skin with a paintbrush and shift the charcoal dust to distribute it. Clumps sink or rise to form a greasy residue slick from the cellulose component of the charred wood. This waterborne matter moves as the cellulose reacts and sun warms the room. As it resettles, I lift a sheet of paper and lay it over the water. My hand strokes the back of the paper to remove any trapped air. Taking in the surrounding conditions, I lift the paper to the vertical plane in a swift action to limit the absorption of water. Small bubbles have repelled the dust and have protected areas of the paper while heavier clumps drop off to reveal the white paper beneath. Most of the charcoal remains on the paper's surface, dragged by the friction of the pull off the water. I hang the print to dry.

In describing my art making processes, I differentiate between artworks that prioritise human intentions and inter-relations (as socio-political constructs) and those that emerge from an encounter with more-than-human media. By distributing matter on bathwater, I make art as a responsive performance within a contingent event. This approach arises out of my experience with certain materials, my past work with baths of acid and etching—working with ink and

18 Etel Adnan, *Sea and Fog*, 8. (New York: Nightboat Books, 2012), Etel Adnan (1925-2021) was a Lebanese-American poet and painter who taught philosophy of art at Dominican University of California and throughout the USA.



Figure 4, Jill McIntosh, *Dust*, 2021, charcoal, water on paper, 1040 x1520mm.

paint as pigments bound in a medium. However, the act of moving and collecting charcoal dust on water is an entirely new occurrence, full of possibilities.

My body is ineluctably present when I work. This charcoal print (figure 4) was made in a domestic bath, recalling the proportions of a human body. These are familiar proportions to the spatial and bodily experience of the artist and viewer. As I stand over the bath my body is vertical. As I raise the work, it becomes a mirror to my body and gravity pulls the fluid down the paper. Theorist Rosalind Krauss describes this experience as the gestalt “made, then, in the self-image of the human subject—subject to gravitation, vertically sighted, dextrally favoured—perceptual space is in this sense a projection of that subject, returning the perceiver’s own potential image as though in an invisible mirror.”<sup>19</sup>

Charcoal dust is burnt wood which adheres to the substrate as the water dries off and is fixed with an airborne varnish. These works on paper have a barren quality once lifted from the water and dried. They become dusty, arid, and desolate. They

19 Rosalind Krauss discusses the gestalt in Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind E. Krauss, *Formless; A User's Guide* (New York: Zone Books, 1997), 89.



Figure 5, Jill McIntosh, *As Loam III*, 2021, charcoal on water, 1040 x1520 mm.

are sandstorms in a desert. They speak entirely of the experience of materials within the event. Once freely circulating in the air, the dust is now bound to a substrate, in different densities, to be encountered as a visual image. They are in raw adhesion to paper and hang in a suspension. Lifted from the horizontal, they cling to the substrate, unsettled in their becoming, as the result of the change.

The production of these bath prints, in relation to Massumi's ideas, can be understood as an entangled event, a matter of,

interference, or resonance. It's not really discrete bodies and paths interacting. It's fields. Gravity is a field — a field of potential attraction, collision, orbit, of potential centripetal and centrifugal movements. All these potentials form such complex interference patterns when three fields overlap that a measure of indeterminacy creeps in.<sup>20</sup>

These works on paper are stains of moving evolutionary events, residual traces of non-human interactions. They resemble (and are fields of) earthly matter.

<sup>20</sup> Massumi discusses motion in an interview with Mary Zournazi, recorded in 2001. Brian Massumi, "Navigating Movements," in *Politics of Affect* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), 17.

The work is a field (see figure 5) but it also takes place in a larger field. This is the matter of the universe, the matter that we experience as a living material, and where we will reside—dust to dust.

The bath prints are visually reminiscent of maps that could be submerged atolls. In another imagining, they could be a glimpse of a body soaking in the bath—disclosed. These are thoughts that drift and where the boundaries of the charcoal dust skin are opened. They become entangled in suggestive and affective resonances of both fluidity and materiality that have occurred in the event. They suggest evolving geology and are made of carbon and water. Will the dust dissolve into the water or will the dust stains rub off? Is this a site of disruption and have we witnessed a memorable event? Is this a record or a trace of an act?

As I work, I move forward intentionally but I am also pulled. The event of the bath print is a fragile future full of traces of the yet-to-be-known and anticipations of what might occur. As the weather and surface water temperature participate in this performance and affect the quality of the charcoal lifted onto the paper, I (with my intentions, and purposeful movements) am only one of the participants here. I may screen the direct sun, warm the water to release the cellulose and move the assembling suspended dust. I may choose the paper, its size, and the grind of the dust, but where the charcoal will adhere and how it will hold to the surface of the paper is contingent on matters out of my control.

Matter is consistently fed into the continuum of the world. Water evaporates into the air to be blown by the wind, warmed and clustered into the rain, to fall and be channeled into rivers and washed to the sea, to evaporate again. Absorbed in these precarious actions, I do not know where my hand will lead. This is beyond thought, an unknown space, that allows actions to unfold. These actions are a response to the rhythms and forces of life that reach far beyond the moment of the event. In the studio I have set up a relational field of materials, water and air, but I do not know exactly how the image will be revealed. This emergence is thrilling, and I experience it as something quite novel with each pull. It is not my intention to reproduce and represent a pre-existing vision in my mind but to

reveal an active field. I throw myself into the unknown by using risk as a tool of chance. The works on paper are revealed in the aleatory making process. These actions are immersive fields, new spaces to inhabit that call for a rethinking of interdependence and fusion.

Abrupt falls, a fall. Gravity is pulling us in. Light runs — like mother to child — to embrace this moving surface caught in its sameness. Water and light create that shimmering which takes our breath away.<sup>21</sup>

## 1.2 Walking in a Field

A field is an open area where matters of interest can be observed within a context. It can be an area of land that is planted with crops or pasture, a piece of land used for a game of sport, or a large area of land or water completely covered in grass or snow.<sup>22</sup> It is a space where elements exist through their interconnected relations, not defined by size, but by the expansion of related extensions.

For Massumi a field is a vibrant association of occurrences which allows for new events while remaining itself a participant, through duration within the continuum. He suggests that “the whole field effects are a dynamic expression of each contributory element’s remote participation in every other’s activity. The singularity of each element’s activity is fused in the general field activity whose tension potentiates the event.”<sup>23</sup> Massumi and Manning point out that a field “does not begin with a form. It does not begin with a figure-background configuration. It begins with a populated field of alterant-altering interfusion. Agencies-patiences abound for the apportioning.”<sup>24</sup>

21 Adnan, *Sea and Fog*, 27.

22 *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed., s.v. “field.”

23 Brian Massumi, *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011),” 22.

24 Erin Manning and Brian Massumi, *Thought in the Act: Passages in the Ecology of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 25



A walk from the North west end of Hyde Park to the south east end of Kensington Gardens, from 12:25 PM till 1:35 PM concluded with 7 stones in my right shoe and 3 stones in my left shoe.

Figure 6, Francis Alÿs, *Pebble Walk*, 1999, photograph, Tate Modern, London, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/alys-pebble-walk-t12193>. Photo © Francis Alÿs. Reproduced with permission from the Tate Gallery.

This field of relations can be literally a paddock or a park. In his 1999 work *Pebble Walk*, British artist Francis Alÿs documented himself walking across Hyde Park, London. Alÿs recorded his unremarkable walking experience by taking an aerial photograph from a plane or drone, which included red buses and a city skyline, as found in a typical London postcard. As he walked over the field, he found that he had stones in his shoes—and recounting this occurrence placed the listener inside his experience. According to the art critic Gabriel Coxhead, Alÿs’s postcard was “a deprecatingly inadequate summary of those vast, flat spaces but an accurate representation of the way events and places are humanly experienced or remembered.”<sup>25</sup>

Alÿs has repeated this postcard-making activity in several locations around the world, sometimes in person, and sometimes through other participants. He recorded the photographic field, commonly traced as memory and nostalgia, and engaged in the field of mass image reproduction, where images are transferred through the internet and posted around our world. This one image refers to a

25 Gabriel Coxhead, “Ephemeral Images in the City,” *Financial Times*, October 4, 2005, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/d40785aa-34co-11da-9e12-00000e2511c8.html>. For more on *Pebble Walk*, see Phoebe Roberts, “Francis Alÿs: *Pebble Walk* 1999,” Tate Gallery, March 2016, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/alys-pebble-walk-t12193>.



Figure 7, Jill McIntosh, *Fluid Suspension*, 2020, exhibition, Gallery 3, Auckland University of Technology.

multiplicity of events overlaid with time and sensation within the field of the art project. As we move around our world, we have a multiplicity of relational fields that include the parks we walk in, the field of experience we live in and the image field found in our imaginations and in semblance.

We live with simultaneous information at every waking moment. We arise to feel our bedsheets, to hear the call of birds or the stirring of the city, to be cognisant of the tasks of the day ahead, and to read the news of the world as it sits on our screens. We move in our immediate world but also in the greater world, perpetually. For Alÿs, the physical discomfort of the stones, the vast field of the grass and weather, and the nod to memory, memorabilia, and time passing reflect this multiplicity of awareness we all live with. We inhabit these entangled relational fields inside this awareness.

My practice is also a field. My experiences in the studio are a field formed by relationships within the processes. The bath-prints are a field of charcoal dust and dry paper; these in turn become part of a greater field when placed in combination as elements in an exhibition. In the gallery space they form new vibrant associations as they interact with the moving conditions in the space. In the exhibition *Fluid Suspension* (St Paul Street Gallery 3, November 2020), I activated a field of sensations and events that drew the relationships between the various collective occurrences—weather, temperature, dusty matter, axes, fluidity,

and suspension all accumulating in the scene of the encounter of the relational field (figure 7). The work consisted of three large chalk paintings, which included a mixture of acrylic paint and chalk pastel alongside a stainless-steel tank.

The sun moved across the windows, illuminating parts of the water in the tank causing light to be reflected and capturing reflections. The chalk pastel clung onto the painted surface of the paper as if deciding whether to adhere or drop as dust to the ground. Manning writes that “to act is to activate as much as to actualise, to make felt the schism between the virtual folds of duration and the actual openings of the now as quality of passage.”<sup>26</sup> The event occurred through the relational forces that emerged beyond the hand of the artist. This was a significant turn in my practice. I no longer felt that I was negotiating the horizontal and the vertical axis but that this was an encompassing and affective association of relationships that exists beyond these dimensions.

Massumi suggests that in the event

all of these things, folded into and around each other to form an experiential envelope, a field, “full of oneness and manyness in respects that don’t appear” — incorporeal medium holding the gift up for the giving, and holding the successive holdings to the same event. Holding-up/holding-together, integral unseen medium of suspension: that does it.<sup>27</sup>

The key point here is that in *Fluid Suspension*, the exhibiting works were holding up and holding together and that these actions formed a field of relations.

Two years later, I exhibited a different combination of works in a collaborative exhibition titled *Fielding* (St Paul Street Gallery 3, March 2022) (figure 8). In place of the stainless-steel tanks, a tray lined with black coated aluminium was positioned under the window. The tray was filled with water and charcoal; dust floated across the surface as a geological reference. I placed different coloured gels (coloured transparencies used in the film industry) on the window, in mainly shades of yellow. The light from the window moved around the exhibition space over the surface of the water and across the wall. This light continuously changed

<sup>26</sup> Erin Manning, *The Minor Gesture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 49.

<sup>27</sup> Massumi, *Semblance and Event*, 35.



Figure 8, Jill McIntosh, *Fielding*, 2022, exhibition, Gallery 3, Auckland University of Technology.

as the clouds drifted over the sun and the sun made its way across the sky. The pathway of the clouds was an unpredictable act, and the sun's path repeated the actions of my hand/body as I pulled each substrate from the bath. The charcoal dust moved ever so slightly with the breeze from the open gallery door. The heat of the sun encouraged the water to swell the suspended, floating matter, causing it to slide along the surface. The charcoal prints on the wall were also suspended, capturing moments that changed in colour as the sun moved along the wall. The occasional chalk dust escaped the surface and floated onto the floor. The drawings offered visual associations with fluid worlds, submerged worlds, and swelling tides.

Through reflecting on and understanding the activation of the event in *Fluid Suspension*, I was able to employ what I had discovered in the next installation. By adding yellow gels to the windows in the exhibition *Fielding*, I emphasised the movement of the light, the sun and the changing weather. I formed a larger pond to engage more reflections of the windows, the surrounding room and the viewer participant engaged in the encounter. The darker lining on the pond attracted heat from the sun and activated the material in the pond, so particles gathered and rose to the surface. I had identified the main actants in the event, and I was now able to develop the occasion.

We understand that a work of art (object or installation) is folded together from Massumi, as what is occurring within our perception is not just seeing, but understanding the potential of the relational occurrences. According to Massumi this is a suspension between the event and our actual and virtual perceptions.<sup>28</sup>

In the exhibition *Fielding*, new potentials were opened by the light from the windows. The light travelled over the surface of the water in the pond. The water cast back the image of a viewer's reflection—placing the viewer inside the work's experiential field. The moving sun spread light but continued within a field of relation and duration. The field was an opening, an area of extension, a commonality full of new potentials.<sup>29</sup> Massumi suggests that,

The point is that art is in inventive continuity with natural perception. Every art object works by tapping into a certain aspect of “natural” perception in order to re-abstract it, so that some actual potentials that were there are suspended while others that tended not to appear before, or even had never appeared before, are brought out. The new potentials can be captured and reframed, and even given functions, political, social, personal, or economic.<sup>30</sup>

Perception can be suspended within the field of an artwork. The artwork relies on a degree of “suspended disbelief,” suggests New Zealand artist Marie Shannon (ideas discussed at length in Section 3.2).<sup>31</sup> Viewers envisage imaginings, new understandings, new perceptions. Our world in flux brings readings and understandings that are constantly evolving.

British artist Tania Kovats' work *Sea Mark* (2014; figure 9) is a field of simple marks that evoke distance and space through their relationship to one another. The impression of a view onto a vast sea is made by painting glaze on tiles and then firing these to retain the liquid, glossy surface. This shows how light captures movement on the water in infinite multiple reflections and diminishes towards the horizon. There is a meditative quality to this work, as if staring out to sea, and we can imagine that the drawing process itself is meditative in its repetitive mark-making.

<sup>28</sup> Massumi, *Semblance and Event*, 57

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>31</sup> Marie Shannon, conversation with author, April, 25, 2023.

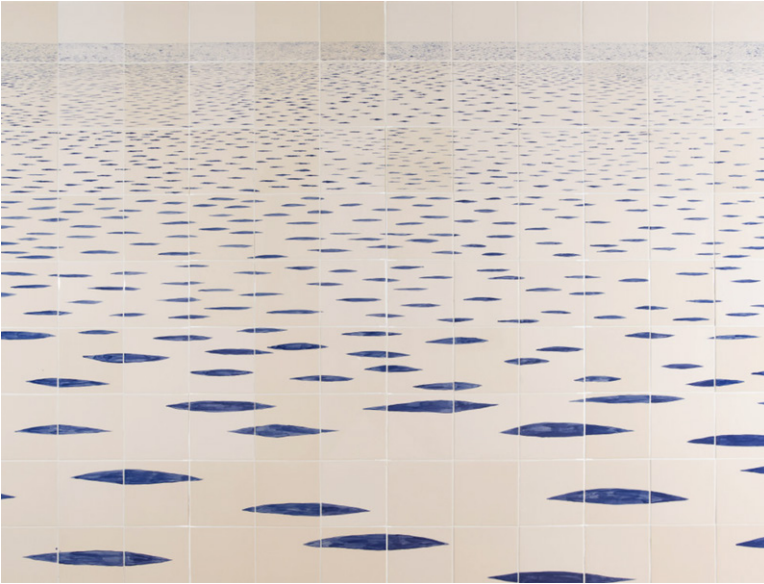


Figure 9, Tania Kovats, *Sea Mark*, 2012-14, glazed ceramic tiles on board, 1820 x 2400mm, <https://www.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/rmgc-object-1098053>. Reproduced with permission from the artist, courtesy of Parafin, London.

Kovats constructs memory systems to record the natural world. She follows natural occurrences in rivers, seashores and oceans and documents her reflections on these events similar to the way Alÿs traversed and documented his field. In this way, Kovats believes her projects exist beyond the ‘I.’ She writes;

using salt to split the ink that I pour over a hydrological chart, an atlas, or a map of the sea. I make drawings with blotting paper that soak up black ink, leaving tide lines. I flood the paper with ink and salt, a high tide, the water evaporates, the salt crystalizes. I draw towards the horizon making a Sea Mark, again and again, loading a brush and emptying a brush. The horizon between sea and sky is my favourite line, even though it isn’t even a line, it’s a curve. I draw round islands, again and again, inkblots that have a cartographic reference in the real world, that I detach them from, floating one island into a dissolved state with another.<sup>32</sup>

This watery field of thought and acts (pouring, blotting, soaking, evaporating, and floating) recalls the same action and marks in my own practice, which can be read as traces or cartographic recordings of lost islands in an immense ocean. Like mine, her shifting materials, are part of something bigger; the water carried on her brush is continuous with all ponds, all rivers and all oceans, part of the expansive field of our weathering planet.

<sup>32</sup> Tania Kovats, interviewed in “Tania Kovats: Why I Draw,” *Artspace Magazine*, April 14, 2021, [https://www.artspace.com/magazine/interviews\\_features/meet\\_the\\_artist/tania-kovats-why-i-draw-56738](https://www.artspace.com/magazine/interviews_features/meet_the_artist/tania-kovats-why-i-draw-56738).

Kovats' exploration of the natural world is a set of interconnected occurrences where sensations are recorded through drawing. She says, "I draw the body from the inside out. I draw how my spine feels as energy explodes up and down it. Through drawing the invisible becomes visible and communicable."<sup>33</sup> Kovats feels as if she is the agent or catalyst in an event, rather than the author. She suggests that her practice of drawing is a meditation, for "drawing is like breathing and dreaming. I draw with my breath. These drawings pass through me."<sup>34</sup> Artmaking, writes Kovats, is an immersive experience, that releases "an opening in the stream of thoughts and emotions that my mind is cluttered with" and through drawing these works "evolve, develop perspective, distance, and intimacy."<sup>35</sup> This is where, she declares, "I locate my courageous liquid self."<sup>36</sup> I identify with Kovats' thoughts. I too find the act of artmaking an absorbing event, where my body and mind have porosity and a feeling of breathing under water.

The artist, in her liquid self, is fluid in her perceptions and the actions of her hand. The resulting image is a fluid field that emerges from the substrate with the sweep of the brush over oscillating layers of material. When I work on canvas, paint and pastel chalk is applied in layers of the substrate in multiple strokes. These may cover the layer underneath, but not entirely; the different layers can be identified as individual marks yet perceived as an overall field. The underlayers give visual depth to the two-dimensional painted surface. Our eyes comprehend multiple layers of information simultaneously to form the field. Here there is a greater understanding, beyond everyday thought, of what will occur. This is the 'unthought' within the event.<sup>37</sup> This is an inter-relational field, an open space in which new events, memories, experience, and time occur. It exists as interconnected multi-directional actions and within new occurrences in art making.

33 Kovats, interviewed in "Tania Kovats."

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 N. Katherine Hayles, *Unthought: The Power of Cognitive Unconscious* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017).



Figure 10, Jill McIntosh, *Field III*, 2020, chalk pastel and acrylic paint on canvas, 1000 x 1000mm.

Art historian James Elkins writes;

If an artist begins to paint a field, say by coating the canvas with a layer of green and then going over it with lighter and darker green, it will be obvious that the lights and darks are resting on top of the original middle green. After a while the different shades might nearly cover the first green, but even if that green shows through in tiny crevices, it may still look as if the meadow was made by floating local colours on top of a uniform background.<sup>38</sup>

38 James Elkins, *What Painting Is: How to Think about Oil Painting Using the Language of Alchemy* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 12.

In my chalk field paintings, (figure 10), I work in layers, coating the surface of the paint and chalk pastel and wiping it back, repeating this process until the work is finished. Painter Amy Sillman explains: “I’m in this process of trying to create a free space. Like an open field, where figure and ground are in very ambivalent, complex relationships. On top of that, I also wanted to see if I could try to blurt something out, or make something completely immediate, that ends up fitting perfectly.”<sup>39</sup> As she describes this, the immediacy of Sillman’s processes enable her to shortcut her thinking process. This gives an intuitive nature to her work as well as a responsiveness to these felt sensations. This is the instantaneous actions of her hand. She is in-acting inside the event of making.

### 1.3 In-Act

What is the agency of the artist in this indeterminate event—within the field of relationships—between water, paint, paper, and canvas—as assembled around particulate matter? My descriptions of my work, its context and the event of the making, are necessarily retrospective as each work has been an absorbing performance, experienced in the moment. Manning says that “the art of time is the proposition art can make to a world in continual composition. It is also the proposition that opens art to the outside, to art as in-act, to practice as the crafting of emergent collectivities.”<sup>40</sup> To register this *in-act* is “conscious knowing, but also that of the in-act of intuition at the edge of the non-conscious that makes felt the ineffability of the event’s middling into experience.”<sup>41</sup> Manning describes *in-act* as experiencing the immersive operation, where the event is put to affect.

To *in-act* within the event is to exist within the potential of what is possible, while sustaining embodiment within the flow. This is felt in my practice through a range of affects, and conditions. When I work, I bring experience from past practices and knowledge of some of the processes and the reactions of the materials, however I cannot control all the outcomes. To totally visualise the outcome would

39 Amy Sillman, in Matt Mullen, “The Playfully Troubled Art of Amy Sillman,” *Interview Magazine*, January 25, 2018, <https://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/the-art-of-amy-sillman>.

40 Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, 52.

41 *Ibid.*, 44.

render it as illustration or craft. The excitement, for the participator in the event, is the element of surprise and discovery. To *in-act* is both to take action and to recognise the way that we are taken up in action.

Massumi suggests that we are embodied within the effects of change as we live within a shifting world. This movement is experienced through actions and interconnected relationships within events and processes. He writes “the concept of the virtual is never to separate it from the in-act.”<sup>42</sup> Within this event is an unfolding of the activity and change; then on to the “potential qualifying process as the production of the new.”<sup>43</sup> This is the coming to the process of ‘becoming,’<sup>44</sup> and, according to this theory, is what resonates in my hand, my intuition, my feelings, and my thoughts—in complex interrelations through my experiencing body. My thoughts, memories, sensations, intuitions, perceptions and actions join charcoal, pastel chalk, paint, water and the substrate in these actions.

This concept of *in-act* from Massumi can be read alongside philosopher and physicist Karen Barad’s notion of *intra-action*. Barad describes *intra-action* as the specific action that arises from new agencies and where the agencies “emerge from, rather than precede,” the acts produced.<sup>45</sup> Barad’s concept of agential realism elevates the occasion or event so that all occasions can be placed together, interspersed or set apart, always unfolding and open.

A work on paper may exist now as a record of the past, but the event also lends onto the felt potential of the new, and here we see again that time enfolds—the past rises from the future. This is durational and the point where the past and future coincide. Massumi writes, “in the arcing of the event toward the production of its novel outcome, physical matter, life matter in general, and human-matter are actively indistinguishable.”<sup>46</sup>

The creative act, for me, is an intricate, interdependent, relational entwining of human and non-human material experience. Artists and their materials are

42 Massumi, *Semblance and Event*, 18.

43 Ibid., 2.

44 Massumi refers us to Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 28.

45 Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 128.

46 Massumi, *Semblance and Event*, 27.



Figure 11, Jill McIntosh, *Dark Matters*, 2021, charcoal dust on paper, 1040 x1520mm.

entangled. This is where Kovats forms a *liquid self* through her engagement with water, sensitive to watery affects. Massumi suggests that “the qualitative dimension of the event is how it happens, co-felt, in the immediacy of its now unfolding.”<sup>47</sup> The “how-now of the event is the feeling it has of participating in itself.”<sup>48</sup> The sensation and experience of the artist do not belong to her but are part of the event. There is “no remove from the event,” so reflection is part of the occurrence.<sup>49</sup> Events are not what happens to a subject/object, they are the subject/object within these occurrences.

In making the chalk field paintings for the exhibition *Fluid Suspension*, I moved material over the papery substrate, my hand pushing against the dusty chalk to reveal the unknown. Risk is inherent within this new experience. The revealing of previously unseen marks sits suspended between the moment of execution and the moment of encounter with percept, affect and concept. Emergent qualities are experienced through the spreading, smearing and slathering of charcoal and

<sup>47</sup> Massumi, *Semblance and Event*, 4.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

chalk, and processual acts are revealed as the materials activate their becoming. I am a manifestation of this relational field.

In reference to Whitehead, writer and philosopher Steven Shaviro suggests that “the experimenter cannot be separated from the experiment, because they are both present in the world in the same manner,” and adds that “there can be no formal, permanent distinction between the observing self” and what he perceives as the “self being observed.”<sup>50</sup> Similarly, an artist is embodied within the practice and is suspended within the ‘observing/observed’ relationship. This can be seen as subjective in position but is not oriented to the self. While immersed in practice, the artist is also simultaneously a filter, a conduit for modes of multiple sensory information in our world; intuitively tumbling through affective, sensory experiences within the making.

Literary critic N. Katherine Hayles discusses actors as *cognizers* (those able to make choices and decisions) and *agents* as material forces and matter.<sup>51</sup> I suggest that the artist is an agent, a participant rather than an actor and a reactant. An artist reflects on her immersion within the material context of the experiential field of materials, that have their own agency within the event. To participate in the art making experience, the artist must surrender their intentions to open the potential and possibilities. Philosopher Gilles Deleuze suggests that

the painter has many things in his head, or around him, or in his studio. Now everything he has in his head or around him is already in the canvas, more or less virtually, more or less actually, before he begins his work. They are all present in the canvas as so many images, actual or virtual, so that the painter does not have to cover the blank surface, but would rather empty it out, clear it, clean it.<sup>52</sup>

Deleuze suggests that the painter is not reproducing a model of their ideas on the canvas. Although the painter draws on past experiences, they clear their imaginings of the canvas before starting, so that the canvas “will reverse the

50 Steven Shaviro writes on Deleuze’s critique of Whitehead and suggests that “What is an Event? is a Deleuzian question. *Deleuze’s Encounter With Whitehead*, (2007), 9.” <http://www.shaviro.com/Othertexts/DeleuzeWhitehead.pdf>.

