

Soul Place: *Anam Áite*

*Connecting Home, Spirit and Heritage
Through Painting*

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Janet Patricia Mazenier

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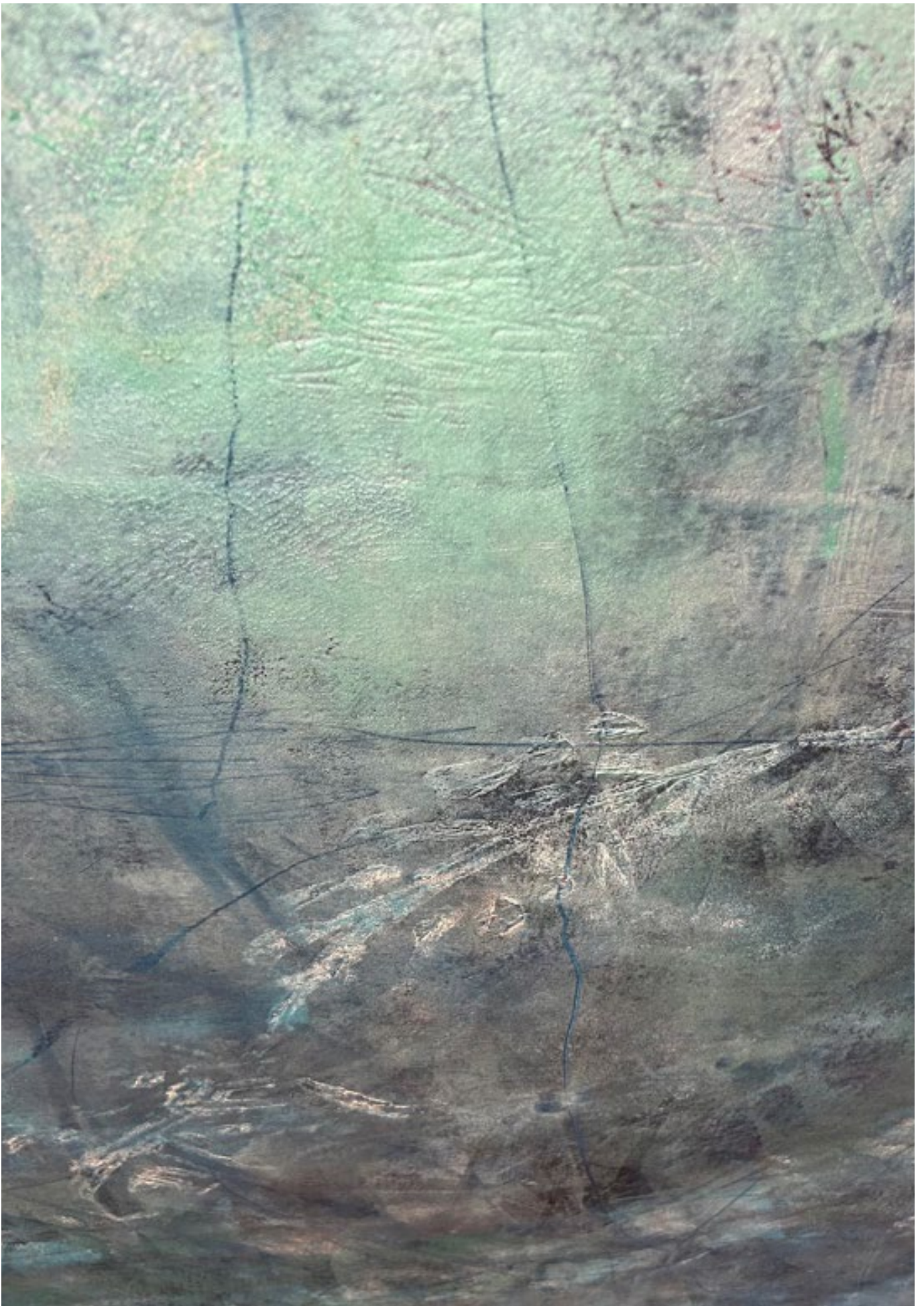


TABLE OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 1.</i> Works in situ. Sanctuary exhibition, 2025. Work L <i>Whisperings</i> . 4000x1800mm. Work R <i>Burren Grykes</i> . 3000x1800mm, collection of the artist. Photograph © Samuel Hartnett. Reproduced with permission.	13
<i>Figure 2.</i> <i>Gritty</i> , 2023, oil paint and cold wax medium on cradled panel. 1000x1000mm.	25
<i>Figure 3.</i> <i>Autumnal Ground</i> , 2023, oil paint and cold wax medium on cradled panel. 1000x1000mm, collection of T. Kidman.	25
<i>Figure 4.</i> <i>Burnt Earth</i> , 2023, oil paint and cold wax medium on cradled panel. 1000x1000mm, collection of L. Hawkins.	26
<i>Figure 5.</i> <i>Burnt Earth</i> , 2023, oil paint and cold wax medium on cradled panel. 1000x1000mm, collection of L. Hawkins.	26
<i>Figure 6.</i> <i>At the beginning of the research</i> . Images of various works in St. Paul’s Church, Te Hau Kapua Devonport. Photograph © Janet Mazenier.	27
<i>Figure 7.</i> <i>Andisol</i> , 2023, oil paint and cold wax medium on cradled panel. 1500x1200mm.	28
<i>Figure 8.</i> Left: <i>Burnt</i> , 2023, oil paint and cold wax medium, 1800x1200mm. Right: <i>Ancient</i> , 2023, oil paint and cold wax medium on cradled panel, 1000x1000mm.	29
<i>Figure 9.</i> <i>Burnished</i> , 2023, diptych, oil paint, pigment and cold wax medium on cradled panel. 1300x1600mm.	30
<i>Figure 10.</i> <i>Work installed at NZ Sculpture OnShore</i> , 2023. This was a test to see how the work would survive being installed outside for three weeks. Photograph © Janet Mazenier.	31
<i>Figure 11.</i> <i>Untitled</i> , 2024, oil paint, charcoal and cold wax medium on paper. 297x210mm.	33
<i>Figure 12.</i> <i>Untitled</i> , 2024, charcoal on paper. 297x210mm.	33
<i>Figure 13.</i> <i>Burren works</i> , various sizes in the collection of the artist. Left to right, <i>Walking The Terrain</i> , 2024, oil paint and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas 3000x1860mm; <i>The Abyss</i> , 2024, oil paint and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas. 4000x1860mm; <i>Verdant</i> , oil paint and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas. 3000x 1860mm.	35
<i>Figure 14.</i> <i>Trodden Path</i> , 2024, oil paint and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas. 1880x2000mm, collection of the artist. Exhibited at <i>Transient Encounters and Transformation Shifts</i> , Toi Pātaka, 2025.	36
<i>Figure 15.</i> <i>Faultlines</i> , work in progress, 2025, oil paint, sand, charcoal, ink, ash, thread, hair and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas. 6700x1800mm, collection of the artists.	37
<i>Figure 16.</i> <i>Urban Creep</i> , 2024, oil paint and cold wax medium on stretched canvas. 1200x1800mm. Exhibited as part of the <i>Fluid Becoming</i> exhibition, 2024. Photograph © Janet Mazenier.	41
<i>Figure 17.</i> <i>Lichens</i> , 2023, oil paint and pigment with cold wax medium on stretched canvas. 1000x1000mm. Exhibited as part of the <i>Fluid Becoming</i> exhibition, 2024. Photograph © Janet Mazenier.	42
<i>Figure 18.</i> Detail, eventual work covered up.	43
<i>Figure 19.</i> <i>Mudflats</i> , 2024, oil paint and cold wax medium on stretched canvas. 1200x1500mm.	43
<i>Figure 20.</i> <i>Field of the Unsaid</i> , work in progress, 2025, oil paint, charcoal and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, size to be determined after completion.	46
<i>Figure 21.</i> Tacita Dean, <i>Chalk Fall</i> , 2018, chalk on blackboard, 36580 x 73150mm. The Josephine Ulrick and Win Shubert Trust Collection, Queensland Art Gallery Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia. Photograph © QAGOMA.	48
<i>Figure 22.</i> Tacita Dean, <i>The Wreck of Hope</i> , 2022, chalk on blackboard, 36580 x 73150mm 2023 installation at Bourse de Pinault Collection, Paris, France. Photograph © Arélian Mole.	49
<i>Figure 23.</i> <i>Working on the Burren paintings at the Burren College of Art</i> , May. 2024. Photograph © Janet Mazenier.	51
<i>Figure 24.</i> Detail: <i>OiOi</i> , 2023, oil paint and cold wax medium on cradled panel.	53
<i>Figure 25.</i> Pounamu at Ōperetu, Narrowneck. Photograph © Janet Mazenier.	55
<i>Figure 26.</i> <i>Ballinskelligs in Early Spring</i> , 2024, oil paint, charcoal and cold wax medium on cradled panel, 1000x1000mm.	62
<i>Figure 27.</i> <i>Field of the Unsaid</i> , work in progress, 2025, oil paint and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas.	64
<i>Figure 28.</i> <i>Field of the Unsaid</i> , 2025. Detail: reworking the painting.	65
<i>Figure 29.</i> <i>Field of the Unsaid</i> , 2025. Detail: reworking the painting.	67
<i>Figure 30.</i> My apoidean companion. Detail: work in progress. 2025.	70
<i>Figure 31.</i> <i>Wax cappings</i> . 2025. Photograph © Janet Mazenier.	72

Figure 32. <i>Field of the Unsaid</i> , 2025, oil paint, charcoal and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas. 1230x2200mm (including rod and clasps).....	74
Figure 33. Rolling on more layers. Detail <i>Field of the Unsaid</i> , work in progress.2024.....	76
Figure 34. Sarah Treadwell. <i>Oceanic Section: Fathom</i> . 2018-2023, oil, ink and watercolour on unstretched canvas with stones, twine, pegs, 1800x1400mm, collection of J. Mazerier. Reproduced with permission.....	79
Figure 35. In County Kerry, with engraved Ogham stone. Photograph © Gail Tangney. Reproduced with permission.	82
Figure 36. <i>Walking the Terrain</i> , 2024, oil paint and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 3000x1860mm.....	85
Figure 37. Detail: <i>Walking the Terrain</i> , 2024.....	87
Figure 38. <i>Walking the Terrain</i> , 2024, oil paint and cold medium on unstretched canvas, 3000x1860mm.	91
Figure 39. Anselm Kiefer, <i>The Orders of the Night (Die Orden der Nacht)</i> , 1996, emulsion, acrylic and shellac on canvas, 3560x4630mm, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, United States. Photograph © Seattle Art Museum/Anselm Kiefer.	93
Figure 40. <i>Walking the Terrain</i> , 2024, oil paint and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 1860x3000mm. Shown during installation at Toi Gallery, Pataka, Porirua in February 2025.....	96
Figure 41. <i>Ephemeral Song</i> (section 1), Work in progress, oil paint, pastel and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 22000x2240mm. 2024.....	98
Figure 42. <i>Ephemeral Song</i> , work in progress, oil paint, pastel and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 22000x2240mm.2025.	101
Figure 43. <i>Faultlines</i> , 2025, oil paint, charcoal, ink, thread, ash, hair and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 6700x2600mm, collection of the artists. Installed at <i>World Building</i> exhibition, Seydisfjordur, Iceland.	105
Figure 44. Detail: <i>Faultlines</i> , work in progress, Collection of the artists.2025.	106
Figure 45. <i>Silfra</i> , work in progress, 2025, oil paint, charcoal, ink, ash and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 3000x1800mm, collection of the artists.	110
Figure 46. Detail: <i>Silfra</i> , work in progress, 2025.....	111
Figure 47. Detail: <i>Silfra</i> , work in progress, 2025.	112
Figure 48. <i>Faultlines and Silfra</i> , works in progress, in situ with Ann Mulcrone. Photograph © Janet Mazerier. Permission to reproduce provided by A. Mulcrone. 2025.....	113
Figure 49. <i>Silfra</i> , work in progress, 2025, oil paint, charcoal, ink, ash and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 1800x3000mm, collection of the artists. Initial installation at <i>World Building</i> exhibition in Seydisfjordur.....	115
Figure 50. Detail: <i>Silfra</i> , in situ after being shifted.	116
Figure 51. Cy Twombly, <i>Three Studies from the Temeraire</i> , 1988-1999, oil on canvas. 265x761x5.6cm installed, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia.	117
Figure 52. Detail: <i>Ephemeral Song</i> , work in progress, oil paint, pastel and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 22000x2640mm..2025.	120
Figure 53. <i>Silfra</i> , 2025, oil paint, charcoal, ink, ash and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 1800x3000mm, collection of the artists.	122
Figure 54. Detail: <i>Ephemeral Song</i> , work in progress, oil paint, pastel and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 22000x2640mm.2025.	124
Figure 55. Detail: <i>Ephemeral Song</i> , work in progress, oil paint, pastel and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 22000x2640mm.2025.	126
Figure 56. Detail: <i>Silfra</i> . Showing ash and charcoal from fire pit, Burren College of Art.2025.....	127
Figure 57. Detail: <i>Ephemeral Song</i> , work in progress, oil paint, pastel and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 2000x2640mm. 2025.....	128
Figure 58. Detail: <i>Ephemeral Song</i> , work in progress, oil paint, pastel and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 22000x2640mm.2025.	130
Figure 59. <i>Tidewoven</i> , 2025, oil paint and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 10000x1800mm. Shown in situ at <i>World Building</i> exhibition in Seydisfjordur, Iceland.....	134
Figure 60. <i>Tidewoven</i> , work in progress, oil paint and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 10000x1800mm.2025.....	136

<i>Figure 61. Tidewoven, work in progress, oil paint and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 10000x1800mm. 2025.</i>	137
<i>Figure 62. Tidewoven, work in progress, oil paint and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 10000x1800mm. 2025.</i>	138
<i>Figure 63. Tidewoven, work in progress, oil paint and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 10000x1800mm.2025.....</i>	140
<i>Figure 64. Detail: Tidewoven, work in progress, 2025.....</i>	141
<i>Figure 65. Detail: Tidewoven, work in progress, 2025.....</i>	143
<i>Figure 66. Detail: Tidewoven, work in progress, 2025.....</i>	144
<i>Figure 67. Rebecca Crowell, Traversing. 2023, oil/cold wax on panel, 48”x96” collection of the artist.</i>	145
<i>Figure 68. Tidewoven, work in progress, 2025, oil paint and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 10000x1800mm. 2025.....</i>	147
<i>Figure 69. Tidewoven, work in progress, oil paint and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 10000x1800mm. 2025.....</i>	148
<i>Figure 70. Detail: Ephemeral Song, work in progress, oil paint, pigment and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 22000x2640mm.2025.....</i>	151
<i>Figure 71. Tidewoven, work in progress, unstretched canvas, 10000x1800mm.2025.</i>	152
<i>Figure 72. Ephemeral Song. 2025. In situ at Gallery 2, Te Wai Ngutu Kākā Gallery, Auckland University of Technology. Oil and pastel with cold wax medium on unstretched canvas. 22000x2640mm. Photograph © Samuel Hartnett. Reproduced with permission.....</i>	159
<i>Figure 73. Ephemeral Song. 2025. In situ at Gallery 2, Te Wai Ngutu Kākā Gallery, Auckland University of Technology. Oil and pastel with cold wax medium on unstretched canvas. 22000x2640mm. Photograph © Samuel Hartnett. Reproduced with permission.....</i>	160
<i>Figure 74. Ephemeral Song. 2025. In situ at Gallery 2, Te Wai Ngutu Kākā Gallery, Auckland University of Technology. Oil and pastel with cold wax medium on unstretched canvas. 22000x2640mm. Photograph © Samuel Hartnett. Reproduced with permission.....</i>	161

ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor used artificial intelligence tools or generative artificial intelligence tools (unless it is clearly stated, and referenced, along with the purpose of use), nor material which, to a substantial extent, has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed: _____

29 January 2026

Date: _____

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I have come to realise and appreciate through this research that I am incredibly lucky to tread in two worlds – that of tangata Tiriti living in Aotearoa New Zealand with Irish family and people in both countries that I respectfully acknowledge and love.

ABSTRACT

Soul-Place: Anam Áite

Connecting Home, Spirit and Heritage Through Painting

This research investigates *anam áite* (Irish term for ‘soul-place’), through painting-based, practice-led inquiry grounded in phenomenology, materiality, and the affective qualities of place. It asks how might contemporary painting practices evoke the spirit of place and engage with its affective, environmental and ancestral dimensions? *Soul Place: Anam Áite* is a journey to better understand how painting can express concepts of place in Aotearoa New Zealand and Ireland.

The research is materially engaged and process-based, emphasising the agency of matter and the collaborative relationship between artist, medium and methods as they relate to the agency of matter. I use cold wax medium¹ as it serves as a key element of my practice for its ability to hold uncertainty, flux, and transformation. The wax, pigment, and surface behave in ways that exceed intention. They crack, absorb, resist, and transform. These intrinsic material responses evolve into methods of their own, guiding the direction of the work and fostering a collaborative rather than unilateral practice. This approach resonates with new materialist and phenomenological perspectives, where material is understood not as passive but as an active participant in shaping the world.”

Artworks are conceived as durational artefacts, containing traces of ecological, ancestral, and perceptual time. Through material transformation, the research sees painting as an agentive, ethical, and attentive practice. Painting is positioned as a form of worlding and world-bending, where spirit, matter, and memory converge to evoke the resonance of place and the complexity of entangled existence.

This research contributes to contemporary discourse on painting by proposing a materially and philosophically grounded approach to art-making that is responsive to place, time and relationality.

1 “What Is Cold Wax Medium?” Cold Wax Academy, accessed October 13, 2025, <https://coldwaxacademy.com/about-cwm/>.

Anam Áite : Soul Place

Ag déanamh naisc idir baile, spiorad and oidhreacht tríd phéintéireacht

Díríonn an taighde seo ar *anam áite* (téarma Gaelacha ar ‘*soul place*’), trí modh phéintéireacht-bunaithe, a dhéanann iniúchadh, trí cleachtadh ar, agus é sin préamhaithe i bhfeiniméineolaíocht, ábharthacht, agus ar na tréithe tionchair d’áite. Fiafraíonn sé ar conas go bhféadfadh cleachtadh phéintéireacht chomh-aimseartha spiorad na háite a spreagadh agus conas dul i ngleic leis an bhfeidhm, an dtimpeallacht agus an mbunthomhas sinsearach.

Lonnaithe idir Aotearoa / Nua Shéalainn agus Éire — fód dúchasach mo shinsear — cuireann an taighde seo taithí áite fé chaibidil, coimeádtha i gcuimhne agus ath-shamhlaithe trí cleachtadh ealaíona. Thug mo chuid taighde ‘s gníomhaíochta *le Te Hau Kapua Devonport*, mar aon le trí thréimhse cónaithe in Éireann, cumas orm nasc dubh doimhin daingean a phréamhú idir fearainn éagsúla, scéalta béaloidis, scéalta draíochtúla agus startha, chun smior eolais a chur ar m’ualach oibre atá préamhaithe idir fíor chuimhní agus cuimhní tógálaithe ar an áit.

Téann an taighde seo i ngleic go hábharach agus ar phróiseas bunaithe, ag cuireann béim ar ghníomhaireacht ábhair agus ar an ngaol-chomhoibríoch idir ealaíontóir, meán agus na modhanna de réir mar ‘s a bhaineann siad le gníomhaireacht ábhair. Úsáidimse céir fhuar toisc go bhfeidhmíonn sí go seoigh chun neamh-chinnteach a ghreamú, síor-ghluaiseacht a thaispeáint agus malartú a h-aimsiú leis. Is mór an méid nósanna feidhmiúcháin ag céir, lí, agus an dromchla a chuireann breis leis an sprioc - tagann scoilt iontu, táid ionsútach, bíonn siad frithsheasmhach, agus claochlaíonn siad. Feidhmíonn na tréithe ábharthach dhúchasacha san mar mhodhanna iontu féinig de réir mar a mhúnlaíonn siad treo na hoibre. Cruthaítear cleachtadh chomhoibríoch seachas ceann aontaobhach amháin, agus é leabatha de bharr san le smaointeoireacht ábharthach agus feiniméineolaíoch—áit in nach bhfuil ábhar éighníomhach ann ach gníomhach i gcruthú domhanda.

Rugadh saothar ealaíne mar iarsmaí fadtéarmacha, le smúit éiceolaíocha, sinsearacha, agus am aireachtála. Tuigtear go bhfuil péintéireacht mar ghníomhaíoch, eiticiúil, agus cleachtadh aireach trí malartú ábhair. Cuirtear péintéireacht ina ríocht a chruthaíonn saol agus saol-lúbacha, áit ina dtagann spiorad, ábhar agus cuimhneachán le chéile chun croí-áite a spreagadh mar aon leis an gcastacht ‘s lúbadh an saoil.