51 Hayles, *Unthought*, 30-32.

52 Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 71.

relations between model and copy,” and the painter will not illustrate an image or idea in their mind but resolve it through the painting process.<sup>53</sup>

I am positioning my artmaking within a contingency, not as an imposition of intentional acts but to *in-act*. Physical objects exist as abstractions within these relationships, as I observe change and becoming is the nature of our world. This project is driven by the experiencing artist, as a participant within actions and occurrences with art materials and the studio/gallery environment. Both human and more-than-human exist in duration and are entangled together.

Multiple trajectories may pause but will continue to move in every direction, perpetually in variation. “Every event is singular. It has an arc that carries it through its phases to a cumulation all its own: a dynamic unity no other event can have in just this way” suggests Massumi.<sup>54</sup> I find myself within the *in-act*, continually edging towards the sense that I am on the verge of a future event. It is the sensation of perpetual change and motion engaged through this in-action that I continue to explore.

## 1.4 Enfolding

And the sea ceased to be because it became the sea, and we stopped at the station of impermanence, and rose from our bewilderment to witness the junction of the past and present.<sup>55</sup>

The chalk field painting *Suspension III* is a work on paper made with layers of acrylic paint and chalk pastel (figure 12). I have chosen paper as the substrate as it inherently has a temporality, a sense of transience, and a sense that there is more to come within the context of time. In the past, paper was used to sketch ideas for a painting, a sculpture, or building, as until 150 years ago drawings were mainly seen as preliminary plans for the main event. I am referencing this historical context to draw on the notion that ‘works on paper’ were, and can be, seen as time bound, moving, fragile, and precarious. The paper I am using is made of cotton

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Massumi, *Semblance and Event*, 3.

<sup>55</sup> Adnan, *Sea and Fog*, 13.



Figure 12, Jill McIntosh, *Suspension III*, 2020, pastel and acrylic paint on paper, 1520 x 1040mm (Photo V. Baldwin). Reproduced with permission.

and linen and is strong enough to take paint and chalk, both suspended media capable of flow. The layering of the fluidity of my materials conveys an aqueous reference, a flow in the suspension of the event, moisture in the air. Marks on the paper accumulate to form a visual depth. These marks, strewn across the surface, fail to challenge the suspension and are scratched in to reveal the underlayers. The size of the paper reflects human proportions. I am participating in this affective event as an impersonal force afloat in the flux of change.

This event deliberately attempts to scramble the linear logic of the perception. An eye may be drawn to an aspect of the work by the reveal of a brighter tone in the underpaint, left uncovered by the overlayer. However, through these means, I also aim to unsettle the vision and disrupt the viewer's ability to focus, by not giving the eye of the viewer a place to rest. The sensation of suspension is time held and time passing. The temporality of this suspension evokes anticipation of the next move, of the progression, and of the consequence. My actions intend to create a sense of uncertainty and indeterminacy. I want to create the perception of floating, a feeling of being removed from time, not frozen in a moment—for suspension is not static—but hanging in the moment.

When we pause, we hold back, mark time and take a breather.<sup>56</sup> William James quotes from an article by philosophical professor Hoffding “We live forwards, but we understand backwards.”<sup>57</sup> In my artmaking, I endeavour to maintain an affective, meditative state which allows care and time to occur within the event. Manning suggests that anything static “is an abstraction” from experience and thus “such abstractions are not the image of the past (the past cannot be differentiated from the in-act of the future-presenting), but ahistorical cutouts from a durational field already on its way. Time cannot be held, and with its movement, everything changes in kind.”<sup>58</sup>

In my practice, an event, is a series of actions, some directed by the artist but others through the agency of matter that arises throughout duration; to the crest

56 *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed., s.v. “pause.”

57 William James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 238.

58 Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, 47.

of the occurrence, and then becomes continuous as memory, reflection, and residue until the next event (within the greater event) is revealed.

This is movement within duration. With all of my processes (water baths, chalk, and paint on paper or canvas) I proceed with no prior knowledge before I start making a work, beyond my choice of the surface, size, and the materials. Each work emerges and enfolds through intuition and the sense that I will feel what to do next without premeditation. The resulting work is unanticipated; I actively resolve decisions within the processual acts of making as they occur, one hand moving ahead of another. My understanding of each work loops back and becomes a retrospective analysis. Each work is experiential and an event. As each work is resolved, I gain an understanding of the gestures, the references, and the influences. The essential aspect of my work becomes the question... what is yet to occur?

Manning proposes that we “engage first and foremost with the manner of practice and not the end result. What else can artistic practice become when the object is not the goal, but the activator, the conduit towards new modes of existence?”<sup>59</sup> I operate in my practice within time and space, immersed within the perpetual flow of making. This is a practical exploration so the unarticulated potential occurs beyond the event while the capability of the material is revealed during the process.

In *Fractals and Slippage I* (figure 13) the materials have behaved through their own agency and own material actions. Charcoal has slipped down the paper surface and shows the force of gravity as the paper is pulled from the water surface. Fractal patterns have also emerged as small powdered clumps of charcoal dust have sealed the paper then broken off when lifted from the water. The relationship between the act of painting, latency, potential, affect, memory and the significance of reception allows for multi-directional, complex, and fluid changes. This is a non-linear method of research, where multiple logics of reasoning and reality exist simultaneously. My processes indicate applied intuition, as a concept of time, and a more complicated form of logic that does not need to be reduced to



Figure 13, Jill McIntosh, *Fractals and Slippage I*, 2022, charcoal, on paper, 1200 x 1000mm.

linearity; intuition becomes a crucial aspect of my methodology, to which I turn in Chapter 2. Although my methods are personal in their responsive attitude and are situated within post-structural and post-qualitative methodologies, intuition is engaged, not to answer to a role in these emergent events, but to reveal the complexities and developments and the opening of ideas based on abstract concepts rendered practical as realised through art practice.

## 1.5 Fluid Suspension

To be in the fog is to be in a state of suspension. What's true is then not true; the mind's liberation. Beyond anti-matter, more matter or more spirit?<sup>60</sup>

My investigation into the sensation of spatiotemporal suspension explores the embodiment of the artist in the *in-act*, within her materials, and the pause experienced in the encounter. In my practice, I am forming environmental and material conditions for events to occur that can't be entirely predicted. This is where the suspension of materials, of time, and of the viewer's eye can barely be perceived as an alteration or a hesitation in the emergent variation. Suspension and fluidity are, for me, simultaneously metaphors, affective materials, and experiential states. Suspension in this practice absorbs the actual through the passing of what ceases to be, and embraces the virtual as the process of becoming through the unspoken, the sensed, the felt, and the in-between.

“Paint is water and stone, and it is also liquid thought,” Elkins suggests.<sup>61</sup> As with water, paint is a fluid that suspends pigment in a fine balance of saturation and in black pigments is “composed of elemental carbon.”<sup>62</sup> When I brush charcoal paint across the canvas, the pigment sits inside the medium until moisture evaporates, and the paint is dry. Paint has flow and is highly mobile. The medium that suspends the pigment in paint has varying degrees of ‘stretch’—a thickness and stickiness, due to viscosity. Similarly, pastel chalk is also pigment bound in a

<sup>60</sup> Adnan, *Sea and Fog*, 70.

<sup>61</sup> Elkins, *What Painting Is*, 5.

<sup>62</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. paint, accessed July 13, 2023, <http://www.britannica.com/technology/paint>.

medium usually gum arabic or methyl cellulose. Once it is drawn on a surface it becomes dusty and moves until it is fixed. The material condition of these media enables metaphoric readings—imaginaries of water and open fields. Water has physical properties, it has chemicals and molecules, life that it supports, matter that it carries. Water supports organic life. It evaporates to the skies, falls as rain, runs into rivers that flow to our oceans. It is a fluid substance that can exert or yield to external pressure.

Canadian cultural theorist Astrida Neimanus has written on our watery existence. In her book *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology*, she discusses how human beings do not simply relate to water but are water and are connected by water. Aware of our existence within this world and the pressing ecological questions facing us, Neimanus suggests that,

We are both of these things inextricably and at once – made mostly of wet matter, but also aswim in the discursive floccations of embodiment as an idea. We live at the site of exponential material meaning where embodiment meets water. Given the various interconnected and anthropogenically exacerbated water crisis that our planet currently faces – from drought and freshwater shortage to wild weather, floods, and chronic contamination – this meaningful mattering of our bodies is also an urgent question of worldly survival.<sup>63</sup>

I am 70% water, I work with water in my art practice, and I live in a fluid world. This is both literal, through the moist air I breathe, the rain that falls, clouds in the sky and the water in our taps and drains but also metaphorical, in the way I make sense of participating in a changeable, unstable, uncertain world. American writer and academic Stacy Alaimo refers to fluidity as a metaphor for the anxiety of inhabiting a “swirling landscape of uncertainty.”<sup>64</sup> We can be immersed in our feeling, sensing, thinking being, but may perceive this immersion as disorienting our sense of self and agency. Suspension is barely perceived in this immersive fluidity and flux as an alteration, a hesitation.

Elkins writes that “to an artist, a picture is both a sum of ideas and a blurry memory of ‘pushing paint,’ breathing fumes, dripping oils and wiping brushes,

63 Neimanus, *Bodies of Water*, 1.

64 Stacy Alaimo, “States of Suspension: Trans-Corporeality at Sea,” *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 19, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 476-493, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isle/isso68>.



Figure 14, Jill McIntosh, *Suspension II*, 2020, chalk pastel, acrylic paint on paper, 1520 x 1040mm. (Photo V. Baldwin). Reproduced with permission.



Figure 15, Jill McIntosh, *Field II*, 2021, chalk pastel and acrylic paint on canvas, 1000 x1000mm.

smearing and diluting and mixing.”<sup>65</sup> This description recalls Kovats’ “liquid self” (Section 1.2). For Elkins, the artist “is the fluid continuously rising, condensing, and pouring back into itself.”<sup>66</sup> This watery embodiment is discussed further in Chapter 3.

65 Elkins. *What Painting Is?* 2.

66 Elkins. *What Painting Is.* 159.

Perhaps this is the allure of liquid, solubility, and saturation of materials. Water transforms through conduction and evaporation. This has qualities of rhythm, motion and waves that can shift to different states of matter, such as steam and ice. Fluid, flow and suspension in this practice are conduits for embracing the concept of multiplicity in regard to actions, opening up new relationships, interconnections, and perspectives.

The fluid uncertainty of working and perceiving, as an event, also invokes an underlying foreboding, as our human world is propelled by an overreliance on fossil fuels, overconsumption of resources, global warming, and a water crisis. This planet is heating due to the burning of forests. Matter morphs through a cycle of small particles that shift into different states: fibre, ash, smoke, rain—solid, gas and liquid.

In the open field of the event, there are multiple interconnections. All actions are relationally connected so it is implicit in this project, and the associated field of events, that in discussing fluid and water I also acknowledge that the weather and atmospheric conditions are part of this practice. By placing transparent gels on the windows in my installations, I am enabling this practice to be activated by the sun, the clouds, and the darkness at night. I am highlighting that we live with simultaneous knowledge of events within the same moment. As I pour water into a bath, the water flows, my body acts, the studio is warm, it is raining outside, a neighbour is crying, a bomb is dropped in Ukraine, and an iceberg sinks further into the sea. My practice and my perception cannot be separated from the rising water temperatures, rising sea levels, our plastic-polluted oceans, and the need to prioritise the health of our more-than-human world. These bath works (figure 16) suggest resonances of submerged matter, atolls overflowing estuaries, and maps of icefields and fjords.

Massumi writes that speculation is the “thinking-feeling of our active implication in the ever-rolling-on in the world to really-next-effects.”<sup>67</sup> In response, we might interrupt, suspend, pause, or in-act: “break-and-relate to make felt an effect: a definition of art.”<sup>68</sup>

67 Massumi, *Semblance and Event*, 37.

68 Ibid.

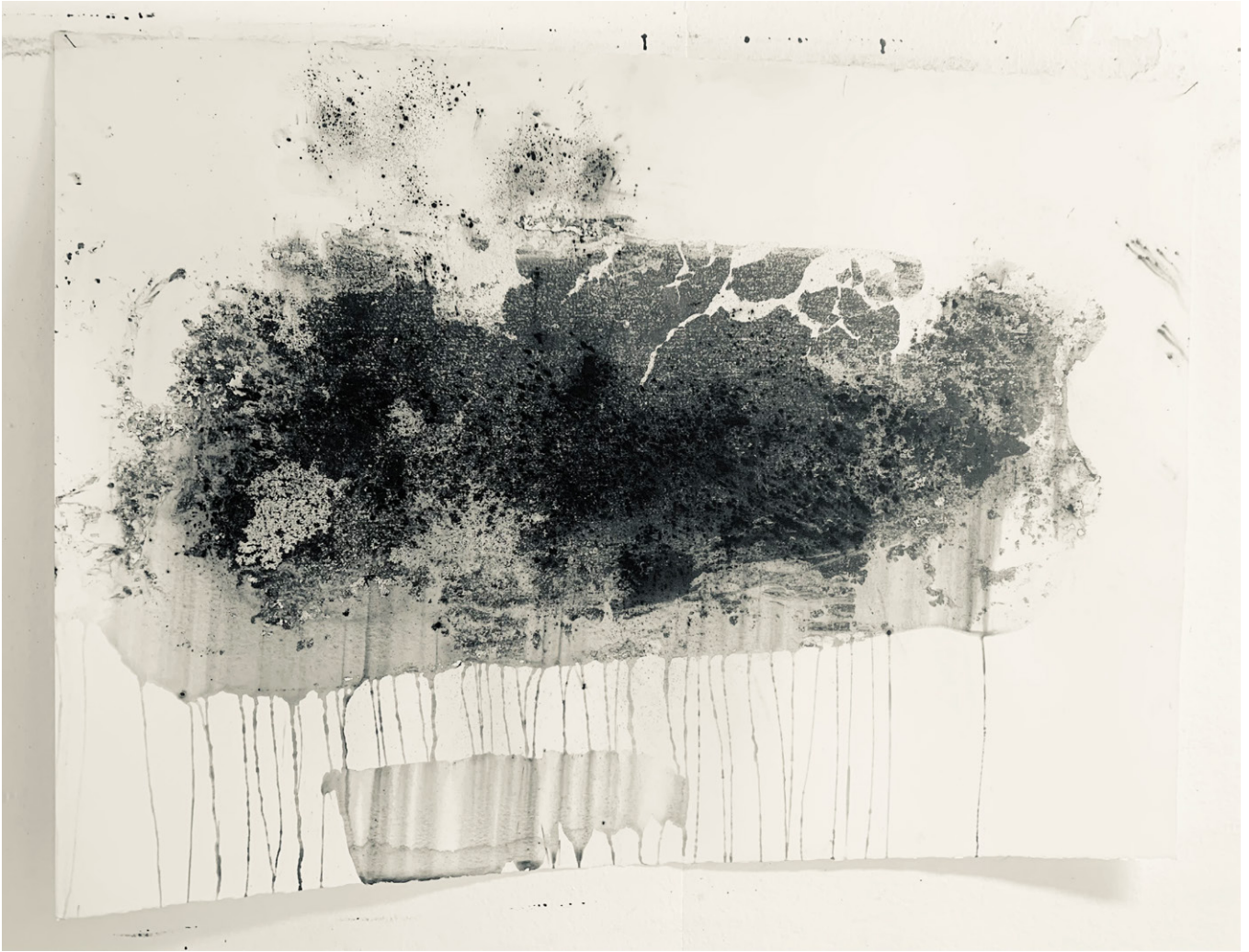


Figure 16, Jill McIntosh, *Matter - 1*, 2021, charcoal on paper, 1040 x1520mm.

In making the works *As Loam I* and *Suspension I, II, III, Dark Matters, Fractals and Slippage I, Untitled I and II*, my body is a “shifter of materials.”<sup>69</sup> I feel like wind eroding the side of a hill, a river washing the silt towards the shore and the tide dragging the sand from a beach. Massumi writes that the experience of live matter, the growth of trees, weather events, and the rising and setting of the sun are a “society of occasions of experience” that reveal to us our semblance of life.<sup>70</sup> This charcoal is occasional. It has travelled far from its original growing place in the earthy ground, it is now a dusty matter that floats on water and adheres to paint or the texture of the paper substrate. Matter moves and is dislocated, relocated, recycled, morphed; and these processes are occurring perpetually along different time scales.

69 Ian Jervis (artist and tutor), conversation with author, April 8, 2021.

70 Massumi, *Semblance and Event*, 26.

This chapter has discussed the significance of the event, the condition of the field, and my in-action and agency as an artist. These entangled themes form the metaphorical and material conditions that I term *suspension*. My practice is an investigation into lively material in suspension and the vast space that opens up in fields. Ideas of field, in-action, and the materiality of fluid suspension allow us to reflect on our watery existence. Here a particle of charcoal dust is a metaphor for our molecular world and is carried by air, fluid and chemical agencies through thoughts and sensations, fears and uncertainties around our threatened planet. In the following chapter I will discuss how these themes are taken up in the methodology of my artistic inquiry.

What does it mean to be water? Can I comprehend you in ignoring intelligence, and contain your immensity? When the cold freezes you, it slows down my blood. Under the moon's attraction you rise and fall as my mind vacillates and fails.<sup>71</sup>

# CHAPTER 2

## — UNDERTAKINGS

### 2.1 Metaphor as a Strategy

Practice-led inquiry fluctuates between experimentation, new discoveries and reflection on the event and is open ended. Massumi describes these evolving actions as time-based events that unfold and enfold in duration (Section 1.4). While I reflect on this vitality by writing in philosophical terms on actions, processes, materials experienced, and their interconnectivity, I do not see written philosophical theory as leading my creative endeavours. Rather, this project unfolds through the creative practical investigation into materiality and its affective processes—and the theoretical associations and reflections arise from this.

Scottish art education researchers Carole Gray and Julian Malins describe this material-led approach to research as inherently “characterised by a ‘relativist’ ontology (multiple realities exist as personal and social constructions) and the ‘epistemology is subjectivist.’”<sup>72</sup> Creative practice art research, they suggest, is both interpretive and discursive and evolves with the project. It is in forming relationships between different components of the practice, the specific processes, methods, materials, thoughts and reflections, and the rigour of the research unfolds over time.

Gray and Malins consider practice-led research to be “a double voiced discourse, radically eclectic, which accepts and criticises,” simultaneously.<sup>73</sup> They suggest that as research progresses there is a “process of destroying and preserving that which has gone before, towards a new synthesis. The departure point for this discourse is specific, but the final destination is open-ended, thereby maximising resistance to single explanations.”<sup>74</sup> This requires an open use of language—

72 Carole Gray and Julian Malins, *Visualising Research: A Guide to the Research Process in Art and Design* (Farnham: Routledge, 2004), 19.

73 Carole Gray and Julian Malins, *Research Procedures/Methodology for Artists & Designers* [research report] (Aberdeen: Centre for Research and Design, Robert Gordon University, 1993), 9, <http://hdl.handle.net/10059/640>.

74 Ibid.

language that opens potentials and possibilities. Practice-led research is exploratory, investigative, and experimental, and therefore the research process is inherently open, in order to generate new knowledge, challenge assumptions, and discover new insights. *Practice* is the relationship between the artist, artmaking, and the reception of the artwork. Practice-led research differs from other forms of research, as it is imbedded in a specific practice and in the context of the artist/researcher. By opening the research to possibilities, there is an agency in the process, and a latent vitality.

This approach is a shared philosophical position in *practice*. Gray and Malins suggest that practice-led researchers have been “characteristically eclectic, diverse and creative in the methodologies that they have adopted” and that “when necessary, they have drawn on positivist experimental methodologies, constructivist interpretation and reflection.”<sup>75</sup> They suggest that many creative research practices invent “hybrid methodologies involving a synthesis of many diverse research methods and techniques.”<sup>76</sup> This approach is reflected in my project, which highlights the importance of experimentation to finding new knowledge in this form of research. I recognise these methodologies outlined by Gray and Malins and I feel that they are at play in my studio.

The methodology in this practice reflects on potential events that arise out of the material properties of water and carbon, as encountered in art practice, and realises their uniqueness as conduits for thought and the generation of concepts. In this chapter, I describe the research in my art practice and my reinvention of techniques through a sustained engagement with carbon and water as *vital elements*. The material properties of water (fluid, changing, movement, and flux) and carbon (particulate, mobile, transforming, and transitory) are metaphors for events in our world. Water instigates and reflects constant change, enabling it to perform as an analogy for the flux of continuous events and the porosity of boundaries. Particulate carbon (the main component of charcoal) physically appears as tiny granules under a microscope, but in sufficient quantities can appear as a liquid, solid, or gas to the human eye. As key participants in the warming of our planet, water and carbon can provoke thoughts of global

<sup>75</sup> Gray and Malins, *Visualising Research*, 21.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

immersion, dependency, and the porosity of our own bodies. Materials and processes—specifically water and particulate carbon—are modes for thought, imaginings, metaphorical associations and reflection in this project. They ‘intra-actively’ generate unique material properties, agencies, and concepts.

As I pour water, float charcoal and transfer it onto different substrates in the studio, a synthesis occurs. Having a basic understanding of how carbon and water behave enables further reflection on my processes. For human beings there is a direct relationship between our existence and carbon—as nature and everything around us (including ourselves) is formed of carbon. Carbon comes from outer space and has emerged from older stars, which have an outer surface that releases carbon as they crumble.<sup>77</sup> We talk of the carbon problem, regret our contribution to carbon emissions, deliberate over carbon taxes and try to reduce our carbon footprint as negative conditions. However, carbon is fundamental to the universe and to organic human life.<sup>78</sup> Carbon is dug as coal, burnt as oil, released into the air as pollution, and manufactured into plastics that do not biodegrade. This carbon will not disappear but transforms, shifts in state, and bonds with new elements. The qualities of dispersal and perpetual change are found within the physical properties of water and carbon. They give momentum to my art inquiry and my reflections on diffusion, imbuelement, steeping, and drift.<sup>79</sup> The materials in this research are lively matter that I encounter in my studio, substances that touch and permeate me.

James Lovelock, the author of the *Gaia; A New Look at Life on Earth*, writes that “it was not the biosphere alone that did the regulating but the whole thing, life, the air, the oceans, and the rocks.”<sup>80</sup> This is our earth where all geological, chemical, and biological processes work together.

In resituating ourselves within a post-humanist world, the focus shifts away from human-centric activity. French sociologist and philosopher Bruno Latour

77 *Carbon: The Unauthorised Biography*, directed by Daniella Ortega and Niobe Thompson (Genepool Productions, 2022), <https://www.thecarbonmovie.com/>.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid.

80 James Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), xv.



Figure 17, Jill McIntosh, *Outside In Me*, 2022, pond with plants, 2000 x 1000mm



Figure 18, Jill McIntosh, *Outside In Me*, 2022, photos of installation, Barrel Store, Auckland.

describes Gaia theory as a unique shift: “in brief, a cultural paradigm shift comparable in scope to the one introduced at the time of the scientific revolution by Galileo Galilei.”<sup>81</sup> Latour describes the work of James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis investigating life formed on all levels—vegetation, insects, molecules—as an inter-relational, self-regulating entity. He suggests that Lovelock provided many changes to our perception and understanding of our world so that it became difficult to consider water, air, mountains, or humans without acknowledging all forms of life as dynamic agencies.<sup>82</sup> This post-humanist view of our world has influenced my perception of my practice and informed my methodology.

When considering this vital animacy in our world, Tania Kovats work comes to mind. Kovats collects materials globally, navigates materials and spaces and lets materials have agency (figure 51). She references Gaia theory which proposes the earth as a self-regulating ontology.<sup>83</sup> Kovats directly looks towards Gaia Theory.<sup>84</sup> Lovelock writes that

Gaia hypothesis is for those who like to walk or simply stand and stare, to wonder about the Earth and the life it bears, and to speculate about the consequences of our own presence here. It is an alternative to that pessimistic view which sees nature as a primitive force to be subdued and conquered. It is also an alternative to that equally depressing picture of our planet as a demented spaceship, forever travelling, driverless and purposeless, around an inner circle of the sun.<sup>85</sup>

The process and the materials Kovats employs have their own agency. Kovats engages with chemical reactions as an aspect of her work. I too am feeling my way through the materials in my practice, through thoughts, imaginings, and occurrences—metaphors for our human condition and the world around us. The materials I use, water and carbon, shift, reform, disperse, and drift, as does all matter. As with Kovats, my practice methodologies operate as metaphors in relation to our living, material, enveloping world. Neimanus suggests water is

81 Brian Latour and Timothy M. Lenton, “Extending the Domain of Freedom, or Why Gaia Is So Hard to Understand,” *Critical Inquiry* 45, no. 3 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1086/702611>.

82 Latour and Lenton, “Extending the Domain,” 3.

83 Ysanne Holt, “On Watery Borders, Borderlands, and Tania Kovats’ *Head to Mouth*,” in “Layered Landscapes: Cultural Investigations in Northern British Edgelands,” ed. Ysanne Holt and Rupert Ashmore, special issue, *Arts* 8, no. 3 (2019): 104, <https://doi.org/10.3390/arts8030104>.

84 Ibid.

85 Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look*, 11.

an “interruptive body.”<sup>86</sup> I understand water and carbon as a media in which we reflect and where we float, not merely as media in which to work.

## 2.2 The Work of Art

Australian art philosopher Barbara Bolt suggests that “contemporary art practice has become implicated in an enframing mode of revealing.”<sup>87</sup> Surrounded and permeated by material agencies, artists might enable and reveal, rather than direct, narrate or ‘work it out.’ Erin Manning and Brian Massumi say that by working intuitively, “experimental practice embodies technique toward catalyzing an event of emergence whose exact lineaments cannot be foreseen.”<sup>88</sup> They suggest that “technique is therefore processual: it reinvents itself in the evolution of a practice. It’s movement-toward definite expression must be allowed to play out. Technique is therefore immanent: it can only work itself out, following the momentum of its own unrolling process.”<sup>89</sup> Bolt refers us to Heidegger who asks, “How are we to talk about a ‘work’ of art if we do not know beforehand what a work of art is?”<sup>90</sup> I am suggesting that the work of art is revealed through the process of making and on reflection.

In my practice, I work with unforeseen interactions and unpredictable events—altering, sliding, veering: the fluctuating actions of materials in process. This is quite different from the Marxist concept of work as ends-oriented human labour, by means of machines and technology. Rather, my work is engaged with the emergence of new events, the possibilities, the sensation, and the continuum of duration. I may have an intuitive sense of the occurrence, but the event is only revealed through the processual act of making, already on its way.

I have worked as a printmaker since undertaking an undergraduate degree at university. Technical knowledge, in my practice, has become intuitive over time, and I am able to rely on feeling my way in response to relational changes and

86 Neimanus, *Bodies of Water*, 46.

87 Barbara Bolt, *Art Beyond Representation: The Performative Power of the Image* (London: I.B.Taurus, 2004), 87.

88 Manning and Massumi, *Thought in the Act*, 89.

89 Ibid.

90 Bolt, *Art Beyond Representation*, 90.

outcomes, memory and past experience. In working with the unexpected, results are revealed as they occur and only then are recognised for their value. This is an intuitive, progressive, and revealing approach, where I am continuously making decisions and interconnections as my mind and body interact with the materials.

Bolt suggests that “the outcome cannot be known in advance. Thus, although we may have some awareness of the potential of a tool or a piece of wood—for example, through previous dealings with wood and tools—every new situation brings about a different constellation of forces and speeds.”<sup>91</sup> Bolt suggests that in each art making event, the materials may be slightly different, the focus of the artist may be less intense, but that the artist and their tools will bring “the intelligence of our tools and materials” and that this will result in a relation of “co-emergence” in the event.<sup>92</sup>

This quote from Bolt is a key point, as it clearly articulates my methodology in artmaking in my practice. There is always a field of occasions within the event and the art practice is revealed through processual acts. Once I decide the work is resolved, it becomes the image that I did not know but can now understand and appreciate. Art materials, studio implements and the artist’s body are all vibrant material participants in the event. Bolt refers us to American philosopher Donna Harraway, and suggests that “the agency of the world is central for revisioning the world and refiguring a ‘different’ politics of practice whereby the tools of practice are not merely used to achieve an end and matter is no longer a resource to be used by humans in order to make an artwork.”<sup>93</sup> In reference to Harraway, Bolt writes that “an ‘object of knowledge’ is no longer a resource, ground, matrix, object, material or instrument to be used by humans,” but rather (Bolt quotes Harraway) “an active, meaning-generating axis of the apparatus of bodily production.”<sup>94</sup> Bolt proposes that objects have become entirely mundane as structures in our everyday world, and that generated knowledge comes instead from activity.

91 Barbara Bolt, “Material Thinking and the Agency of Matter,” *Studies in Material Thinking* 1, no. 1 (April 2007): 3, <https://materialthinking.aut.ac.nz/papers/37.html>.

92 Ibid.

93 Bolt quotes Donna Harraway. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. (London: Free Press, 1991) 200.

94 Ibid.

Elkins offers the word *hypostasis* to describe matter as vital in rendering abstract ideas concrete. Hypostasis is “what happens when fluid and stones seem to have inner meaning,”<sup>95</sup> as if “something as dead as paint might also be deeply alive, full of thought and expressive meaning.”<sup>96</sup> Elkins suggests that looking at a painting of an object can feel like looking through a window into somewhere else. In fact, it is “weight and thickness clinging to the canvas, gathering dust, wrinkling with age.”<sup>97</sup> Elkins refers to the semblance of an artwork, the nuances, the indications, and how this can be reduced to a factual reality of cloth and dried fluid, which has cracked, stretched, wrinkled and become dusty over time. Art materials have their own agency and occur in our imaginings but, as with all matter, they exist within time.

In my practice, the physical and material work of making is experienced in time but is not felt as a linear progression or narrative. In this project, memory and past experience are recycled and later works do not necessarily take priority over earlier ones. By revisiting these ideas and placing them in new relationships, they are transformed. Revisiting and reassembling is a way to take care of past thoughts and objects. The original context has passed yet the material objects remain active. Their origin is no longer relevant once they have been relocated, have moved within the continuum of our world. They have shifted.

In fact, many of my physical labours in the studio could be interpreted as ‘shifting.’ I layer my materials, transfer them from one surface to another, and merge them onto different grounds. Kovats suggests that in order not to preconceive an outcome “there has to be space for a drawing to drift into areas that are not immediately accessible, with ambiguous or shifting status that resists interpretation, a drawing that is just itself.”<sup>98</sup> I adhere to this alive and fluid movement in the studio myself. I experience, as with Kovats, movement in materials and events that cannot be defined. I experience a shifting and drifting, where balance is destabilised. This is a sense of being carried; a slippage, a sliding motion from floating, distant and simultaneous multiple thoughts. My

95 Elkins, *What Painting Is*, 48.

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid.

98 Kovats, interviewed in “Tania Kovats.”

methodology is shifting in that it involves moving and being moved; but there is also, slippage, the drift into somewhere formerly inaccessible to me.

Rather than centring my practice on myself as the worker (in the Marxist sense of an agent working towards a valuable end), I position myself as one element in a larger body. The work of art unfolds and opens new spaces through shifting and drifting. The emphasis is on an understanding of my role as filtering, participating and transferring. I will refer to this in this thesis as my *shifting methodology*.

### 2.3 Seriality and Shifting

My experiences as a printmaker—transferring images, inverting, and tracing are the origins of my creative practice. When an etching plate is submerged in an acid bath, the acid bites the exposed plate through active chemical reactions. Once removed, the ground and shellac are cleaned off, and the plate is ready for printing. Ink is smeared over the plate, pressed into the intaglio grooves then whisked off the top surface of the plate in a number eight action of the wrist with mull. In relief printing, the printer rolls ink on to one surface then moves this through the press and onto paper. In multi-plate or block prints, the images are separated into individual colour plates or screens, which are then printed and reassembled as one image; this process is repeated for each print within the edition.

Physical properties such as the viscosity of ink, the strength or dampness of paper, and the temperature of acid need careful consideration to enable a successful outcome. Printmaking is a serial process, and serial processes involve consistent conditions and shifting material from one surface to another. Whether etching a plate, drawing on a lithographic stone, or inking a woodcut, the printer is usually planning to make a limited-edition series of prints. The printer begins the edition by pulling several artist's proofs. Once a proof is selected, the edition is printed as accurately as possible, yet each print will be slightly different. Heavier ink will lie in one corner or on an edge, as these are hand printing processes that form an edition, a series of prints.

Editions are thus closely controlled duplicates, with as minor variation as possible between prints. Dissatisfied with the technical work of this repetition, I have moved away from the printing of editions and have begun (some years ago now) to work in monoprints by painting printing ink directly onto a sheet of plastic and rolling this through a press to print onto paper. In my current process, I challenge the ground that the ink was applied to, by spreading the ink onto water. I then lay a sheet of paper, canvas or plastic over the water and lift the ink and paint onto a new substrate. In Chapters 3 and 4 I will discuss some of these transformations of printmaking processes, including making prints from floating pigment, scanning particulate matter, and exposing surfaces to weather. I am currently more interested in shifting than in duplicating.

Shifting is implied when working in series. By working in multiples, I am allowing the material agency in each individual participatory work to find its own unique pathway. Each work is unique, but they are a family and can be seen as a hybridity of more traditional printmaking and contemporary painting techniques. By discussing a series, I am discussing actions and ‘art making experience’ as a passage between several surfaces. A series of work draws a parallel between each mark and each texture on the substrate. There is a sisterhood or a commonality that each work shares while exploring difference. However, serial work and this shifting is not about the individual as the artist. It is about the relationship between all actors—the materials, substrates, charcoal, paint, pastel, water, and binders—and the conditions, like weather, gravity, and the temperature of the water or acid. This is a shift in thought away from the artist as the primary participant, as an acknowledgement that all lively matter and actants are participatory in the event, and that they are constantly in change and movement.

Serial works follow “a systematically predetermined process; the order (rules used to create the artwork) takes precedence over the execution or making of the work; that the completed work is self-exhausting.”<sup>99</sup> In contrast to these assumptions, each of my works that are made in a series has a unique, endless variety of marks. I exploit the image-making potential of these small variations as they drift progressively away from their origin.

99 *Tate Art Terms*, s.v. “Serial art,” accessed May 6, 2023, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/s/serial-art>.



Figure 19, Jill McIntosh, *Fields of Matter*, 2022, charcoal on paper exhibited in *Fielding*.

A ‘series’ is not merely repetition. In the exhibition *Fielding* (figure 19), I hung a series of nine paper charcoal prints on the wall of the gallery. All the prints were on the same size and weight paper and had been printed with the same process, but each work responded to the different pulling of the paper from the water and the different laying of the charcoal and each work was differentiated by a small variation of marks. Massumi says that each “repetition will be different to a degree, because there will be at least microvariations that give it its own singular experiential quality and make it an objective interpretation of the generic motif.”<sup>100</sup> He continues by saying that “it is because it presents difference through variation that [such works are] a thinking-feeling of a margin of changeability. You could even say of indeterminacy since likenesses can overlap and contaminate each other.”<sup>101</sup> In the encounter of a series of work, a ‘sameness’ can be identified, but also the many degrees of variation. In a series, one work runs into the next. There is a continuity in both the degree of ‘sameness’ and process.

The continuity in a series is in the predetermined processes. In this event it is the choice of materials and not the compositional outcome. Neimanus suggests that difference is being “already always part of overlapping, interconnected cycles of repetition: we know water on earth is finite” and that “yet, while the water that

<sup>100</sup> Massumi, *Semblance and Event*, 50.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*



Figure 20, Jill McIntosh, *Untitled*, 2021, charcoal on paper.

moves through these cycles is always ‘the same’, it is by no means undifferentiated. What repeats is always difference.”<sup>102</sup> Massumi suggests that variation exists as difference in the precarious condition of the emergent event, as new; while Neimanus sees water and earthly matter as being in constant change and flux, circulating within the world as a fixed quantity, perpetually in transformation. These philosophers come from various positions, but have synchronicities in their thoughts.

My processes are also affected by warmth, weather, and the breeze on the day. If we consider all repetition as time based, then it is part of a moving wave. Gilles Deleuze suggests that repetition is a rupture in continuity and says, “no two grains of dust are absolutely identical, no two hands have the same distinctive points, no two typewriters have the same strike, no two revolvers score their bullets in the same manner.”<sup>103</sup> As our world is constantly in motion, every moment is an arrival. Even if an object is digitally reproduced, it has time attached to it, therefore cannot be an exact replication. By working in a series, I experience multiplicity. I make families of works on paper, that show constant change and the positivity of difference in their emergence.

When I make a series in my practice, there is some repetition, but also subtle differences and variation that suggests movement and change. In her book *The Minor Gesture*, Manning writes that *the minor*, less noticed but equally significant event opens “experience itself, activating a shift of tone, a difference in quality.”<sup>104</sup> This is experiencing an indeterminate event in space and time where a shift opens the potential for difference and variation. Neimanus refers to feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray’s idea that water is “paradoxically a ‘liquid ground,’ both essential to life and also always shifting. Water is at once the originary condition of all possibility, but also its force of differentiation and wellspring of unknowability.”<sup>105</sup> Shifting and seriality overflow into difference as a consequence of material vitality.

Massumi suggests that ‘there must be a continuity in changeable qualities.’<sup>106</sup> This is an “integral synchrony of before and after. Unbeing, being. Time-like, logically prior to linear time. In the limits of the present. Wholly, virtually, vaguely. Differentially. Edging into existence.”<sup>107</sup> Through variation we have the event, movement, and change, and we have the new edging into existence. This is opened through processual acts and a shifting methodology.

103 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Athlone, 1994), 31.

104 Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, 1.

105 Neimanus, *Bodies of Water*, 69. Neimanus refers to feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray’s thoughts on water as a liquid ground. This resonates with my idea of printing off the surface of the bath.

106 Massumi, *Semblance and Event*, 88.

107 *Ibid.*, 89.



Figure 21. Studies for *Transitional Acts* exhibition in the studio, 2023.

## 2.4 The Shudder of the New

Barbara Bolt suggests that, “by definition, the ‘new’ cannot be pre-conceived” but “emerges through process as a shudder of an idea.”<sup>108</sup> Shuddering, like shifting, might catch by surprise, and part of art making is creating the conditions in which we might become sensitive to the shudder of an idea as it arrives edgewise.<sup>109</sup> To shudder is to shake, shiver, tremble, vibrate, heave or convulse.<sup>110</sup> If the ‘new’ arrives shuddering into the world, it is arriving with the force of the event. Bolt, in *The Exegesis and the Shock of the New*, suggests that in creative practice-led research “we do not consciously seek the ‘new’ but rather are open to what emerges in the interaction with the materials of practice.”<sup>111</sup> The methodology of shifting—orienting oneself through repetition to tiny variations of permeating materials—opens a field for new possibilities to edge into existence. This implicates the researcher as ‘moving’ and ‘opening’; becoming receptive to permeations within her as they unfold in the practice.

The emergence of the new is a crucial topic in a line of process philosophy from William James, Henri Bergson and Alfred North Whitehead, to Gillies Deleuze, Brian Massumi and Erin Manning. Deleuze writes that with repetition there is a change “a difference, something new,” as we move always forward.<sup>112</sup>

I am cutting, painting, attaching, and collecting as I work through processes that are often not sequential. I spread materials and make marks, and I experience these gestures as in-active performances. I am suspended within this moving and unfolding, propelled by the momentum of durational processes. Each series leads to another, without conclusion.

108 Barbara Bolt, “The Exegesis and the Shock of the New,” *TEXT*, special issue, no. 3 (April 2004), <http://www.textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue3/bolt.htm>. The title of this section references Robert Hughes, *Shock of the New: The Hundred Year History of Modern Art; Its Rise, Its Dazzling Achievement, Its Fall* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981). This book was released along with a documentary television series, narrated by Hughes in the 1980s.

109 The title *Shock of the New* has subsequently been used by a number of philosophers including Deleuze, Guattari, Barbara Bolt, Simon O’Sullivan amongst others.

110 *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed., s.v. “shudder.”

111 Bolt, “The Exegesis and the Shock of the New,” 1.

112 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 93.

Australian philosopher Craig Lundy suggests that Henri Bergson's concept of 'intuition' "aims to produce genuinely new knowledge about new and specific problems."<sup>113</sup> Lundy suggests that Bergson had "an alternative kind or sense of clarity when it comes to new ideas."<sup>114</sup> Bergson's concept of intuition cannot easily be verbalised.<sup>115</sup> Bergson writes that "intuition, like all thought, finally becomes lodged in concepts such as duration, qualitative or heterogeneous multiplicity, unconsciousness—even differentiation"<sup>116</sup> Bergson's concept of intuition has been deeply considered in this project. On occasion I have written this word in reference to these thoughts. In other sections I write 'intuition' as meaning —understanding an occurrence instinctively, without reasoning through the process of thought. Bergson's thoughts on intuition are significant to the writings of Massumi and Manning. Massumi discusses the intersections between emergent events and the new when he says "a panoply of before-afters merge into and emerge out of each other, bearers one of the other, folded together by habit. The folding together fuses an infinite continuum of potential crossings and conjunctions, before and afters, into the singularity of an event of perception."<sup>117</sup> He describes this event as where a "kind of feeling is present, an infinitesimal continuation of all feelings differing infinitesimally from that is present."<sup>118</sup>

In applying intuition, I draw on tacit memory and implicit forethought, but I do not know what an image will be, until it is revealed. It can be recognised in reflection as the embodiment of time: old memories of colours and strokes. Every mark, swipe or scratch moves forward in uncertainty and discord into the unknown and latency is revealed. Although it is not evident how the work will unfold, it still occurs in relationship to past experience. It is in the making process that this past experience is manifested, not as predicted or pre-empted, but as emerging when needed or called upon in the moment. Old memories, past

113 Craig Lundy, *Deleuze's Bergsonism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 26.

114 Ibid.

115 Ibid.

116 Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind: Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison (New York: The Philosophical Library<sup>132</sup>, 1946), 23.

117 Massumi, *Semblance and Event*, 95.

118 Ibid.,96.



Figure 22, Drying the charcoal dust prints in the studio for the exhibition *Fielding*, March, 2022.

experiences, and the momentary rush of intuition, emerge in a new guise as the shuddering event.

## 2.5 Binding

My inquiry centres on particles and fluid in motion, but it also incorporates suspending, binding, trussing, smearing, strapping, roping, and mooring this material into images.<sup>119</sup> A shifting methodology must eventually address pauses in movement in the immediate and the continual. In this section I use the idea of *binding* to understand this aspect of my practice.

When particulate matter is mixed into a liquid medium, the result is a viscous colloidal suspension. Viscosity has time attached to it. It pulls and stretches as it slows down yet releases the flow. It is a property within colloids, writes British artist and filmmaker Freddie Mason, which is “a vast array” of “imperceptible mixtures.”<sup>120</sup> Liquids can be dispersed in gases to form liquid aerosols like clouds, mists, hairsprays.<sup>121</sup> And there are solids that can be dispersed in gases.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>119</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed., s.v. “attaching.”

<sup>120</sup> Freddie Mason, *The Viscous: Slime, Stickiness, Fondling, Mixtures* (Punctum Books, 2020), 205.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

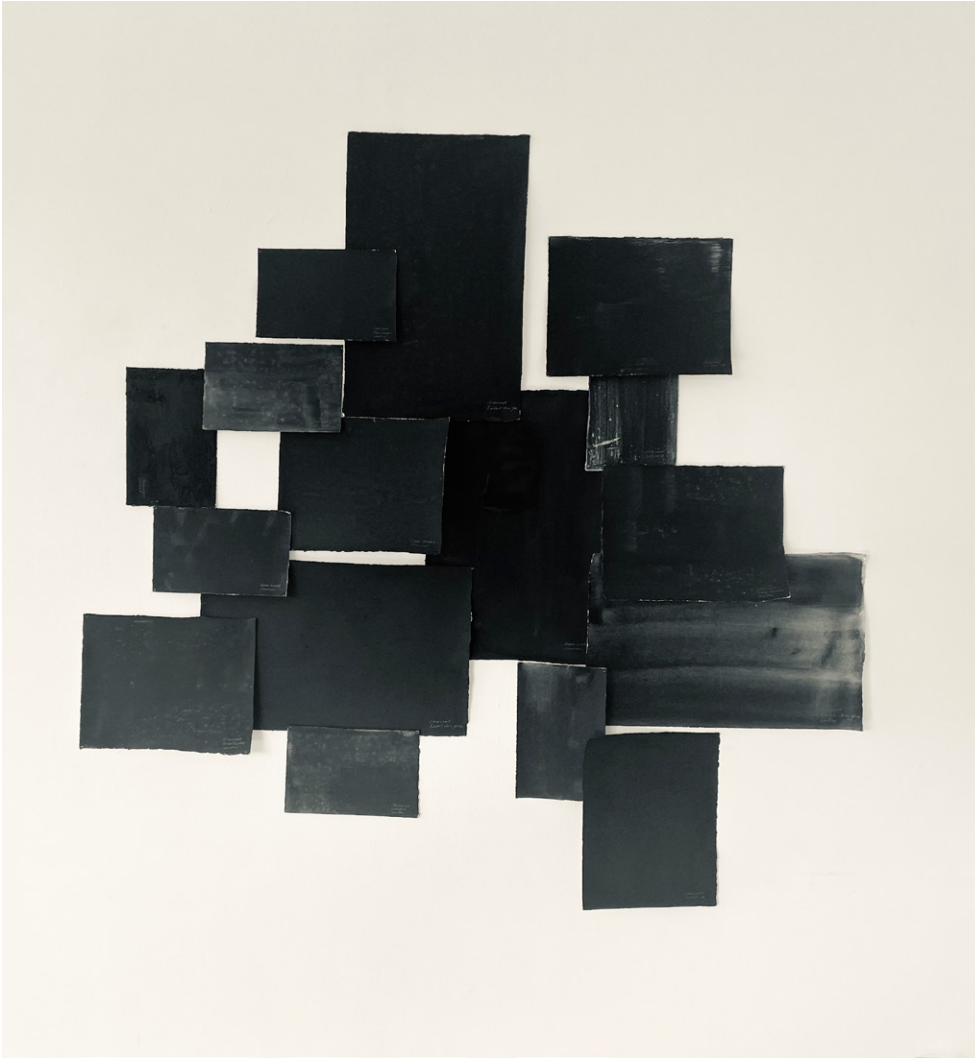


Figure 23. Assemblage of charcoal samples for RM Gallery installation, 2020.

Viscosity is a quality of stickiness due to internal friction in a fluid.<sup>123</sup> Colloidal materials, Mason suggests are often “composed of very fine and even dispersals of one kind of material within another.”<sup>124</sup> Colloidal thinking, Mason says “is collaborative and fluid.” This is prevalent not only in my practice but also in my methodological thinking. For me, this fluidity opens the field to invite new relationships, new information and new thoughts.

In art practice, mixing material into a binding or suspension is often a prelude to depositing it on a surface and attaching it to a substrate. The amount of stretch in the mixture of paint or ink is the amount of viscosity. This viscosity determines whether you can roll out ink onto a wood block smoothly or whether acrylic paint will allow you to blend paint strokes. Paint pigment might be held in a

<sup>123</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed., s.v. “viscosity.”

<sup>124</sup> Freddie Mason, *The Viscous: Slime, Stickiness, Fondling, Mixtures* (Punctum Books, 2020), 203.

colloidal binder—egg white or water, linseed or polymer. In my art practice, I have experimented with a range of binders from boiled linseed oil, walnut oil and latex emulsions to hold charcoal dust. The history of charcoal, as a material to draw images, dates to the earliest human art practice—cave and rock drawings that used animal fat as a binder.

Binding is mixing fluid with solids. As Elkins would say, this is “water and stone”<sup>125</sup> (Section 1.5). I have a fluid and experimental practice. It relies on open-ended, adjustable, variable thought and an intuitive awareness that is always ready and becoming, manifested beyond thought, after many years of art making. The process of making is not just the emergence of events through material agency, it is also allowing the processes to run their course and knowing how and when to act, when to stop. It is guided by activating conditions that allow events to emerge that I do not completely anticipate. This is fluid and it reveals the thrill of the unexpected and the new. As artist Marie Shannon explains, she does not want to make work that she can anticipate<sup>126</sup> (see Section 3.1). If I were to visualise my works in advance, the works would merely illustrate an idea and the final state would be a replication. My works, as temporary bindings, however, can be provisionally closed or released, but are always subject to being shifted and reopened, so they can follow this drift further within flux and perpetual motion.

<sup>125</sup> Elkins, *What Painting Is* 5.

<sup>126</sup> Marie Shannon, interviewed in Sarjeant Gallery Te Whare o Rehua, *Sleeping Near the River and New Works* (Whanganui: Sarjeant Gallery Te Whare o Rehua, 2021), 36.

# CHAPTER 3

## — DARK, FLUID, LIGHT

### 3.1 Affective Resonances

The indeterminate and affective qualities of chalk, charcoal dust and water, as described in this exegesis, manifest conditions of uncertainty, instability of ground and perpetual movement. This chapter attends to my use of these dark materials as well as black aluminium lined pools and stainless-steel tanks, to produce what I term, ‘dark affects.’ These dark affects are considered alongside work of other artists who have explored similar qualities. In Chapters 1 and 2, I have examined how my art making arises from my participation in events that are filled with highly mobile material and atmospheric agencies. These agencies are lively and are distributed over surfaces, drifting and shifting in the event that is full of potential.

At the end of the previous Chapter, I aligned myself with Marie Shannon’s position where to visualise an artwork prior to making—is to fall into illustrating. An essential part of my practice is to open myself to unanticipated occurrences, so the outcome emerges through the making. By working with this shifting methodology, I position my body as a participatory agent that filters, transforms, and yields repeatedly. New work emerges as a shudder (Section 2.4); where something arrests me, pulls my attention and is recognised retrospectively. These materials are metaphors that overflow the work, permeating bodies and environments, and become conduits for intuition and thought.

As conceptualized by Brian Massumi, to be suspended in a semblance and an event is to move backwards and forwards in time, anticipating and reflecting in a continuum of ever-evolving actions as “past, present, future are always co-implicating. They are mutually included in each other.”<sup>127</sup> In making the chalk field work *Suspension I* (figure 24), I evoked a sense of immersion as if hanging or breathing under water, or drifting in time. The work had ‘porous boundaries’



Figure 24, Jill McIntosh, *Suspension I*, 2020, pastel chalk and acrylic paint on paper, 1520 x 1040mm. (Photo V. Baldwin). Reproduced with permission.

as there wasn't a clear separation between media and technique. This was a multi-disciplinary approach where the blending of materials formed something new as experimental work and a hybridity of media.

Later in this chapter, I will discuss the particular semblances and affective qualities of dark matter as darkness, arising directly from land as soils, peat and coal; charred remains of wooden houses and boats; bush burnt in deforestation; and the night sky where we imagine the universe. I will touch on the cosmogenealogical concept of *te kore* in Māori culture, as discussed by Moana Nepia. I turn first, however, to semblances and affects of water.

### 3.2 Semblance of Water

A *semblance* is typically taken to be “the outward appearance or apparent form of something, especially when the reality is different.”<sup>128</sup> For Massumi however, the concept of *semblance* is not about appearance and is “free of the connotations of ‘illusion.’”<sup>129</sup> Massumi draws on the writings of the process philosophers—James, Whitehead, Deleuze, and Manning, among others—to develop his idea of semblance as a description of how art works are event-oriented, relational and interactive, and affective. “Semblance, by whatever name—pure appearances, self-abstracting perceptions, thinking-feelings—occur in so-called natural perception,” writes Massumi.<sup>130</sup>

Art however, “isn't about ‘illusion,’” but rather it is “constructing artifacts—crafted facts of experience.”<sup>131</sup> An art work exists, not as a made object, but as a continuum of ever-evolving actions, sensations, and perceptions that are interrelated, and co-dependent, within the art making/viewing experience. Massumi's notion of semblance describes the experience of sensation in another new dimension. “A semblance in itself is a kind of ‘living in’ of potential,” formed by the ecology of experiences both within the artist and for the viewer.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>128</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed., s.v. “semblance.”