Cabhraíonn an taighde seo le plé-chomhaimseartha ar phéintéireacht tríd cur chuige atá préamhaithe i bhfealsúnacht agus ábharthacht a mhol ar ealaín agus atá freagartha ar áit, am agus ghaolmhaireacht.²

2 Translated by Dr Donncha ÓTeangana

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Attestation of Authorship.....	6
Acknowledgements.....	7
Abstract	9
Introduction.....	13
TŌKU PEPEHA	16
Place.....	17
Material Transformations.....	18
Affect	19
Worlds Within Worlds	19
Temporal Strata Concepts.....	20
CHAPTER ONE: Place.....	21
Landscape Painting and Abstraction: Aotearoa New Zealand.....	21
Being In/Out of Place: The Residencies.....	32
Spirit/Soul-Place, Anam Áite, Mauri.....	36
Strata.....	40
Thin Places.....	45
Tacita Dean	48
Place Effect	50
Terrains.....	54
Language and Its Importance	56
Exteriority: Interiority	58
CHAPTER TWO: Material Transformations	60
Material Choices	60
Alchemical Materials and Processes	63
Material Entanglements.....	69
Substance and Form.....	70
Artwork as Artefact	73
Concepts of Materiality.....	75
Sarah Treadwell	78
Material/s: Insight/s.....	83
CHAPTER THREE: Affect.....	85
Recreating Experience	86
Yearnings	89
Anselm Kiefer.....	92
Affect as Maker.....	94
Affective Scale.....	95
Colour and Affect	99
CHAPTER FOUR: Worlds within Worlds.....	103
Mutual Becoming	103

World Bending Place.....	105
The Space/s Between	110
Cy	117
Knowledge Through Perception.....	118
Between Elements	121
Memory and Painting.....	125
CHAPTER FIVE: Temporal Strata Concepts.....	133
Deep Time and Existence	133
Intra Actions	137
Thinking About Thinking.....	142
Rebecca Crowell	145
Durations	146
Realms.....	149
Noticing, Reflecting	150
Conclusion	154
Appendix 1. Ephemeral Song: reflections	157
Bibliography	162

INTRODUCTION

This research situates painting as a complex practice of encounter with place, time and matter by drawing on aspects of phenomenology, environmental aesthetics, knowledge systems and material theory. At its centre, the project fabricates conditions of painting that allow for notions of a spirit or soul of place that are the atmospheres, memories and resonances embedded within places in Aotearoa New Zealand and Ireland. It is important to me that viewers experience the work, whether small or large, hung vertically or horizontally, as a portal or entry point that engages them in an immersive and/or contemplative fashion into a new world of looking. Worlds within worlds exist within each painting as abstracted landscapes retaining an identifiable grounding even when simplified, fragmented, gestural or materially transformed. By distorting horizon, atmosphere, terrain, colour and spatial relations, the landscape remains perceptually legible as subject matter, particularly when the work is referentially titled. While traces of land, water, weather, sediment or spatial memory may be sensed within the work, these elements are not rendered as explicit images of landscape. Instead, they function as materially contingent fields of perception in which place is encountered through sensation, memory, atmosphere and process.



Figure 1. Works in situ. Sanctuary exhibition, 2025. Work L *Whisperings*. 4000x1800mm. Work R *Burren Grykes*. 3000x1800mm, collection of the artist. Photograph © Samuel Hartnett. Reproduced with permission.

The writing weaves together my work with perspectives of theorists and writers including phenomenologist philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), anthropologist Tim Ingold, poet and novelist Linda Lappin, academic Phillip Tabb, linguist Manchán Magan, and academic Pete Rive. The discussion frames painting as an embodied and entangled process, one that navigates between control and

release, perception and material agency, memory and transformation. I explore how the ways in which my media, in particular cold wax medium, participate in my making processes. Painting is understood not as representation but as a form of ‘world-bending’ that is an active, porous co-creation of matter, time and spirit. It is tangible in a world that is moving rapidly towards a cyber non-reality where entanglements between devices, networks and people occur without the haptic touch of connection.

Born and raised in Aotearoa New Zealand as a first generation New Zealand person, I took for granted that I was of Irish heritage, non-Māori and Pākehā. Latterly I have come to identify as tangata Tiriti,³ a term that currently describes a political identity for non-Māori New Zealand people who are here legally by right or virtue of te Tiriti.⁴

At various times I have reflected on my Aotearoa New Zealand immigrant heritage, conscious that I exist within an in-between space of identity, neither tangata whenua (person of the land),⁵ nor fully Irish, having no lived experience of Ireland. As writer Mary Jacobus (1944-) writes in *On Belonging and Not Belonging* “the wish to recover and remember what had been lost by a previous generation may arrive later in life. And so it was for me.”⁶ Echoing Jacobus’ wish, my search for belonging as a citizen of Aotearoa and New Zealand as well as Ireland started when I commenced this research project. In her book *This Pākehā Life*, academic Alison Jones (1955), writing of her home in Aotearoa New Zealand, notes that “she cannot imagine living anywhere else.”⁷

Relationships seemed always to be at the heart of all my engagements with Māori and Māori things, and at the heart of Māori understandings of the world. I thought about how Māori profoundly understood and understand the world as a series of never-ending, never-resolved relationships – between people, objects, time, space and on and on.⁸

3 *Who Are Tangata Tiriti? - Network Waitangi Otautahi*, July 8, 2024, <https://nwo.org.nz/resources/who-are-tangata-tiriti/>.

4 Claudia Orange, “Te Tiriti o Waitangi: The Treaty of Waitangi,” in *Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, accessed November 7, 2025, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/te-tiriti-o-waitangi-the-treaty-of-waitangi>. Orange explains: “Te Tiriti o Waitangi (in English, the Treaty of Waitangi), New Zealand’s founding document, was meant to be a partnership between Māori and the British Crown. Although it was intended to create unity, different understandings of the treaty, and breaches of it, have caused conflict. From the 1970s the general public gradually came to know more about the treaty, and efforts to honour the treaty and its principles expanded.”

5 *Te Aka Māori Dictionary*, under “tangata whenua,” <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/word/7420>.

6 Mary Jacobus, *On Belonging and Not Belonging: Translation, Migration, Displacement* (Princeton University Press, 2022), 2.

7 Alison Jones, *This Pākehā Life: An Unsettled Memoir* (Bridget Williams Books, 2021), 7.

8 Jones, *This Pākehā Life*, 225.

Being tangata Tiriti is a relational engagement with Māori; as my research proceeded, I engaged with a sense of place in Aotearoa New Zealand that revealed how I might be present and connected with Māori *whānau*⁹ family and friends as well as my Irish family and friends. This emerged through spending time with people and place in both countries, learning about and engaging in traditions and rituals, particularly in Aotearoa New Zealand as I started to learn *Te Reo Māori* (Māori language),¹⁰ and *tikanga* (protocols and customs).¹¹

As an embryonic learner of Te Reo Māori, I locate it throughout this document alongside English to describe place names, privileging Te Reo Māori before English as an acknowledgement and respect for *mana whenua* (those with authority over land or territory).¹² Māori words are briefly glossed in English in the text. However, there is a tension between working with Te Reo to guide and support my research and using it through appropriation and cultural ignorance. I attempt to work in a way that embraces the language and tikanga holistically and with the grace to learn from my clumsy attempts and mistakes.

I cannot speak for other tangata Tiriti, and I suspect there will be no ultimate way to be a citizen in Aotearoa New Zealand. Jones argues, “However imperfect or limited our Pākehā perceptions might be, to be Pākehā, to fully inhabit that identity, is to be permanently orientated to Māori, as well as to know about our historical entanglements.”¹³ Thus, it is important that I am conscious of Māori philosophy and research methods as they may relate to my project. While there are many Western philosophies that might provide ways of thinking about how I work, discover and develop knowledge, few can assist when the initial premise is that I am a tangata Tiriti artist, rather than say, a ‘European or Irish New Zealander.’

My (tōku) Pepeha is a way of situating myself as a person of Aotearoa New Zealand. This Pepeha acknowledges my connections to places and people.¹⁴

9 *Te Aka Māori Dictionary*, under “whānau,” <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/word/10062>.

10 Rawinia Higgins and Basil Keane, “Te Reo Māori: The Māori Language,” in *Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, accessed October 4, 2025, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/te-reo-maori-the-maori-language/print>.

11 *Te Aka Māori Dictionary*, under “tikanga,” <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/word/8043>.

12 *Te Aka Māori Dictionary*, under “mana whenua,” <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/word/3452>.

13 Jones, *This Pākehā Life*, 190.

14 “Pepeha: Connecting with Identity and Land,” Waitangi Treaty Grounds, accessed December 8, 2025, <https://www.waitangi.org.nz/waitangi-blog/discovering-the-power-of-pepeha>.

TŌKU PEPEHA

He tangata Tiriti ahau.

I am a person of the Treaty — a Treaty partner, acknowledging my place under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

I whānau mai ahau i Whanganui.

I was born in Whanganui, Aotearoa New Zealand.

E noho ana ahau i Tāmaki Makaurau.

I live in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland.

I te taha o te maunga Takarunga.

I am near the mountain Takarunga (Mount Victoria).

I te rohe ā-iwi o Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei.

I live within the tribal area of Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei.

Nō Aerana, oku tīpuna.

My ancestors come from Ireland.

I tae mai ōku tīpuna ki Aotearoa i te tau kotahi mano, iwi rau, ono tekau mā whā.

My ancestors arrived in Aotearoa New Zealand in the year 1964.

My father was born in 1931 in Dublin, Ireland during the Great Depression. His childhood was spent in poverty when he spent a significant amount of time out of the city with extended family in County Kerry. After leaving school, he became a cinema manager, a position that enabled him to see films and places that provided a somewhat idealistic opportunity to transform his life beyond Ireland. His desire to explore the world beyond his local boundaries resulted in him travelling widely by joining the merchant navy. My mother was also born in Dublin, with extended family in County Kildare where she also spent time during her childhood. Eventually my parents married and permanently departed Ireland in 1964 to raise their family in Aotearoa New Zealand. Globally distant from our close and extended Irish family, we grew up with scant knowledge of our heritage and culture. Finances were tight, so there were no opportunities for us to travel back to Ireland during my upbringing. My first visit to Ireland was as an adult in 1996, at which time I had limited time to visit my father's childhood home in Dublin and explore the city areas where my parents spent time.

This research project has provided many opportunities through painting to engage with my home,

whānau and people in Aotearoa New Zealand and its *wairua* (spirit),¹⁵ as well as with my heritage, the culture and people of Ireland and its spirit or ‘soul-place,’ its *anam áite*. For this research I use the terms soul, spirit, *wairua* and *anam áite* interchangeably, acknowledging there are many layers of understanding and meaning that apply differently to each of them.

The arguments and research are undertaken in a sequence of chapters that address concepts of place, material transformation, affect, worlds within worlds and temporal strata concepts.

Place

This research emerged from a desire to investigate how painting can act as a medium for revealing and constructing a soul of place, its *anam áite*. Across cultures, the idea that certain landscapes carry a spirit, essence, or presence has persisted for centuries. In Aotearoa New Zealand, Māori beliefs and traditions describe the vitality of place through *mauri*,¹⁶ (the life force) which animates *tangata whenua* (people of the land). To inhabit a place, therefore, is to enter a field of forces that exceeds geography and engages memory, language, spirit, and affect. Jones describes relationships for Māori as

contingent, fluid and always on the move, always in the process of being and becoming something. In the end, the most important things are ineffable, unexplainable, difficult, and sometimes even contradictory.¹⁷

This research is a fluid, embodied and transnational practice, unfolding between Te Hau Kapua Devonport in Aotearoa New Zealand and from time spent in various residencies in Ireland. This oscillation across territories, hemispheres, languages, cultures and histories enables me to encounter place not as fixed or singular, but as layered, entangled, affectively charged and at times, unexplainable and difficult.

In her book *The Soul of Place* writer Linda Lappin suggests that if we learn to read the landscape, looking for and searching for its stories will heighten our imagination. We can hone our ability to make

15 *Te Aka Māori Dictionary*, under “wairua,” <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/word/9082>.

16 *Te Aka Maori dictionary*, under “mauri”, <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/word/3960>

17 Jones, *This Pākehā Life*, 226.

connections “between topographical features, human activities, ourselves and our inner ecologies that may at first glance seem unrelated.”¹⁸ Place, in this sense, is not only a backdrop but a layered manuscript, inscribed with memories, images and meanings. Painting becomes a way of re-reading this manuscript of place. Through layering, scraping, and excavation, I attempt to give form to the thin and thick strata of memory and stories that inhabit landscapes which are then translated through my work. Academic Phillip Tabb introduces the concept of the ‘thin place’, locations where the boundary between realms of Earth and sky becomes permeable, providing a further theoretical anchor.

In *Thin Place Design*, Tabb describes these places as spiritual experiential thresholds charged with atmosphere.¹⁹ As I have experienced such atmospheric thresholds both in Ireland and Aotearoa, looking out towards the Skellig Islands from Ballinskelligs Bay, and when standing on the volcanic flanks of Rangitoto, these places seem to fold time and bodily presence that exceeds description.

Material Transformations

The discussion in Chapter Two Material Transformations is indebted to philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty who offers a phenomenological grounding, emphasising perception as an embodied encounter with the world.²⁰ Many of his ideas resonate with the way my paintings using cold wax medium behave as they resist control, cracking, absorbing, and transforming matter and the work in ways that exceed intention. By using this medium the painting surface, like perception itself, becomes a site of negotiation between human gesture and material agency, a threshold where the space between control and release yields meaning.

Academic Tim Ingold’s anthropology of dwelling and his writing on lines and materials-in-process extend this into matter itself. For him, materials are not static but always in movement, carrying histories and potentialities within them. His notion of dwelling emphasises being-in-the-world as a process of correspondence with materials and environments.²¹ Aligning with my practice, the beeswax, pigment, and surface are not passive carriers of intention but participants in a continuous and collaborative negotiation. Each layer of wax acts as both archive and trajectory, sedimenting, unfolding, and holding traces of time. Painting thus becomes a process of correspondence and ‘world-making’ in motion.

18 Linda Lappin, *The Soul of Place: A Creative Writing Workbook* (Solas House, 2018), 2.

19 Phillip Tabb, *Thin Place Design, Architecture of the Numinous* (Routledge, 2024), 1.

20 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (Routledge, 2014), 213.

21 Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* (Routledge, 2013), 21.

Affect

Informed by Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, Chapter Three Affect emphasises how perception reveals atmospheres, moods, and resonances, those ineffable forces that cannot be measured but are nonetheless felt.²² When I walk beside the basalt cliffs of Ōperetu Narrowneck in Te Hau Kapua Devonport or the limestone pavements of the Burren in Ireland, the encounter is visual and haptic, sonic, and affective.

Affect is further considered with reference to the work of linguist Manchán Magan who highlights how language itself encodes affective relations with place. Irish words and mythic associations embody sensations, directions, and belonging that exceed English translation.²³ Academic Pete Rive's writings on environmental aesthetics add an ecological dimension to the dimension of 'soul-place,' foregrounding how art can awaken attentiveness to ecosystems and their fragility, and how worlds can 'bend.'²⁴ When walking around boglands in Ireland or on the volcanic coasts around Aotearoa New Zealand, I notice and sense ecological entanglements and losses. Painting, in relationship with these ideas, is a becoming of an aware, affective practice that is an act of care and attentiveness to spirit, mauri and anam áite.

Worlds Within Worlds

The convergence of these theoretical anchors (place, material transformation and affect), as explored by Merleau-Ponty, Ingold, Magan, Lappin, Tabb, Rive and others frames a practice that is phenomenological, material, linguistic, ecological, and affective. In Chapter Four, painting is understood as a co-creative set of actions bringing worlds within worlds into being. My work does not aim to depict actual places in Ireland or Aotearoa New Zealand but rather to evoke a special element of their atmospheres, to bend memory and matter into a surface that resonates with both. This bending remains open and porous, inviting viewers into the spaces that are between presence and absence, memory and perception, spirit and matter.

22 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 211.

23 Manchán Magan, *Thirty-Two Words for Field: Lost Words of the Irish Landscape* (Gill Books, 2020), 6.

24 Pete Rive, *Worldbending: A Survivor's Guide for Those Who Want to Think and Act Creatively About Our Future* (World Benders, 2019), 7.

Temporal Strata Concepts

Conscious of its shaping of worlds within worlds, painting holds within it temporal strata and affective atmospheres that cannot be reduced to surface description. Through its genesis each work undertaken in this research becomes a temporal artefact, layered like geological strata with sedimented gestures, excavated marks, translucent veils, and buried traces. These layers are discussed in Chapter Five as they echo histories both human and non-human, ecological and cultural, ancestral and contemporary. Cold wax painting with its systems of layering becomes both archive and threshold, concealing, revealing, and retrieving presences across time and matter. The Irish dolmens and pavements of the Burren and the boglands of County Kerry, along with Rangitoto's²⁵ volcanic rock in Aotearoa New Zealand, act as geological and cultural strata for the painting practice, which seeks this temporality in material form.

Ingold's dwelling perspective emphasises that to inhabit and to create is to move along lines of correspondence with materials, to join the meshwork of forces, histories, and trajectories that make up the world.²⁶ Cold wax painting becomes a medium that is uniquely capable of engaging with these correspondences, holding temporal strata, bending worlds into being, and evoking atmospheres that exceed description. Ultimately, the research positions painting as a phenomenological, ecological, and dwelling practice that invites viewers to enter a meshwork of matter, memory, and spirit.

25 "Rangitoto Island," Department of Conservation, accessed October 4, 2025, <https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-go/auckland/places/rangitoto-island/>.

26 Ingold, *Making*, 132.

CHAPTER ONE: PLACE

Landscapes can be deceptive. Sometimes a landscape seems to be less a setting for the life of its inhabitants than a curtain behind which their struggles, achievements and accidents takes place. For those who are behind the curtain, landmarks are no longer only geographic but also biographical and personal.²⁷

Echoing John Berger's (1926-2017) comments above, my personal engagement with places in which I have spent time in Aotearoa New Zealand and Ireland situates the enquiry within a broader transdisciplinary discourse that considers place as layered, relational, hidden or disguised, and at times as an indescribable phenomenon.

Landscape Painting and Abstraction: Aotearoa New Zealand

Landscape painting in Aotearoa New Zealand has a long history, with its origins located in many artists' desire to record their observations and experiences of place. As Westernised painting evolved from colonial settlement during the 1800s, a European modernist style eventually emerged.²⁸ Ideas of painting in Aotearoa moved through impressionism, cubism, surrealism, and primitivism, and over time created a shift from realism toward understandings of contemporary painting as an expressive, more abstract ordering of colour, form, and affect. This lineage informs my practice, where layered surfaces and abstracted material transformations echo modernist moves away from direct representation. Art historian Francis Pound (1948-2017), who also writes extensively on Aotearoa New Zealand's history of painting, noted that the emphasis on landscape painting which "...above all other genres, comes to be made and to be evaluated in terms of *New Zealandness* [emphasis in the original]."²⁹ Therefore, I persistently ask what it means to be a contemporary painter of landscapes in Aotearoa New Zealand?

27 John Berger, *A Fortunate Man: The Story of a Country Doctor* (Canongate Books, 2016), 1.

28 "History of New Zealand Painting," New Zealand History, accessed August 30, 2025, <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/culture/nz-painting-history>.

29 Francis Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand Art and National Identity 1930-1970* (Auckland University Press, 2010), 3.

My practice situates itself within the lineage of painterly abstraction that privileges material process, surface accretion, and embodied perception over formalist autonomy. With its emphasis on gesture and material agency, my work simultaneously aligns with Abstract Expressionism and later post-minimal and phenomenological approaches that foreground duration, density, and the viewer's sensory encounter. The paintings remain grounded in place, matter, and geological time, drawing abstraction back toward the world rather than away from it. In this sense, my work contributes to a contemporary reconfiguration of painterly abstraction as a site of sedimentation, where affect, memory, and material histories are embedded within the painted surface.

As abstraction can refer to a mode of practice in which visual form is primarily organized through an indirect representation of the observable world, it privileges formal, material, spatial, gestural, temporal or affective relations. As it relates to my work, abstraction can be considered to encompass phenomenological, material, and conceptual concerns where meaning emerges through process, surface, embodiment and perception rather than illustration or depiction. As my paintings do not seek to represent landscape descriptively or illustratively, they can be considered abstract despite their experiential relationship to place, atmosphere, estuarial environments, sound, history and environmental memory. Meaning emerges phenomenologically through layered matter, embodied process, temporal duration, and affective resonance as materials are built over time.

Whenua (land)³⁰ remains central to living and belonging in Aotearoa New Zealand. It is a living presence and continues to be a contested territory and site of ecological and cultural transformation. Painting the whenua requires asking questions about what it means to inhabit and engage with Aotearoa New Zealand. Contemporary landscape painting included experiments by, for example painters Colin McCahon (1919-1987),³¹ Toss Woollaston (1910-1998)³² and Māori artist Ralph Hōtere (1931-2013),³³ as they aligned the land with the expressive potential of paint itself. Their use of abstraction distilled horizon, weather and light into fields of colour and atmosphere as a continuation and critique of landscape painting traditions.