<sup>129</sup> Massumi, *Semblance and Event*, 16.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>132</sup> Massumi, *Semblance and Event*, 58.

Semblance can thresh out our lived abstractions in art practices that are event-oriented and relational in presentation.<sup>133</sup> These abstractions are virtual relations that emerge through processes. Semblance is part of the *in-act* of the event (see Section 1.3). It is not subjective perception but arises out of experiencing the occurrence. Semblance is vital to the event as potential and moves through the trajectory of experience's "in-folding and out-folding" as what has just happened, and what is about to be.<sup>134</sup>

This section will refer to art works by Marie Shannon, New York/Icelandic artist Roni Horn and Icelandic/Danish artist Olafur Eliasson in relation to my reading of Massumi's concept of *semblance*. In looking through the filter of each artists' making, I have come to a greater understanding of my own practice and the understanding of my work as semblances. Through looking at works by these artists I have been able to identify and develop a greater understanding of previously intuitive aspects of my own drawing and painting.

Marie Shannon's practice, processes, and methodologies, weave together the past and present and evoke affective responses. Shannon uses photography to explore themes of memory and identity in relationships that stir sensation. By distancing her viewers and building interiors to form a sense of intimacy, she draws the viewer's attention to the temporality and interiority of spaces (figure 25). In *Sleeping Near the River and New Works*, (exhibited at Trish Clark Gallery in 2021), Shannon plays with shadows and light to convey a sense of sadness, loss or memory. By using text from her diary, she forms empathy between the viewer and the subject, that enables a sense of deep connection. Shannon was the artist-in-residence at the Tylee Cottage in Whanganui for three months. The cottage is near the mouth of the Whanganui River, where her images were taken. Her video footage and photographs of the river were paired in the exhibition with photographs of paper models as abstractions of the domestic environment of the cottage where she lived.

Shannon writes, "I deliberately didn't want to come up with a picture in my head of the work I would end up with," and that she "didn't want to make work that

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 59.

followed a thread from the last work I had made.”<sup>135</sup> For Shannon, this requires stepping into the unknown, allowing the work to unravel through the process. In the exhibition, *Sleeping Near the River and New Works*, Shannon constructed models of the cottage and lit these from behind, before carefully photographing them (figure 25).



Figure 25, Marie Shannon, *Upstairs Window*, 2021, archival digital inkjet print, 577 x 760mm. From the exhibition *Sleeping Near the River and New Works*, (Photo by author) (Photo © Marie Shannon. Reproduced with permission).

The light and dark draws the viewer into a sense of something and nothingness, a feeling of both recognition and disconcertion. The quality is uncanny. Shannon has formed a dreamscape where the viewer is drawn into a subliminal state of consciousness. This dream space is abstract, the use of space, metaphorical, and the photographs place the viewer in this zone. The scale architectural models are painted in luminous pale layers.<sup>136</sup> The materiality of the models is distinct—a viewer can see cardboard edges and paint strokes—yet the affect is transporting. The models and photographs show internal spaces, an emptiness, personal memorabilia twinkled out to open a space for reflection.

<sup>135</sup> Marie Shannon, interviewed in Sarjeant Gallery Te Whare o Rehua, *Sleeping Near the River*, 36.

<sup>136</sup> Marie Shannon in an interview with Greg Donson from Sarjeant Gallery Te Whare o Rehua, Whanganui. Exhibition Catalogue for *Sleeping Near the River and New Works* (Whanganui: Sarjeant Gallery Te Whare o Rehua, 2021), 36.

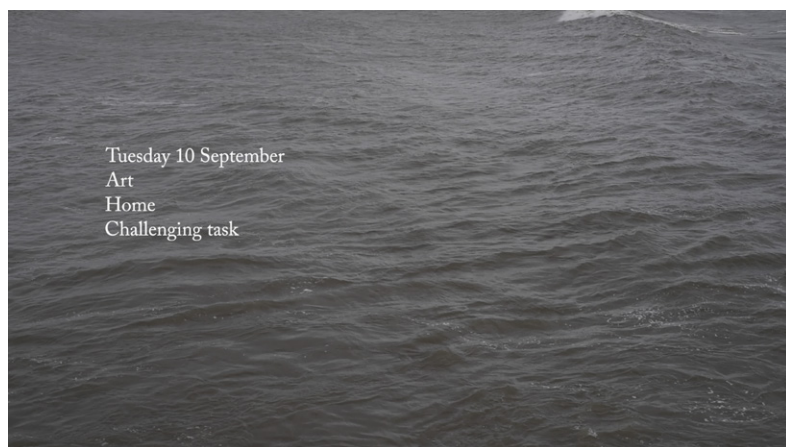


Figure 26, Marie Shannon, *Sleeping Near the River*, 2021, digital video still (photo by author). (Photo © Marie Shannon). Reproduced with permission.

The accompanying video work of the Whanganui River has a dreamlike quality that is mesmerising (figure 26). Text, breath, and water all flow and mingle as if sleeping in a suspended state. The video shows the surface of the turbulent mouth of the Whanganui River overplaying a distant, disconnected voice and sounds of breathing, alongside text from Shannon’s daily diary.<sup>137</sup> This evokes a dreamlike state in the viewer, as you imagine what is underneath the voice—underneath the water surface. The moving image was recorded where the fresh water of the river meets the Tasman Sea and shows the rhythmical movement of the outgoing and incoming tide. In this absorbing event, the movement of river becomes subliminal. It is this intersensory presentation of everyday experiences, the movement of the tide and latent memories, that evokes a sense of otherness and dreamtime. Shannon draws the viewer in, as random text from her diary becomes a voice in the viewer’s head. The continual flow of the river draws the viewer down into her depths of contemplation. I am drawn to the internality in Shannon’s work.

In a conversation with Shannon in 2023, she described the video in her 2021 exhibition: “I observed the river at the North Mole, where it meets the sea, in a number of different weather and tide conditions, and discovered that in an outgoing tide and a westerly wind, the waves came up the river and the river was flowing down to the sea, creating a weaving of movement in the two directions.”<sup>138</sup> The “waves form but don’t break, they just roll up the river, and there is a central

<sup>137</sup> The New Zealand government passed an unprecedented law in 2017, declaring the Whanganui River to have personhood status – a living whole – from the mountains to the sea incorporating her physical and spiritual elements. <https://natlib.govt.nz/he-tohu/learning/social-inquiry-resources/cultural-interaction>

<sup>138</sup> Marie Shannon, conversation with author, April 27, 2023.

current flowing against them that you may not notice at first, but it stops the movement being decisively right to left.”<sup>139</sup> Here Shannon explores the concept of duration and the hiatus of a suspension. The forces surged from different sources and rendered the intersection almost motionless. They were active in the colliding of the equally powerful currents yet they were unable to progress until the tide turned or the current in the river subsided. Shannon suggests that the overlaid texts on the moving images in the exhibition contributed to an observational detachment to the event “as they are presented as isolated vignettes of narrative, that are not explained, contextualised or analysed, just reported in an observational way.”<sup>140</sup>

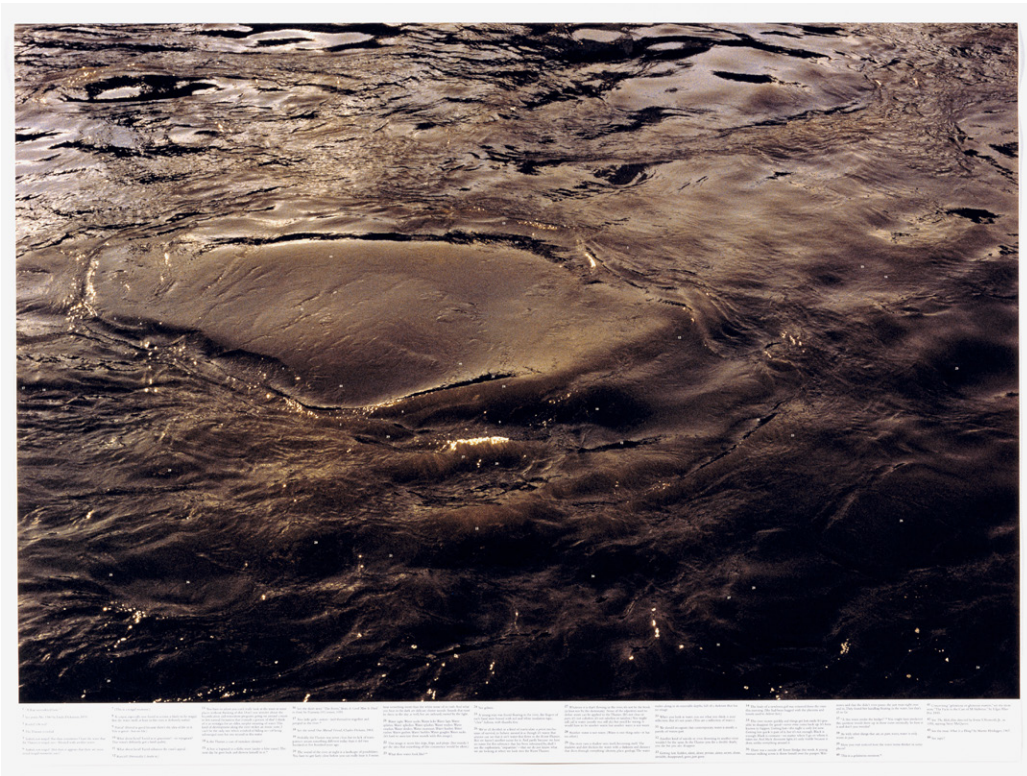


Figure 27, Roni Horn, *Still Water (the River Thames for Example)*, 1999. Photo by author. Reproduced with permission of Tate Gallery.

New York artist, Roni Horn shares Shannon’s interest in deep waters. Her photographs hold atmospheric qualities, and are affective in a way that is difficult to identify. This ambiguity can be unsettling for viewers, but it also invites the viewer to engage with the images in an active way. Horn photographed the

139 Ibid.

140 Marie Shannon, conversation with author, April 27, 2023.

Thames River in a project called *Still Water (The River Thames, for Example)* (1999). The photographs were printed in a series of fifteen lithographs featuring the subtle variations in light movement on the watery surface (figure 27). The water's surface appeared to be thick and sculptural: deep and dark, with burnished colours on the surface. Horn writes that “talking about the weather is talking about oneself,” as the forces of nature flow through us and past us.<sup>141</sup>

In Shannon's photographs the river draws you into its murky depths and you can only imagine what is beneath. Horn also explores weather, climate change, water, time, perception, identity, and an uncertainty in time and place. Her work looks at ways in which identity is shaped by perception. It reflects the forces of nature as powerful external events but also suggests that they simultaneously exist within us.



Figure 28, Roni Horn, *Vathasafn /Library of Water*, 2007. Installation, Stykkisholmur, Iceland. Photo © Stefan Altenburger. Reproduced with permission from Artangel.

Horn is an environmental art activist. In 2007 an installation in a library building in Stykkisholmur, Iceland, was commissioned from Horn, titled *Vatnasafn/Library of Water in 2007* (figure 28).<sup>142</sup> This was installed as an assemblage of large glass vials of water collected from Icelandic glaciers, physically preserving samples of

<sup>141</sup> Roni Horn, “Weather Reports You: An Introduction by Roni Horn; A Collective Self-Portrait,” *Artangel*, February 15, 2007, <https://www.artangel.org.uk/library-of-water/writing-weather-reports-you/>.

<sup>142</sup> “Weather Reports You: An Introduction by Roni Horn; A Collective Self-Portrait,” *Artangel*, February 15, 2007, <https://www.artangel.org.uk/library-of-water/writing-weather-reports-you/>.

the thundering rivers and frozen glaciers.<sup>143</sup> This was a slice of a geographical/geological moment captured as evidence of change. One of these glaciers was subsequently declared dead in 2014.<sup>144</sup> The *Library of Water* is formed from large curved glass pillars that contain water samples mirroring the surrounding external landscape, a reminder of our threatened ecologies.

These vials are luminous, reflecting the light within the library and the movement of the sun and clouds outside the windows. The glass is so highly reflective that they catch the light from the windows and the weather outside—cylinders are full of water and full of light.<sup>145</sup>

The cylinders mirror the viewer and the environment together. When you look into the surface you are captured in a momentary portrait revealing the theme of ‘identity’ that is explored in Horn’s photographs. *When You See Your Reflection in Water, Do You Recognize the Water in You?* was the title of Horn’s exhibition at the Pola Museum of Art in Hakone, Japan, in 2022. Another artwork by Horn is: *Untitled* (“*A Dream Dreamt in a Dreaming World Is Not Really a Dream... But a Dream Not Dreamt Is*”).

Danish/Icelandic artist; Olafur Eliasson, also explores semblances of our natural environment through light and water. In *Beauty*, 1993, (figure 29) he suspended a water spray bar under the ceiling, which released small drops of water in a sheet that was poured into a grill below and cycled back with a pump.<sup>146</sup> Light was shone from the side to illuminate, refract, and form a rainbow; luminous against the gallery space. The fluidity (falling water and drifts of vapour), the light, and the recycling of the water formed an enticing experience. Eliasson was not inventing an image of world around us but showing us what is here. This semblance has an unfolding and enfolding of perception, matter, the artist’s imaginings, and the environment. Horn, Shannon, and Eliasson each explore semblances of light and water. Astrida Neimanus (discussed in Section 1.5)

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> “Weather Reports You: An Introduction by Roni Horn; A Collective Self-Portrait,” *Artangel*, February 15, 2007, <https://www.artangel.org.uk/library-of-water/writing-weather-reports-you/>.

<sup>146</sup> Olafur Eliasson, *Beauty*, 1993, was re-exhibited the Tate Modern Gallery in 2019. <https://olafureliasson.net/artwork/beauty-1993/>



Figure 29, Olafur Eliasson, *Beauty*, 1993, installation. Spotlight, water, nozzles, wood, hose, pump. Dimensions variable. Tate Modern Gallery, London, (Photo © by Anders Sune Berg.) Tate Images license permission. Courtesy of the artist; neugerriemschneider, Berlin; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York / Los Angeles © 1993 Olafur Eliasson

suggests, that in a very literal way, “we are the watery world—metonymically, temporarily, partially and particularly. Water irrigates us, sustains us, comprises the bulk of our soupy flesh.”<sup>147</sup> Water reminds us of our fishy origins, of the muted sound, the smooth sticky water along our sides, the mesmerising reflections, and inky depths. Water has a symbiotic relationship with light (both in our ecosystem and art practice) through movement, reflective qualities, mirroring, and diffraction—which form affective resonances. Water and particulate carbon, manifested as reflections and imaginings, instigate and reflect flux, change, and permeability in the world around us. They are key participants in global warming, metaphorically suggesting global immersion, and the simultaneous absorbency and expulsion of fluid in our bodies. Water has a temporality, yet is a constant in our world in some form, through changing and shifting. Imaginings of our watery world are highlighted by the writings by Neimanus, and are a semblance that embodies ‘flow’ in this art practice.

This connects conceptually and affectively with suspension and fluidity, through sensation. There is an uncertainty in the weather and in these watery worlds. This is not just about the mutability of water, but also how water places us in

147 Neimanus, *Bodies of Water*, 27.

relationship to semblances as lived in potential. These abstractions are relational and occur within the artist by permeating our perception and imaginings. Semblances that occur in our natural perception are interactive, and have affective resonances. Water is transparent when in liquid form. It moves and plays together with light to bounce multiple, ever-changing reflections. It can be a small droplet in steam, rain, or mist, capable of dividing light, or a dense volume that has force and depth that cannot be contained.

And what is this surge of the stupendous and quasi un-nameable entity, where un-numbered amounts of bubbles unbreakably bound to each other make a eulogy for smallness while creating the maddening form of an elusive infinity?<sup>148</sup>

### 3.3 A Bath and a Pond

A bath is a container of water. A bath is also an “act or process of immersing,” which is a field of allegorical reference and thought in this project.<sup>149</sup> Bathing implies embodiment, soaking, immersion; while a pond appears to be still, held or dammed up.<sup>150</sup> A pond may move slightly in a breeze but it is contained and the water is in a suspension. A bath, pond or tank responds in relation to the surrounding forces—the weather, temperature, wind, and light. I recall the thoughts of Tania Kovats when she says “I want my work to speak to our liquid selves, the part of our identities that is fluid and shifting and hard to hold.”<sup>151</sup>

As does Horn, I am bringing the outside in. In the exhibition *Fielding* in 2022 light shone through the gel filters mounted on the windows and projected into the pond, the gallery walls, and the floors (figure 30).

<sup>148</sup> Adnan, *Sea and Fog*, 10.

<sup>149</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed., s.v. “bath.”

<sup>150</sup> Tania Kovats, interviewed in “Mediating between Nature and Self: An Interview with Richard Bright,” *Interalia Magazine*, April 2018, <https://www.interaliomag.org/interviews/tania-kovats/>.

<sup>151</sup> Mariele Neudecker, interviewed in David Trigg, “Marielle Neudecker: The Contemporary Sublime,” *Seisma Magazine*, May 5, 2022, <https://seismamag.com/visual-fine-art/marielle-neudecker>.



Figure 30, Jill McIntosh, *Fields of Matter*, installation, 2022.

The pond was a shallow water container that held material and threw reflections from the windows, mirroring the surroundings so that the gallery viewer became a participant in the event, caught in the reflections and coloured by light. As I spread the particulate material over the water, clumps sank or rose to form a greasy residue slick from the cellulose component of the charred wood. This waterborne matter moved as the cellulose reacted and the sun warmed the room. The charcoal, graphite and pastel chalk placed on the water surface, floated or sank to the bottom, some remaining suspended in the solution. The pond was in familiar proportions to the spatial and bodily experience of the artist and viewer. A field of relationships is activated—weather, temperature, body and breeze, intersected with art materials in a relational entanglement (figure 31).

An ambiguity between depth and shadow in the pond was experienced in the encounter. The matte black, light-absorbent aluminium lining allowed the



Figure 31, Jill McIntosh, *Thought in Act*, 2022, charcoal and dust on water.

material to float without adding another reflective level. As I dispersed the dust over the surface, the cellulose in the charcoal swelled, and small chemical reactions occurred as dust particles bonded and formed a skin. Particles floated—partly because they were virtually weightless and partly through the binding of the cellulose. There is an ecology of experiences involved in making artworks, experimenting, experiencing, exploring the agency of materials that shift and bind, and overlaying metaphor on processes.

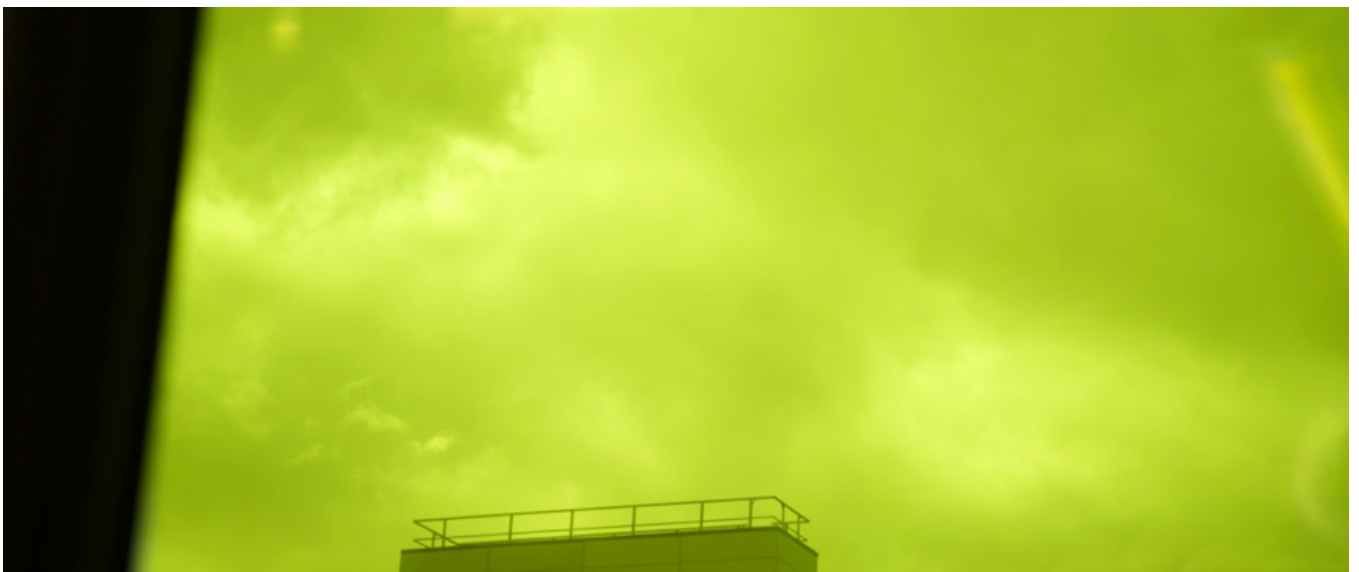


Figure 32, Jill McIntosh, *Fielding: Active in Variation*, 2022, yellow gel on window. Photo © F. Cahill. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 33, Jill McIntosh, *Fielding: Thought In Act*, 2022, (detail) dust, debris and moth on water.

My experiments with water and art materials began in 2004-6, when I worked with large clear plastic lined ponds supported by PVC pipe, filled with water, onto which I sprayed paint. My intention was to shift the ground that I was working on from canvas or paper to the highly mobile surface of water. I followed this idea through lifting paint skins off the surface (figure 34).

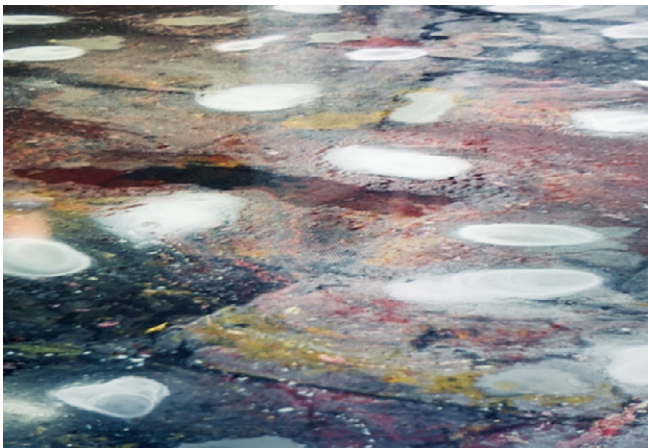


Figure 34, Jill McIntosh, *Untitled*, 2006, spray paint on water.

In 2020, in an installation in St Paul Street Gallery 3, I developed this idea by using the water surface to suspend particulate matter and I designed, and had manufactured, a shallow stainless steel tank. The tank was suspended off the ground by wooden bearers which were not visible, so that the tank seemed to float off the floor (figure 35).

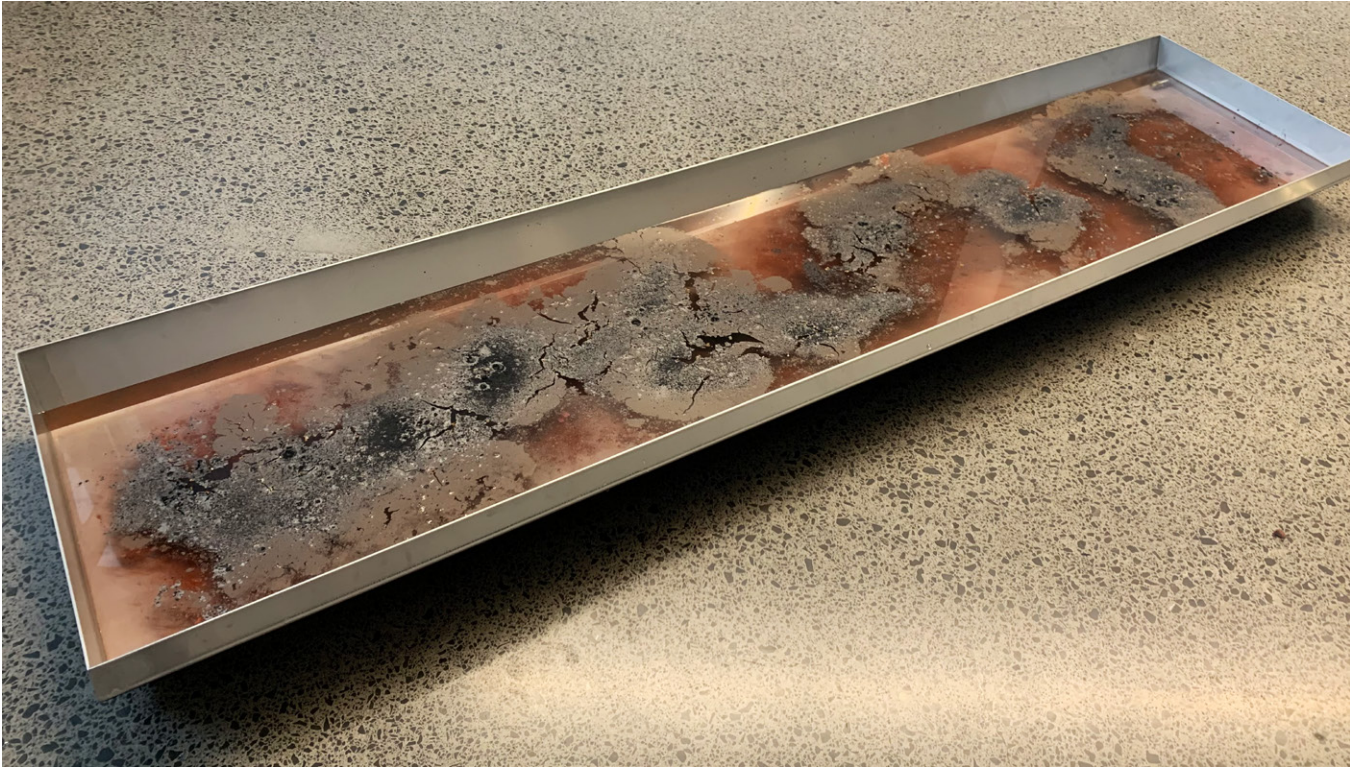


Figure 35, Jill McIntosh, *Untitled*, 2020, charcoal, graphite, debris in stainless-steel tank. Part of *Fluid Suspension* exhibition.

In 2021 I began working again with the domestic bath—this time with charcoal dust. Initially I swathed the bath in cloth but I found that this repelled the material at the edges (figure 36).



Figure 36. Bath tub experiments in 2021.

Later, in 2021, I explored the relationship between water, light and darkness on the wall in *Outside in Me*, The Barrel Store, CEAC, Henderson, Auckland. In reference to the mid-century artist Hans Haacke, I made a clear plastic container (figure 37).



Figure 37, Jill McIntosh, *Light on Water*, 2022 installation. Photo © F. Cahill. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 38, Jill McIntosh, *Light/Water/Life*, 2021, installation. Photo © F. Cahill. Reproduced with permission.

Although I was holding water and plants in ponds, I felt that the enclosed plastic holder turned the plant into a specimen—a detached object captured for scientific exploration. This was at odds with my desire to blur the boundaries of liquid and matter. I decided that shallow ponds suited my idea that plants, water, and material had potential and agency to move, grow, and overflow onto other surfaces.

In this exhibition I installed spotlights over a water pond (figure 38) and floated water plants to evoke the natural world and to draw on the natural relationship between plant life, water and light.

For artist Mariele Neudecker, water tanks initially referenced the Victorian fascination with snow globes (1990s). They were small interiorities, “entangled in ideological intricacies and post-Romantic discourse.”<sup>152</sup> Although the daughter of a science teacher (and fascinated by our geological, geographical, and chemical world) her enquiries were initially a search for contemporary manifestations of the sublime. As her practice developed, she investigated “the nature of perception,” and “our relationship to landscape, and how we have inner worlds.”

In the 2000s Neudecker’s practice expanded to encompass our climate crisis. The submerged landscapes came to represent deadly underwater futures. In (figure 39) two glass spheres are filled with water and salt, then sealed by an upside

<sup>152</sup> Mariele Neudecker is interviewed by David Trigg. “Marielle Neudecker: The Contemporary Sublime,” *Seisma Magazine*, 5 May 2022. <https://seismamag.com/visual-fine-art/marielle-neudecker>

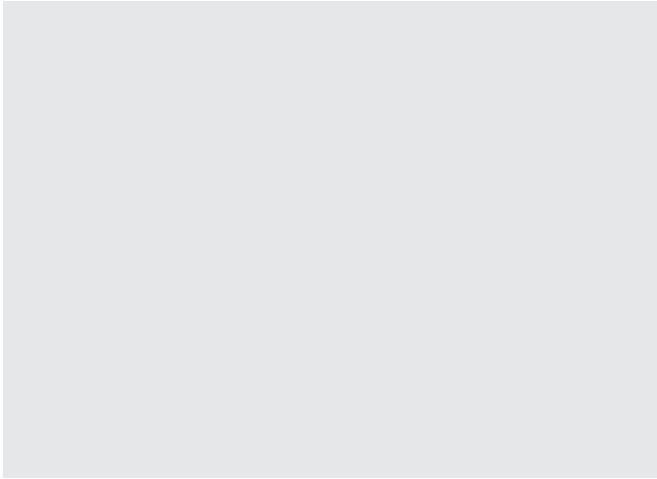


Figure 39, Mariele Neudecker, *400 Thousand Generations*, 2009, multimedia installation, Exhibited in “eARTh: Art in a Changing World,” Royal Academy of Arts, London. Photo © Mariele Neudecker and Thomas Rehbein Galerie. Image removed for copyright reasons. This can be viewed at: <https://seismamag.com/visual-fine-art/mariele-neudecker>

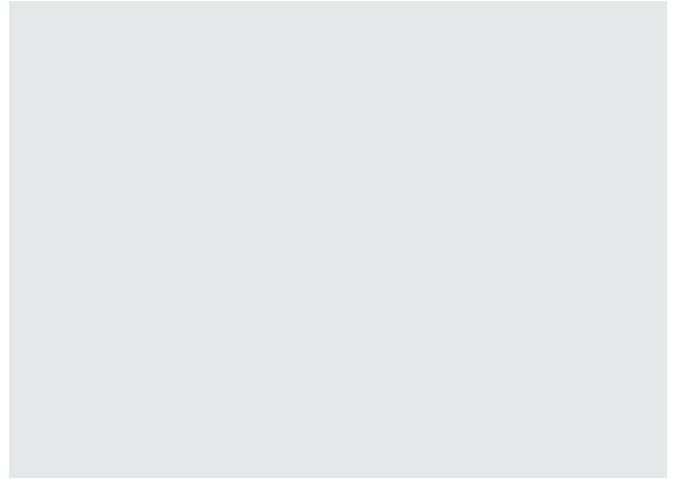


Figure 40, Mariele Neudecker, *And Then The World Changed Colour; Breathing Yellow*, 2019, mixed media: glass, water, salt, plastic. Commissioned by Dulwich Picture Gallery. Photo by Benjamin Jones, © Galleria Pedro Cera, Lisbon. Image removed for copyright reasons. This can be viewed at: <https://seismamag.com/visual-fine-art/mariele-neudecker>

down model of a mountain to reference the snow globe but also to explore our perception and our apprehension around our future world.

Through the 1990’s Neudecker constructed her miniature, watery, subterranean worlds as small internal landscapes, submerged in liquid by muddied waters to show mist, fog, and atmospheric effects. These works gradually changed over time in relation to the environments they were set in.

As Neudecker, experienced the effects of climate change, icebergs and other fragile landscapes emerged in her watery globes. She said, “I am thinking about current questions and politics when I make these works, and inevitably the iceberg piece confronts viewers,” as “it is important to intrigue, inspire, and maybe even agitate people.”<sup>153</sup> Neudecker has maintained her interest in the curiosity and interiority of the globes and, as with Shannon and Horn, she is concerned with perception, affective materials, and our alarm about the future of our planet.

Ponds are semblances of water and light. They are interactive, inter-relational, immersive and always in perpetual change. They open the minor interstices uniquely embedded in relationships and occasions around them. I am suggesting that each part of imagining and making is a process that is punctuated by a

153 Mariele Neudecker, interviewed in David Trigg, “Marielle Neudecker: The Contemporary Sublime,” *Seisma Magazine*, May 5, 2022, <https://seismamag.com/visual-fine-art/mariele-neudecker>.

relational event. Manning claims, that *events* are “movement-moved is never twice the same: it is always altered by the ecologies that create this singular field of relation.”<sup>154</sup> As with Eliasson, in the work *Beauty*, (Section 3.2), he is not creating an image of a world around us, but showing us what is already here.

### 3.4 Suspension in Perception

In her article *States of Suspension*, literary scholar and environmentalist Stacy Alaimo refers to the post-humanist position, where our human-centric decision-making is experiencing radical challenges. Alaimo, like Neimanus (see Section 1.5) and the artists discussed above (Section 3.2), reflects on our watery existence, not only on our human origins in evolution, but as watery bodies of fluid, moving in the stream of life. This perception of our world is one which is beyond our control: a whirling, turbulent, meteorological phenomena within which, although we feel disembodied, we maintain our sensing bodies. Water is a literal substance that runs through, around, over, and past us; and is also a metaphor for living, working, and feeling within these field of events.

Perception is our ability to be aware of an occurrence through our senses and is the way an action or event is interpreted or understood. This can be an intuitive understanding or an insight.<sup>155</sup> Perception is essentially abstract. When we see a box, we don't have to go around the back of it to know it has three dimensions. A *semblance*, however, takes the perceived abstraction of the box and elevates it by suspending it with potential. Massumi suggests that “an object is a semblance to the extent that we think-feel things like its backedness, volume, and weight.”<sup>156</sup> By experiencing the world through perception and the senses of our bodies, we gain a greater understanding. Deleuze suggests that “painting gives us eyes all over,” by saying our senses perform not just through our eyes but through our bodily response to sound and touch.<sup>157</sup> Massumi argues that perception is not just vision:

<sup>154</sup> Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, 19.

<sup>155</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed., s.v. “perception.”

<sup>156</sup> Brian Massumi, “The Thinking-Feeling of What Happens: A Semblance of a Conversation,” *Inflexions: A Journal for Research Creation*, no.1 (2008), [http://www.inflexions.org/n1\\_massumihtml.html](http://www.inflexions.org/n1_massumihtml.html).

<sup>157</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans., by Daniel W. Smith (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 45

to get an emergent figure, you need to add senses other than vision. In particular, touch and proprioception, the registering of the displacements of body parts relative to each other. Say a varying complex of light-lines comes to the eye with a change in proprioception. Intersensory conjunction: the first complex of moving light-lines segues into another. With the new complex comes a feeling from an outstretched hand: intersensory conjunction.<sup>158</sup>

Eliasson investigates this “intersensory conjunction” in our perception. In *Beauty* (figure 29), he creates a wet misty waterfall (see Section 3.2).<sup>159</sup> We experience this through our eyes, our ears, the moist atmosphere on our skins, the position of our body, and our ensuing movement. By disorienting our multi-sensory perception and unsettling the eye, an unease is evoked in the viewer, which enfolds uncertainty, intensity, wonder, and affect. Our senses perceive the event as it unfolds: we are wet by the mist, our ears hear water, our eyes see a curtain of water spray, and they also see a rainbow. We can understand how it is made without moving all around it, but the most overpowering sensation is one of awe. This is awe experienced in the beauty and awe in the cleverness of Eliasson. He was able to bring to the gallery all the rainbows of the world; each one met with pleasure and surprise. And this is semblance, as it is not just perception and feeling but a knowing of the past and the potential.

In the studio, as a scene of artmaking, my actions reflect the perception that the world and our sense of ourselves in it is fluid. Sensing, perception, and thoughts, are shaped as in-active events (see Section 1.3). The matter I work with exists in relation to all other matter, human and non-human, without boundaries. Perception also implicates time, fragility, memory, change, and flux. Our lives are suspended between past and present. Often dislocated from our places of birth, we find our identities are suspended between our memory of ourselves and that imposed by our situations.

In Section 3.2, Shannon describes her filming of the Whanganui river (figure 26), as a “dynamic but unresolved movement,” where she needs to “hold the viewer” or carry them.<sup>160</sup> She discusses how the waves from the incoming tide roll over the

<sup>158</sup> Massumi, *Semblance and Event*, 95.

<sup>159</sup> Olafur Eliasson, *Beauty*, 1993, at the Tate Modern Gallery. <https://olafureliasson.net/artwork/beauty-1993/>

<sup>160</sup> In conversation with Marie Shannon, 27 April, 2023.

incoming current of the river. Where the tide and the river current meet “it stops the movement being decisively right or left.”<sup>161</sup> There is a hiatus, a suspension in the movement as two forces meet in equal strength. Rather than the work of an agent acting on inert matter, I see my relation to my artmaking too as dynamic but unresolved, held or carried but not stationary.

I perceive that a degree of anxiety and uncertainty exists in our society around the speed of change; increasingly economic hardship caused by exponential growth in the world population; the global diminishing of resources and climate change. This uncertainty can be felt as a suspension, as an inability to determine our actions, as a hiatus or the feeling of being caught in a flooded river unable to find a shore. Alaimo in response to this social anxiety, argues for a conception of *trans-corporeality* which is the “posthumanist sense of the human as substantially and perpetually interconnected with flows of substances and the agencies of environments,” and where “a human subject finds herself in a swirling landscape of uncertainty.”<sup>162</sup>

“Uncertainty produces an affective change in the situation,” suggests Massumi.<sup>163</sup> It shifts the dynamic and creates a space for new events to emerge. Massumi suggests that *uncertainty* creates a manoeuvrability, as in “all living things, the autonomization of relation is effected by a centre of indetermination (a localised or organism-wide function of resonance that delinearizes causality in order to relinearize it with a change of direction).”<sup>164</sup> He suggests

the point of art is that it is in inventive *continuity with* natural perception. Every art object works by tapping into a certain aspect of ‘natural’ perception in order to re-abstract it, so that some actual potentials that were there are suspended while others that tended not to appear before, or even had never appeared before, are bought out.<sup>165</sup>

This is percept/affect/concept in process. It occurs to me that in working with water and darkness, I might be working with the suspended perception of an unstable ground. It is this uncertainty and precariousness, that opens the space

161 Ibid.

162 Stacy Alaimo, *States of Suspension*, 1-3.

163 Massumi, *Politics of Affect*, 11.

164 Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 37.

165 Massumi, *Semblance and Event*, 57.

for the new and semblances in my art project. The perception of uncertainty is an intuitive understanding, and feels like an insight into our world. Through my art practice I am seeking the capacity to gain a greater and deeper understanding of this sensation. By working with the volatile surface of water as my ground, in the bath prints and the pond installations, I am searching for an understanding of instability, transition, and change.

It is abstraction that suspends inherent potentials. In an interview with The Institute for Unstable Media, Massumi explains that we need to “get past the idea that form is ever fixed, that there is any such thing as a stable form”<sup>166</sup> Massumi suggests that this is just as relevant to traditional art making practices of painting and sculpture. “The idea that there is fixed form is actually as much an assumption about perception as it is an assumption about art.”<sup>167</sup> He says that vision and perception are in movement and are dynamic for a “transparent registering of something that is just there, simply and inertly. If vision is stable, then in order to make art dynamic, you have to add movement. But if vision is already dynamic, the question changes. It’s not an issue of movement or no movement. The movement is always there.”<sup>168</sup>

Death withdraws from the plains that lead to the sea. The latter turns me into a mass of beneficial water where the heavy bird of heat tests its wings. I'm letting go. The entering fog is eager for human presence. Not a stranger, not a pause.<sup>169</sup>

166 Massumi, “The Thinking-Feeling of What Happens” An interview, *Inflexions Magazine*. No.1, 2008. [http://www.inflexions.org/n1\\_massumihtml.html](http://www.inflexions.org/n1_massumihtml.html)

167 Ibid.

168 Massumi, “The Thinking-Feeling of What Happens.”

169 Adnan, *Sea and Fog*, 5.

### 3.5 The Minor

Perception and possibility can be inherently political. This section refers to Erin Manning’s book *The Minor Gesture*, which uses the critical concept of *the minor* to discuss possibilities for *transformative* action.<sup>170</sup> Massumi describes our world as in constant movement, and art as in constant movement, but not all movements are able to be perceived immediately (and some not at all). It is in *the minor* act that secondary indication occurs; in the event—dismissed for its subtlety and light strength. “The major is a structural tendency that organises itself according to predetermined definitions of value. *The minor* is a force that courses through it, unmooring its structural integrity, problematising its normative standards.”<sup>171</sup>

In my practice I find myself searching between occurrences and this has become a methodology; looking for the minor. The major is easily identified; we know what this is, as it is clear and articulated, but with further exploration the effects of the minor event come to the fore as less recognised forces, less determined but possibly more significant than the major. A shifting methodology, through continually slipping and seeking variation, opens the minor gesture.

Manning says that the force of an event is within *the minor*, as it is not bound by pre-existing conditions, as this is where change, variation and flux occurs. She suggests that “it is the minoritarian tendencies that initiate the subtle shifts that be created the conditions for this and any change.”<sup>172</sup> This is about finding ways to live differently, think and make in variation. In investigating an event it is often the conditions.<sup>173</sup> What will happen next?

*The minor* can be seen in the work of Algerian artist Lydia Ourahmane. For her *limbo* is a state of waiting, where you can get relief from suffering; not purgatory but a pause.<sup>174</sup> Her practice explores the minor in the form of interstices, small

<sup>170</sup> Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, 1. Manning’s writings on the minor are “allied to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s concept of the Minor.”

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, 1.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Kunsthalle Basel, “Lydia Ourahmane, in Conversation with Elena Filipovic,” February 24, 2021, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z09DPGq3XAo>.



Figure 41, Lydia Ourahmane, *Barzakh (Limbo)*, 2021. Views of installation at SMAK. (Photos © Dirk Powels).  
Reproduced with permission. (Photographs supplied by Lydia Ourahmane).

spaces and secondary rifts. In 2020, Ourahmane moved to Tangiers and found an apartment to live in. The apartment had been vacated by a previous tenant who was now deceased. The apartment was exactly as the tenant had left it. Books were open, tea cups still sat on the table. All the owners possessions including bedlinen and crockery, so Ourahmane just started using them, slotting her own possessions around them, so as not to disrupt the existing scene. In 2022, she moved all the contents of the apartment to a gallery in Switzerland. This included the front door, which she reassembled at the Kunsthalle Museum in Basel as an installation, *Barzakh: Limbo*, (2021).

The installation was a mix of items belonging to the artist and those belong to the deceased tenant. Ourahmane initially hesitated in shifting the items owned by the past tenant. She perceived moving the items as erasing the traces of her

cares, habits, preferences and perceptions. This was material matter left behind by the deceased. In moving these in the same configuration into the museum, Ourahmane reflected on the process of death, the decisions people make about what to keep, what to sell, or what to throw away. The spirit of the apartment had passed and all that was left was traces of a life through material aspects. Viewers in the museum were invited to participate in the installation, to open drawers, read books and move objects. Ourahmane contemplated how she felt when the audience had the agency to disrupt the arrangements of these objects she had placed.

When objects are moved into a gallery “the armour comes off and you can see the flesh underneath.”<sup>175</sup> The confronting part of the process for Ourahmane was unpacking the relocated objects and re-reading them in their shifted state. As the artist, she added layers to the instalment—lasers to disrupt the space and hand blown glass containers to house listening devices and replay recorded sound. Movement of bodies around the gallery space created further disruption as the lasers sound was transmitted and interrupted by people walking through them. This implicated the body of the viewer. The works were in ‘limbo,’ suspended in a state of anticipation (figure 41).<sup>176</sup>

Literary scholar and cultural theorist, Lauren Berlant, theorises that often we feel a “sense of precariousness”—a fear that “hard work, thrift, and following the rules won’t give us” a happy life or a happy ending and that this causes anxiety and uncertainty within us.<sup>177</sup> Unknown events, as part of an evolutionary inevitability, are experienced through intuition and sensation and this can give us the feeling of walking into a tunnel of darkness where there are no stable reference points.

Columbian artist Oscar Muñoz reveals *the minor* through a theme of ‘absence and presence,’ and notably uses the fluid, unstable conditions of water and particulate matter to do so. Muñoz’ work represents the fragility of life, the temporality, and

175 Kunsthalle Basel, “Lydia Ourahmane, in Conversation with Elena Filipovic,” February 24, 2021, video.

176 Ibid.

177 Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, (Durham:Duke University Press, 2011)

the fading memories of what has occurred within his physical environment.

Columbian art curator, Jose Roca describes this as the:

ephemeral and unstable image of Muñoz' works, always oscillating between presence and absence, is paradoxically more efficient as a memorial or a monument, since it addresses poetically the ephemeral nature of human existence, memory and history. His work transcends the specific anecdote, as well as the particular and defined historical fact, to allude to the human condition and the ephemerality and fugacity of life itself, to an immemorial memory that harks back to the origins of time.<sup>178</sup>



Figure 42, Oscar Muñoz, *Narciso en proceso*, 1996/2007/2012. Coal dust over, water, paper and plexiglass – 9 pieces, 50 x 50 x 10cm. Reproduced courtesy of the artist and Sicardi Ayers Bacino. © Oscar Muñoz

His time related works “are the result of charcoal dust sifted through a photo-serigraphic screen [which] has been prepared with a photographic self-portrait of the artist onto the surface of a container full of water.”<sup>179</sup> The charcoal floats precariously on the water, disturbed by movement, then settles, disappearing all but for the material residue at the bottom. The image has been suspended, paused in the water before it disintegrates and is remembered. This indeterminate event is without boundaries yet evokes a continuity through memory (figure 42). This is a minor temporal gesture, sifting the image of a face with charcoal onto water, allowing this to disperse and settle to the bottom of the basin. This

<sup>178</sup> José Roca, “José Roca on Óscar Muñoz,” *Philagrafika*, 2008, <http://www.philagrafika.org/pdf/WS/Working-States-Munoz.pdf>.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

small act, however, highlights intensely important socio-political occurrences in Columbia—the missing people, the looming fear of death in this volatile country, and the transience of life.

Precarity, indeterminacy, and darkness, are often associated with environmental death as well as the death of individuals. Philosopher Rosi Braidotti suggests that we need to see death as part of our awareness of our own mortality and that this is not a reversal of the human nonhuman status. She says, “reversals miss the point of how relationality works: the porous boundaries, the flows and incessant exchange of information at all levels between the humans and their multiple non-human environments.”<sup>180</sup>

To take leave from the moon and go in deeper night. On its other side, to encounter being. Spiritual fields of attraction. Immateriality.<sup>181</sup>

### 3.6 Dark Affects

This section concerns the visual perception of blackness as an affective analogy for time, space and semblance and a way to activate a politics of *the minor*. Blackness evokes sensation through the sense of a void and the inability to see a ground, but it is also spatial and has a temporality. Darkness and light, carbon and water occur in my practice through my use of black paint and charcoal, black aluminium lined pools and stainless steel tanks to produce what I refer to as *dark affects*. In *Uncertain Spaces*, (figure 47), I evoked a mirror, a reflection of the environment and the viewer’s self. I implied analogies of stepping into a puddle, or the dusky rim on a coffee cup—‘traces’ of humanity. Darkness can be seen as *the minor*—as the absence of light, when we sleep, not act. We all experience this *darkness*. It descends on us every night and is part of our existence as the sun moves around our planet. “The minor gesture is the pulse of a differential that

<sup>180</sup> Rosi Braidotti, *Posthuman Feminism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2022), 133.

<sup>181</sup> Adnan, *Sea and Fog*, 5.

makes experience in its ecology felt.”<sup>182</sup> For a suspension or gap is, as Manning says, “out of time, untimely, rhythmically inventing its own pulse.”<sup>183</sup> Darkness is thus not merely an absence of light but an opening of a space in which perception is suspended.

Suspension is a delay, a pause or a limbo. This is found in melancholy, the felt sense of not moving forward or back but hanging in place. In this section I discuss darkness, and artists who have worked with dark, absorbent materials. The term blackness is generally defined as “the complete darkness; the absence of any light,” and emotively as “a state characterized by despair or depression.” It evokes perceptions of space, infinitudes, emptiness, nothingness, voids, unrealised potential, negation, and death among many other inferences, and it holds a complexity of implications within historical and contemporary art practice.

In art practice, black can form affective relations through dark pigments, or the use of shadow and low light. This blackness/darkness evokes the concepts of ‘slippage,’ and not being located ‘anywhere.’<sup>184</sup> Dark space is difficult to articulate and our perception of a dark void can be felt as instinctive and intuitive. British writer and environmental philosopher Timothy Morton writes of the “dark-depressing” ecological awareness that is also “dark-uncanny.”<sup>185</sup> He suggests that we experience the anthropocene as a loop in “a universe of finitude and fragility, a world in which objects are suffused with and surrounded by mysterious hermeneutical clouds of unknowing.”<sup>186</sup> This echoes the thoughts of Braidotti discussed in Section 3.5, where she argues that darkness indicates death and negativity within the Anthropocene and that we need to revise our view of death as the absence of life. Braidotti suggests that we need to see beyond our

<sup>182</sup> Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, 64.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>184</sup> Bois and Krauss, *Formless: A User's Guide*, 15. Rosalind Krauss and Yves-Alain Bois define this as “formlessness” and George Bataille as the “Informe.” This concept is plural. It moves beyond definitions of form and concept and re-reads abstractionism, but it also has a dark undertone entropy, base materialism, and the uncanny. This is not pared back colour, form and representation, and the opening of a new beginning, as the early modernists implied.

<sup>185</sup> Timothy Morton, *Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 5.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 6. Timothy Morton has collaborated with Olafur Eliaison as an interviewer and as co-guest on art and environmental forums.

own mortal lives towards the future of our planet. We have to stop polluting our oceans, stop producing single use plastic, and start reducing carbon emissions more radically, because this is how relationality works.<sup>187</sup> This intuitive feeling about ‘black’ is a gut feeling, a hunch, a knowing from past experience rather than from logical reasoning or empirical evidence.

For British artist Antony Gormley, it is the closing of our eyes that gives us the experience of “interiorised darkness, which is no different to the darkness of the night sky.”<sup>188</sup> Gormley says this is where we feel a sense of our body as a place and that he has “a profound belief that this internalised sense of space is in absolute connection with the extension of cosmic space. We have an intuition embedded without our biology about space at large.”<sup>189</sup> Gormley explains this further “the paradox is that we live within a body that has a skin that is our bounding condition, yet we have this faculty of imaginative extension into endless space.”<sup>190</sup> This condition is a *suspension*—we are embodied by our senses, our physicality, yet disembodied by our imagination. Ideas and thoughts around endless darkness and space can fill us with wonder but can also evoke melancholy, loss, death, and despair. Darkness can be deeply personal but can also have socio-political dimensions, as Braidotti suggests in (see Section 3.5); making it a crucial opening to the minor. It is nebulous, a suspension, as tangible as paint, or as abstract as outer space, always fluctuating within our perception and imagination, and constantly in motion.

Total darkness and black can appear to be still, but if we perceive the vital reality of material, we can understand that everything has movement and, while it can present as still, it is constantly in motion. Active light and still darkness are poles apart but allow each other to exist. Massumi suggests that sight emerges “from the edge of illumination.”<sup>191</sup> He says, “the senses only ever function together, fusionally,” and at “the extreme of every sense’s separating-out, it reaches an

187 Rosi Braidotti. *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011) 335-9.

188 Sarah Lea, “Behind The Scenes of Our Anthony Gormley Exhibition,” *RA Magazine*, Autumn 2019, <https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/article/antony-gormley-behind-the-scenes>.

189 Ibid.

190 Ibid.

191 Massumi, *Semblance and Event*, 95.

immanent limit where it flips into an immediate relation with other sense experience.”<sup>192</sup>

Massumi reminds us that sight is not just the biological function of the human eye in response to light, but is also cognitive and imaginative. Darkness is an exemplary instance of *semblance*, a condition of multi-sensory perception that emerges as an event to become aware of itself and its limits. In painting, fields of black pigment can evoke uncertainty and stigma, rupturing of identities, betraying trust and hope in the everyday. This is black as a singular yet universal, undefined, uncertain quality that can convey feelings of negative self-relation.