The physical environment and evolving perspectives on land, identity and belonging have influenced landscape painting since the early 21st century. Aotearoa New Zealand's clarity of light³⁴ was, and remains a major influence on the ways in which people and painters viewed and reinterpreted the landscape. Artists such

30 *Te Aka Māori Dictionary*, under "whenua," <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/word/10256>.

31 "The Colin McCahon Online Catalogue," accessed October 12, 2025, <https://www.mccahon.co.nz/>.

32 "Toss Woollaston," New Zealand History, accessed October 12, 2025, <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/keyword/toss-woollaston>.

33 "Hōtere, Hone Papita Raukura (Ralph)," in *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, accessed October 12, 2025, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/6h3/hotere-hone-papita-raukura-ralph>.

34 Jock Phillips, "Light," in *Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, accessed October 7, 2025, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/light/print>.

as Gordon Walters (1919-1995),³⁵ Theo Schoon (1915-1985)³⁶ and Rita Angus (1908-1970)³⁷ are well known landscape painters. During the 1940s Walters and Schoon visited various locations around Te Waipounamu the South Island to investigate and reinterpret (and as some have suggested, appropriate) Māori rock art. In his book *Gordon Walters*, Pound writes of the influence by Swiss-born German artist Paul Klee (1879-1940)³⁸ and French artist Andre Masson (1896-1987)³⁹ influence on Walters' paintings.

Writers William McAloon and Jill Trevelyan in the book *Rita Angus Life & Vision* comment on Angus' early career: she "began exhibiting at a time when the issue of national identity was an intellectual obsession in New Zealand. Writers and critics spoke of the need to break free of a colonial dependence on Britain and establish a vigorous local culture."⁴⁰ Angus has left a strong legacy, with paintings such as the work *Cass* painted in 1936.⁴¹ Hōtere and contemporary artist Shane Cotton⁴² (1965-) interrogated colonisation and asserted that *whakapapa* (genealogical descent)⁴³ was integral to the land. Hōtere's monochromatic works convey a sense of memory and resistance, and Cotton continues to reinterpret landscape and related elements through his Ngāpuhi perspective, according to writer Anthony Burt "blending history, mythology and imagery as he places ancestral figures in surreal cosmic landscapes."⁴⁴

Author Gordon Brown discusses Dame Robin White's (1946-)⁴⁵ work in *Robin White New Zealand Painter*, compiled by Alister Taylor and Deborah Coddington. Brown comments that White was heavily influenced by McCahon and Angus and that she (at the date of publication in 1981) paints to question the act of representing place.⁴⁶ Contemporary painters Aroha Gossage (1973-),⁴⁷ and multi-disciplinary artist Lisa

35 "Walters, Gordon Frederick," in *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, accessed October 12, 2025, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/5w7/walters-gordon-frederick>.

36 "Schoon, Theodorus Johannes," in *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, accessed October 12, 2025, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/5s4/schoon-theodorus-johannes>.

37 "Angus, Rita," in *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, accessed October 12, 2025, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/5a16/angus-rita>.

38 "Paul Klee," Paul Klee, accessed October 12, 2025, <https://www.paulklee.net>.

39 "André Masson," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, October 24, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Andre-Masson>.

40 William McAloon and Jill Trevelyan, *Rita Angus: Life and Vision* (Te Papa Press, 2008), 10.

41 "Cass by Rita Angus," *New Zealand History*, accessed October 7, 2025, <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/cass-rita-angus>.

42 "Shane Cotton," Auckland Art Gallery, accessed October 7, 2025, <https://www.aucklandartgallery.com/explore-art-and-ideas/artist/1722/shane-cotton>.

43 *Te Aka Māori Dictionary*, under "whakapapa," <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/word/52190>.

44 "New Painting: 12 October–16 November 2024," Gow Langsford, accessed October 7, 2025, <https://gowlangsfordgallery.co.nz/exhibitions/354-new-painting-shane-cotton/>.

45 "Dame Robin White: Arts Foundation Laureate," Arts Foundation, accessed October 12, 2025, <https://www.thearts.co.nz/artists/dame-robin-white>.

46 Alister Taylor, *Robin White New Zealand Painter* (Alister Taylor, 1981), 26.

47 "Aroha Gossage Art," ARTIS Gallery, accessed October 7, 2025, <https://www.artisgallery.co.nz/artists/gossage/>; Emil Scheffmann, "Aroha Gossage's Matrilinial Landscapes," *The Art Paper*, November 20, 2025, <https://www.the-art-paper.com/journal/aroha-gossage-landscape-paintings>.

Reihana (1964-)⁴⁸ layer meaning, narratives and re-interpretations of whenua landscape and history. My own work sits in relation to this brief outline of the long history of landscape, or place, painting in Aotearoa New Zealand. As a tangata Tiriti artist I respect our whenua, and through my paintings I aim to offer insight into the layered conditions of the histories of painting in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Considering how land and place relate to my research and in relation to its soul, spirit, or anam áite I consider Merleau-Ponty's idea that "phenomenology is the study of essences ... such as the essence of perception or the essence of consciousness."⁴⁹ I interpret his notion of essence as a reference to the presence of something distinctive or irreplaceable, which resonates deeply with the character of place, imbuing it with meaning beyond its physical attributes. Place relates to various types of knowledge in which the unwritten is passed down through stories and oral histories over thousands of years. These often hold reference to elements of the unseen, yet recognised, through generations.

My research delves into the strange and subtle nature of invisible forces we cannot see yet somehow feel. They linger in the atmosphere of place, in the quiet pull of memory and in the intuitive sense that something more is present. These feelings and sensations defy logic, yet they shape how we relate to the world, echoing ways of knowing that are felt rather than spoken. As I have visited various places during my research, listened to folktales and myths, trodden paths that thousands, maybe millions of people and animals over the era have walked on (or swam in), I have consciously tried to gather and sift elements of these layered territories to inform my work.

48 "Lisa Reihana," Auckland Art Gallery, accessed October 7, 2025, <https://www.aucklandartgallery.com/explore-art-and-ideas/artist/4064/lisa-reihana>.

49 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 7.



Figure 2. *Gritty*, 2023, oil paint and cold wax medium on cradled panel. 1000x1000mm.



Figure 3. *Autumnal Ground*, 2023, oil paint and cold wax medium on cradled panel. 1000x1000mm, collection of T. Kidman.

The works *Gritty* (fig. 2) and *Autumnal Ground* (fig. 3) were created in 2023 at the beginning of the research period. While the underlying concepts remained similar throughout the research period, the execution of ideas shifted markedly. The terrain of these paintings is smaller in scale than paintings made towards the end of the research. When I started, I was working at various scales, although none were larger than 1800mm in any orientation. The works *Burnt Earth 1* and *Burnt Earth 2* (fig. 4 and fig. 5) are examples of small works that spoke to walking on the volcanic soil of our local maunga (mountain).⁵⁰

50 *Tē Aka Māori Dictionary*, under “maunga,” <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/word/3952>.



Figure 4. *Burnt Earth*, 2023, oil paint and cold wax medium on cradled panel. 1000x1000mm, collection of L. Hawkins.



Figure 5. *Burnt Earth*, 2023, oil paint and cold wax medium on cradled panel. 1000x1000mm, collection of L. Hawkins.

These early works were points of departure for the rest of my research. Their strong colours were, at this stage, somewhat habitual with reds and oranges commonly used in my practice.

My work emerges from a painting practice that traverses terrains of memory, cultural heritage, and environmental embodiment employing media such as beeswax, oil, and found/transformed materials. I reflect on how places hold historical and emotional weight and how they are remembered, inhabited, and transformed through artistic practice. Through materially immersive strategies such as layering, excavation, and at times collaborative making, the work is intended to engage the liminal qualities of place. At this stage of the research (fig. 6) I was experimenting with small and larger works in an historic deconsecrated church that I used as a studio. It was dark and gloomy, the work seemed to reflect the feeling of this place with a mix of the muted colours offset by the reds and oranges, perhaps an attempt to bring life to something that felt ‘dead’?



Figure 6. At the beginning of the research. Images of various works in St. Paul's Church, Te Hau Kapua Devonport.
Photograph © Janet Mazenier.

Place in all its contexts can be considered porous, affective, and temporally sedimented. Phenomenological perception provides a foundation for considering how memory, perception and consciousness can shape our understanding of the places we occupy.⁵¹ Writer and geographer Edward Relph outlines notions of place and placelessness and he examines how the direct experiences and consciousness we have of our lived world are the foundations of geographical knowledge.⁵² Lappin also draws attention to our search for identity through connections to land, tradition and language, echoing poet John Montague's (1929-2016) poignant lines from *A Lost Tradition*: "The whole landscape a manuscript / We had lost the skill to read."⁵³



Figure 7. *Andisol*, 2023, oil paint and cold wax medium on cradled panel. 1500x1200mm.

Throughout this research journey, I have been consciously searching for a belonging beyond mere identity, where place holds resonance as it gathers layers of memory, atmosphere, and material presence that exceed its surface appearance. It is not just a physical location, but a lived field where past events, sensory

51 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 23.

52 Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (Pion, 2008), 4.

53 John Montague, *The Rough Field* (The Dolmen Press, 1972), 79.

impressions, and affective intensities remain palpable. The painting *Andisol* (fig. 7) is a medium sized work on panel that was intended to capture the sense and colours of walking on volcanic soils around my home in Te Hau Kapua Devonport. The fiery reds were speaking to a resonance, an echo or vibration that continues long after the initiating event has passed. The studio, the places I walk and the people that inform my research also cause vibrations and echoes in the work. From the local to the monumental, places I have visited throughout the research significantly impacted how I think about place and all its connotations for my work.



Figure 8. Left: *Burnt*, 2023, oil paint and cold wax medium, 1800x1200mm.
Right: *Ancient*, 2023, oil paint and cold wax medium on cradled panel, 1000x1000mm.

The paintings *Burnt* and *Ancient* (fig. 8) were concerned with straddling ideas of wandering in place within an urban environment as well as in my home area of Te Hau Kapua Devonport. Psychogeographer Merlin Coverley describes psychogeography as “the point at which psychology and geography collide, a means

of exploring the behavioural impact of urban place.”⁵⁴ Coverley promotes the idea that psychogeography can be considered as a term for “overcoming the processes of ‘banalisation’ by which the everyday experience of our surroundings becomes one of drab monotony.”⁵⁵ His views echo theorist Rudolph Arnheim (1904-2007) in *Art and Visual Perception* who argues that visual art operates through perceptual forces such as balance, tension, rhythm and movement, all of which give form to meaning where the viewer perceives and receives relationships rather than isolated elements. Arnheim theorises that aesthetic form is deeply tied to thought, emotion and understanding.⁵⁶ He further notes that

whatever happens at any one place is determined by the interaction between the parts and the whole. If it were otherwise the various inductions, attractions, and repulsions could not occur in the field of visual experience.⁵⁷

My work acknowledges the force of Merleau-Ponty, Coverley and Arnheim’s ideas as they explore perceptual ambiguity, relational tensions and spatial complexity, extending beyond experiences to the creation of new worlds where paintings reshape and reform the relationships between people, places and their elements.



Figure 9. *Burnished*, 2023, diptych, oil paint, pigment and cold wax medium on cradled panel. 1300x1600mm.

54 Merlin Coverley, *Psychogeography* (Pocket Essentials, 2010), 10.

55 Coverley, *Psychogeography*, 11.

56 Rudolf Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception, A Psychology of the Creative Eye* (University of California Press, 1974), 11.

57 Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception*, 17.

The work *Burnished* (fig. 9) is a painting from a body of work of eleven paintings (fig. 10) that was created to reflect how place and its affect could be articulated within the area of focus (at Fort Takapuna in Te Hau Kapua Devonport for the exhibition at NZ Sculpture OnShore 2023).⁵⁸ *Burnished* is a materially-rich exploration of multiple colour applications investigating how multiple layers can be applied and excavated throughout repeated processes. As the beeswax with paint accumulated, the eventual painting was extremely heavy. Installed for three weeks on the external walls on one of the historic buildings in direct sunlight it also experienced a cyclone and despite the extreme conditions, *Burnished* and its companions were safe with no damage. The impermeability of the beeswax combined with the media withstood extreme heat and sunlight as well as rain and wind; the strong supports held the work securely in place.



Figure 10. Work installed at NZ Sculpture OnShore, 2023. This was a test to see how the work would survive being installed outside for three weeks. Photograph © Janet Mazenier.

58 “2023 Exhibition,” NZ Sculpture OnShore, accessed October 12, 2025, <https://nzsculptureonshore.co.nz/pages/gallery>.

Being In/Out of Place: The Residencies

This research enabled a personal inquiry into spatial, cultural, and embodied experiences that shape my understanding of place. It situates how my painting practice can evoke the elusive spirit that various places hold for me. Over the course of the research I attended four art residencies in Ireland that allowed me to visit the land where my parents grew up, including Counties Kildare and Kerry where my parents spent a lot of their childhood, and then County Clare, where I spent time in the Burren.

My father had aspirational notions of a life beyond post-War poverty and the political Troubles⁵⁹ in Ireland that were occurring through the 1960s. Living in Aotearoa New Zealand my siblings and I grew up with a feeling of strong Irish heritage, in fact; all of us started primary school with Irish accents. Growing up with my parents' stories of Ireland and their memories of 'home', I developed perceptions of an Irish way of life that was traditional, romantic, spiritual, Catholic, restricted and poor. The strongest memories from my parents are of places where their extended family lived (and some still live), digging for turf carried on the backs of donkeys, and where they engaged in Irish cultural traditions such as dancing and storytelling. Then and now Irish people are required to learn their language at school. At the age of 94, my father could remember his Irish when prompted. In the 1940s leaving school at age 14 was normal, although my father received an extended education due to being the only boy in a family of girls. The soul-places of Kildare and Kerry are embedded in my parents' childhood memories.

59 "The Troubles: Northern Ireland History," in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, November 22, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/event/The-Troubles-Northern-Ireland-history>.



Figure 11. *Untitled*, 2024, oil paint, charcoal and cold wax medium on paper. 297x210mm.



Figure 12. *Untitled*, 2024, charcoal on paper. 297x210mm.

The first residency I attended was in February 2024 in Cill Rialaig,⁶⁰ Ballinskelligs, Kerry. The drawings I made there *Untitled* (fig. 11 and fig. 12) echo the isolation and sense of loneliness I experienced. The landscape was stark, the hills were covered in snow, and there were few people around. The size of the cottage studio constrained the size of the work I could produce, and the lack of heating contributed to a strong feeling of isolation. At night I remember hearing a whispering, organ-like, haunting ‘song’ that seemed to come across the bay from the Beara Peninsula once the wind and rain died down. Disappointingly, despite extensive enquiries I can’t find any information about what this sound might have been.

Returning to Ireland in May 2024 I attended a second residency in the Burren College of Art.⁶¹ The Burren is an other-worldly place that is quite different to other places in Ireland. Its lithic landscape is endowed with small arctic plants in spring and the surrounding mountains reflect the colours of sunrise and sunset with soft pinks and glowing gold. Here, and in other areas Ireland’s bogs contain a rich, affective tapestry of colours that shift with the seasons and with the light holding multiple hues of deep peat browns and earthy blacks. Decomposed plant material make up the sombre, almost black layers of peat that are often tinged with deep brown or umber. Iron-rich waters and sphagnum moss give parts of the bog a rusty, burnt-orange or reddish tone, especially around waterlogged areas. Peat-stained water collects in pools, reflecting the sky and becoming almost black in certain lights. In autumn and late summer, grasses and heather turn gold, creating a warm contrast to the darker peat. Mosses, especially sphagnum, come in an array of greens, from bright lime to deep forest hues. Throughout Ireland heather brings bursts of muted pinks and vibrant purples; lichens and the soft light of misty conditions can give Irish landscapes a cool, desaturated tone, especially in winter or early morning.

60 “Residencies,” Cill Rialaig Arts Centre, July 21, 2018, <https://cillrialaigartscentre.com/residencies/>.

61 “Artist Residencies,” Burren College of Art, accessed August 30, 2025, <https://www.burrencollege.ie/programmes/artist-residencies/artist-residency-programmes/>.



Figure 13. Burren works, various sizes in the collection of the artist. Left to right, *Walking The Terrain*, 2024, oil paint and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas 3000x1860mm; *The Abyss*, 2024, oil paint and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas. 4000x1860mm; *Verdant*, oil paint and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas. 3000x 1860mm.

The *Burren Works* shown in figure 13 from the exhibition *Transient Encounters and Transformational Shifts*, are three works that I made while at the Burren residency in 2024. They encapsulated the mountains with their displays of colour, time of day, weather, and geological composition. Generally, Ireland's exposed rock formations that comprise granite, limestone, and quartzite give off grey, blue and silver hues while reflecting cloud shadows and mists of soft blues, purples, and deep greys that create atmospheric shifts. The Burren's colours were similar but the rawness of the landscape portrays a mystical reverberation of colour and visual texture.

Ireland has a raft of colours which emanate from bracken and ferns, which are coppery reds and oranges in autumn, and the iron-rich rock deposits holding reddish tints in certain areas. Golden evenings in late summer present effects where the sky and landscape interact, creating soft purples and pinks at sunset. All the

colours are there despite the grey, short days of winter. This time in the Burren changed my practice markedly. By being able to spend time in place and with the extensive space of the studio I was able to make these three works which I brought back to Aotearoa New Zealand and exhibited with Sarah Treadwell at *Toi Pataka* in Porirua in January 2025.⁶²



Figure 14. *Trodden Path*, 2024, oil paint and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas. 1880x2000mm, collection of the artist. Exhibited at *Transient Encounters and Transformation Shifts*, Toi Pataka, 2025.

Spirit/Soul-Place, Anam Áite, Mauri

Questioning how contemporary abstract painting might articulate a place's soul, anam áite or mauri, my work responded to the expansiveness of the places I was visiting in Ireland, as well as continuing to speak to my home in Te Hau Kapua Devonport in Aotearoa New Zealand. The cognitive act of collecting, sifting ideas and memories has become a way for me to associate my internal thoughts and feelings with snapshots of the fragmented experiences that make their way into my work. Author Anthony Murphy in his book *Mythical Ireland* writes:

62 "Transient Encounters and Transformational Shifts," Pataka, accessed October 12, 2025, <https://pataka.org.nz/whats-on/exhibitions/transient-encounters-and-transformational-shifts/>.

There are so many places in Ireland that are liminal and seemingly enchanted that it's easy to see why the landscape of this island has often been described as magical. It is possible to stand at one of the countless special or sacred places in Ireland and feel that you are standing on the edge of forever.⁶³

I was indeed enchanted by my time in Ireland, so I revisited the Burren in 2025. This particular area drew me back because of the way it activates layers of history, spirit, folklore and myth in this seemingly timeless place. Undertaking the residency with nineteen other artists resulted in another shift in my practice, as we worked together on a large cold wax painting called *Faultlines* (fig. 15). Eventually forming a collective called *Meitheal*⁶⁴, and while in residence we spent the three weeks introducing additional elements to the painting such as stitching, fire and ash from the College fire pit (the wood was ash that had been burnt as it had ash-die-back disease).



Figure 15. *Faultlines*, work in progress, 2025, oil paint, sand, charcoal, ink, ash, thread, hair and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas. 6700x1800mm, collection of the artists.

63 Anthony Murphy, *Mythical Ireland: New Light on the Ancient Past* (Mythical Ireland, 2025), 2.

64 *English-Irish Dictionary* (de Bhaldraithe), under “meitheal,” <https://www.teaglann.ie/en/eid/meitheal>.

As *Meitheal* developed our ideas and intentions, we employed a methodological framework that was grounded in collaborative knowledge production as multi-disciplinary artists working together and with the materials available to us. Forming a collective comprising all women became a deliberate decision as a response to the call from the organization Sluice for the World Building Exposition in Seydisfjordur, Iceland. As we developed our ideas over many discussions prior to the 2025 residency, it was determined that the approach taken would be collaborative and would embrace as many of our artistic disciplines as possible. Collaboration, in this context, meant making reciprocal, collective decisions that relied on the friendship and trust that had been built from our time together in 2024. Aware there were possibilities for egotistical hurdles and / or conflict, at times, robust discussion of decisions was required, and all were resolved quickly.

Our approach to material collaboration was intuitive as we recognised our materials as active agents possessing resistance, contingency, tactility, viscosity and temporal behaviours. Error-as-method embraced experimentation, problem-solving, miss-steps and productive failure. At times this required muddling our way through. Drawing on the knowledge of various members who had specific expertise, we all learned from each other, thereby enriching our individual practices. Cold wax medium acted as a metaphoric and literal binding mechanism for our approach, making processes and the resultant work *Faultlines*.

While the Burren holds a mixture of strong memories because of its tragic history during the Great Famine of 1845-1852, my primary experience of the area was experiencing its lunar-like landscape and awe-inspiring monuments of hills and mountains. As an ‘outsider,’ I saw and felt this place differently than those who have lived their lives there during such a tragic period although people who live there now hold a close and positive bond with the land and its history. The unusual lime flagstone formations are made from clints (the cracks between the limestone pavements) and grykes (the flat limestone pavements). Boulders known as glacial erratics (isolated, round boulders) litter the landscape, their shapes in contrast to the slabs of limestone pavement on which they sit. Alpine flowers and primroses grow among the clints, and the ocean has swept its way into the stoney-bottomed ravine where the land meets the Atlantic.