Artists gravitate to black pigments for various reasons. Kazimir Malevich thought blackness was the beginning of abstract painting. His painting *The Black Square* has been described as “the first time someone made a painting that wasn’t of something.”<sup>193</sup> The reference here is not just to abstractionism but also that black paint represented ‘nothingness’ and the ‘void.’ In Malevich’s book *The Non-Objective World* (1927) he writes that in 1913, when he was “trying desperately to free art from the dead weight of the real world, I took refuge in the form of a square.”<sup>194</sup> The black painting seems weightless, and more as a thought than an actual painting, disembodied.

Malevich’s paintings may be seen as the beginning of abstract painting, but the force of the scored marks struck on the surface of the *Ramble Drawings* by American artist Richard Serra cannot be seen as abstract—they are not detached and conceptual, they show tension, density and affective resonances. These drawings by Serra can be described as ‘heavily’ black (figure 43). He uses the black media of charcoal, etching ink, paint stick and wax. The media seem to soak into the paper. Linear marks are arranged both horizontally and vertically, in dense masses. Through his practice as a sculptor, and in his drawings, Serra recognises that space and affect exist within black material. He has developed paintings and drawings that look at suspension and spatio-temporality within black space. Serra’s

<sup>192</sup> Massumi, *Semblance and Event*, 75-76.

<sup>193</sup> Tate Gallery, “Five Ways to Look at Malevich’s Black Square,” Tate Gallery, accessed June 11, 2023, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/kazimir-malevich-1561/five-ways-look-malevichs-black-square>.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

work links with Richard Long's practice of walking over the landscape in many countries, collecting stones and rubbings. The *Ramble Drawings* are also rubbings that record moments or cartographic locations, in Serra's continuous journey.

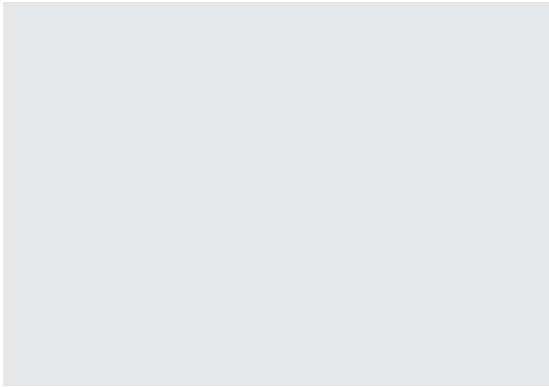


Figure 43, Richard Serra, *Ramble Drawings*, 2016, following series at Gagosian, New York. Photo © Zarko Vijatovic. Image removed for copyright reasons. This can be viewed at: <https://gagosian.com/exhibitions/2016/richard-serra-ramble-drawings/>

In the installation *Memory*, at the Guggenheim Museums in Berlin and New York, in 2008, British artist Anish Kapoor placed a large, steel, enclosed curved seed pod shape at the end of a gallery.<sup>195</sup> Viewers could walk up to it but only enter at one portal. Inside the darkness of the space and the curved sides gave the viewer an immersive experience of dark space. Without any perceived corners it felt limitless, reflecting Kapoor's interest in exploring the unknown and the yet to be perceived. Blackness and darkness are related but have different implications in regard to space. Darkness is enveloping, surrounding and is the absence of light. Black art materials, as used by Malevich and Serra, are abstractions that evoke a sense of nothingness or endless space.

For New Zealand artist Colin McCahon, the black paint became a substrate onto which he could write not unlike a blackboard. McCahon used black paint in many ways—as a silhouette of hills in receding light, chasms for casting light,

<sup>195</sup> British artist Anish Kapoor is also obsessed by the darkness of carbon paint and explores darkness in site specific installations. He obtained exclusive artist use of the reputed darkest black paint in the world and the darkest man made substance, invented to camouflage satellites. This paint is completely light absorbent and yet densely opaque. The installation with the Vantablack paint was to be installed at the 2020 Venice Biennale but was postponed due to the pandemic. This wasn't Kapoor's first art project to explore darkness.



Figure 44. Colin McCahon, *Black landscape*, 1965, Auckland. Purchased 1976 with Special Government Grant. © Courtesy of the Colin McCahon Research and Publication Trust. Te Papa (1976-0040-4) Reproduced with permission.

and as darkness behind a candle. He produced *Black Landscape* (figure 44)<sup>196</sup> and a number in 1965 and in a number of variations. This may have arisen from his from his association with his art student Buster Pihama, also known as Buster Black, who painted predominately in black and added sand to his paint.<sup>197</sup>

New Zealand artist Ralph Hotere; (Te Aupōuri/Te Rarawa) is particularly known for his use of black paint, black lacquer, lithographs and charred wood. He worked and travelled as an artist in the 1960s, and, once back in New Zealand, his biographer Vincent O'Sullivan writes that he was left suspended between different worlds.<sup>198</sup> His black paintings were sometimes drawn as windows. They were political or meditative and self-referential abstractions. Hotere's dark paintings reflect the influence of his childhood, living without electricity, where the light of the day started with the dawn and ended with a fire and a stoked oven. Here the blackness of a moonless night was immersive and held the unknown. In living

<sup>196</sup> Colin McCahon, *Black Landscape*, 1965, PVA paint and sawdust on hardboard, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington, New Zealand. Also see Megan Tamati-Quennell's writings on McCahon for the Colin McCahon Research and Publication Trust, <https://mccahonhouse.org.nz/100/megan-tamati-quennell/>.

<sup>197</sup> In 1956, Pihama (also known as John Pihama), of Ngāti Maniapoto and Ngāti Rangi descent,<sup>75</sup> attended classes taught by Colin McCahon, where he painted landscapes in total black paint, embedded with sand and ground glass. Megan Tamati-Quennell (above) acknowledges the research undertaken by Finn McCahon-Jones on Buster Black. <https://mccahonhouse.org.nz/100/megan-tamati-quennell/>

<sup>198</sup> Vincent O'Sullivan, *The Dark is Light Enough: Ralph Hotere; A Biographical Portrait* (Auckland: Penguin Random House, 2020).

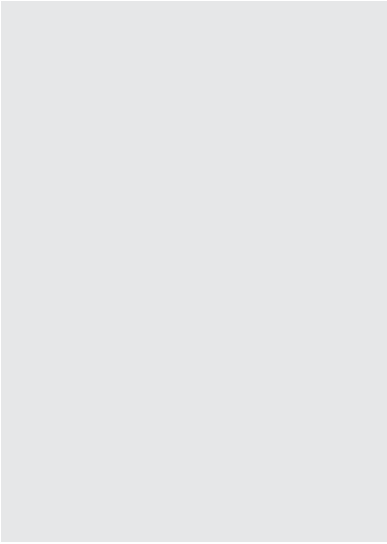


Figure 45, Ralph Hotere, *Drawing (Ko Wai Koe?)* 1977, lacquer, ink and pencil on paper. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū; Purchased 1978. Image removed for copyright reasons. This can be viewed at: <https://christchurchartgallery.org.nz/collection/78-107/ralph-hotere/drawing-ko-wai-koe>

near the beach on the Hokianga Harbour, riding horses that left traces in the sand or by drawing with a stick on the beach, the New Zealand landscape influenced his practice.<sup>199</sup>

As an artist, Hotere worked within a vast field that spanned continents, landscapes, politics questions of identity and his cosmology. When I viewed his retrospective exhibition *Arete*, at the Christchurch Art Gallery in 2021, I was particularly struck by the work *Ko Wai Koe?* (1977), a black field painting similar to my own.<sup>200</sup> Hotere interrogates us and himself with the question in his title, which translates as “*Who are you?*”

There is little contrast in the black on black as the material is treated consistently over the substrate. Hotere sometimes applied a different sheen of paint or used a stencil for application changing the brush stroke to delineate the writing in the black works. The visual encounter is still. There is a powerful sensibility evoked by the undistinguishable, and there is no noise as the viewer is muted. The eye perceives what is no longer visible, and this can evoke a sense of eternity and the infinite. The compelling lack of light can diffuse the eye’s ability to observe immediately. The viewer can then be absorbed into the painting’s surface, mesmerized and enclosed by the blackness. There is an overwhelming recognition of the emptiness that reflects back on the self.

For *Black Phoenix* (1986), Hotere gathered burnt wood, the remains of a fishing boat, from a boat builders yard in Carey’s Bay, Otago, and reassembled the charred wood in an installation. The wood was partially sanded back, painted, carved and stencilled with text in te reo Māori. The installation referenced Hotere’s own ancestral pa, Te Aupōuri which was also consumed by fire and rebuilt. The charred wood vertically lined the walls as warriors or the protective fence of a pā. On the floor, the sanded wood formed a pathway to the centre which tilted the axis and extended to the centre and across the walls, as a cross. The change of axis within the space, and the use of dark materials formed a black cross, a symbolic form Hotere turned back to repeatedly, evoking a movement between death and life.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> In 2021, a retrospective exhibition of Ralph Hotere’s work, called *Arete*, was curated and exhibited at Christchurch Art Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand.



Figure 46, Ralph Hotere, *Black Phoenix*, 1984-88, Port Chalmers. Charred wood Installation. Purchased 1988 with New Zealand Lottery Board funds. © Ralph Hotere Trust. Te Papa (1988-0030-1/AA to BZ). Reproduced with permission.

Charcoal dust and suspension of particulate matter on water surfaces evoked dark thoughts; but as materials they are in the world around us—“vibrant,” shifting, entangled, and moving.

This work gestures towards a vast space—of political, spiritual and affective qualities. The placing of the black charred wood with the natural deep patina relates to fortification or military precision, making a resoundingly strong statement about colonialism, socio-political and environmental change, and material transformation.<sup>201</sup> *Black Phoenix*, can be read as crossing a field of entangled histories.

This work forms a field that is interdependent and requires balance of weight. This balance exists between materials and processes—between matter, the act of making and sensation. Hotere dedicated years to the exploration of blackness. He often painted in high gloss paint or in a combination of matt and gloss, but it is the raw dusty charcoal and the unreflective and light absorbent wood in *Black Phoenix* that has had an impact on my art practice, suggesting, sensation, absorption and silence.

Other Māori artists have understood *te kore* or *te korekore* as the “nil, zero, void and nought, or *te pō* ‘the night.’<sup>202</sup> Peter Moana Nepia, in his thesis “Te

201 Te Papa website. <https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/object/37093>

202 P.M. Ryan, *The Reed Dictionary of Modern Maori* (Wellington: Reed Publishing, 1995), s.v. “te kore.”

Kore; Exploring the Māori Concept of the Void,” suggests that “te kore may be understood as a void or nothingness that is personified,” and it has a range of attributes that show complexity and transformation in physical (sensory, perceptual, sexual), psychological, emotional and spiritual relations.<sup>203</sup> He suggests it shows lineage and that in Te Rangikaheke’s Te Arawa creation narrative, it expresses the sadness in the children as their parents separate.<sup>204</sup> It is seen as “a time of preparation, a pause, a moment in space.”<sup>205</sup>

I term the minor semblances of blackness and darkness *dark affects*. Such affects open to cosmology, identity, nothingness, space, and intensity in the art works discussed in this section and in my own works. Notably, this happens through my use of black materials, as well as baths, tanks, and ponds of water. In my practice, *dark affects* activate our endless imagination about space, abstraction, melancholy, other-than-body experience, and socio-political thought. They are a field of interrelated ideas, and affects of blackness have a bearing on, touch, and leave a mark on my practice. Darkness is the absence of light, but perhaps it also illuminates.

Black is spatial, it can be compelling in the encounter and can form registers in memory and time. As with these other artists, I feel drawn to black. An overarching consideration in my practice is space and the drifting, the shifting of materials and the shifting ground. This practice explores the surface of water for its indeterminate and mobile properties. It also investigates black for these same reasons. The lack of definition in black paint or black space evokes an endless search for a ground.

In those turbulent nights I swim through many large, torrential and merging rivers, that disorient their own speed and storm out of space, to take me into new perceptions with exhilaration and awe.<sup>206</sup>

203 Peter Moana Nepia, “Te Kore: Exploring the Māori Concept of Void” (PhD thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2012), 42.

204 Ibid.

205 Ibid., 56.

206 Adnan, *Sea and Fog*, 26.



Figures 47, Jill McIntosh. *Uncertain Spaces*, Installation, 2022.



Figure 48, Jill McIntosh, Video Loop of reflections in the pond. *Uncertain Spaces*, 2022.

### 3.7 Hesitation

Through my early chalk field works, such as *Suspension 1*, with which I began this chapter (see Section 3.1), I became interested in the imagined experience of immersion, floating, and drifting. As I experimented with baths, and shallow tanks, I began to discover new resonances for this idea particularly in the interplay between blackness and watery reflections. In November 2022, I installed *Uncertain Spaces*, a black pond in the exterior courtyard of an AUT building (figure 47).<sup>207</sup> The pond was contained within a frame of wood, lined and wrapped with flat black aluminum sheeting.<sup>208</sup> There was a deliberate reference to the abstraction of Malevich's black square painting, and the black canvases of Hotere. The pond became a living, changing surface that responded to rain, wind, dust, and collected debris.

<sup>207</sup> "Uncertain Spaces" was a simple rectangle measuring 1000mm x 2000mm shallow pond with a depth of 20-30mm

<sup>208</sup> This material is light absorbent and used by film makers to disguise objects they do not want to record on the screen. It is used to cut light off an object in film.

The pond remained installed for two weeks and I recorded the surface throughout ultimately re-exhibiting it as a video loop in which the black frame of the screen took the place of the pool's black rim. The black was ambiguous, it spread over perceptual boundaries, and disorientated perception.

Through this work I reflected on the way 'darkness' registered as a human imprint on this world in the form of atmospheric particles and vast kilometres of waste. Humans leave traces—burnt forests, receding water lines on the shore, plastic on beaches, melting glaciers and icebergs, which display our disregard for the distribution of resources. I recalled the writings of Tim Morton and Rosi Braidotti, who reflect on the ecological minor bound up with a sense of loss. The literal and unstable reflection of the pool mirrored the various hesitations in my thoughts and practice—suspended time, indeterminacy, and uncertainty. It is in these pauses, in the interstices between part actions, that my thesis on suspension and uncertainty has been revealed.

The work *Black Field* in 2020 (figure 49) was also a particularly significant work for me, bringing together my chalk-field works and my pond installations. I was searching for a neutral space: one that was indefinite, one that allowed affective space to breathe. As I painted and drew on the paper, I was aware of a relationship with the stainless-steel tank that happened to be sitting on the ground nearby. I placed this to catch drifting material from the work on the wall. Initially it was lightly filled with water, but this evaporated, leaving a dark dry residue.

The black residue was dense and deep. The inky blackness of the chalk field above the tank was compelling as it disoriented the perception of figure and ground. As a negation, it suggested censorship, finality, delay, or death. Once completed, I was repelled by any white paper space that extended a narrative of negative space. The blackness was uncontained and atmospheric. It questioned where does it start and where does it end?

Suspended in front of this work, I lingered with my hesitations and imaginings. Massumi refers to these intensities as “static—temporal and narrative noise’



Figure 49, Jill McIntosh, *Black Field*, 2020, acrylic paint and charcoal.

yet it is, “a state of suspense,” “because it is filled with motion, vibratory motion, resonance.”<sup>209</sup> These feelings of intensity are seen as nonlinear and enable, through resonance, the suspension of the present to the future from the past. The difference between affect and emotion in affect and sensation is crucial. The uncertainty in my work is not an emotion, a reaction to an event, but an intensity with its own logic. In opening my acts of painting/drawing/floating to the sensation of intensity, an awareness of semblances and *the minor in-acts* come into the field. Just as a memory is drawn from the past into the present, it also operates within intuition and multiplicity by growing and changing in between its various recognitions and relations with lived reality. These qualities are strong elements, which can leave the event with a sense of unease and disorientation.

Art writer, media theorist and philosopher Boris Groys, suggests that the current condition in contemporary art making,

actually constitutes by doubt, hesitation, uncertainty, indecision – by the need for prolonged reflection, for delay. We want to postpone our decisions and actions in order to have more time for analysis, reflection and consideration. And that is precisely what the contemporary is – a prolonged, even potentially infinite period of delay.<sup>210</sup>

<sup>209</sup> Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 26.

<sup>210</sup> Boris Groys, “Comrades of Time,” *E-Flux Journal*, no. 11 (2009), 2, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/11/61345/comrades-of-time/>.



Figure 50, Close up of Jill McIntosh, *Black Field*, 2020, acrylic paint and charcoal.

Delay is a condition of *suspension*. *Suspension* is a hesitation, and delay has emerged as an important consideration in this practice. In this chapter, I have explored this through semblances of water and *the minor* sensations—uncertainty and a pause. Our world is indeterminate, it questions its identity, it reaches out to our more-than-human world, now threatened by over-consumption of resources, poverty, and discrimination. Are we reflecting, or are we held in a hiatus by the enormity of the issues affecting us? My artmaking, with its dark affects, reflects on this as hesitation or delay.

Darkness was put into orbit and Creation skipped its laws.  
Ever since we move in confusion.<sup>211</sup>

# CHAPTER 4

## — WHAT MATTERS?

### 4.1 Permeation

Material has actual and metaphorical potential and is lively—it slips and glides, tumbles down a siding and escapes into the air eluding containment. This understanding of matter, (which underwrites much of my practice and has been implicit in the earlier chapters of this thesis), draws particularly from the theoretical area of discussion on the materiality of art. In this chapter I discuss Jane Bennett’s concept of *vital matter*, Alan Marder’s philosophical discourse on the significance of dust in the world and Stacy Alaimo’s concept of *trans-corporeality*, where she describes human life as osmotic, both biologically and chemically through our fishy origins and “through the process of gradual or unconscious assimilation of ideas, knowledge.”<sup>212</sup>

Alaimo argues for the concept of *trans-corporeality* in the new materialist post-human sense. This concept “traces the material interchanges across human bodies, animal bodies, and the wider material world.”<sup>213</sup> Alaimo suggests that humans are “substantially and perpetually interconnected with the flows and substances and agencies of environments.”<sup>214</sup> Alaimo’s concern is that our material selves can no longer be “disentangled from networks that are simultaneously economic, political, cultural, and scientific.”<sup>215</sup> Information and connectivity permeate our being. Alaimo suggests that everyday practitioners in environmental issues, health and justice are currently working to reshape the “flows of material agencies across regions, environments, animal bodies, and human bodies” to develop knowledge and tracings around interchanges, human permeability, and the rapidly dissolving stability of traditional ideological modes and constructs.<sup>216</sup>

<sup>212</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed., s.v. “osmotic.”

<sup>213</sup> Alaimo, “States of Suspension,” 476-93.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>216</sup> Alaimo, “States of Suspension,” 476-493.

Foregrounding *trans-corporeality* as an argument for our oceans, Alaimo suggests that our human perception of our ocean is that it is so large and so vast that “anything can be dumped into it”; and it is this very vastness which makes it difficult to “capture, map and publicise the flow of toxins across terrestrial, oceanic and human habitats.”<sup>217</sup> Most human cultures are drawn to the sea to swim, fish, float or to watch the waves, but we have much stronger connections with our origins through biological tracing, our ability to breath oxygen, and our salty tears. For many, our threatened oceans hover at the extremities of human perception, suggests Alaimo, and cause a pause in action over addressing these impending issues.<sup>218</sup>

Our world of lively matter and watery substance permeates our bodies and the lives around us—dispersing its energy, life-giving but also as debris and decay. Primarily, this section looks at how matter and water are inherently *suspended*—held or bound by material parameters such as shorelines, borders, fences, containers, heavy atmospheres, skin, viscosity, and socio-political conventions.

Petra Lange-Berndt asks a paradigmatic question about revising our interrelationship with material: How is it possible “to give agency to the material, to follow the material and to act with the material?”<sup>219</sup> This question acknowledges that the world around us is a multiplicity of dissemination and exchange between—molecular entities, elements, biology, geology, physics, politics, economics, social attitudes and weather—all of which permeate our physical and metaphysical being. Lange-Berndt suggests that the path of “materials” is not linear and not easily contained by language. This non-linear pathway, and Lange-Berndt, refers us to the writings of Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*, who ask a similar question—how are we “to define this matter-movement, this matter-energy, this matter-flow, this matter in variation that enters assemblages and leaves them?”<sup>220</sup> And they suggest that this is “destratified, deterritorialized matter,” matter that has an agency that is beyond language and category.<sup>221</sup>

217 Alaimo, “States of Suspension,” 476-493.

218 Ibid.

219 Lange-Berndt, *Materiality*, 13.

220 Ibid., 38; Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 2nd ed., trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1987), 407.

221 Ibid.

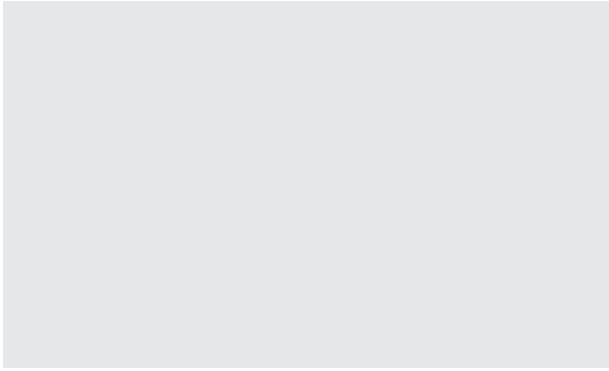


Figure 51, Agnieszka Kurant, Detail of Agnieszka Kurant, *Chemical Garden*, 2021, sodium silicate, copper, nickel, cobalt, chromium, manganese, iron and zinc salts, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/ Los Angeles, and Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź. Collaboration with Dr. Magdalena Osiał. (Photo by Anna Zagrodzka.) Image removed for copyright reasons. This can be viewed at: <https://www.juliet-artmagazine.com/en/agnieszka-kurant-crowd-crystal-2/>

“Clearly materials have agency, they can move as well as act and have a life of their own, challenging an anthropocentric post—Enlightenment intellectual tradition,” suggests Lange-Berndt.<sup>222</sup> She adds that those “who are not intimidated by materials, have not predominantly been academics but artists, designers, architects, conservators or technicians,” and I add scientists here too.<sup>223</sup>

Materiality has permeated art practice and drawn it away from the modernist view, where to make something ‘new’ is to improve the world. Rather, the position of the artist is no longer the author but a participant within the event. The artist, actor, and participant’s bodies are porous; they absorb and expire, interact and bond, re-bond, transmute, move and connect. After an interview with Polish installation artist Agnieszka Kurant, (see fig. 51 for an example of her work), Noam Segal from *Flash Art* writes:

Kurant is part of a larger group of artists who deal with our shared spheres of existence from micro to macro, the molecular to the digital, animal and plant kingdoms to intergalactic spaces. This kind of artistic research looks at the most basic units that form our “world picture” and toys with their possible transformations, often through the crossing of spheres or species.<sup>224</sup>

By investigating materials that exhibit agency and visual change, Kurant “deploys the agency of different nonhuman entities” and works with a wide variety of

<sup>222</sup> Lange-Berndt, *Materiality*, 16.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Noam Segal, “Systemic Errors of Collective Intelligence: A Conversation with Agnieszka Kurant,” *Flash Art Magazine*, November 3, 2021.

matter, from termite mounds, slime and metals, to “gather and create new complex assemblages” (figure 51).<sup>225</sup>

While she has some intention in directing these materials, they all have their own momentum and propensity for change that is beyond human intervention, and they hold together different states of “organic and synthetic, engineered and naturally reproduced, manufactured and algorithmic.”<sup>226</sup> Kurant (in relation to artificial intelligence) questions ‘autonomy,’ ‘risk-management’ and whether in the future we will have room for new knowledge to emerge if there isn’t the potential for some degree of error.<sup>227</sup>

Tania Kovats, whom I have discussed earlier in this exegesis (Sections 1.2, 2.1, 3.3) is also interested in our oceans and the materiality of our natural environment, Although she does not explicitly identify with *materiality*, Kovats is an advocate of Gaia Theory, which can be seen as a precursor in this area of thought. Her work experiments with materials such as salt and pigment on paper, where she uses her art making as an opportunity to raise awareness of rising sea levels through climate change (figure 52).<sup>228</sup> As the artist, Kovats is placing these relationships over each other—ink over salt water, the artist’s body over her materials, thoughts over actions and reflections, while allowing each to remain evident.

Kovats’ book, *Drawing Water: Drawing as a Mechanism for Exploration*, collected drawings and works on paper from many professions together. Her own drawings sit alongside those of cartographers, writers, archaeologists, scientists, engineers, soldiers, sailors and artists, and machine-produced seismological recordings. This assemblage of drawings form a collection of landscapes, oceanic diagrams, thoughts around the human body, dream states and the cycle that culminates in death. Artists such as Kovats and Kurant, maintain semblance and materiality in their work while raising awareness of environmental and socio-politics.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Noam Segal, “Systemic Errors of Collective Intelligence: A Conversation with Agnieszka Kurant,” *Flash Art Magazine*, November 3, 2021.

<sup>228</sup> James Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

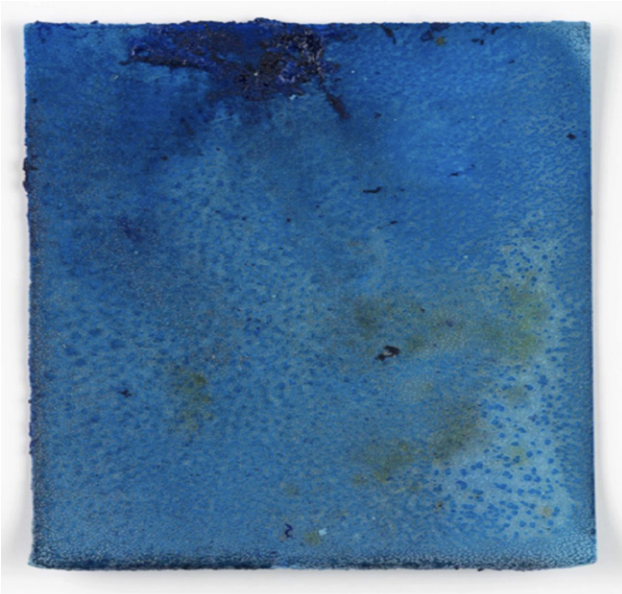


Figure 52 Tania Kovats. *Evaporation (Blue) 23*, 2014, ink and salt, sea water evaporated salt crystals. <https://www.houldsworth.co.uk/exhibitions/70/works/artworks-8003-tania-kovats-evaporation-blue-23-2014> Reproduced with permission from the artist, courtesy of Parafin, London.