On the other side of the Bay the Aran Islands are located. Poul nabrone dolmen in the central Burren area is accessible to all, holding a presence that draws people to visit and wonder at the Neolithic people who erected it for rituals and to allow for the burial of the dead. *Faultlines* was painted as a direct response to the area that we were occupying as some of us were taking this work to Iceland to show in the Sluice ‘World Building’ Exhibition.⁶⁵

65 “Sluice Seyðisfjörður,” Sluice, accessed October 12, 2025, <https://sluice.info/events/seydisfjordur>.

In the Burren, Aran Islands and in Kerry, I felt something inexplicable, a whisper of ghosts, longings, heaviness, as well as a sense of the expansiveness of the Atlantic ocean stretching towards Greenland, the Arctic circle and beyond to the coast of Alaska. Philosopher Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962), in *The Poetics of Space* states that “profound metaphysics is rooted in an implicit geometry which – whether we will or no – confers spatiality upon thought.”⁶⁶ He continues, “everything takes form, even infinity. We seek to determine being and, in so doing, transcend all situations, to give a situation of all situations.”⁶⁷

When considering the inexplicable, historian Lucy Mackintosh, in her book *Shifting Grounds*, writes of the mauri of place and how Māori hold histories of place in terms of both people and whenua.⁶⁸ Mackintosh notes how places have “long histories, both natural and human, (that) have been woven together over hundreds of years to form potent sites of meaning.”⁶⁹

66 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Places* (Beacon Press, 1994), 212.

67 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 212.

68 Lucy Mackintosh, *Shifting Grounds: Deep Histories of Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland* (Bridget Williams Books, 2021), 1.

69 Mackintosh, *Shifting Grounds*, 1.

Strata

Geologist Jan Zalasiewicz writes of the land, and how “one walks across and past thicknesses of strata, that represent segments of the history of that sea floor.”⁷⁰ I contemplate strata as I walk and look at the ground where points of history present elements that are moments in time which continue to be shoved, ejected, buried and flattened over millennia. Tectonic plates constantly move, slip, slide, and clash as they create new crusts of molten lava that eventually become rock and land. Analogous to this, my work is built in strata, each layer overlapping, leaking and collaborating with the previous layers. Every application of material is another crust forming a perceived solid surface made of wax and media. Scientist Stephen Harding and playwright Peter Oswald have encapsulated the Universe’s creation processes in the scripted audio application *Deep Time Walk*, commenting

A new worldview is required – a change of perspective away from seeing the Earth as our pantry, our lumberyard and our waste dump, to seeing Earth as a self-regulating living planet. A precious environment from which all life has emerged ... Understanding the dynamics of the atmosphere, the oceans and the biosphere requires knowledge of Earth history.⁷¹

When walking in Aotearoa New Zealand and Ireland, I notice rocks intertwined with sediment, clay, and pebbles, upended and mixed with iron ore, mud, fossils, and various types of soil. Recalling Harding and Oswald’s words I often change my perspective by leaning forward, sitting and lying down, to discover more about this precious environment. Lichens cling to stoney surfaces, a place where vibrant matter and agency intermingle to create, reshape, evolve, destroy and eventually morph into something new.

The astonishing colours and shapes of the plants also capture me. I respond to other places, such as the six concrete silos that are now artists’ spaces at Silo Park in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. These haunting spaces invite a different conversation of rawness and visceral response to their historical, circular rawness. My work *Urban Creep* was displayed in a group exhibition with artists Alys Midgelow-Marsden and Mette Hay

70 Jan Zalasiewicz, *The Planet in a Pebble* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 134.

71 Stephen Harding and Peter Oswald, *Deep Time Walk: The Fool and the Scientist* [script for the Deep Time Walk app] (Deep Time Walk, 2019).

called *Fluid Becoming*,⁷² holding a conversation with the concrete spaces, the layers of wax with a muted palette acknowledging these historic silos (fig. 16).



Figure 16. *Urban Creep*, 2024, oil paint and cold wax medium on stretched canvas. 1200x1800mm. Exhibited as part of the *Fluid Becoming* exhibition, 2024. Photograph © Janet Mazenier.

72 “Fluid Becoming,” Alysni Midgellow Marsden, accessed December 8, 2025, <https://www.alysni-midgellow-marsden.com/fluid-becoming-project>.

The work *Lichens* (fig. 17) was also shown in this exhibition, its lithic palette speaking to lichens resting on the surface of stone. Painted after I returned from the Burren in 2024 it holds memories of that place as well as Te Hau Kapua Devonport. This work started the creation of hybridised paintings that address non-specific places of both Ireland and Aotearoa New Zealand.



Figure 17. *Lichens*, 2023, oil paint and pigment with cold wax medium on stretched canvas. 1000x1000mm. Exhibited as part of the *Fluid Becoming* exhibition, 2024. Photograph © Janet Mazenier.

Ōperetu Narrowneck Beach’s north-facing cliffs are curved upwards with thrusting shapes that indicate violent forces, as Aotearoa New Zealand formed, and continues to form from the clashing of tectonic plates and volcanic eruptions. Zalasiewicz describes the interactions formed in these types of cliffs as a half-graben where different angles come together to form a visual panorama, reminding us that the seafloor changed shape, “or rather, its idea in human minds changed shape.”⁷³ The southward side of the peninsula holds remnants of black volcanic lava that over 250,000 years ago cooled and became basalt as it entered the ocean, yet another visual reminder of nature’s power. At times, my works reference the grabens with their unusual formations where shapes have clashed, co-opted and coincided in order to create strata that today seem ancient but in the context of deep time, are relatively recent in age. Figure 18 is a detail of a work that was eventually covered up, much like the elements of tectonic forces throwing surfaces up and out like the grabens.

73 Zalasiewicz, *The Planet in a Pebble*, 136.



Figure 18. Detail, eventual work covered up.



Figure 19. *Mudflats*, 2024, oil paint and cold wax medium on stretched canvas. 1200x1500mm.

The painting in figure 19, *Mudflats* is a textural, atmospheric abstracted landscape with intermingling layers of muted earthy tones: ochres, greys, taupes and hints of soft blues. Painted as a reflection of the silted areas that surround Te Hau Kapua Devonport, the strata in the work hold areas of shadow and light. The marks traverse the surface like traces or residues of movement built from sediment or geological accumulation where the roots of the mangroves sitting in the interstitial zone between land and ocean filter residues to the ocean. By introducing subtle turquoise flecks and scratched incisions I was able to suggest water, light, and reflection intended to evoke the shifting liminality of tidal zones where land and sea intermingle. There were many shifts and changes as this work progressed as using cold wax medium with other media introduces elements of accidental happenings. (The work was selected for the Waikato Painting and Printmaking Awards, and was the eventual winner of the Painting award.)⁷⁴

Artist Helen Frankenthaler (1928-2011) once stated, “You have to learn how to use the accident, how to recognise it, how to control it, and ways to eliminate it so that the whole surface looks felt and born all at once.”⁷⁵ Ingold asks the question, “If everything about a form is prefigured in the design, then why bother to make it at all? But makers know better...”⁷⁶ While I thought I knew where *Mudflats* was heading, it followed its own path as it developed, as cold wax paintings often do. Rich marks sat on the surface, and shifts of colour occurred until I had to decide it was resolved.

74 “2024 NZ Painting and Printmaking Award,” Waikato Society of Arts, accessed October 12, 2025, <https://wsa.org.nz/product/2024-nz-painting-and-printmaking-award/>.

75 “‘The Heroine Paint’ After Frankenthaler,” *HuffPost*, January 5, 2016, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/the-heroine-paint-after-f_b_8891974.

76 Ingold, *Making*, 22.

Thin Places

As this research journey proceeded, the term ‘thin place’ started to emerge as a threshold, mystical place discussed by Tabb, where, according to writer Kerri Ní Dochartaigh, the distance between ocean and sky is a shimmering distance of less than three feet.⁷⁷ Ní Dochartaigh explains:

They are places that make us feel something larger than ourselves, as though we are held in a place between worlds, beyond experience. It can also be a slippage of time sensed and unsensed or an inexplicable feeling of connection or non-connection. A thin place can be understood to encapsulate a timeless concept deeply rooted in early Celtic spirituality where the idea of certain places and times serve as bridges between the earthly and the divine.⁷⁸

Tabb speaks of places around the world that awaken a sense of beauty and wonder, spaces that have the power to elevate, shifting awareness into a more profound state of being. Such places are described by him as “*spiritual experiential thresholds* [emphasis in original] ... charged by elicitors or triggers that can be a dramatic view, mountain top, tranquil brook ... a spiritual ceremony.”⁷⁹ His writing aligns with Merleau-Ponty’s ideas of how we can experience phenomenological essence. As I reflect on these connections, I consider ways in which my work emanates from a thin place of remembering, those flashes of insight or dreams that must be written down at 4 am or they will end up forgotten. The translation of these nocturnal ‘rememberings’ into artworks involves a response that is thin and thick, with pauses for thought, frustration, contemplation and action.

77 Kerri Ní Dochartaigh, *Thin Places* (Canongate, 2022), 23.

78 Ní Dochartaigh, *Thin Places*, 23.

79 Tabb, *Thin Place Design*, 1.



Figure 20. *Field of the Unsaid*, work in progress, 2025, oil paint, charcoal and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, size to be determined after completion.

The places that I have visited in Ireland - with their silent signifiers of ‘thin’ histories, the land’s standing stones, holy wells, old buildings, wedge tombs, dolmens, ring (faery) forts, silé na gigs, whitethorn trees, water, churches, beehive huts and rivers - visit me again when I’m painting (or more often, sleeping when an idea for

a painting will unexpectedly strike). *Field of the Unsaid* (fig. 20) is a hybrid work that came to reference both Ireland and Aotearoa New Zealand with all their memories, including the time I spent in Cill Rialaig drawing. It could be considered a ‘thin’ work with slices of ‘rememberings’ and hidden references to these beautiful, mystical thin places and as it contains a muted palette, it is a thin place of colour. Shrines in Ireland, such as Knock,⁸⁰ are places long remembered in folklore. In more recent times of Catholic belief, they are where saints and virgins have purportedly appeared to humans. Holy wells are dotted around the country, containing spring water that can allegedly cure ailments such as depression, eye issues and more general complaints. To me, the veil between this world and ‘the other’ is thin in these places.

When I climb Rangitoto in Aotearoa New Zealand and look down at its black basalt rock, the result of immense forces that threw this volcano out into the open sea only 600 years ago I feel diminished but at the same time excited for the possibility of how painting can speak to it. Rangitoto is a precious taonga⁸¹ for local iwi and could be considered a thin place, new in relation to the history of these volcanic islands, a reminder that we are at the mercy of, and have the pleasure of nature in front of us.

My thinking about places in Ireland and Aotearoa New Zealand changed throughout the process of this research. Paintings became more hybridised as becomings of overlapped experiences from both countries and without particular emphasis on either. Tabb, when experiencing the sensation of thin places in Ireland, especially the Skellig Islands,⁸² notes that their “mountains and peaks had mythical significance in pre-Christian Ireland and were later given saintly place names. They symbolised upward reach, boundaries between territories and were grounds for ritual ceremonies.”⁸³ When I was in Ballinskelligs, I looked out over the ocean towards these magnificent islands rising abruptly from the ocean. Their majestic peaks came in and out of focus depending on the weather, a constant reminder of their presence as clouds shrouded them or on a clear day, standing proud as they reached upwards towards the heavens.

80 “Ireland’s International Eucharistic and Marian Shrine,” Knock Shrine, accessed August 30, 2025, <https://www.knockshrine.ie/>.

81 *Te Aka Māori Dictionary*, under “taonga,” <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/word/7418>.

82 “Skellig Michael,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed October 12, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Skellig-Michael>.

83 Tabb, *Thin Place Design*, 8.

Tacita Dean

Tacita Dean is a significant artist for this research who observes that “place can be difficult to locate,” suggesting that a layered and elusive quality attaches to the ways in which it is experienced and defined:

It is a question that has been asked with increasing frequency in recent decades, as its importance is recognised in anthropology, architecture, ecology, feminism, globalism, literature, mathematics, music, psychology, urbanism – indeed almost any area of human activity. And of course art.⁸⁴

Dean’s place-focused practice is wide-ranging and while I specifically address her work and concerns through her drawing practice, she also expresses her ideas with film, video and sculptural media.⁸⁵ Her breadth of practice and the sheer scale of her monumental chalk drawings aligns with my practice and thinking, especially in these globally, politically and socially difficult times as my paintings anchor me to a sense of belonging in place.

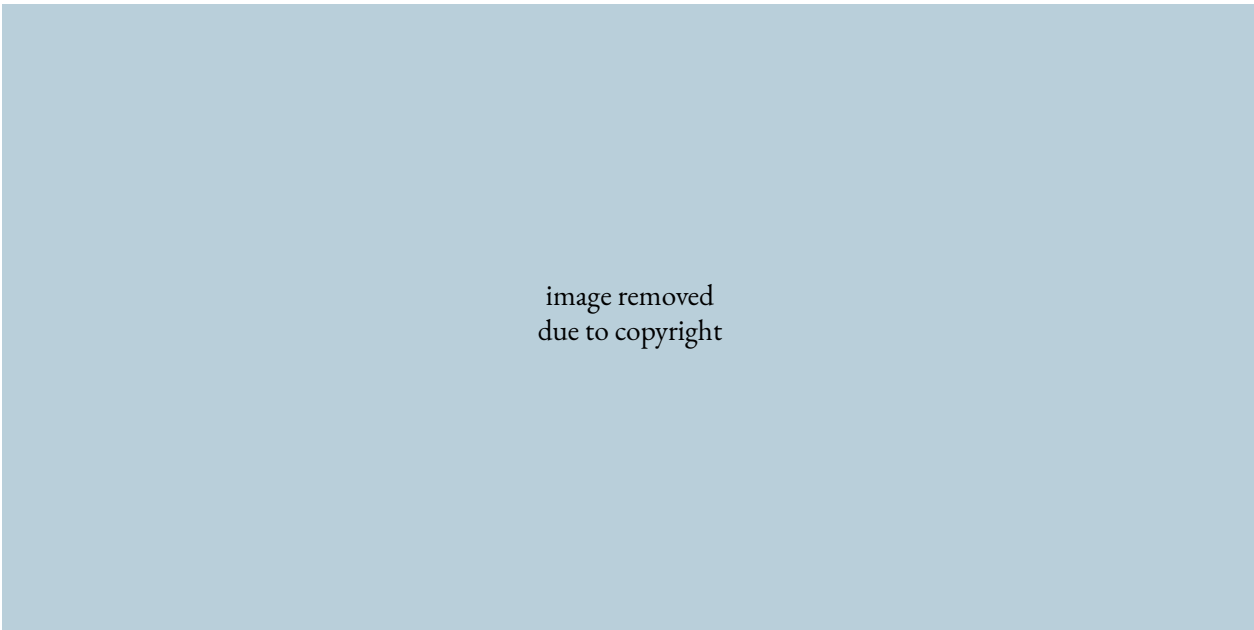


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Figure 21. Tacita Dean, *Chalk Fall*, 2018, chalk on blackboard, 36580 x 73150mm. The Josephine Ulrick and Win Shubert Trust Collection, Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia. Photograph © QAGOMA.

84 Tacita Dean and Jeremy Millar, *Place* (Thames & Hudson, 2005), 11.

85 “Tacita Dean: Sydney International Art Series 2023/2024,” MCA Australia, accessed August 30, 2025, <https://www.mca.com.au/exhibitions/tacita-dean/>.




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Figure 22. Tacita Dean, *The Wreck of Hope*, 2022, chalk on blackboard, 36580 x 73150mm 2023 installation at Bourse de Pinault Collection, Paris, France. Photograph © Arélian Mole.

In her drawing practice, she works primarily with white chalk on blackboard. The work is grand and monumental in scale; however, as it is unfixed,⁸⁶ it is fragile and transient. Her drawings are characterized by their use of a fragile, erasable medium on a blackboard surface, evoking ephemeral thin place connotations. The medium becomes an active site of temporality, its impermanence reinforcing themes of transience and loss, particularly in works such as *Chalk Fall* (fig. 21) and *The Wreck of Hope* (fig. 22).⁸⁷ Chalk, a substance derived from sedimented geological time, becomes a vehicle for tracing fleeting moments and vanished landscapes. The blackboard surface acts not only as a support but as a temporal field that is a palimpsest evoking absence as much as presence.

In contrast, my paintings embrace a materially rich and enduring medium that is a continual layering of oil paint or pigment with cold wax, creating surfaces that feel both tactile and archaeological, evoking depth, memory, and time. Sometimes the mixture will contain materials such as ash or sand to bring a roughness and historical memory of burnt trees to the work. My process involves excavation by scraping, layering, and

86 Sean Burns, "Time Is Tacita Dean's Material," *Frieze*, June 14, 2023, <https://www.frieze.com/article/tacita-geography-biography-2023-review>.

87 "Tacita Dean: Sydney International Art Series 2023/2024," <https://www.mca.com.au/exhibitions/tacita-dean/>

reapplying, often mimicking geological processes and the passage of time. Where Dean's chalk drawings are subtractive in their vulnerability to erasure, my paintings accrete traces of material history into dense, nuanced fields. Both she and I foreground materiality, ephemerality, and a phenomenological sensitivity relating to place and temporality in ways that are intended to engage the liminal and the experiential.

Despite using different materials, processes and approaches, Dean and I engage a sensitivity to surface as a temporal register and a site of transformation. Her chalk works are rooted in her broader preoccupations with the temporality of analogue media and the vanishing present. Acting as memory spaces, her landscapes are interstitial zones haunted by historical, environmental, or cultural residue. The act of drawing in chalk becomes a gesture of marking time that underscores the fleeting and contingent nature of visual experience. Her works operate between image and disappearance, inviting a phenomenological engagement that foregrounds the viewer's awareness of duration and fragility. My paintings similarly address the notion of 'the space between', as multiple layers engage in infinite, successive combinations. The process of making evokes sedimentary time in which history is embedded, weathered, and partially obscured with a concern for affective atmospheres that relate to material transformation.

Dean makes her drawings with gestures with semiotic chalk lines suggesting structures or landscapes that hover between representation and abstraction, just on the verge of vanishing.⁸⁸ The world is hinted at, never fully disclosed, echoing the spectral nature of memory and disappearance. My approach to abstraction is more materially immersive as the physicality of my surfaces transforms environmental experience into affective thin and thick fields of colour, texture, and depth. My use of abstraction as a mindset and as a tool in painting is not a departure from the world but an intensification of it, an evocation of atmospheres that resist codification. In this sense, Dean and I engage abstraction as a means of reconfiguring the perceptual and emotional dimensions of the world (rather than a retreat from reality).

Place Effect

As I work, I reflect on place as both a physical and symbolic space, one that shapes more than the act of creating and the experience of being; rather, it shapes the feeling of being in place. Through this lens, I consider how its presence influences not only my own process and also how others might engage with it. Relph explains his interest in the concept of place as one that is derived from landscapes and notes that place is usually described

88 Ágnes Pethő, "Tacita Dean's Affective Intermediality: Precarious Visions In-Between the Visual Arts, Cinema, and the Gallery Film," *Arts* 12, no. 4 (2023): 168, <https://doi.org/10.3390/arts12040168>.

in geographic terms.⁸⁹ However, he extends this understanding beyond geography to connect place with phenomenology concluding that “both geography and place are, at their core, a phenomenon of experience.”⁹⁰ As my work is a mix of phenomenological terrains of transcribed memories and experiences, the concept of place in its widest connotation allows for the illumination of the ideas, motivation and the artwork that is then a place of becoming.

The Burren residencies impacted my work in many ways. Before the first residency, I was working at small-medium scale, and I worked on paper and cradled panels. Painting there shifted the scale of my work significantly to three 1860x3000mm unstretched canvases as the Burren College supplied the materials thus allowing me to work with the width of the bolt. The generous studio space allowed for the works to be completed and cured before leaving (fig. 23).



Figure 23. Working on the Burren paintings at the Burren College of Art, May.2024. Photograph © Janet Mazenier.

As a result of walking, learning about and observing the colours and forms of the area, these glimpses

89 Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 1.

90 Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 2.

of memory were parsed into the paintings, layered with a sense of the Burren topology with its lower, unseen lower cave systems, karst limestone pavement and mysterious thin places. As the residencies in Ireland at this stage provided opposing experiences, various impressions formed of rich interactions, pleasant, happy times and lonely, cold periods where I felt that I was on a precipice at the very edge of the world. As Bachelard comments, “we feel warm *because* it is cold outdoors.”⁹¹ Anticipating that I would have felt at home in my ancestral places of Kildare or Kerry, instead I felt that I had found my place in the Burren, Ireland.

Seeing places through an artist’s eyes has made me more conscious when I visit various places of the veil between elements, such as the unseen trace of a footfall, blood spilt or smell of burned wood or turf. Lore and memories are kept alive with oral histories, folklore and stories with places holding remembrances of massacres, births and their spirit of place.

Scholar Liana MacDonald, in Joanna Kidman’s edited book of essays *Fragments from a Contested Past*, highlights that, in many places in Aotearoa, there is a lack of visible signage.⁹² More specifically, MacDonald refers to a place where I used to live, Pāuatahanui in Porirua, Te Whanganui a Tara, Wellington. In the 1800s, fierce, bloody battles were fought between various tribes as well as the Crown. Battle Hill is named for one of these conflicts. However, I have found that many people who live in the area aren’t necessarily aware of its history, despite these events taking place less than two hundred years ago. While it is possible to find information about the area’s history, without visible signage or a curiosity to learn more about the name, Pāuatahanui is predominantly experienced these days through its farming practices and food and wine festivals. It is a beautiful area with spacious farmland, forests, a golf course, a small village and a shallow inlet where the water is surrounded by wetland areas with frequently used walkways. The colours shift and change through the seasons, and the foliage is predominantly native. The hills have been denuded, and clay is now predominant as trees and topsoil were removed when a nearby suburb was being built. Extraction of the topsoil has resulted in runoff from the clay pouring silt into the inlet, changing what was a deep water port to one now little over a metre deep. Although this area is no longer ideal for farming, despite its complex history and unique characteristics, people raise sheep, cattle, and horses, and operate garden centres and orchards. We lived in Pāuatāhanui for over eight years. I am convinced there is a history of blood remaining in the soil of the property that we occupied, as we had a number of tragic and frightening events happen during our time there. Our property overlooked Battle

91 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 39.

92 Joanna Kidman et al., *Fragments from a Contested Past: Remembrance, Denial and New Zealand History* (Bridget Williams Books, 2022), 58.

Hill and, I imagine, might have been a perfect place for a Māori *pā* (fortification)⁹³ to be located, to watch for invading war parties and colonial troops.



Figure 24. Detail: *OiOi*, 2023, oil paint and cold wax medium on cradled panel.

The detailed work *OiOi* (fig. 24) describes the rich colours of these robust warrior plants that absorb silt and runoff. They are ‘in-between’ plants of incredible beauty and sturdiness that grow between silt runoff from the land and the ocean - these plants have left an indelible mark on me.

Where I now live in Te Hau Kapua Devonport, there is substantial history of settlement by Māori and later, by Europeans.⁹⁴ The peninsula is, on one side a surfeit of mangrove swamps and on the other, golden sand

93 *Te Aka Māori Dictionary*, under “pā,” <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/word/4853>.

94 “History and Heritage: Devonport Village; Auckland’s Best Seaside Escape,” Devonport Village, accessed August 30, 2025, <https://devonport.co.nz/explore/history-heritage>.

beaches with rolling green land that has been repurposed as the golf course and adjacent football/skate park. This beauty conceals the rusted car bodies and toxic waste that is buried just a few metres below. In 2010 during an excavation in Te Hau Kapua Devonport for the construction of a naval museum, moa bones were found many layers under the surface; archaeologists determined they are approximately 500 years old.⁹⁵ Discoveries like this, as well as learning about Pāuatāhanui and Battle Hill, lead me to continually wonder what other taonga and histories lie buried and undiscovered throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. Mackintosh discusses Aotearoa New Zealand's deep history, and the increasing interest in place and space by Western historians. She notes that for Māori the interest and knowledge has always existed commenting "When histories and landscapes are viewed as co-constituted, or made together, then deep natural histories and early human histories can be seen as more interwoven with the more recent past and the present."⁹⁶

Terrains

Te Hau Kapua Devonport is the home of Terehia Walker and Ngahiwi Walker. I met them through community activities related to our local gallery and have participated in beginner te reo Māori classes with them. Terehia is a weaver and Community Iwi Advisor and Ngahiwi is a weaver and carver, as well as the Māori Cultural Advisor to the Aotearoa Royal New Zealand Navy. Before leaving Aotearoa New Zealand for Ireland in May 2025 I was able to have some pounamu⁹⁷ (greenstone) blessed by Terehia and Ngahiwi for family and friends in Ireland (fig. 25).

95 Ben Watson and Sarah Coddington, "Big Dig at Navy Museum Site Uncovers Moa Bones," North Shore Times, April 16, 2010.

96 Mackintosh, *Shifting Grounds*, 12.

97 *Te Aka Māori Dictionary*, under "pounamu," <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/word/5954>.



Figure 25. Pounamu at Ōperetu, Narrowneck. Photograph © Janet Mazenier.

By gifting this taonga I wanted to create a symbolic exchange of spirit between cultures and countries. We spent time at Ōperetu Narrowneck beach, facing directly toward Rangitoto. This beach is framed by a sense of geological time with its eastern horizon dominated by the dark symmetry of the dormant volcano, a forebodingly close and constant presence. This place could be considered a threshold space, where land meets the Tikapa Moana Hauraki Gulf. The beach's golden sand forms a shallow arc between headlands that are shaped by tidal rhythms and a long history of coastal habitation. Nearby, Fort Takapuna speaks to its colonial military past and the beach is lined with pohutukawa trees, upended striated cliffs and remnants of its volcanic history with striped, rust/iron oxide-coloured rocks protruding into the intertidal beach area. Ōperetu

Narrowneck beach is a liminal zone shaped by transitions between land and sea, war and peace, past and present. Although in geological terms Rangitoto is considered young the view of it anchors the beach with a sense of deep time offering a visual echo of the elemental forces that formed the coastline. This beach offers a slow, continuous presence that is a place where the ordinary becomes contemplative, and where the horizon holds both history and possibility.

On a warm, sunny day, we stood in the shallows while Rangitoto watched on with the tidal pools sparkling as they shimmered on the golden sand in the warm sun. Lappin notes that “some localities possess special powers, not necessarily healing powers, or rather, not *only* healing powers, that human beings may absorb and draw benefit from by simply being there.”⁹⁸ Terehia and Ngahiwi say that Ōperetu Narrowneck beach is treasured by local iwi (people of the locale)⁹⁹ as a special place for undertaking ritual practices; it is also a place where I spend much time. Dipping the taonga in the water we said a *karakia* (ritual incantation)¹⁰⁰ and closed the ceremony with *kai* (food),¹⁰¹ followed by an afternoon of laughter and connection; *whanaungatanga* (friendship).¹⁰² It was an auspicious time that inspired me to think deeply about how to appropriately gift the pounamu to my whānau (family) in Ireland. Blessing the pounamu extended my knowledge of Māori culture and the associated spirit of the ocean and land that were imbued into the stone and carried from one side of the world to another. In Ireland, I dipped the pounamu in the Atlantic ocean before gifting it, so as to signify the connection of spirit and terrains that exist between Ireland and Aotearoa New Zealand. We also bathed the canvas that we were about to work on. This was initially mystifying to my Irish artist friends, but with a spirit of connection and belonging, both ceremonies were a way of connecting us.

Language and Its Importance

Deciding when a painting is fully resolved is arbitrary and reflects many years of painting practice. An instantaneous mental shift may create a completely different interpretation of an experience or thing. The decision to allow a work to be resolved may be made when I can walk into the studio and ‘know’ it is complete, or alternatively, when I’m tired of it or working towards an exhibition deadline. Now more aware that the titles

98 Lappin, *The Soul of Place*, 60.

99 *Tē Aka Māori Dictionary*, under “iwi,” <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/word/1822>.

100 *Tē Aka Māori Dictionary*, under “karakia,” <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/word/2275>.

101 *Tē Aka Māori Dictionary*, under “kai,” <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/word/1894>.

102 *Tē Aka Māori Dictionary*, under “whanaungatanga,” <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/word/10068>.

of my works can convey their deeper meanings, I approach naming them with greater thought and intention. At this stage I haven't titled works in Te Reo Māori or Irish as I don't feel confident with the richness of either language to do so. Both Te Reo Māori and the Irish language are so descriptive they require knowledge and deep thought to interpret and use them appropriately. Magan highlights how a greater understanding of linguistic descriptions of place in Ireland can bring these places to life in their full context.¹⁰³ He writes of lost words in the Irish landscape, noting that Irish words have

different ways of seeing the world ... when giving directions, I had to orient myself very differently, depending on the language...I would need to situate myself in relation to the planet. I would be heading *siar ó dheas* ('south-west') along the road or *aduidh* ('to the north') or *soir abhaile* ('eastwards home'). Even when someone or something was just a little way off, such as a cow in the next field, I would say, *Ta an bhó thoir sa pháirc* ('The cow is in the field to the east').¹⁰⁴

Inhabiting places in my home of Aotearoa New Zealand where the land speaks of rich volcanic soils, black basalt rock, cobalt skies and clear blue oceans places my work in context of belonging, of habitation, of having been born here, despite my Irish heritage. MacIntosh resists a purely material or utilitarian reading of land. As she says, she perceives land as an archive "with long histories, both natural and human, [which] have been woven together over hundreds of years to form potent sites of meaning."¹⁰⁵ In both countries as they hold history hidden beneath the surface, truths must be sought with intention, like treasures buried in quiet soil. History lives in the soil as well as the memories of those who have received stories passed down through generations.

How can an abstracted landscape painting tell stories of stars, celebrations, brutality and sadness? The way we come to know place mirrors the way language lives, shaped differently across lands where Indigenous tongues still breathe. Not being an Irish speaker, I have relied on my Irish-speaking family and friends to advise me when I am thinking about *place* in Ireland. Writer Hector Ó heochagáin describes language as

103 Magan, *Thirty Two Words for Field*, 7.

104 Magan, *Thirty Two Words for Field*, 2.

105 Mackintosh, *Shifting Grounds*, 1.

A passport to delve deeper into new worlds ... The Irish language is our inheritance. It lives underneath us in the soil, it blows through the leaves on trees and rises from the roots, it's in the wind and the rain, in the water and the waves, it's in our stone and our mountains, our sun and our sky. Irish was part of this island before English, it's the language of our tribes, and it tells us about our ancestors and our land.¹⁰⁶

When spending time there, it became clear to me that the increasing and visible use of the Irish language can unlock greater knowledge of place and heritage. Road signs around the city areas held both English and Irish names, while in the more remote country areas, Irish names were more prominent, and in some areas, there was no English name at all. When naming a work, I ask what it means to give voice to place, where the spirit of Aotearoa New Zealand meets the memory of Ireland and vice versa, each shaping the other in a quiet dialogue, together and apart.

Exteriority: Interiority

In *Landscape and Narrative*, author Barry Lopez explains the split of internal understanding versus the external subject of landscape outside of self: “the external landscape is the one we see that is not only the line and colour of the land and its shading at different times of the day ... The second - the interior landscape - is the personal or individual response to the exterior factors.”¹⁰⁷ My response to being in Ireland has always been emotional; I feel the land speak to the multiple generations of my heritage, surprisingly and particularly when I spend time in the Burren. My work now contains and obliquely expresses sorrow, my loss and inability to ever feel *truly* Irish while also expressing the joy that I have gained from this research journey and the connections with art-making, place and people that have occurred. This research has also taken me on a journey of connection with iwi who live with and near me as we have connected in weaving language and friendship, taking time to understand each other's cultures.

Magan highlights Ireland's oral lore, poetry, myths and legends that have been kept alive over centuries, inextricably linked to the land. While “much of it may be make-believe ... there is truth there too,

106 Hector Ó hEochagáin, *The Irish Words You Should Know: And How to Use Them Every Day* (Gill Books, 2024), 9–10.

107 Barry Lopez, *Crossing Open Ground* (Vintage Books, 1989), 64–65.

just as indigenous tales from other cultures are now being found to contain knowledge.”¹⁰⁸ Tales of gods and heroes can often be profound. Magan notes that with a “journey through myth and landscape, you’ll find yourself entering a maze in which physical reality warps and winds back on itself.”¹⁰⁹ De-linearising history and re-layering it, I employ parallel processes in the way I make my work. Memories become distorted, interpreted and misconstrued.

‘Place’ could therefore be considered ephemeral, non-existent and existent, thick and thin. As I walk in Aotearoa New Zealand and Ireland, looking up, down and around, I continually ponder what is beneath the surface. My work has become more universal, a shift away from small-scale to larger works that speak to, for example, aspects of grey greens that reflect clay and greywacke stone from Ōperetu Narrowneck beach or equally the karst limestone of Ireland’s west coast in Clare.

In this chapter I have sought to articulate the ineffable qualities of place - its spirit, mauri or anam áite, which can be atmospheres, thinness, thickness; or as perceptual, affective, and embodied experiences. The work developed through this research reveals that place is not fixed or singular, rather it is shifting constellations of experience, cultural inheritance, landscape, and language. Painting offers a site through which to process these intersections, to evoke what lies beneath the surface, and to hold the sedimentation of time and emotion.

By learning about aspects of tikanga and Te Reo Māori, Celtic mythology, and theories of thin places and phenomenology, the research positions place as more than a backdrop. It is participant, collaborator, provocateur, and repository. The artworks that have emerged function as translations, animated by an ethics of care and an acute sensitivity to what cannot be fully seen or named. Ultimately, this research affirms that place is affective, relational, and deeply entangled with the act of making. To paint place is to make contact with its unseen layers, to give form to its vibrations, and to dwell within its thresholds. The research remains open, like the landscapes it touches, welcoming transformation, inviting questions, and always allowing for return.

108 Manchán Magan, *Listen to the Land Speak: A Journey into the Wisdom of What Lies beneath Us* (Gill Books, 2022), 2.

109 Magan, *Listen to the Land Speak*, 3.

CHAPTER TWO: MATERIAL TRANSFORMATIONS

The research explores the entangled material, philosophical, and affective dimensions of my painting practice, phenomenological enquiry and an experimental approach to material transformation. Doing this situates my work within a materially-engaged, process-based methodology. Foregrounding the agency of matter, this methodology investigates how it collaborates with me as the maker and how I collaborate with its material properties. At its core, as noted earlier, my practice is shaped by the alchemical and sensorial properties of beeswax, oil, pigment, and found materials, through which I engage the concepts of world-building-bending, phenomenology and transformation.

As well as phenomenology and world-bending, this research explores the living energy of materials and painting and holds the artist's presence in every gesture and act of labour, inseparable from the distinct media that shape its voice. I examine how material choices not only shape visual outcomes but also influence embodied experience and conceptual resonance.

Material Choices

Defining painting is a complex and vague construct: thus, I struggle to differentiate painting from drawing. My works could be deemed paintings, painted drawings or drawn paintings, or perhaps even textile works. In her book *The Love of Painting*, theorist Isabelle Graw focuses on

painting as a formation, on the historical changes it has undergone, and on its enduring characteristics. In conceptual terms, the advantage of the formation is that it allows us to conceive of changes, openings, and boundary shifts, alongside aspects that persist over time.¹¹⁰

Graw further comments that paintings can be thought of as “a wide variety of things: paint on a flat surface, a concrete artistic practice, an eighteenth-century institution, an early modern invention, or just a

110 Isabelle Graw, *The Love of Painting: Genealogy of a Success Medium* (Sternberg Press, 2018), 14.

specific painted picture.”¹¹¹ Considering her perspective, I contemplate how a painting is formed and how meaning is derived from material transformation. In the context of my practice, processes mirror natural weathering, geological formation, the passage of time that makes material transformation and the final affect central to the work. By building up and scraping away layers, I can reveal traces of prior decisions, emphasising the temporal and processual nature of my practice. My practice is durational, where time matters as decisions are made during the process of making and as a result of time resting the work between any actions undertaken. I choose to use beeswax as a key medium, with its physical presence and capacities for opacity or translucency. Its ability to trap or obscure forms is an invitation to the viewer into a sensory engagement with the surface.

This invitation aligns with Merleau-Ponty’s notion of “attention casting its light upon consciousness.”¹¹² Graw discusses how “the *affective* [emphasis in original] power of paintings “surpasses reason and cannot be captured in words,”¹¹³ arguing further that paintings are tied to their “distinctive media and material characteristics ... insist(ing) on a less mythically charged concept of affectivity, one that seeks out the causes of affect within paintings themselves, while also stressing the projective dimension of affective responses.”¹¹⁴

Working with charcoal and graphite takes me back to childhood, when these media were the only affordable and available drawing tools in Whanganui, Aotearoa New Zealand where I grew up. As a powerful, historical type of drawing media, their simple material immediacy, expressive range, and responsiveness to touch are qualities that make them uniquely suited to exploring gesture, presence, and perception. Their power lies not only in what they can depict, but in how they embody and record the act of drawing itself, as well as bend perceptions of form and materials. I try to maintain a practice that is as non-toxic as possible. Beeswax is an organic and archival material, and castor wax is also organic. However, non-organic elements such as odourless mineral spirits and workable fixative are needed. Acrylic paints, comprised of polymer chemicals, are not recommended for use with the beeswax medium as plastic is not likely to bind with wax. By reusing and painting over existing works, my practice holds infinite possibility for extension. My research embraces the historied and varied surfaces that painting can inhabit, each one a reimagined ground that is open to adaptation and possibility.

The work *Ballinskelligs in Early Spring* (fig. 26) presents a negotiation between materiality, temporality,

111 Graw, *The Love of Painting*, 13.

112 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 29.

113 Graw, *The Love of Painting*, 16.

114 Graw, *The Love of Painting*, 16.

and surface transformation. The substrate is a panel that has been painted over many times, introducing a pre-existing history of use, compression and fragility that situates the work within an aesthetic of contingency and decay. Its scratches act as temporal inscriptions, signalling the passage of time through the object's layers of media. By painting this with layers of colour underneath such as ochre yellow, a tension is introduced between saturation and erosion. The bleeding of ochre outwards from the centre suggests processes of transformation akin to oxidation with elements of drawing indicating ghostly impressions of memory remnants. This palimpsestic layering situates the work within a phenomenological register where the viewer encounters not an image but a surface in flux, where visibility and concealment oscillate and the work is perpetually in the process of becoming. Painted after I returned from the residency in Cill Rialaig, the work is a constant reminder of the snow-swept mountains, earthy bogs and turf around the Ballinskelligs area.



Figure 26. *Ballinskelligs in Early Spring*, 2024, oil paint, charcoal and cold wax medium on cradled panel, 1000x1000mm.

Affective atmospheres can be constructed by making specific material choices. Whether these decisions relate to the absorption and reflection of light, the tactility of wax, aspects of colour or the inclusion of organic matter, resulting works are intended to resonate with the idea of spirit/soul of place, its *mauri* or *anam áite*. As my work is a materialisation of the sensations and memory traces of a place, the materials themselves becoming agents of material processes. These processes shape a space in between, where elements of opacity, translucency and stability shifts and flux can fade presence into erasure. In this interplay, paintings emerge in a liminal state, suspended between becoming and dissolving, surface and depth, past and present. Certain ways of handling materials can produce an affective charge that goes beyond technique as it contributes to an embodied experience for both me and the viewer, involving the resistance of wax, the saturation of pigment, and the unpredictability of mark-making. I am attempting to tell stories from a non-human perspective using my own body, my materials and the space between myself and the places the work speaks to as I chart a sensory space, the space between seer and seen. These choices generate affective intensities that engage with a viewer's own sense of perception, memory, and temporality. Sometimes experiments have resulted in surprising effects that shift the register of my paintings as they embody a dialogue between control and surrender, where I initiate the process, but the media determines the outcome until I decide to finish working on the painting.

Alchemical Materials and Processes

More than ten years of practice with my current materials and cold wax painting methods has given me considerable knowledge of how they interact, although I am continually discovering further potential. Their alchemical qualities provide challenges and infinite possibilities via the manipulation of the materials and application of human agency and judgment. These elements, together with raw materials, hold the potential to create an artwork. Ingold writes of materials, saying that

practitioners know them by knowing their stories: of what they do and what happens to them when treated in particular ways. Such stories are fundamentally resistant to any project of classification. Materials do not *exist* ... rather as substances-in-becoming they carry on or *perdure* [emphasis in original].¹¹⁵

115 Ingold, *Making*, 31.

As I reflect on Ingold's statement, working with my media encourages contemplation of the stories and agency they bring with their provenance. The wax holds archival qualities and an ability to remain impermeable while charcoal holds memories of the burnt and crushed spectral willow or ash tree that has been repurposed as a drawing medium. All of the materials 'speak' as they collaborate and interact, the processes of overlapping and erasure creating an ongoing dialogue with each other and me, the artist. Ingold further discusses the question of materials holding agency, acknowledging that while they "*leak* [emphasis in original]: that is because of the interchange of materials across the surfaces by which they differentiate themselves from the surrounding medium."¹¹⁶ In cold wax painting, materials leak when their inherent qualities resist containment or fixed form, allowing them to transgress boundaries both physically and conceptually. This leakage can manifest through the bleeding of pigment into wax layers, the unpredictable absorption of solvents, or the shifting opacity of layered surfaces.