The re-thinking of our relationship with matter is not simply elevating our awareness of its vitality. It has a socio-political dimension that recalls the operation of the minor (Section 3.5) Lange-Berndt suggests that “to follow the material means not to discuss aesthetic issues of quality, expressiveness or symbolic content but to investigate transpersonal societal problems and matters of concern.”<sup>229</sup> By this, Lange-Berndt means that through re-thinking our relationship with matter, we re-think our societal norms. By re-evaluating our relationship with matter we open the greater discourse on the fluidity of knowledge. We are able to examine how fixed ideas change constantly based on political, socio-economic and cultural positions and open new ways of thinking about difference and identity as fluid.

A central theorist on materiality, Jane Bennett casts her net of care wider to: not just human, but also nonhuman life, such as our pressing technological, biomedical, environment concerns. Bennett refers to rubbish dumps, landfills, and oceans polluted with plastic, and she raises the question of “how to acknowledge the obscure but ubiquitous intensity of impersonal affect?”<sup>230</sup> She suggests that to address these world-embracing problems, we need “a cultivated, patient, sensory

<sup>229</sup> Lange-Berndt, ed., *Materiality*, 16.

<sup>230</sup> Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, xiii.



Figure 53. Jill McIntosh, 2019, *Untitled*, pastel chalk, charcoal and acrylic paint on paper.

attentiveness to non-human forces operating outside and inside the human body.”<sup>231</sup>

Bennett’s thoughts shift the focus and perspective on our world. As discussed by Lange-Berndt in this section, human life is not about complex policies on epidemiology, it is about gathering information on how we are actually living: the diversity, social connectivity, gender differences, ethnicity discrimination, consumption, and social/political injustices. As we expand our historical idea of the human domain, the agency of the non-human—viruses, microbes, minerals, elements and their processes—are now entangled with human life in co-existence.

In the project (figure 53) I chose paper because it has a temporality, a sense that there is more to come in transfer, translation, transformation and time. The affective sensation for me as the artist is to be moving under thick turbulent water. As this work emerged on the page through layering paint and pastel chalk, wiping the surface, cutting through the wax in places and polishing it back, it became a

mesh of intuitions and feelings—undirected fluid thought. The paper was strong enough to take paint and chalk and charcoal—suspended media (matter in a binding), capable of flow. The layering of the fluidity of my materials shows a materiality and a reference, as if suspended within a solution and within time.

This is this. This is that. In between, existence's duration, our efforts and understanding. In the meantime, the pine makes a shadow on the oak tree; the image reaches the brain in spite of myriads of exploding suns. Electronic flowers unfold into sentences of doom.<sup>232</sup>

## 4.2 Unbounded Domain

Art writer Boris Groys suggests that throughout the 20th Century art museums became a means to deliver all things and relinquished programmes to “the flow of time.”<sup>233</sup> Groys was not suggesting that art museums depict the fluidity of time but reflected art as “transitory and in flux.”<sup>234</sup> As this project progresses, I am thinking of the gallery or museum as a frame or container where this fluid art overflows into communities, ecologies, the pavement outside. Although collecting acquisitions is still a role for many museums, others have become places of temporary curatorial projects, temporary collections, installations, and events, representing the “transitory character of the present order of things.”<sup>235</sup> Rather than being solely the collector and preserver of objects, the archives of the art museum now record and document art works and art practice. Groys suggests that “art does not predict the future but rather demonstrates the transitory character of the present—and thus opens the way for the new.”<sup>236</sup>

According to this critique, the historical role of the museum has been to exist as a neutral space that directs the viewer from the outside world to an artwork and the interior space on a plinth or in a frame. Now, contemporary gallery visitors are led beyond the artwork to the surrounding space, the didactic material, and the socio-

<sup>232</sup> Adnan, *Sea and Fog*, 19.

<sup>233</sup> Boris Groys, *In the Flow*, 2.

<sup>234</sup> Boris Groys, *In the Flow*, 3.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.



Figure 54. Antony Gormley, *Host*, 2016 -2019, installation at Royal Academy of the Arts London. <https://www.antonygormley.com/works/making/host-ra>. (Photo © Antony Gormley). Reproduced with permission.

cultural position within the archives and the internet<sup>237</sup> The 21st century museum is no longer bounded by time as it records all events and time is not contingent. Our world is rapidly changing and the museum has become a public space where boundaries are pushed to open a space where the public can engage and debate the issues of our time. My interest is in the gallery as a space for the vitality of matter to be explored, even sometimes to overspill this container.

Artist Anthony Gormley, explores the boundaries of gallery space. In his project, *Host* (2016-2019), he flooded a gallery floor already spread with dusty clay/earth.<sup>238</sup> The water lapped its way over the earth until it was covered, some particles melded, and residue floated. Small, residual specks of soil lifted from the earth and became suspended in the water, settling in the gap underneath the surface. This vast surface could not be apprehended in one view. It was observed from a doorway, and formed a perfect undisturbed pool, as the eye was cast over

<sup>237</sup> Boris Groys, *In the Flow*, 6.

<sup>238</sup> Gormley (London: Tate, 2004), 82-84.

the reflective surface, through the water to the muddy depths below. This was an uncertain, liquid space.

The installation *Host* was “raw material, the stuff of the earth, its stark presentation of the unformed. Viewed from a threshold [...] *Host* extends before you, immediate and visible in its entirety. It is a vast liquid expanse, an admix of equal parts earth and Atlantic seawater, flooding the gallery to a depth of 23 centimetres.”<sup>239</sup> In an interview with James Putnam, Gormley describes his art making with clay as,

something to do with the iron in the earth, which is also the iron in our blood, which somehow makes a connection between flesh and planet. That connection is very important. Field suggests that the earth holds the memory of our ancestors and also the promise of the unborn. It has a life, a memory and a conscience.<sup>240</sup>

In the same way, Gormley sees clay and iron as a vital connection between ‘flesh’ and ‘planet.’ Water and charcoal, suspended particles, are a conduit between our bodies and our environment, as an opening of fields of entangled associations that draw on time, memory and our awareness of our compromised planet, highlighting the extent to which we are inhabited by vibrant matter.

Human life is closely linked and interconnected with insects, plants, animals, minerals, elements, and the weather. We can no longer see the world as a singular objective reality. Within the plurality of our existence and the temporalities, we are forging our way into the unknown. Acknowledging the materiality of our world creates a space for artists like Gormley, to think through the relationships we have to material and our embodiment within this endless space. Massumi suggests that this “resonance can be seen as converting distance, or extension, into intensity. It is a qualitative transformation of distance into an immediacy of

<sup>239</sup> Martin Caiger Smith, edited excerpt from the exhibition catalogue Antony Gormley, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 2019, 250. <https://www.antonygormley.com/works/making/host-ra>

<sup>240</sup> From the catalogue for the Tate Liverpool exhibition *A Secret History of Clay: From Gauguin to Gormley* (London: Tate Publishing, 2004) 82-84.



Figure 55, Jill McIntosh, *Matter as Loam II*, 2022, charcoal paint and water on paper, 1040 x1520mm. Exhibited in *Fielding*, Gallery 3, Auckland University of Technology, Auckland.

self-relation.”<sup>241</sup> This is matter-movement, fluidity and flux. Massumi proposes that “possibility is back-formed from potential unfolding.”<sup>242</sup>

In my own work *Matter as Loam*, (figure 55) part of the exhibition *Fielding* (2021, St Paul Street Gallery), charcoal moved from being an airborne powder to a crushed smear of blackness on the surface, escaping my hand and venting across the paper. While it was bound to the substrate by its own properties and the actions of my hand, it resisted total adhesion, and water falling onto the surface liberated it and moved the charcoal across the concrete floor of the gallery.

As discussed in Chapter 3, a darkness arises out of this swirling uncertainty of indeterminate matter—a rising sensation of unknowing the unthought. As with intuition, dust is unguided and can be disconcerting. The artist’s body performs, matter acting within matter, as suspended materials (water and carbon) that permeate and partially compose the body. The artist is perpetually overflowing actual and spatial boundaries, responding to and absorbing the world around. Boundaries are broken, floated over, matter resists containment as it moves and transforms within our world.

<sup>241</sup> Massumi, *Parables of the Virtual*, 14.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

### 4.3 The Material Turn

The Material Turn, of which revised ideas on materiality, as discussed above, are a part, challenges dominant narratives and invites a rethinking of materials, bodies, socio-politics and environment. It adopts multiple positions and agencies and promotes a way forward through a multiplicity of entanglements. Rosi Braidotti, an advocate of this turn, examines the material foundations of what it is to be human. She suggests that the humanities, including art practice, are in a dark place because they are about Western males (humans), exclude women and people of different sexual orientations and ethnic backgrounds. The term human is not neutral; it carries within it access to rights. Braidotti is pleading for a new epistemological definition, a new theory of knowledge, of what it is to be human and this is grounded in perspectivism that removes the discrimination of traditional socio-cultural boundaries.

In a Masterclass at Auckland University, March 2023, Braidotti explained that the humanities need to recognize all life as matter but also to see that through means like artificial intelligence, humans themselves are becoming more-than-human. She suggested that the world is developing into classes: of those enhanced by access to technology, and those who do not. Some, she argues do not want to help our planet, as they believe it is exhausted, and advocate mining other planets for minerals, such as lithium.

In the context of these emerging socio-political distinctions, post-human conditions and climate crises, we might ask how art practice is situated. Can museums, as a public place, play a role anymore? What can we learn from people who have lived closer to the land? What Indigenous practices can we explore to make this world more connected to its resources and better managed? How can we collaborate to make more effective decisions about our future? We have many decisions ahead of us regarding sustainability, biodiversity and education around how to respect and enjoy the planet. This has to permeate the very socio-political and cultural behaviour of governments, corporations, societies and individuals. Coole and Frost suggest that, “while new materialists’ conceptualisation of

materialization is not anthropocentric, it does not even privilege human bodies.”<sup>243</sup> They propose that,

as a consequence, the human species, and the qualities of self-reflection, self-awareness, and rationality traditionally used to distinguish it from the rest of nature, may now seem little more than contingent and provisional forms or processes within a broader evolutionary or cosmic productivity.<sup>244</sup>

Materiality has opened a discourse, a movement of theory, a cross fertilization of many fields and a political inquiry. It has arisen from the diversity of feminism, the humanities, and the natural sciences. It foregrounds matter as an active force that both responds and shapes our world through perpetual movement, processual occurrences and self-organisation.

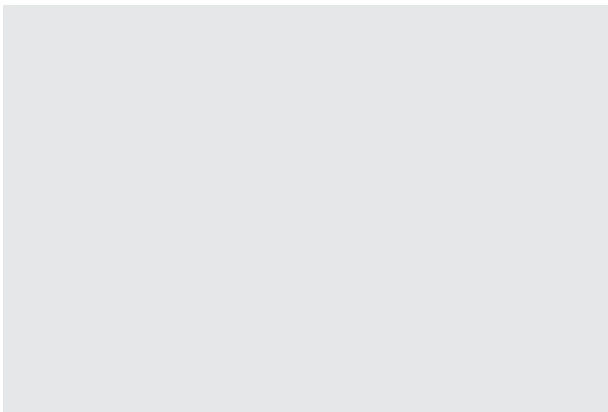


Figure 56, *Les Immatériaux*, 1985, Paris, curated by French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard and Thierry Chaput at the Pompidou Centre. Tous les auteurs' site in the exhibition at the Pompidou Centre (the visitor could participate in real time in various digital writing experiments.) Image removed for copyright reasons. This can be viewed at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/tate-papers/12/les-immatériaux-or-how-to-construct-the-history-of-exhibitions>

Lange-Berndt suggests that the socio-economic climate and the rise of photographic and digital technology in artmaking gave rise to the current debate around materiality, and proposes that this was fueled by the exhibition *Les Immatériaux* (figure 56) at the Pompidou Centre in Paris in 1985.<sup>245</sup> From

<sup>243</sup> Coole and Frost, *New Materialism: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.20.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> Lange-Berndt, *Materiality*, 16.

the 1960s, there was an increasing sense that the future of aesthetics lay in the technological advances of the time. Silk screening was performed by a machine; mass printing, photography, computers, television, and film all relied on the technological base of engineering, mechanics, manipulation, and recording... soon to be overlaid with digital technology. According to Lange-Berndt, this exhibition questioned whether art still held a place as socially reflective and culturally significant.

In the years since, reflection on the processes of art making and art viewing, materials, and a wider cultural approach by Indigenous and diverse cultures has allowed for a reframing of this perspective. In recent artmaking practices, there is an alternative mobilization, an anti-human-centricity as a provocation to this production. This can be seen as art making with living organisms, an appreciation of the agency of materials, the cultural, the Indigenous and the non-human. Here our understanding of value, activity, events, time and space is constantly being reexamined. In the remainder of this chapter, I will consider a series of works that open a more optimistic view of art's capacity to activate a broader ecological field.

Dryness peels away the soul caught in gravity's unconquerable solitude. The body's magnetized metals turn naturally North. The face, with eyes, mouth and nostrils, strains to remember intricate mental constructions. Bones end dust over dust.<sup>246</sup>

#### 4.4 Dispersal

In the exhibition *Outside in Me*, at the Barrel Store (2022, Corban Estate Art Centre), I built a pond for water plants. The plants thrived in the low light and warm water and became a conduit for the air in the gallery and the water as they fed from both. Other tanks contained resoaked seaweed to emit a strong salty aroma evoking thoughts of our threatened oceans. They were not objects in the gallery, but co-occupants of it. With post-human thought, a paradigm shift has taken place regarding our perception of plants to one of symbiosis and



Figure 57, Jill McIntosh, *Outside in Me*, 2022, aluminium ponds, seaweed and plants in water. Barrel Store, Corban Estate Art Centre), Auckland.

new insights into how indigenous and introduced plants, reflect questions of colonisation and how we can co-exist in a human-non-human relationship. This is seeing plants and minerals as allies—not just for consumption.

Danish artist Tue Greenfort’s practice explicates this wider notion of ecology as he works beyond categories, loosening the edges and interweaving complex relationships between nature, human culture, animals and science, while encompassing environment concerns and socio-politics.<sup>247</sup> The origins of Greenfort’s work are in the Land Art and Environmental activist movements in the 1960s and 1970s. After visiting Lake Victoria in Tanzania, in 2017, he formed an installation (*400 Million Years*, 2017, Berlin) from the water life and included dried fish and prints off the skin of fish as snapshots of the Anthropocene, at a given time. Challenging norms, he explored what he called “faux classification” and “amateur collecting” (questioning our human desire to categorise), and he suggests that this is a redistribution of the “visibility between the invading and the inhaled.”<sup>248</sup> His practice records events in human habitation of the Anthropocene,

<sup>247</sup> Tue Greenfort, interviewed in Solange de Boer et al., eds., *Tue Greenfort: Photosynthesis* (London: Sternberg Press, 2003).

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

as a way to bring socio-political awareness to biological and geological issues by recording timelines in marine and plant life.<sup>249</sup>

In his installation *Alga*, Greenfort explores algae as live organisms that defy these classifications.<sup>250</sup> They can be superfood and provide remedies, yet be poisonous and life-threatening. Greenfort sourced water and algae from around Munich. Writer Sabine Adler, in her article on Greenfort for the Eres Foundation, suggests that, like Olafur Eliasson, (discussed in Section 3.2), Greenfort's practice can be read against the writings of Timothy Morton, in particular his book *Being Ecological*.<sup>251</sup> Here Morton questions whether humans should be dominant over nature, describes ideological views of animal and plant-life, and imagines a world prior to the Anthropocene. Through this, he shines a light on our natural world and makes the neglected more visible. Greenfort's practice highlights interesting biological phenomena in this way. Just as with Eliasson's *Beauty* (figure 29), Greenfort is not inventing an image of a world around us, but showing us what is here. Morton considers ecological awareness and discusses actions and movements that can help direct human beings towards living sustainably. He begins his book *Dark Ecology* with a prologue that states:

art is thought from the future. Thought we cannot explicitly think at present. Thought we may not think or speak of at all. If we want thought different from the present, then thought must veer towards art. To be a thing at all—a rock, a lizard, a human—is to be in a twist.<sup>252</sup>

I would like to argue here that “be in a twist” as described by Morton is a *suspension*.<sup>253</sup> Morton's dark ecology paints humanity as stunned by the headlights. We are frozen in our actions, between driving our car to work each day with its convenient park, its air conditioning and its safety rating or standing on the side of a street hoping our bus will be on time. That's our *suspension*.

249 *Tamoya Ohboya*, 2017. Commissioned by TBA21–Academy.

250 Sabine Adler, “Tue Greenfort, ALGA,” Eres Foundation: Art and Natural Science, accessed June 12, 2023, <https://eres-stiftung.de/en/program/alga>.

251 Timothy Morton, *Being Ecological*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2019).

252 Timothy Morton, *Dark Ecology – For a Logic of Future Coexistence*. (New York: Columbia, University Press, 2018) 1.

253 *Ibid.*, 1.

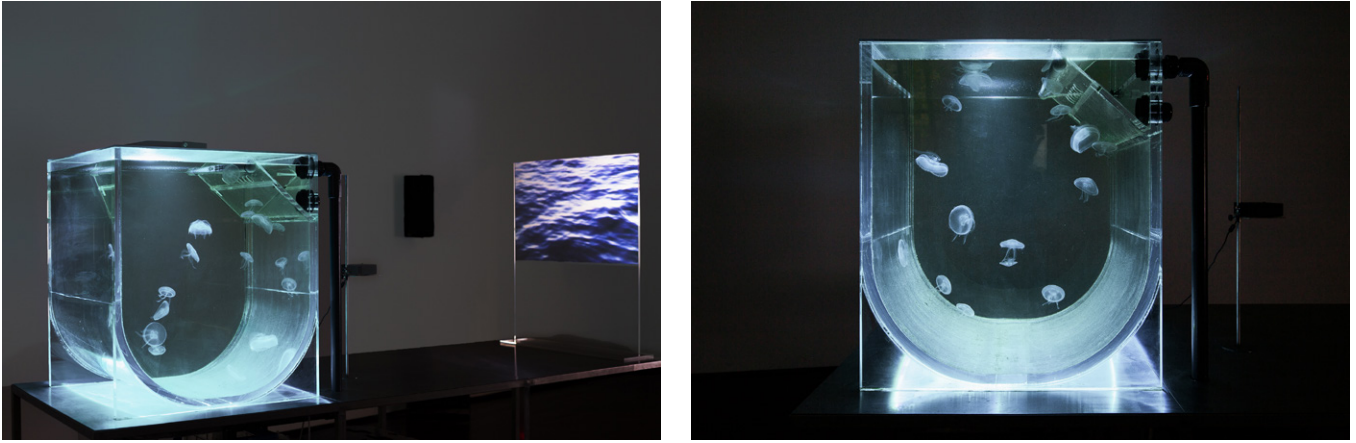


Figure 58, Tue Greenfort, *Tamoya Ohboya*, 2017. Stainless steel table, Aurelia aurita, aquarium technique, single-channel video projection of Chironex, Perspex panel. Installation view: Tidalectics, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna, Austria. (Photo © Elodie Grethen | TBA21). Reproduced with permission.

Matter has agency, even when it is paused or suspended. It has agency and efficacy that is dependent on collaboration and interference of bodies and other forces. This agency in a material assemblage, like an event, has a cyclical life span. Debris from matter or events is everywhere. By looking and observing we are able to make sense of incidental matter. Jane Bennett, in the well-known opening to *Vibrant Matter* describes debris as found in a drain on the street, explaining how a relationship is “formed with each other, with the street, with the weather that morning, with me.”<sup>254</sup> This debris and inert matter exists in relation to all matter as lively matter that can enact, inform, describe and trace as once it is in a relationship, it becomes significant. It may be glued to paper or swept up and discarded but it will not cease to exist.

Material is potential and possibility, energy and new life, but also the recycling of matter through debris, death and decay. To decay is to “decompose, rot, putrefy, go bad, spoil, fester, perish, deteriorate, degrade, break down, break up, moulder, shrivel up, wither, technical mortify, necrotize, sphacelate.”<sup>255</sup> It is also to “deteriorate, degenerate, decline, go downhill, slump, slip, slide, go to rack and ruin, go to seed, run to seed, worsen, crumble disintegrate, fall to pieces, come apart at the seams, fall into disrepair, become dilapidated; fail, wane, ebb, dwindle, collapse.”<sup>256</sup> Dust as debris and decay is an affective and disturbing metaphor, an opening to death that recalls the dark affects described in Chapter 3.

<sup>254</sup> Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 5.

<sup>255</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed., s.v. “decay.”

<sup>256</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), s.v. “decay.”



Figure 59, Jill McIntosh, *Fielding*, close up of charcoal dust that has drifted, 2021. (Photo © F. Cahill). Reproduced with permission.

As I draw over acrylic paint, the chalk crumbles against the canvas. Most of the chalk adheres but some becomes dust, falling at my feet. This dust has become a part of my practice as it spreads its way across the studio floor, gathering into corners, shifting, changing shape, is ground by my shoes and traces my actions, recording an event. Although this is usually an unremarkable event, I have come to see it in terms of the affective field marked by these definitions.

Dust can be chalk or charcoal applied to paper but can also rise out of carpets, upholstered furniture, and fireplaces, and can be pet and human detritus, dirt, smoke, exhaust fumes and plant pollen. It circulates our world and our daily lives, accumulating and dispersing randomly, showing the passage of time. Small particles exist in an indefinite duration and in the oscillation of change, cause and effect, and endless potentialities. Water, wind, and sun are revealed through these dusty occasions, floating back and forward, alternating between the made and the unmade. Associations arise from vast empathies with this particulate matter, as we navigate our way through the uncertainty of our everyday events.



Figure 60, Nina Canell, *Blue (diffused)*, 2014, Medium unknown, <https://arthur.io/art/nina-canell/blue-diffused>, From the Exhibition *This is Tomorrow*. (Photo © Nina Canell). Reproduced with permission.

Swedish artist Nina Canell floods her art images by allowing the material to disperse. By combining unrelated materials and forming situations where they can be altered, Canell focuses our attention on spreading and loss. In the work *Blue (Diffused)* (2014), shown in figure 60, we see this dispersal as nothingness, an ice cream run over by a car, a colony of spider eggs.

She unearths energies in her materials as “synergies, transferences and entanglements,” and these “unite material forces and material form.”<sup>257</sup> Canell articulates this as working within a “material imagination” and says “installations posit themselves as testing grounds—imitating, misinterpreting or reinventing elements of the natural world—proposing intimate bonds in our existing as well as fictive vicinity.”<sup>258</sup> In other works, Canell uses latex, steel and concrete. She has long considered ‘hardscaping’: driveways, walls, pavements, and the materials that they are composed of. Shells, sand, and other aggregates have been dredged to make limestone for concrete, which is old material often composed of ancient fossils. Canell sees this material as a depleting of the earth resources; as the mindless use of fossils in concrete to cover the ground as displaced energy, which can also act

<sup>257</sup> Fionn Mead, “Nina Canell/Perpetuum Mobile (25kg),” *Dolomiti Contemporary: Visual Arts on Location*, 2016, <http://www.dolomiticontemporanee.net/DCe2013/?p=12406>.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*

as a host for other events. By placing found material in new environments and relationships, she releases the vitality and agency of these materials.

In my own recent attempts to activate ambient dust, I experimented with pieces of carpet and light to release dust, with the idea of presenting this as a dust mote installation, capturing this in photography as the dust floated off the surface in all directions (figure 61). This particulate matter is alert; it can be suspended, caught by a breeze or bound in a medium. It can circulate as smoke from a fire or as a sand-storm from the desert. It is both living matter (in the sense of Bennett's vibrancy, and because dust is mostly human skin cells) and dead matter (recalling connotations of decay and disuse). Particles are suspended and stream through our world and our bodies in rivers. These fields are about the present and the virtual, actions and in-actions in our relational world. All actors, sun, wind, water, particulate matter, and humans are suspended as participating and interconnecting elements in an event.



Figure 61, Jill McIntosh, *In Search of Dust Motes*, 2023, photographs.

In my art practice, I am defining movement of spaces in-between materials, suspensions that form the less definite moments. Dust is indefinite, as it circulates, settles, then rises into the air again. This movement can be the quiet lull within an action, or it can be a pause in time, the unseen potential within the duration of an event or the way time is explored in art processes where the material components

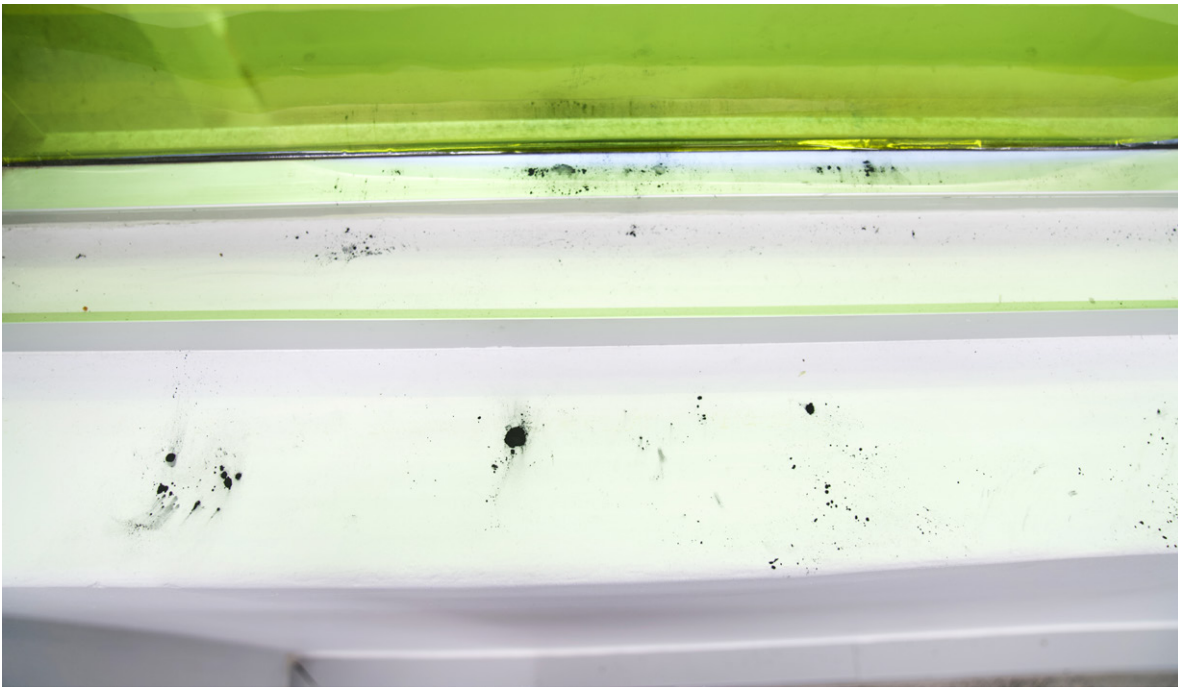


Figure 62, Jill McIntosh, *Fielding*, dust falling and drifting, 2022. Photo © F. Cahill. Reproduced with permission.

are suspended or change orientation.<sup>259</sup> This movement is found in the transformation of materials from water to ice or from a solid to dust; the mobility of matter, the transferal, transformation, and translation—that matter engages in.