Figure 27. *Field of the Unsaid*, work in progress, 2025, oil paint and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas.

116 Ingold, *Making*, 95.

The work *Field of the Unsaid* (fig. 27) occupies an entangled surface where matter can become event. At the stage pictured in Fig. 27, it was still being developed with more charcoal, graphite, beeswax and paint pushing; it was pulling across temporal layers, forming a palimpsest of visible and hidden atmospheres. A spirit of place, undefined and unknown, becoming a place of holding where marks emerged like remnants of a dream just past waking, half-formed, half-vanished. Listening to the gestures of erosion, the microhistories of pressure, friction, and disappearance, a field of tensions unfurled. Some months after deciding this work was completed, I reflected on it further, deciding to veil the marks again as they weren't 'unsaid' like the title indicated. I felt they were shouting. I had felt increasingly uncomfortable relating the title to the work and I could have re-titled it, but I decided to change the work itself to relate it more closely to the title and therefore the underlying intentions. *Field of the Unsaid* (fig. 28) speaks to the hours of labour, the many reworkings, the hidden marks and the veiled areas of absence and presence.



Figure 28. *Field of the Unsaid*, 2025. Detail: reworking the painting.

As I considered the contrasts of light against opacity, sharpness against dissolution and rhythm against rupture, I intended the work to speak to a world in flux that is bending at the edge of what can be held in perception. Each line became a thread in a larger ecology of affective sensation. The work tested me as it negotiated its path with spaces between intention and release, structure and entropy, surface and depth.

After deciding to veil the work again to push some of the marks back and allow the work to breathe I continued the processes of covering and drawing. While doing this could be considered in conventional painting a ‘miss-step’ in the process of making work, it forms an essential part of my process. These processes can reveal sites of tension between control and surrender, presence and erasure. The act of continual relayering reflects an obsession with resolution that is striving toward an imagined perfection which remains perpetually out of reach. Beneath the surface, traces of previous gestures remain as palimpsests, echoing the painting’s temporal depth. The agency of the media allows for paint to resist, accumulate, crack or dull, pushing back against my original intentions while asserting its own becoming. This complex dialogue between human will and material response is at the crux of my practice. The overworked surface registers intensity, frustration, desire, and exhaustion, becoming a visual archive of emotional labour, temporal duration and the instability of meaning. Phenomenologically, *Field of the Unsaid* now invites prolonged looking. Its density slows perception, drawing the viewer into an embodied encounter with time, gesture, and failure (fig. 29).

As the wax acts as both a binder for the dry media and as an active participant, it is a semi-permeable membrane that allows memory, perception, and gesture to unfold. The materials leak, absorb, resist, and archive echoing elements of our planet with ongoing tectonic movements, volcanic occurrences and weather impacts. These behaviours invite a reconsideration of control, authorship, and the thresholds between human and non-human agency.



Figure 29. *Field of the Unsaid*, 2025. Detail: reworking the painting.

The physical processes such as scraping, incising, obscuring, layering and drawing, allow for the construction of surfaces that resonate with geological time and environmental forces becoming a means of conjuring affective terrains and temporalities that resist linear resolution. Weaving together theory, personal narrative, material processes, and site-specific reflections, I trace how landscape, weather, light, and memory can be materialised and embedded into the stratigraphy of surface and depth. My work also considers the ethical and ecological implications of using materials that are both ancient and under possible threat, such as beeswax.¹¹⁷ Ultimately, this enquiry articulates a practice that is as much about listening as it is about making – listening to materials, to place, and to the insights they carry.

When I make the cold wax medium, the beeswax and castor waxes leak into each other as they meld. The amount of the castor wax used is much less than the beeswax. After the two waxes cool slightly the mineral solvent is poured in to bind the waxes resulting in the medium. When painting with it, the solvent evaporates, allowing it to dry hard. Adding an alkyd resin allows for ongoing flexibility when working with unstretched canvas, reducing brittleness as canvas flexes with temperature changes. These material

117 “Why Bees Are Essential to People and Planet,” UN Environmental Programme, May 20, 2019, <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/why-bees-are-essential-people-and-planet>.

behaviours disrupt the illusion of control while foregrounding process and temporality. Wax absorbs, resists and reveals in ways that evoke a sense of emergence or becoming. Leakage between the waxes and solvent becomes a phenomenological event, wherein the medium is a membrane where matter, memory, and gesture intermingle. When applied, the various media challenge conventional hierarchies of surface and depth, form and formlessness, allowing the work to hold space for the ephemeral, potentiality and in-between. Ingold further asserts that while materials hold potentiality,

the role of the artist is not to give effect to a preconceived idea but to follow the forces and flows of material that bring the work into being. To view the work is to join the artist as a fellow traveller, to look *with* it as it unfolds in the world, rather than *behind* it to an originating intention of which it is the final product.¹¹⁸

As I consider Ingold's concept of material agency, the materials I use take me on a journey, working in collaboration as they maintain their own agency amid my actions. Cold wax painting can incorporate other genres such as sculpture (scratching, building impasto surfaces that create a three dimensional surface effect, holding textiles within the paste as it dries hard), print-making (transfer processes, mono-printing, use of print-maker's tools), drawing (line, scribbling, asemic writing, using a variety of tools to make marks). The ground allows for stitching, burning and cutting, a folding and unfolding of material processes and actions that come together to transform and resolve the work.

Author and artist Jerry McLaughlin, in the book *Cold Wax Medium*, notes that wax has been used as far back as 4000 BCE by the ancient Egyptians, who used pigmented wax for painting.¹¹⁹ Over centuries, the use of wax to make artwork has evolved; heat was traditionally required for the manipulation of wax to fuse layers which is an encaustic process. However, more modern materials have been added, such as dammar resin and solvents, changing the process.¹²⁰ Although my preference is to make my own medium, there are commercial providers that make excellent products. Commercial products are a smooth, soft, white paste. My own medium is grittier as it holds the remnants of the pollens harvested by the bees, as well as traces of the bees' bodies, and

118 Ingold, *Making*, 96.

119 Rebecca Crowell and Jerry McLaughlin, *Cold Wax Medium: Techniques, Concepts and Conversations* (Squeegee Press, 2016), 21.

120 Crowell and McLaughlin, *Cold Wax Medium*, 21.

sometimes remnants of the castor wax as it has hardened within the medium. Whichever cold wax medium is used, the paste and cured surface will last indefinitely.

Material Entanglements

A mixed media painting practice naturally contains multiple materials as well as entanglements of visual thinking, agency and decision making. For me, a notable and attractive aspect of painting with wax is the residual smell of honey. Smell, tactility and potentiality are a vivid reminder of a deeper connection through the bees' labour to the pollens and flora that were original contributors to the wax. On a warm winter day while reworking *Field of the Unsaid*, multiple bees visited my studio. I imagine they were hungry, attracted to the smell, given the time of year and scarce food available to them. They visited without threat, reminding me of their presence and beauty, and often landing on the surfaces of paintings that hadn't fully cured (fig. 30).

Why use wax? It offers dualities of freedom and constraint, ephemerality and opaqueness, visual versus actual texture, and the extension of paint volume; all qualities I enjoy. As it holds abilities to refract light and shift an opaque pigment to a translucent finish, it continually leads me down paths that are interesting and infinite; it holds the ability to directly (and indirectly) influence aspects such as transparency and the capture of diffused 'light.' As a transparent medium, it allows the light to pass through the layers, thereby creating a luminous effect as well as a sense of depth.



Figure 30. My apoidean companion. Detail: work in progress. 2025.

Substance and Form

In the 17th century, philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650) used wax to illustrate the substance of materiality and discuss how we might understand solidity and form. Writer Annette Baier (1929-2012) summarises Descartes' thinking as he placed himself at the centre of existence, comparing wax to the intellect:

A piece of wax, fresh from the honeycomb and still retaining the scent of the flowers the bees had visited. It is white and solid, but when put by the fire it becomes liquid and transparent and can be formed into countless shapes.¹²¹

121 Annette Baier, "Wax," in *The Cambridge Descartes Lexicon*, ed. Lawrence Nolan (Cambridge University Press, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511894695.259>.

For Descartes, wax became an extended substance, one that, according to Baier, is “the implicit comparison between his mind, with its countless thoughts, and the wax, and its countless shapes, makes the wax a sort of image of himself.”¹²² It is the intellect and the senses that make sense of wax for me, in its various forms: its smell, materiality, and tactility providing sensory and conceptual delights that are integral to my practice. Its material properties, malleable, translucent, and responsive, allow for a dynamic dialogue between control and chance. Using wax invites slowness; it demands touch, time, and layering, allowing me to embed fragments, gestures, and traces that speak to memory, landscape, and affective resonance. The delight emerges not only with the tactile pleasure of working the surface, scraping, burnishing and incising, but also with wax’s capacity to hold media and simultaneously obscure. This duality fosters a sense of mystery and depth, evoking the space between presence and absence, visibility and concealment. Bees are agents that join the dots, moving from pollinator to pollinator and connecting places and spaces. Their honey and wax is a becoming, an amalgam of these movements.

Wax’s ability to archive the physicality of process aligns with my fascination with material transformation. Each mark, inclusion, or removal becomes part of a temporal palimpsest, engaging the viewer in a phenomenological experience of looking, sensing, and feeling. The medium’s unpredictability, how it cracks, resists, or absorbs, mirrors natural processes of erosion and decay, echoing themes of impermanence and world-bending. Ultimately, wax is a collaborator in my work, offering delight through its aliveness, its sensuousness, and its continual negotiation of material, meaning, and memory.

122 Baier, “Wax.”



Figure 31. Wax cappings. 2025. Photograph © Janet Mazenier.

As I work with wax (fig. 31), I consider Descartes' philosophical position, holding the crumbled pieces, looking at their colour, and contemplating their provenance. Wax is both shiny and matte, holding the smell and taste of honey, and is chewable when raw. I constantly wonder at what point in history it was discovered as a material that could be used for preserving, painting, or acting as a resist for jewellery making and sculpting. It holds tremendous capacity for transformation of both its qualities and the qualities of other materials it protects and interacts with.

Artwork as Artefact

Ingold suggests that artists start with an image or idea and finish “with an arbitrary endpoint.”¹²³

“The living artwork becomes a ‘thing’ ... and the vitality of the work of art, then, lies with its materials...”¹²⁴

Arguing strongly for material vitality as the materials hold their own effect, he asserts that the artist is the agent, bringing the materials into the thing that becomes the painting. Echoing Descartes’ logic, political theorist and philosopher Jane Bennett, in her book *Vibrant Matter*, describes ‘things’ as producing effects, seeing objects in conjunction and in contrast with themselves and their environment, so that a materialistic approach to buying and discarding materials reduces the “vitality of matter.”¹²⁵ Graw advocates for effectiveness within the paintings themselves as well as “the projective dimension of affective responses.”¹²⁶

The wax, as a ‘thing’ when combined with other media (also a ‘thing’ or ‘things’) allows for the creation of an artwork that is also a ‘thing’ which holds and projects the ongoing effect of beeswax as vibrant matter. The resultant artwork holds wax’s material vitality with its capacity to influence, disrupt, and co-author the work. Unlike passive substrates, wax behaves unpredictably: it resists, absorbs, repels, and responds to temperature, pressure, and touch. Its shifting states, solid, soft, melting, introduce a temporal dimension that requires me to adapt, wait, or intervene as the dialogical relationship progresses.

This material agency invites me to relinquish full control, allowing the wax to assert its presence as it layers, cracks, conceals, or reveals acting not merely as a medium but as a participant in meaning-making. It archives gestures, preserves traces, and fosters material memory, engaging with themes of time, decay, and transformation. Its translucency plays with perception, invoking the space between surface and depth, interior and exterior. This thin place of liminality positions wax as an active force in shaping aesthetic, conceptual, and phenomenological outcomes. In relational terms, wax worlds actively, not by representing, but by enacting, embedding, and co-producing lived and imagined terrains within the painting. It thus remains agential through its resistance to finality, insistence on becoming, and its invitation to me to co-create with, rather than dominate, the material. At its most basic, it is a carrier for other elements.

123 Ingold, *Making*, 96.

124 Ingold, *Making*, 96.

125 Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Duke University Press, 2010), 5.

126 Graw, *The Love of Painting*, 16.



Figure 32. *Field of the Unsaid*, 2025, oil paint, charcoal and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas. 1230x2200mm (including rod and clasps).

Drawing on Bennett's ideas of 'thingness,' the 'things' I work with become a 'thing' (known to me as a painting but as noted earlier this could easily be deemed a painted-drawing, drawing, or drawn-painting), and is usually, but not always, determined as a finished 'thing' otherwise known as an artefact at the moment I decide it's finished and titled. As an artefact the work is a material object that retains traces of cultural, historical, bodily or experiential processes. Within contemporary painting discourse, the artwork as artefact exceeds purely formal concerns by

foregrounding residue, memory, process and material evidence. This ‘thing’ called *Field of the Unsaid* (fig. 32) became a conglomeration of different actions and materials that hold agency individually and collectively. This assemblage was created in this context on a substrate and with agential decisions made by a human that produces effects while retaining the agency of the materials. It finally reached resolution after some months.

Having painted on panels earlier in my practice, I now prefer painting on unstretched canvas, as it provides opportunities to play with the size of the work by reducing it or adding elements such as stitching, cutting and additional textiles. There is a freedom to make very large works (panels and stretched canvases become very heavy over time due to the layers of media) and the unstretched canvas doesn’t chip at the edges and is more easily transported, as it can be rolled and wrapped.

Concepts of Materiality

Viewers taking time and having to work to understand my paintings provides enjoyment for me. Discombobulation and distortion introduce elements of experimentation and an invitation to look more closely into the paintings. *Field of the Unsaid* (fig. 33) was intended to evoke an atmospheric field that sits between memory from my daily walks and the materials that comprise its makeup. While there is a sense of geological time held in the original work where pigments have settled, shifted, and been disrupted, reworking it now suggests erosion and/or the scarring of a surface over time. The scraped marks and veiled luminosity invite tactile engagement, pulling the viewer into a phenomenological relationship with the surface as both skin and archive. Light plays a crucial role. Held within wax’s capacity for translucency, it filters through strata, creating moments of quiet radiance amid murky, earthen tones. Hovering between abstraction and familiarity, it registers as a kind of world in flux. It is neither fully formed nor fully undone, embodying ‘the space between’ presence and absence. The agency of wax obscures and reveals and participates in decay and preservation. As such, the painting is a transformation of matter into a site of affective resonance and spatial imagination.



Figure 33. Rolling on more layers. Detail *Fidd of the Unsaid*, work in progress.2024.

Ingold writes that materiality can hold multiple meanings, and to conceptualise what materiality actually means, we need to have some idea of what we think its physicality and form might be.¹²⁷ This perspective aligns with Descartes' idea of wax as an extended substance, and Ingold notes that the raw physicality of the world's 'material character' can be considered distinct from the social and historical agency of humans who project our interpretation of meaning as it relates to the "finished forms of artefacts."¹²⁸ He asks the question of what is meant by 'materiality', suggesting that there are two perspectives defining materiality thus

on one side is the raw physicality of the world's 'material character'; on the other side is the socially and historically situated agency of human beings ... [who] project upon it both design and meaning in the conversion of naturally given raw material into the finished forms of artefacts.¹²⁹

127 Ingold, *Making*, 27.

128 Ingold, *Making*, 27.

129 Ingold, *Making*, 27.

In his opinion, the notion of materiality is presented as “the very bedrock of existence and as an externality that is open to comprehension and appropriation by a transcendent humanity.”¹³⁰ However, Ingold cautions us to be wary of the term materiality as it creates a perception of something ‘solid.’ I ask myself whether my work is a solid object or the result of a viewer’s perception while holding its material existence, such as a material such as stone. Poet David Whyte has written about Ireland’s stone

The face in the stone is a mirror looking into you.
You have gazed into the moving waters,
you have seen the slow light, in the sky
above Lough Inagh, beneath you, streams have flowed,
and rivers of earth have moved beneath your feet,
but you have never looked into the immovability
of stone like this, the way it holds you, gives you
not a way forward but a doorway in, staunches
your need to leave, becomes faithful by going nowhere,
something that wants you to stay here and look back,
be weathered by what comes to you, like the way you too
have travelled from so far away to be here, once reluctant
and now as solid and as here and as willing
to be touched as everything you have found.¹³¹

Whyte’s poem is a reminder of the perceived solidity of stone and my inherent desire to touch it. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen posits “material insistence as being especially evident in unworked stone”¹³² and discusses how this material can become “as plastic a substance as wood in the hands of the careful hands of a sculptor

130 Ingold, *Making*, 27.

131 David Whyte, “Stone (Thobar Phádraig),” The On Being Project, accessed July 15, 2025, <https://onbeing.org/poetry/stone-thobar-phadraig/>.

132 Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Stone: An Ecology of the Human* (University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 13.

or mason.”¹³³ Ingold asks what is matter? What do we mean when we speak of materials? Are they the same or different?¹³⁴ He notes that fields of practice work with materials where skill is applied and “that they are endowed with properties, whatever the field of practice or the materials involved may be.”¹³⁵ No stone will ever be the same as another, “practitioners know them by knowing their stories: of what they do and what happens to them when treated in particular ways.”¹³⁶ The trace of the human touch on the raw materials is held in the work where stories of both the materials and my agency remain. How can I transcribe the feeling of touching an ancient stone into the creation of an artwork? The work *Field of the Unsaid* could be speaking to Ireland’s stoniness; alternatively, it could also speak to fungal and mycelial threads of connection, depicted as lines, moving and communicating within the layers of the work, hiding the earlier layers as the strata are built.

Sarah Treadwell

Aotearoa New Zealand artist Sarah Treadwell (1952-) works with watercolour, ink and oil paint on unstretched canvases. Her more recent paintings speak to oceans and water with notions of temporal sedimentation (fig. 34). Using trace lines, erasures, and overlaid scripts, the work suggests time not as a linear progression but as a palimpsest of memory and inscription. By combining watercolour, ink, and oil paints, her technique embraces flow, bleed and contingency.

133 Cohen, *Stone: An Ecology of the Human*, 13.

134 Ingold, *Making*, 28.

135 Ingold, *Making*, 30.

136 Ingold, *Making*, 30–31.



Figure 34. Sarah Treadwell. *Oceanic Section: Fathom*. 2018-2023, oil, ink and watercolour on unstretched canvas with stones, twine, pegs, 1800x1400mm, collection of J. Mazenier. Reproduced with permission.

Her marks are reminiscent of fissures, cracks and forms such as coral from beneath the ocean. The splashes of pigment are reminders of reefs that have existed and then disappeared. Gesturally, the marks speak to a freedom of expression that is reflective of the use of her wide range of tools as well as a more embodied response to her surroundings and the painting itself. In 2023 she and I exhibited together at Depot Artspace in an exhibition called *Physical Traces Mapping with Detail*.¹³⁷ Treadwell's paintings speak directly to their materiality, her choice of palette reflecting the oceans she brings to life in her work with her choice of colours. Her work has influenced some of the ideas and colours that I bring to my paintings, although the execution and colour choices are different. Her work speaks to oceanic drifts, corals, and sea beds, and mine speaks to a sensual, spiritual concept of 'place'. At times, she will anchor her works by tying stones or broken bricks to her work to hold the work down, bringing a sense of groundedness to her paintings.

137 "Physical Traces: Mapping with Detail," Depot, accessed August 30, 2025, <https://depot.org.nz/event/physical-traces-mapping-with-detail/>.

By choosing to use beeswax, I am able to bring something of the whenua into my work via the agency of the bees who mine the local flora. Places are drawn, remembered, and transformed through art, which while also concerned with perception, aligns with affect theory, new materialism, and the poetics of emergence, foregrounding non-human agency, phenomenology and transformative processes. Treadwell's unstretched canvases, although not a direct influence on the choices I have made to use similar grounds, are similarly sized to mine, hanging loose, either in vertical or horizontal format.

Over the many weeks of its evolution, *Field of the Unsaid* was covered with intermittent white layers of cold wax, oil paint and charcoal. Ongoing attention continued as frustration built over time. Reminding myself that this work would eventually reach resolution I considered, and agreed with Ingold's comments that "wisdom runs not in straight lines but along the ways of the donkey ... slow but nimble ... obdurate, capricious, dogged, curious, petulant, at once captivated and astonished by the world in which they find themselves."¹³⁸ He continues "they live in hope...find the grain of things and follow it, and in so doing find themselves."¹³⁹ Similar to Treadwell and in reflection of Ingold's comments, I found a path as I collaborated with the work, then followed it, allowing it through its durational development to determine the next step, at other times wresting back control of the making processes and decisions. Ingold notes a 'slide' between text and picture, a continuum of language "the comprehension of which depends upon twin operations, of seeing and reading, or showing and saying."¹⁴⁰ Scratching or drawing into the work introduces a questioning, seeing and reading exchange as the materials respond and speak back. In collaboration with my work I follow the dogged ways of the donkey, wavering, slowing, stopping, starting again.

During warmer months, I take my shoes off when in the studio, grounding myself to the floor through my feet. In summer I take the paintings in progress outside to the grass or concrete to work on them with liquid media such as ink, and to allow the sun to create a slump by melting the media. At times, I use my hands to paint, the tactility of the media allowing me direct and unmediated contact with the work and its materials. There is a sense that I am in a deep connection with the work that is almost primal, a return to childhood that is a direct connection to the ground with its undulations, cracks, hidden depth, mysteries and soils. As soil scientist Alisa Bryce notes in her book *Grounded*, "life can only exist because of the soil. That sticky, gritty stuff

138 Ingold, *Making*, 141.

139 Ingold, *Making*, 141.

140 Ingold, *Making*, 131.

beneath your feet is the foundation of life on Earth.”¹⁴¹ Working in bare feet and with my hands is a way of anchoring myself while I’m painting.

When walking outside, I consider Bryce’s writing and how it is impossible to see the memories that exist in the soil or the minute creatures who live their lives out of our sight under my feet, or are crushed under every footfall. She points out that, all the time these memories are being created, the soil is recording traces of lead from bullets, phosphorus deposits from bones, mercury from teeth fillings and iron from blood.¹⁴² Heavy metals remain in the soil after manufacturing processes and contamination due to buried rubbish. On my walks around our peninsula, I see where iron rust seeps out from beneath our local skate park where the discarded and buried car bodies sink through sludge into the earth below, and the leaching metals with their rust-coloured oxides and pools of blue-green colour indicate remnants of oil. These could be considered banal elements; however, psycho-geographically, I do absorb their materially vibrant colours, form, shapes and leakage into my work.

By using mined, burned, churned, reconstituted materials of charcoal, dry pigments, oxides and paint mixed with the wax medium, pigments can hover lightly on the surface of the layer beneath, without compressing into it. Light pressure with opaque pigments can do the same and transparency is achieved by limited pressure by applying thin layers of paint and media. Resisting conventional tools, I prefer to use silicon squeegees, soft brayers, gloved hands, skewers, palette knives and drawing materials such as compressed charcoal, crayons, graphite blocks, twigs and leaves. The direct feeling of application with my gloved hands can be satisfying; however, depending on the viscosity of the paint mix, it can also be frustrating due to the media sticking to the glove fabric. The ‘feel’ of working with cold wax medium is one of a haptic softness. This closeness to the materials is an intimate process of exchange between me and the work.

I contemplate the massive historic and ongoing forces that created Ōperetu Narrowneck’s twisted, folded, meshed cliffs and rocks with their swirled clay, iron ore banks and schist falling back on each other, the result of the early laying down of Aotearoa New Zealand’s coastline. Pebbles sit within layers and seams of ore and clay, speaking to a deep time history when these cliffs were the seabed over which oceanic forces swept backwards and forwards. Cohen argues that “stone brings story into being, a partner with language (just as inhuman), a material metaphor.”¹⁴³ Spending time in Ireland in places like Kerry, The Burren and Aran Islands,

141 Alisa Bryce, *Grounded: How Soil Shapes the Games We Play, the Lives We Make and the Graves We Lie In* (The Text Publishing Company, 2022), 5.

142 Bryce, *Grounded*, 254.

143 Cohen, *Stone: An Ecology of the Human*, 4.

I am continually amazed at the lithic surroundings, their pink-grey-violet colours reflecting the sunset and sunrise, shifting shadows and clouds creating moving spots of darker colours.

Cohen writes that

a rock discovered at the shoreline opens an adventure in deep time and inhuman forces: slow sedimentation of alluvium and volcanic ash, grinding tectonic shift, crushing mass and epochal compaction, infernal heat, relentless turbidity of the sea.¹⁴⁴

A simple rock can, according to him, retain the residues and traces of these massive universe-forming forces; they are ever-present, if we only take the time to stop and look.



Figure 35. In County Kerry, with engraved Ogham stone. Photograph © Gail Tangney. Reproduced with permission.

The ancientness of place is apparent in both Aotearoa New Zealand and Ireland when looking closely at Ōperetu Narrowneck’s cliffs and Ireland’s lithic landscapes. The colours are represented in my palette in various ways, and stories are embedded everywhere in the materials of the earth and stone in these places, where land gives an atmosphere of solidity, of historic depth, of what Cohen calls “enlarged temporal and geographical scales.”¹⁴⁵

144 Cohen, *Stone: An Ecology of the Human*, 4.

145 Cohen, *Stone: An Ecology of the Human*, 9.

Material/s: Insight/s

As my practice continues to develop, I constantly gain knowledge and insight by maintaining a regular, diligent and focused approach to making work as well as collaborating with and teaching others. Magan writes of Ireland, where

wisdom lies beneath our feet, not always obvious, a country where the reach of folklore is more extensive than broadband or mobile phone coverage in many parts. It forms a carefully constructed web of stories whose aim is to communicate old knowledge to future generations.

I relate his words more broadly not just to Ireland but also Aotearoa New Zealand and my practice, where all of the elements that I work with hold their insights and oftentimes wisdom. The wisdom of place memories reminds us, through earthquakes, storms and other natural catastrophic events, that we as humans can be considered inconsequential. Both Cohen and Magan indicate how stone and place can hold knowledge and agency, highlighting how we busy, contemporary humans think of nature as ‘out there,’ external to humanity. Magan notes that the “internal idea of territory is just as important ... a common concept among societies that have not been torn from their traditional beliefs.”¹⁴⁶ As I paint, I consider my internal territories of sensing, perceiving, thinking and how these translate into action in an ecological collaboration with my media.

Ecologies are ways of thinking about systems, interconnections, and interactions that happen between materials and how they manifest in art making. As I read and make work that speaks to my aesthetics and ideals, these things influence me to think about who we are and why we exist. As theorist Lucy Lippard states:

Whether the approach is anthropological, archaeological, geological or astronomical, the relatively new field of prehistoric scholarship has two prime obstacles ... that absolute proof is very hard to come by ... only a minute percentage ... only a few have turned up the museum-worthy artifacts.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Magan, *Listen to the Land Speak*, 141.

¹⁴⁷ Lucy R. Lippard, *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory* (New Press, 1995), 29.

In relation to the dimensions that she discusses, I consider these ecologies. Ingold argues that “materials are ineffable, rejecting being able to be pinned down.”¹⁴⁸ However I choose and use my media, with their agency they activate their own unpredictable impacts individually and with each other as they create a visual impact on the surface of the painting; they clash, cover, and quake and at other times settle and breathe silently.

Throughout this enquiry, I have positioned my painting practice as a site of material, conceptual, and ecological entanglement: one in which the agency of matter is not merely acknowledged but embraced as a co-creator. Cold wax medium, with its mutable, sensuous, and alchemical properties, has emerged as a generative force that enables a form of painting which is tactile, temporal, and phenomenologically charged. Through its translucency and resistance, its capacity to obscure and reveal, wax holds the potentiality of a becoming of surface and depth, archive and threshold.

By engaging with the philosophies and considerations of material vitality and transformation, particularly those of Ingold, Merleau-Ponty, Cohen, Magan and Lippard, I have explored how material acts not as an inert substrate but as a participant in meaning-making. My work unfolds through processes of layering, excavation, and revision, mirroring the rhythms of natural weathering and geological transformation. This not only blurs the line between painting and sculpture, but between self and world, allowing the artwork to emerge as a liminal artefact that holds both presence and memory.

Attending to the slow unfolding of materials, to the traces of bees, soil, and pigment, allows me to reframe painting as an ecological and temporal act, one that acknowledges the histories embedded in matter, and the fragility of the more-than-human worlds we inhabit. The studio becomes a site of listening, attunement, and ethical response, where materials are collaborated with, not exploited. Ultimately, my practice is not about resolution or mastery, but about staying with uncertainty, flux, and becoming. In working with wax, I seek to world with it, to co-construct spaces that evoke the spirit of place, the resonance of time, and the complexity of entangled existence. The paintings are offerings: porous, alive, and vibrating with the material and affective traces of their making, in a similar sense to the stones of Ireland with their ancient Ogham marks.¹⁴⁹

148 Ingold, *Making*, 31.

149 James MacKillop, “Ogham,” in *A Dictionary of Celtic Mythology* (Oxford University Press, 2004).

CHAPTER THREE: AFFECT

As a painter, I experience affect¹⁵⁰ as an embodied, pre-cognitive force that arises through material engagement, sensory perception, and the dynamic interactions between body, medium, and environment. This affective experience relates to Merleau-Ponty's theory of phenomenology where he suggests that "phenomenology involves describing and not explaining or analysing."¹⁵¹ In relation to this, when painting I am describing via the manipulation and application of media the senses and experiences of the places in which I have spent time. When walking, as noted earlier I contemplate the places I tread and try to slow down to experience the feeling of the place. Unlike emotion, which can usually be categorised and linguistically articulated, I then experience affect as a state of flux, shaping and being shaped by my material practice.

The notion of affect as an embodied, pre-cognitive, and relational force that intersects with place, memory, and materiality is an underpinning concept for my practice-led painting methodology. Merleau-Ponty sees affectivity as a "mosaic of affective states, self-contained pleasures and pains, which are not easily understood and can only be explained through our bodily organisation."¹⁵² He argues that "even if it is conceded that human affectivity is "shot through with intelligence," it is the association of ideas or reflexes that cause affect.



Figure 36. *Walking the Terrain*, 2024, oil paint and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 3000x1860mm.

150 Andrew M. Coleman, ed., "Affect," in *Dictionary of Psychology*, 4th ed. (Oxford University Press, 2015).

151 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 8.

152 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 156–57.

Recreating Experience

Walking the Terrain (fig. 36) became a visual recreation of the sounds, smells and feelings that came out of time spent in Cill Rialaig, the rhythms of nature presenting colours, smells and soul as memories from this place as well as later time spent in the Burren and it eventually absorbed sensations of being home in Aotearoa New Zealand. While in Cill Rialaig due to the weather, lack of heat, company and inability to associate with the wider Irish community, I felt ‘un-belonged.’ As Jacobus writes, there is “the urgent need to communicate and the still more urgent need not to be found.”¹⁵³ While I spent this solitary time feeling lonely, the experience resulted in a much deeper understanding of the soul-place of the residency ex-famine cottage and its surroundings.

As noted earlier, when I am painting, my practice is an affective, phenomenological method, one that listens and responds to memories of place through layered gestures, texture, colour, and time-based transformations. The research is shaped by my personal history, particularly my ancestral ties to Ireland, and the emotional complexity of returning to a homeland experienced through being-in-place. These emotional landscapes, intertwined with material explorations, invite questions around belonging, dislocation, and the ability of painting to create speculative environments that are at once real and imagined. Painting expands notions of material intelligence, embodied knowledge, and the environmental sensorium and as a result my work does not represent a particular place but rather evokes a felt essence through processual abstraction (fig. 37).

153 Jacobus, *On Belonging and Not Belonging*, 1.



Figure 37. Detail: *Walking the Terrain*, 2024.

Concepts of affect can be related to Lappin’s notion that the soul of place “is like an invisible net cast up at times from within a house, neighbourhood, or landscape to draw us into its labyrinthine folds.”¹⁵⁴ Her comments resonate with not only my practice but also my life and my sadness at the lack of lived knowledge of my heritage. During the period of the research by spending time in Ireland, an invisible net did indeed cast a spell over me. The Irish landscape, particularly the Burren, captured my soul, curiously returning me to something I didn’t know I was missing. Lappin asks, “What is a landscape if not a set of spaces and places linked

154 Lappin, *The Soul of Place*, 225.

by pathways, ‘stories?’”¹⁵⁵ The stories my parents had told us over the years had captured my imagination; this resulted in the need to experience Ireland for myself through the eyes of my art practice.

One day, I drove through snowfall to Kerry, where the mountains retained their snowcapped grasses and rocks reflected silver and glistening white with frost. While Ireland is particularly renowned for its emerald greens, the vast range of colours that the land presented was surprising. Spending time there at different times of the year has offered seasonal variations, making them dynamic and atmospheric landscapes. The work *Walking the Terrain* recalls the pink lichens, yellow and green mosses, verdant grasses, violet heathers, pink and grey stone, rich soil, umber turf and reflections of the experiences I had when in this wonderful country. Every time I painted a layer or created a mark, I slowed down to think, to remember what it was like being in that place where the surprising occurs, the affective place of Ireland speaking to its past, present and future.

Ingold refers to the relationship between thinking and making, as artists “practice what I would like to call an *art of inquiry* [emphasis in original].”¹⁵⁶ The materials, sensual memories and ideas allow me to try things to see what happens. Ingold continues: “Thus the art of inquiry moves forward in real time, along with the lives of those who are touched by it, and with the world to which both it and they belong.”¹⁵⁷ The interplay of these colours makes bogs and the mountains both otherworldly and deeply rooted in Ireland’s ecological and cultural history. Geophilosopher David Abram describes these kinds of landscapes as “alive, aware and expressive.”¹⁵⁸ Indeed, they were; the effect of these places that I passed through, spent time in, sniffed, touched and observed continues to sit with me.

Returning to Aotearoa New Zealand, I felt a powerful sense of grief that I hadn’t lived in Ireland and been imbued with the traditions of Irish culture, the people and the land. When I was first in Kerry, my newfound Irish cousin welcomed me home as a Kerry-woman, a phrase I never expected to hear. Similarly, actor Peter O’Toole described his transition from being British-born (with an Irish father) to arriving in Ireland and the effect that spending time there had on him. He said that until that point, he felt misunderstood. When he visited Kerry, he felt like he had arrived home, later buying property and living in Ireland permanently to raise his family.¹⁵⁹

155 Lappin, *The Soul of Place*, 11.

156 Ingold, *Making*, 6.

157 Ingold, *Making*, 7.

158 David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous* (Vintage Books, 2017), 139.

159 Shakespeare Network, “Peter O’Toole–Interview–Loitering with Intent–Autobiography–1993–4K,” February 3, 2024, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EmvZCQ0D9SM>.

Yearnings

In early February 2024, while standing on the hillside above Cill Rialaig, I looked across the bay towards the Beara Peninsula and the Skellig islands off the southern coast of Ireland. The air was still, with snow on the mountains behind me. It was clear and cold, allowing a view of these ancient, historic places, surrounded by stony fields and rock walls that fell sharply towards the bay. The only human sound was a local farmer calling his sheep to feed them their winter nuts. This stunning landscape with its winter-spring weather challenged me in unexpected ways. At times, the sky and sea dissolved into each other, with only the Skellig Islands offering a trace of form, a delicate, thin threshold that echoed the shared essence of life and place. I usually like my own company, but the experience in Cill Rialaig, despite its surreal beauty culminated in a strong feeling of being out of place. Artist and scholar Anna Sabadini writes in her essay *Touchstone*:

I am following a yearning, a spiritual movement towards a geological self. Towards rock. When I calibrate myself against the ranges and their vast territories of time, I feel as though I am moving closer to myself..¹⁶⁰

Sabadini's observations activate my experience in Cill Rialaig where I was drawn to the worn, striated, ancient rocks that surrounded me while at the same time I felt discombobulated by being far from the familiarity of home. My sense of not being 'in place' was profound. The contrast between Ireland and Aotearoa New Zealand can be stark, although both countries are similar in many ways. Ireland's rocky shoreline and mountains with misty skies and dire weather, short days and long nights, contributed to a sense of connection with ancestors who survived and (some of whom) eventually moved away to form new lives. At this time when I felt so isolated, I also felt relieved that my parents had emigrated to a country with warmer weather, clearer skies, and the sun with its blessed warmth. This residency offered an immensely reflective experience, demanding a consciously attentive presence to fully absorb the stark beauty of the weathered landscape and stone, imbued with the profound historical resonance of the famine cottage that served as its setting. Lappin suggests that atmosphere in landscape can exert an irresistible appeal, evoking longing and imagination.¹⁶¹ I agree that some places offer comfort, while others challenge us, shaping our emotional and sensory experience in distinct ways.

¹⁶⁰ Ann Schilo et al., *Visual Arts Practice and Affect: Place, Materiality and Embodied Knowing* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 96.

¹⁶¹ Lappin, *The Soul of Place*, 2.

Artist Anna Nazzari reflects on her residency experience, describing it as having “direct associations with place as it encompasses the state or reality of living in a place.”¹⁶² She describes this time as one of being an “otherworldly dwelling in place, and [considers] how artefacts within this domain generate meaning that is shaped by my specific perceptions of this experience.”¹⁶³ After my return to Aotearoa New Zealand, the act of making in each country offered distinct perspectives that emerged through being present in place, through memory, and in dialogue with others as I navigated the process of creating work post-residencies.

Magan suggests that those who cannot speak Irish cannot understand the land they occupy, as the Irish language is integral to the history and description of a certain place.¹⁶⁴ Mackintosh notes that the “stories and achievements of ancestors over generations were not only spoken; they were also recorded in the land itself.”¹⁶⁵ To really know a place is to recognise what is not seen, to listen and to gain an understanding of how places came to be named with language. Echoing these memories and concepts through the material vitality and agency of my media, my paintings carry traces of time, movement, and atmosphere as a textual visual language. The memories and sensations of the landscape that speak through the works’ material presence are manifest through gestural actions shaped by time and space: the landscape, the studio, and shared moments in-company and in-memory. As Merleau-Ponty argues, “through optics and geometry we construct the fragment of the world whose image can, at any moment, form upon our retina.”¹⁶⁶ By experiencing the fragmentary, optical and visceral sensations in Cill Rialaig, these sensations became an amalgam of colours and experiences that transmuted into the painting.

The methodological investigation underpinning this research is a process of embodied painting that reimagines the phenomenological sensations of places that I have visited and occupied. Embodiment in this context relates to an understanding that perception and meaning arise through lived bodily experience. For me, this encompasses gesture, movement, touch, rhythm and sensory responsiveness as I make work, and how the work eventually becomes an embodiment of all these processes. This unfolding has allowed complex ideas to organically emerge, erupting from the very process of creation itself. Through the work (verb and noun), clarity can, and has emerged. Being present with the world and the painting process is a sensory activity, as I recall the vivid and not-so-

162 Schilo et al., *Visual Arts Practice and Affect*, 3.

163 Schilo et al., *Visual Arts Practice and Affect*, 3.

164 Magan, *Thirty-Two Words for Field*, 144.

165 Mackintosh, *Shifting Grounds*, 28.

166 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 6.

vivid sensations that I experienced in places like Cill Rialaig and the Burren, which are then brought out through the creative process.



Figure 38. *Walking the Terrain*, 2024, oil paint and cold medium on unstretched canvas, 3000x1860mm.

Like all of my work, *Walking the Terrain* (fig. 38) could be considered a kind of drawn-in-painting where drawing media is applied as well as oil paint. Similarly, Aotearoa New Zealand artist Gordon Walters, when creating his rock drawings in the 1940s, re-assigned the assumed hierarchy of oil paint over pencil, thus bringing the materials together “as equals within the one work.”¹⁶⁷ Stepping aside from oil painting conventions, this freeing up of technique allows for different conversations between media.

167 Francis Pound, *Gordon Walters* (Auckland University Press, 2023), 71.

The act of scratching through layers to reveal surfaces, fissures, cracks, and emerging colours can also be understood as a form of drawing, just as much as the marks made with charcoal or pastel. Layers are built over fissures, even as soil blows onto stone and creates space for new growth. Cold wax painting thrives in the tension between concealment and revelation. The medium's capacity to expose while simultaneously veiling means that layers speak directly to notions of temporality, memory, and the palimpsestic nature of experience. This dynamic is a kind of visual archaeology where each layer both uncovers and obscures, creating a material record of decisions, hesitations, and transformations. Cold wax, translucent and pliable, makes visible the trace of time as it is scraped back, incised, burnished, and dissolved while still offering a skin of opacity and concealment.

Anselm Kiefer

When viewing an exhibition in 2014 at the Royal Academy in London by artist Anselm Kiefer (1945-),¹⁶⁸ I was overwhelmed by the sheer scale of Kiefer's work, both in terms of dimensions and the far-reaching conceptual underpinnings that formed the basis of the ideas he expressed. His material choices of lead, ash, straw, clay, broken glass, fire and concrete convey a visceral, almost alchemical sense of decay and rebirth. The surfaces are heavily encrusted, weathered, and distressed, evoking the ruins of history. His materials bear weight that is both literal and metaphorical, manifesting trauma, memory, and cultural entropy. While my material transformations usually emphasise subtle shifts and atmospheric resonance, his surfaces suggest rupture, entropy, and historical sedimentation. Ambiguity and storytelling are a focus of Kiefer's work, as they both recall and dismiss history. He articulates the most evil of histories as his work confronts the depth of humanity and, at the same time, the worst of it. Seeing his work was a deeply impactful and affective experience. I found the scale and complexity of the work tested me. In both his and my practice, materials become mnemonic as they are layered, fragile, and insistent.

168 "Anselm Kiefer," Royal Academy of Arts, accessed August 30, 2025, <https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/exhibition/anselm-kiefer>.