My particular interest is in the agency of dust and debris in my materials and studio. This dust is light, multifaceted, mobile, and it exists as individual items or clumps as a group.

While reflecting on these tiny specks, I exploited the capacity of photogrammetric scanning and 3D printing to scale up particles of charcoal to an extra-large size (figure 63). By digitally compositing many photographs of a small piece of charcoal, a wireframe scan was created; it was then printed in layers of extruded plastic. The surface qualities of the particle shifted from charcoal, to computer image, and from computer image to plastic. The charcoal was enlarged and transformed into a satin, oily, reflective, tactile object.

259 In 2017, the Whitechapel Gallery in London curated an exhibition titled “A Handful of Dust” which paid homage to the Man Ray/Marcel Duchamp project ‘Dust Breeding’ in 1920. During a visit to Duchamp’s in New York studio, Man Ray was intrigued by the thick layer of dust sitting on Duchamp’s artwork ‘The Bride Stripped Bare by Her bachelors, Even.’ Over the lead and glass, the dust appeared as a surreal landscape. Man Ray opened the shutter on his camera and left it open for several hours. Many photographers have since captured a variety of ‘dust’ images from dust storms, the residue of explosions, gravesides and gravel.

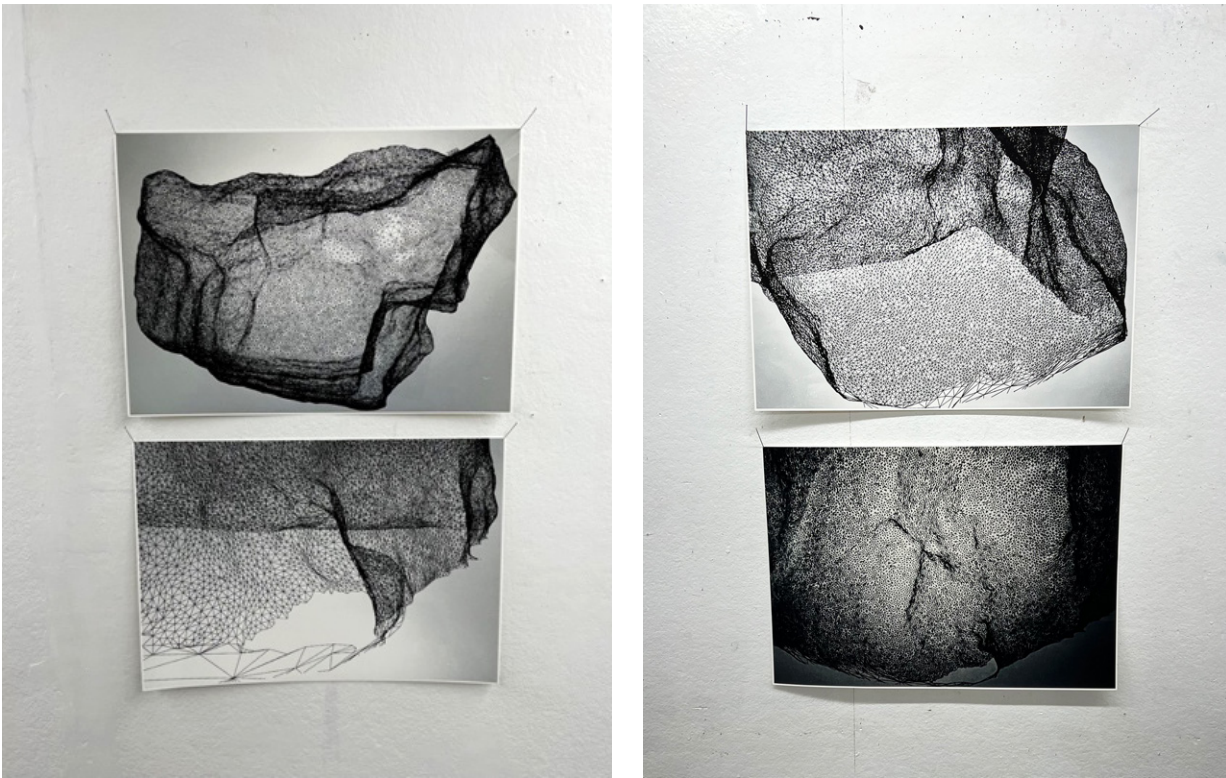


Figure 63, Wireframe scans of charcoal and 3-D prints, by Jill McIntosh, Dr Carl Douglas, and Matthew Davis, in 2022. Photos by author; digital images by Dr Carl Douglas. Reproduced with permission.

As plastic, this newly emerged object was made from fossil fuels, old carbon once buried in the ground and now removed. This made the process curiously cyclical. The prints were compelling in their satin-like surface, unsettling as they could not be easily defined as either a cast from a piece of coal or an object formed by modelling with a human hand. This caused an uncanny affective response from the viewer. The physicality of the 3D print representation of carbon was hard to determine and the processes and materials were not immediately evident. They emerged as a speck of dust that had been enlarged in our material imaginations.

The most frustrating aspect of working with small particles is their mobility. Unless you bind these in medium, they escape. What is the point of a feather duster that flicks the dust off a surface, so it can float into the air and settle again? Binding permanently can solve this problem, such as mixing flour into a cake. Binding matter temporarily is affective, if you are anticipating time within an event.

British artist Richard Long also has his origins in the Land Art movement of the 1970s. In 1990, he presented liquid clay work *White Water Line* on the floor of the Tate Gallery, which was awarded the Turner Prize. This was a mixture of white china clay and water mixed into a slurry and poured in a continuous action on the floor. After a few weeks it dried out and crumbled into dust and at the end of the exhibition it was swept and thrown away. The art project was a single continuous action by the artist within the gallery space that existed over a period of time.

Long drew a fluid pattern on the gallery floor with the poured sludge. His actions formed a delicate, temporal, and striking white graphic event of porcelain clay against the wooden floor. Long was cognizant of his disregard for the conventions of humidity control in the gallery, the conservators' concern about shifting clay dust, and the gallery founders' fear for safety of viewers on the slippery floor. This was liquid clay not a fired ceramic object sitting on a gallery plinth. The work was an event, incorporating—the pouring, evaporating and ultimate dispersal, then disposal.



Figure 64, Richard Long, *White Water Line*, 1990, installation, Tate Gallery, London. Photo source: Tate Photography. Tate Image license.

Within Long's art making, there is flux that draws from history, philosophy, geology, wider art practices, and an acknowledgement of space and time. Massumi writes that a

relation is a suspension of the particular definitions of the terms in relation. If it is as real as they are, its reality is of a different order: an implicate order, of ready-to-be-things folded eventfully into each other. If the implicate order is of the order of an event, then like every event, really-next-effects will unfold from its happening: to be continued.<sup>260</sup>

Massumi is describing the perpetual movement in the world around us is observed as change and flux. He considers the ongoing, multi-directional dispersal of actions within the event. *White Water Line*, too, described our unfolding material selves. It investigated clay suspended in water, transformed as the water then evaporated into the air to float as dust or be swept as rubbish into a bin. The pattern Long poured on the gallery floor was intestinal, fluid, and a pathway that although it ended, was bodily and suggested a continuum.

In my studio, other dust becomes part of the work—blown in plant pollen, skin particles, woollen fibres and insect debris. These particles fuse with my art



Figure 65, Jill McIntosh, *Untitled*, 2020, close up.

materials. I am recording this dust as it falls, as it is carried in by breezes and tracked around the studio by my shoes. I place paper on the studio floor to collect this debris and record these events. Some of these recordings are kept as drawings on the wall, others have become photographic records.

Dust, soil, and debris are found everywhere in our environment. I consider this as I prepare for an exhibition. In preparation for *Fielding* (2022), the suspended debris, including the dust from my pastels, crumbled charcoal, and graphite, was swept from the studio floor and spread on the stainless-steel ponds. Some of the material sank to the bottom of the ponds, and other particles grouped together and formed a delicate skin. This debris and dust respond to the warmth of the sun, and the breeze from the open gallery door, and the composite minerals accumulated in the dust and debris form chemical reactions.

Deleuze and Guattari suggest that suspension of matter can occur when caught between sedentary capture (striated space) and nomadic force (smooth space) as “matter- movement.”<sup>261</sup> Michael Marder suggests that dust is a “yard stick by which to measure reality, if not as something that is, then as something that once was.”<sup>262</sup> Marder suggests that dust blurs boundaries and that we contribute to the multiplication of dust “by wearing clothes, using things around us and merely living—shedding skin cells, hair and other biological components of our

261 Deleuze and Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*, 415.

262 Michael Marder, *Dust*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 36.

bodies,”<sup>263</sup> as dust can be any matter that is dry and detaches in particles. The dust on my studio floor is a material that traces my responses and my movements in and around the art works. As I traipse through the dust I leave footprints and also track dust around the studio floor. One grain of chalk dust can be crushed, smeared, streaked in a trajectory across the paper, across the floor and into the corners it sometimes inhabits. This dust is environmental, and as we co-exist, it is also communal.

In my practice, dust is a metaphor for life. As pollen, it fertilises plants and gives life. As the crumbled leaf from a tree in autumn, it is debris. Carbon dust, as activated charcoal removes anti toxins, yet as carbon monoxide it is suffocating and polluting in the air. Dust is more of an awareness than an interest in this practice. Dust is not the dualism of life, and death for dust has a multiplicity of indications.

Trees are meant to stay erect. They spread their branches for the duration of their lives; they shed their scale/leaves, withstand a storm while the sea falls back on its horizontality.<sup>264</sup>

## 4.6 Materiality and Suspension

Karen Barad suggests that “matter is an enfolding, an innovation, it cannot help touching itself, and in this self-touching it comes in contact with the infinite alterity that it is.”<sup>265</sup> Matter is the world around us interconnected and entangled. Stacy Alaimo sees our existence as a floating “state of suspension, between terrestrial human habitats and distant benthic and pelagic realms, between the aesthetic estrangement of sea creatures and the recognition of evolutionary kinship, between mediated, situated, and emergent knowledges,” where “suspension may denote a pause in action.”<sup>266</sup>

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>264</sup> Adnan, *Sea and Fog*, 27.

<sup>265</sup> Karen Barad, “Trans Materialities: Trans\*/Matter/Realities and Queer Political Imaginings,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 21, no. 2-3 (2015): 387–422, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2843239>.

<sup>266</sup> Alaimo, *States of Suspension*, 490.

Implicit in new materialist theory is a care for our threatened planet. Alaimo acknowledges that, there is “no safe place to stand,” with global warming, the intolerance of diversity and our diminishing resources.<sup>267</sup> Alaimo, writing from the perspective of environmental studies, science and feminist theory, focuses on *trans-corporeality* in the relationship of our bodies to nature and how our acknowledgement of the non-human can alter our sense of our place within the Anthropocene. Alaimo is raising awareness of the necessity of establishing a positive relationship with matter and how we live on this earth, in this biosphere on this planet; a superorganism “composed of all life tightly coupled with the air, the oceans, and the surface of the rocks.”<sup>268</sup>

My project investigates the relational intersections between matter and actions, experiences, time, place, and the artist’s body as a *suspension*. It looks at the agency of making and the transient, transforming possibilities that occur. It explores materiality and the embodiment of the artist through consciousness, subjectivity, language, emotion, meaning, value, and agency—as emerging from a suspended relationship with all matter. Material can be conceived of as “open, complex systems with porous boundaries” rather than closed and static.<sup>269</sup> It is in the relationship between matter that we can observe the lively dynamic. Human-centric theories of matter, of an action or an event, move across the human-non-human divide. This combined materiality in an assemblage can occur intentionally or incidentally. Manning asks, “What else can artistic practice become when the object is not the goal but the activator, the conduit towards new modes of existence?”<sup>270</sup>

I return again to Eliasson’s *Beauty* (figure 29; see Section 3.2). The fine spray of water forms a sheet of mist in the gallery. The light shining on the mist is diffracted, broken up into its component colours and a rainbow is formed. Eliasson did not invent the rainbow, but he was able to show us what is here in the world around us. This is the strength of new materialist thought. It opens our perception to enable us to experience what is here. It is vibrant matter and dust and decay;

267 Ibid.

268 Alaimo, *States of Suspension*, 490.

269 Brian Massumi, “The Autonomy of Affect,” *Cultural Critique*, no. 31 (1995): 15.

270 Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, 46.

it is a celebration of diversity and the confronting reality of discrimination; it is vast oceans full of food and pollution. We are suspended between the multiple considerations. This is the significance of new materialist thought, as it frames these issues, heightens our awareness, and expands our perceptions.

The sky fell and storms blew on its face. It sank deeper; in that maelstrom humans lost balance. There were fires on earth questioning in the waters.<sup>271</sup>



Figure 66, Jill McIntosh, *Field I*, 2021, chalk pastel and acrylic paint on canvas, 1000 x1000 mm.

# CONCLUSION

Through working with materials, by experimenting with water, different papers and different grinds of charcoal, I have found that new perceptual space cannot be located or allocated but must be revealed. This project explores, through the shifting of materials, how variation and similarity reside in newly proposed understandings of the condition of *suspension* in art materials and art practice. Over the course of this research, I have examined the literal suspension of particles in fluid; those that form our bodies as physically suspended in the world as an ecological and material field; and have discovered that by considering temporal suspension (such as pauses, delays) as a reorientation of the suspension of perception, that perception is also a suspension. By allowing the agency of my materials to interact within conditions— new marks, new surfaces, new movements of materials, have been revealed. These are new discoveries and contribute to the wider investigation into agency of matter in our non-human/human world.

By setting up conditions, allowing chance and the material agency to determine the outcome, these works have a presence beyond authorship. Petra Lange-Berndt suggests “the term ‘material’ describes not prime matter but substances that are always subject to change, be it through handling, interaction with surroundings, or the dynamic life of chemical reactions. It is therefore a political decision to focus on the materials of art: it means to consider the processes of making.”<sup>272</sup> She suggests that Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have provided us with a rethinking on how we see matter, not as a substance or compound but as variation and flux (Section 4.1).<sup>273</sup>

In the studio I have experimented with different weights of paper, with found papers, graph paper, cloth and canvas. I have changed the temperature of the water, the temperature of the room and experimented with different grinds of charcoal. I found that satin hot press cotton paper absorbs moisture and contains enough sizing to allow the cellulose in the charcoal dust to adhere. This provides variation within similarities in the works on paper. In other work I have mixed charcoal dust and chalk pastel with acrylic paint or made paint by

<sup>272</sup> Lange-Berndt, *Materiality*, 12.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

binding charcoal and rabbit skin glue, or cellulose paste and linseed oil to find material mixtures that show flux and change. I have shifted materials through digital processes, explored scale and transformation through the use of fossil fuel products and set up conditions of motion (in the ponds where water is drawn out then returned) to reflect the movement of the moon.

In reflecting back over this research, I feel that this practice-led research inquiry began with a sensation. Initially this was hard to define but through working with my art materials: charcoal dust, water, paint, and paper, the project became evident. It was the indeterminate quality of being present yet nothing, of being delayed and unable to act, of being held without stays, feeling there was no up or down, and no stable ground—it was the sensation and perception of *suspension*. I commenced this project and explored this idea through using charcoal dust on water, as a way to imagine and reveal other conditions of suspension. My particular interest is in the minor force, the felt occurrence, the interstices in matter-movement, and our perception and imaginings of this condition. Matter as a stable compound does not exist, as our world is all action, activity, events and is experienced.

In the Introduction, I describe this thesis as contributing to wider discourse on *suspension*, *materiality fluidity* in hybrid and relational art practices. The question driving my project is “how does exploring suspended particulate matter illuminate affective states in the artist and the encounter?” Initially this was a material exploration of studio conditions and occurrences. Having reflected on these actions and events I have discovered new insights into the experience of *suspension* in the art event. While I have acknowledged the language around *suspension* and how the term is used in art theory, through experimentation, I have simultaneously explored the physical and affective resonances of suspension. By shifting materials, spilling over boundaries, the agency in my materials have found their own course. This has been an over-flowing that marks the “visibility between the invading and the inhaled.”<sup>274</sup>

In Chapter 1 I introduce my two materials—particulate charcoal and water. In this section I describe my practice with charcoal and water and how I use the water surface as a moving ground for the material. I discuss my exploration into the perception of suspension in the paint/pastel chalk field works on paper. In both forms of practice, I am working in a field (“a place where a subject of scientific study or of artistic representation can be observed in its natural location or context”).<sup>275</sup> As my art practice has developed, it has formed a field of differences and variations. In this chapter I discuss the significance of the event, the condition of the field, and my in-action and agency as an artist. It is these interconnected themes that form the metaphorical and material conditions for the central idea of this thesis: *suspension*. I am suggesting that the various senses of suspension are each linked as consequences of an event—the event of artmaking. Later in this chapter, I look to the practice of British artist Tania Kovats for a commonality in her approach to my work. Erin Manning, Brian Massumi and the process philosophers’ concepts of *in-action* and *event* have become ways of thinking through this condition of work that emerges contingently through a field of relations.

In Chapter 2 I describe my *shifting methodology*. This is where I use difference and variation in seriality, and the blurring of metaphoric and literal sense, to disclose the emergence of something new. In this section I describe this ‘emergence’ as a *shudder*,—the feeling that something has taken hold of me, rather than something that I (as the agent) have uncovered. I emphasise the way this practice-led research situates agency in the flux of the practice with its reflexive operations. This is something that I may not know in advance, and I will not necessarily recognise what form this knowledge will take.

Chapter 3 describes *dark affects* as emerging in the field of practice from using black materials suspended on water that open up *the minor*. Here there is a discussion on the role of baths and ponds in my practice. It is my intention here to build on the idea of *perceptual suspension* by referring to Massumi’s concept

<sup>275</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed., s.v. “field.”

of *semblance* as a means of articulation. *Semblance* counters the idea of a distinct split between subject and object, and instead prompts an understanding of ‘our’ sense and experience as being, in fact, an event’s becoming-aware-of-itself. The materials water and charcoal permeate our bodies, and in this way ‘sense and experience’ permeate us. Further into this chapter, I describe the work of New Zealand artist Marie Shannon as escaping illustrating an image or concept but as being taken-up in her practice. I argue here that dark affects, as semblances, open to a politics of *the minor*. They interrupt the sense of a fixed ground and a reliable subjectivity, which activates our imagination to consider—infinity, endless space, abstractionism, out-of-body experience, and socio-political thought. These dark affects also arise out of delay, doubt and hesitation—suspensions that are affecting decision-making over our threatened ecology.

In my own practice, I bring in circulating matter through charcoal dust, moving water, and capturing debris from my work in the studio alongside light-filled rooms and plants to reveal living, entangled and decaying matter. I am balancing two main themes: the *vitality* and suspension of matter (the extent to which it is alive, pervades our bodies and is open-ended), and *dust* (as matter decaying, dispersing and circulating back into its environment). In Chapter 4, I discuss this concept of transience alongside Bennett’s *vital matter* and Marder’s philosophy of *dust*. This is viewed in terms of *materiality* and new materialist theory. In this Chapter, I investigate the vitality of my art materials which are open-ended and full of life. The amount of water we have on earth and in the atmosphere seldom changes, but is cycled through various compounds and substances, as liquids, solids, and gases. I have referenced the work of artists Richard Long and Antony Gormley as examples of art projects that challenge boundaries by flooding gallery spaces with earth and water.

At the conclusion of this exegesis I feel that I have stepped into a new space. I have gained a greater understanding of my materials, their agency and how they respond to new arrangements and connections, to chance and how they can be highly mobile and fluid. Moving forward I intend to extend my practice to work within the environment — to work with rivers and tides. Stacy Alaimo’s concept

of *trans-corporeality*<sup>276</sup> has opened up ideas for me on watery suspensions, and this has become a significant term in this exegesis as another way to imagine a world of matter and sense that passes through us, in which we circulate and are held. This has been considered alongside affect and event theory through the writings of Manning, Massumi, Bennett and Braidotti. These theorists have been a particular focus for me, as their thoughts have synchronicities with this inquiry.

Theories on materiality and matter are recognised as having sensation and agential properties—slimy, sticky, viscous—properties of movement, gravity, and transformation. They describe material motion where we envisage that nothing around us is stable, all of our world is uncertain, and we live on a shifting ground. Suspended materials have qualities of motion, rhythm, and waves. Fluid can shift into different states, such as steam and ice. This project considers *suspension* and the movement of fine particles is a metaphor for the affective resonances of transience and uncertainty in the world around us.

An artist is suspended within the in-act, the processes, and materials through touching, sensing movement, atmospheric conditions and observing the liveness of this ontology. In art making processes new work emerges through possibilities and reflecting on the latency in these possibilities to produce new insights, knowledge and perspectives. Through recognising experience, potential is realised while remaining a possibility.

This research inquiry gives special attention to the *agency of matter*. It suggests that in the encounter our understanding of relational events is beyond ‘the human,’ and it recognises that the vibrancy of matter and diversity can open spaces for alternate understandings. Matter is unpredictable, unanticipated, and not able to fall into the cliché of the assumed. By opening up new notions of materiality unexpected actions and new possibilities arise, and alternate associations enfold, allowing imaginings of different interactions and intensities in

276 Alaimo “*States of Suspension*.”

the event. This project surveys the affective properties of art materials, water and paper, in drawing, painting, installation, and theory, alongside external conditions such as weather, climate change, variation and diversity in socio-politics.

The concept of *semblance* raises questions of identity, intimacy, the undefinable and uncertain, and a sense of other. *Semblance*, in this project, references a state of being, and is observed as ‘interior thought.’ In the black paintings it is a field of self-reflection. Exploring *darkness* is a perceptual journey, an analogy for time, endless space, and duration. The concept of darkness is both singular and universal, just as intuition is singular and universal. I consider *darkness* as indeterminate, unknown and enveloping. Affect relations not only belong to the encounter, they are continually present in our world. As our world increasingly exists in the virtual, our presence and our trace becomes more uncertain. By using intuition, I allow the sensations of perpetual uncertainty, discord and fluidity to form a field of interconnected matter that I encounter with my body.

This exegesis has been written in conjunction with my ongoing studio work. For the exhibition *Transitional Acts—Suspension and Materiality in the Event* (to be installed at St Paul Street Gallery 2 in September 2023). This is working with stainless steel ponds and a motorised pump to move the water from pond to pond, performing as if a tide, responding to the movement and gravitational pull of the moon and to a lesser extent the sun in relation to the adjacent tinted window coverings and the series of charcoal bath prints. One or more 3D printed charcoal pieces assist in intersecting the gallery space and in activating a field of relations. This work has been discussed in this exegesis.

In the studio, I do not know what will occur or has occurred until it enters the world. My methodology in this project is to open up the differences within my practice through immersive, continuous yet reflective acts within a momentum. This spurs my intent to practice outside the studio. This research inquiry lingers on possibility, potential, open spaces—both intimate and vast. This is a space where I can apply my findings to wider critical theory and challenge existing ideas. By looking at the work of other artists and artist reviews, and applying

critical thought to gain a fuller understanding of this domain, a broader contextual relationship occurs. This project asks questions about how time and space are experienced, alongside affective resonances, by the artist and in the encounter. This is a synergy of affects, sensations and actions where thoughts reach into the dark corners. It is where vulnerabilities lie, insecurities and uncertainty lurk and intuition seeks out new spaces. Time moves as a point, arching over and folding back again.

Throughout this exegesis, I have quoted extracts from Etel Adnan's poetry. These thoughtful reflections remind me that artmaking and art practice is embedded in our everyday as *in-act* and *event*. Adnan's thoughts do not represent but reflect our lives as fluid and transient. The insights from this art philosopher and painter have been included as a pause, a breath between experiences and I am grateful to attach extracts from her insightful book. *Suspension*, I suggest, is experienced—poetically, affectively as well as materially. A speck of dust can stir thoughts and imaginings of uncertainty, flux, and universality.



Figure 67, Jill McIntosh, *Transitional Acts*, 2023, installation. Ngutu Kākā Gallery 2, Auckland University of Technology, Te Wānanga Aronui O Tāmaki Makau Rau. Photo V. Baldwin. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 68, Jill McIntosh, *Somatic Inference*, 2023, stainless steel, water, graphite, charcoal, chalk dust, pump. Photo V. Baldwin. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 69, Jill McIntosh, *Relational Flow*, 2023, vinyl on glass. Photo V. Baldwin. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 70, Jill McIntosh, *Black Rift*, 2023, intaglio print, Charbonnel ink on Lanaquarelle paper. Photo V. Baldwin. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 71, Jill McIntosh, *Particulate Matter*, 2023, plastic filament 3-D print. Photo V. Baldwin. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 72, Jill McIntosh, *Chalk Suspension*, 2023, pastel chalk and acrylic paint on canvas. Photo V. Baldwin. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 73, Jill McIntosh, *Shifting Field*, 2023, charcoal on Lanaquarelle paper. Photo V. Baldwin. Reproduced with permission.

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