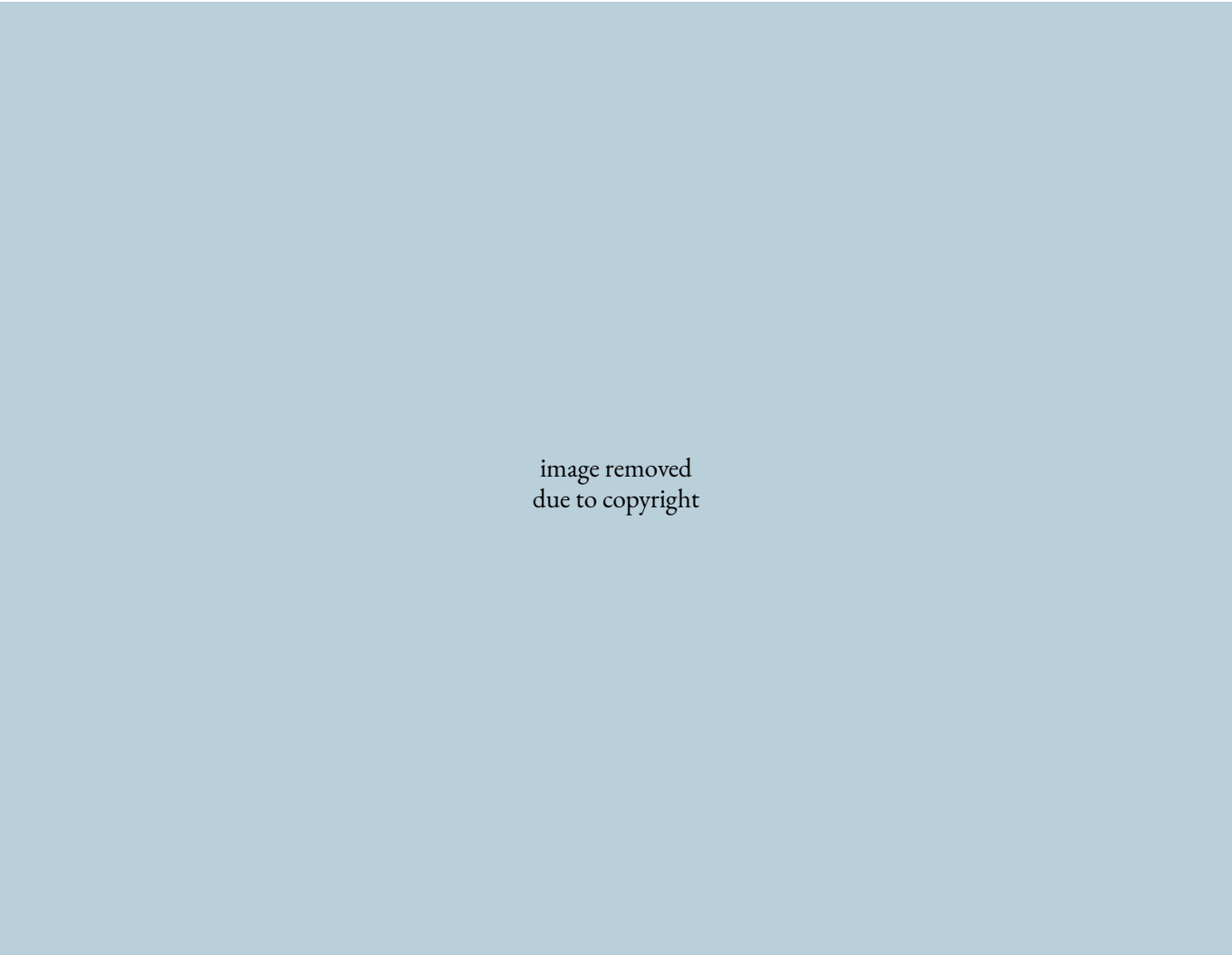


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due to copyright

Figure 39. Anselm Kiefer, *The Orders of the Night (Die Orden der Nacht)*, 1996, emulsion, acrylic and shellac on canvas, 3560x4630mm, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, United States. Photograph © Seattle Art Museum/Anselm Kiefer.

Inscribing the past into the present through acts of excavation, erosion, and renewal, Kiefer and I work with material transformation. My approach is more intimate and atmospheric as it bends world and memory through quieter, more nuanced inscriptions of place, evoking temporal strata through veils of materials, layered depth, and geologic abstraction. Both he and I examine themes of trauma, memory and cultural entropy, our materials acting as agents in the articulation of our ideas.

Affect as Maker

Ingold writes of “the immense reservoir of know-how that lies beneath the surface and without which nothing could be practicably accomplished.”¹⁶⁹ In this context, ‘surface’ refers both to the thin place of my mind, a reservoir of memories that informs my creative process and to the accumulated layers that gradually build into the final surface of the work itself. The act of applying paint, the resistance of materials, and the embodied engagement with the surface all contribute to an affective exchange. Ingold writes of the artist “tracing a path that others can follow.”¹⁷⁰ Applying, scraping, or revealing layers of wax is not only a technical procedure but also an affective engagement where sensation, memory, and atmosphere converge in ways that can exceed intentional control and leave a hint of my agency, a path for others to follow. Paint and associated media are active vehicles for emotion as the media actively and affectively participates in the dialogue between me and my emotional state. As I reflect on my subconscious decisions, I am aware that my work, as Ingold suggests, “requires the most intense concentration ... we have eyes to watch and look, ears to listen and noses to sniff the air ... [enabling] us to tell in one of its senses of the way things are going.”¹⁷¹ The way I can manipulate cold wax medium and sometimes additional materials such as wool, thread and fire pushes the works to the limits of current knowledge of the media and how they are used. Merleau-Ponty’s concept of embodied perception¹⁷² considers that an artist does not simply impose meaning onto the canvas; rather, the body perceives and responds to the material environment in a reciprocal exchange:

The object is only determined as an identifiable being through an open series of possible experiences and only exists for a subject who produces this identification. Being only exists for someone who is capable of stepping back from it and is thus himself absolutely outside of being. This is how the mind becomes the subject of perception, and the notion of “sense” becomes inconceivable.¹⁷³

In this regard, painting can be a means of translating ephemeral affective intensities into tangible forms.

169 Ingold, *Making*, 109.

170 Ingold, *Making*, 110.

171 Ingold, *Making*, 111.

172 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 40.

173 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 220.

Ingold takes the position that it is the “gestural synergy of human being, tool and material. Hands, in a word, can *tell* [emphasis in original], both in their attentiveness to the conditions of a task as it unfolds, and in their gestural movements and the inscriptions they yield.”¹⁷⁴

The affective charge of a painting resides in its capacity to enact, transmit, and modulate intensities that resonate beyond the purely visual. The weight of a tool in the hand, the resistance of the wax against a blade or squeegee, the way light catches on a textured surface, each of these sensations carries an affective charge, shaping my embodied experience. This encounter is not just personal but relational, as the painting itself becomes an active participant in the affective field: guiding decisions, evoking memories and time through accumulated traces of past gestures. Many works are revisited after completion, sometimes years later. The process of rethinking, the evolution of practice and potentiality for the work is seductive, at the same time allowing for the work to be repurposed and transformed into a new voice.

Merleau-Ponty notes that “a perception awakens attention, and (then how) attention develops and enriches this perception.”¹⁷⁵ By paying attention, a perception, experience of a place, a moment, or a shifting atmosphere can imprint itself affectively onto or into the work. This may not necessarily be through direct representation but through attention to qualities like recall, luminosity, density or movement.

Affective Scale

Although I work with various sizes of paintings, larger works invite the viewer to step into them to engage with their layered, textured surfaces. Decisions such as colour, contrast, and perspective create depth to guide the viewer’s eye through a compelling narrative. *Walking the Terrain* is one such work (fig. 40). As my works can be hung either vertically or horizontally they offer a challenge to the viewer to reframe their perspective of landscape or place-based painting and to see the work as a possible portal to a speculative world. The viewer’s reading of the work changes as with scale and orientation the paintings combine micro and macro elements that are intended to make the world within the painting feel unplaceable but at the same time reminiscent. These elements can hint at non-places as well as all-places, as the painting becomes a suggestion of a new way of looking at terrains. Standing close to the work reveals the minute marks and provides a peripheral ‘enclosure’ for the viewer, while standing back the paintings express themselves as colour fields and

174 Ingold, *Making*, 116.

175 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 29.

topographical or geological structures that don't conform to earthly logic. Collapsing horizon lines, floating structures, or ambiguous gravitational pulls make the space in the work feel elastic, as if the viewer is stepping into unstable terrains. Residual marks (erased text, shadows, partial imprints) are suggestions of an active past presence, as if another world's memory is seeping through as a form of visual soundscape.



Figure 40. *Walking the Terrain*, 2024, oil paint and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 1860x3000mm. Shown during installation at Toi Gallery, Pataka, Porirua in February 2025 .

As noted above, Kiefer's works overwhelmed me with scale and density, creating an almost oppressive spatial experience, reinforcing themes of insignificance in the face of painting history and myth. Comparatively, my work attempts to create an immersive experience on a more reduced scale. I find myself drawn to his ideas and articulation of the immenseness of history as well as the intimacy in the ways he uses colour, sculptural

elements and drawing. He bends history through mythic symbolism and material decay, whereas my work, rather than focusing on historical gravitas, bends environments through material transformation as it focuses on process, ephemerality, and sensory shifts.

My paintings are a combination of large-scale marks and internal, immersive and intimate moments, whereas Kiefer's spaces are external, vast and monumental. His work feels static, frozen in the aftermath of destruction, preserving the scars of history. My work emphasises transformation, suggesting moments in flux and ephemeral experiences materialised through the act of painting itself.

Memories of the times I spent in Ireland morphed into the idea for *Walking the Terrain* and later referenced walking around my home in Aotearoa New Zealand, as a hybrid work that contained multiple experiences of being in-place. The painting and its underpinning memories became a metaphorical spatial weaving of time, with an embodied awareness of walking, listening, smelling, touching, and remembering. *Walking the Terrain* is an object that exists in a liminal space between presence and absence, mark-making that feels impermanent, with hovering opaque and translucent layers. Textures imply that the flow of the work is fading or emerging, leaving an emotional residue rather than a concrete memory with dissonant remnants. An acoustic space with its layers acting like echoes, voids like silences, and textures as rhythms, this work asks questions of me: how a surface can feel like it's holding onto an echo or that it's about to dissolve into the environment. Engaging with the ephemeral, the transient qualities of air, water, erosion, and weathering, this work (and many of my paintings) holds a sense of elemental movement, as if wind or water has shaped it, suggesting that our bodies are continuous and contiguous with the larger, breathing world. This place (the work and the places it references) also embodies a profound sense of timelessness. What began at a smaller scale over time expanded dramatically, influenced by both the generously sized studio space at the Burren College and the grandeur of the Burren itself, calling for expressions that ranged from the intimately detailed to the monumentally scaled.

After returning to Aotearoa New Zealand, following the first residency in the Burren in 2024, I started the painting *Ephemeral Song* with the intention to express the universal sense of places I had visited as well as my feelings for Aotearoa New Zealand (fig. 41).



Figure 41. *Ephemeral Song* (section 1), Work in progress, oil paint, pastel and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 22000x2240mm. 2024.

The work started as a way of responding to the strange, ephemeral organ-like sound that I heard on still nights when in Cill Rialaig. It eventually morphed into an encapsulation of the immenseness of the Burren area, the cold black-grey Kerry cliffs, rare arctic flowers growing in Ireland and Aotearoa New Zealand's beauty that is all around me, located in the whenua and moana (seas) of home. It is a balance of place experience and responsive emotion as the marks with their varied scale recollect and reframe the small flowers, cracks, fissures, boulders and mountains that have become embedded in my memories.

Titling a work usually occurs after a painting is completed however, the title of *Ephemeral Song* was decided before it was made so I could record its progress over the year of its making to maintain the reference to this song I heard while at Cill Rialaig. As it developed, the work eventually took on all the memories and experiences from Ireland and Aotearoa New Zealand. By employing sensorial methods in making my work, I continue to learn ways of expressing my awareness of the world. Spending time with this painting was an emergence of unseen, felt experiences that were then expressed visually. The spaces between the marks, the colours, and the layers are a method of enquiry that allowed me to employ new ways of perceiving and understanding the world through embodied knowing. As a result of becoming more aware of my surroundings

by spending time in place, I have become more conscious of the processual nature of my practice as my work provides painted responses to deep listening and mindful consciousness.

Ireland holds a surreal, timeless quality, revealing and concealing millions of years of geological and human history. Shaped by glacial, tectonic and erosional forces, the Burren's limestone is rich with fossils that trace back to the Carboniferous period when the area was a tropical sea. With its palpable, mystical atmosphere, its vast silence, shifting light, and stark contrasts between stone and flora create an immersive sensory experience that feels ancient and sacred. These elements stir a profound sense of connection to human history and ritual. The space captivates the senses through its tactile surfaces and resonant acoustics, where sound glides across stone and light dances between rock and sky. Embodying ideas of transformation, impermanence, and the interplay between the ephemeral and the eternal, the area captured my imagination as I felt its ancientness and spirit.

The Burren area's karst limestone has a fragmented yet cohesive surface where a painting can echo the landscape by revealing and concealing fissures and fractures that could be seen to mimic geological erosion. It feels empty and deeply alive as it holds remnants of ancient histories and contemporary life. Paralleling how the Burren's surface reveals traces of deep time, my paintings can hold voids as they explore negative space and contrasts between thick and thinly painted areas.

Colour and Affect

The colours chosen for the works *Walking the Terrain* and *Ephemeral Song* indicate how I experienced an affective essence of Ireland - the stone walls, mountains, tiny pink flowers and dark umber bogs, and of course my evolving, deeper knowledge of Te Hau Kapua Devonport. As art historian John Gage discusses in *Colour and Meaning*, "Colour...is the attribute of visual experience that can be described as having quantitatively specifiable dimensions of hue, saturation, and brightness."¹⁷⁶ Both subjective and objective, colour in "art is ... a vehicle of sensibilities, of values and of ideas."¹⁷⁷ Art is a language that speaks to harmony, refraction of light and changes during the day that perceptually change how colour is experienced. Beeswax also holds and changes colour depending on the pollens the bees are harvesting. The pollens can slightly influence the colour of the pigment or oil paint, creating a warm atmosphere within the mixture.

176 John Gage, *Colour and Meaning: Art, Science and Symbolism* (University of California Press, 1999), 11.

177 Gage, *Colour and Meaning*, 12.

Author Victoria Findlay discusses how colours exist, noting that “our minds create them as an interpretation of vibrations that are happening around us ... we translate what we experience into concepts like ‘objects’ and ‘smells’ and ‘sounds’ and, of course, ‘colours’, which are altogether easier for us to understand.”¹⁷⁸ By slowing down my process and allowing for natural drying times, I returned to rework, disrupt or excavate *Walking the Terrain* and *Ephemeral Song*, mimicking the evocative and erosive forces that shape land over millennia. As the colours were layered, they disclosed tonal transitions and textural contrasts.

In the context of my work, where phenomenology and material transformation are central, colour’s affective power can be understood as both an immediate sensory experience and a mediator of deeper, often ineffable, emotional responses. Operating not just as a visual element but as an environmental force, it can shape how a painting is felt, both physically and emotionally. It is an emergence in the dynamic interaction between the viewer, the environment, and the artwork. In cold wax painting, the translucency, layering, and texture intensify this dynamic. When light refracts through wax layers, the shifts in saturation depend on proximity, and the temporal changes as the viewer moves around the work all contribute to an affective charge that is fluid, immersive, and relational. In this context, colour is inseparable from its material presence, as it exists not just as pigment but as a phenomenon embedded within layers, textures, and tactile qualities of the surface. The interaction between colour and materials and the ways that these elements seep through topographical layers are absorbed into porous surfaces or disrupted by scraped textures creating affect through contrasts of density, depth, and luminosity. Colour can behave as both substance and trace, evoking sensations that can oscillate between tension and calmness, opacity and transparency, solidity and ephemerality. Large fields of colour can pulse with emotional intensity, evoking feelings of awe, melancholy, or transcendence without relying on representational content. In this sense, colour acts as an atmospheric force, capable of generating moods, tensions, and resonances that defy precise articulation. While affect often precedes language, cultural and personal experiences inevitably shape how we respond to colour as certain hues carry historical, symbolic, or psychological connotations. However, in abstract painting practices like cold wax painting, colour can transcend fixed meanings, operating instead in ambiguous, layered ways. It invites subjective interpretations, shaped by the viewer’s memory, emotion, and embodied history, allowing for multiple, shifting affective responses over time.

178 Victoria Findlay, *Colour: Travels Through the Paintbox* (Hodder and Stoughton, 2002), 4.



Figure 42. *Ephemeral Song*, work in progress, oil paint, pastel and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 22000x2240mm.2025.

Colour can function as a phenomenological, environmental agent that shapes the atmosphere of a painting's world by distorting spatial perceptions, suggesting otherworldly climates, or creating portals between different emotional or perceptual realms. It doesn't just fill space; it creates space that can define the emotional landscape, altering the viewer's sense of time and bending the environment into new affective dimensions. In my work, surfaces carry both the weight of history and the fragility of the ephemeral, and colour operates like a spectral presence, both material and immaterial, grounding and otherworldly. Through these lenses, colour becomes more than an aesthetic choice: it is a dynamic, transformative force that shapes how both the artist and the viewer can inhabit the world of the painting and the sources for its inspiration.

Ephemeral Song (fig. 42) is the largest work in terms of scale and time spent on one painting that I have ever undertaken. Created as a dynamic process of recalling memories and perceptions, as the work proceeded

development between layers occurred as decisions were made by building the colours, marks, scratches and smears towards a ‘busy’ surface. The colours reflect my perception of ocean and land, seen and unseen surfaces, senses, whiffs of smells, songs, sounds and glimpses, aspects of living and being that hold gossamer threads of a thin place affect. I hold place memories, for the experiences I have gained by being-in-place overlap with all other memories that form the paintings that I make and am yet to make.

When in progress, my intention at each stage became a calming focus for the next layer as I introduced colours such as yellow beneath white, creating a luminous effect. As I progressed through each section, I remained mindful of the parts already completed, navigating the tension between control and release. At times, I revisited previous steps to guide my direction. At others, I allowed intuition to lead the way. Sometimes, a mark was covered over, a temporal aspect of my work that introduces elements of surprise when later excavated. *Ephemeral Song* affected me as maker with the use of colour and how it could tell the universal story of the places I had spent time in. It was an embodied engagement with material, time and space, the ultimate investigative challenge in terms of size and affect. In painting such a large work I was conscious of keeping a consistent palette throughout each section, although the sections changed as the work progressed and the research explored how affect operates as both a method and a phenomenon during its creation.

By working in my home studio and at the residencies, the research foregrounds the significance of being-in-place as a generative condition for art-making. Through walking, observing, writing, and mark-making, ephemeral sensations are translated into material forms that evoke rather than represent. Affect is thus understood not as an internal emotion to be expressed, but as an emergent quality shaped by the interaction of body, place, and medium with my artworks functioning as portals, visual soundscapes and textural mappings that invite the viewer into speculative, affective terrains. Through embodied engagement with place in Aotearoa New Zealand and Ireland the project investigated how anam áite’s sensory, temporal, and emotional dimensions can be made manifest through painting. The medium of cold wax, with its capacity for layering, excavation, colour and atmospheric resonance, has proven to be effective and critical in materialising affect as a dynamic interplay between surface, depth, memory, and presence.

Through this sustained enquiry, the research contributes to an expanded understanding of affect in painting practice, affirming that the ephemeral and the embodied are not opposites but entangled forces that shape how we see, feel, and inhabit the world.

CHAPTER FOUR: WORLDS WITHIN WORLDS

Situated within my research lies the concept of worlds within worlds, an idea that could be described as a nested ontology through which multiple systems and experiences co-exist, intersect, and generate meaning as it relates to the production of artworks. These nests hint at layers-within-layers, scales-within-scales and places-within-places. By drawing on phenomenology and affect theory, my research investigates how the space between material, gesture, and perception becomes a generative site for emergence, where connection and meaning are not fixed but felt, embodied, and continually in flux. Merleau-Ponty describes the sensation of consciousness as “borrowing from sensation ... our perceptual field is made of ‘things’ and ‘gaps between things.’”¹⁷⁹ His writing is an underpinning commentary on my reflecting and making processes as they unfold slowly and sensorially. The thing that is an artwork is a becoming that has occurred from the making process as well as the ‘gaps’ in knowledge, process, perception and sensation; it is matter, thought, entanglement, relationships and stories.

This research proposes an entangled, reciprocal relationship between me, my materials, my environments and the people with whom I have collaborated during this period. My practice investigates how painting can evoke temporal depth, environmental memory, ontological permeability and connection. Place is co-constituted through tactile engagement: the mauri, anam áite and the affective charge of materials converge when people cooperate by making decisions and working together. My work discusses notions of hidden connections in the world, particularly in relation to perception, embodiment, mapping, ecology, intersubjectivity and collaboration.

Mutual Becoming

Theorist Donna Haraway’s notion of companion species destabilises human exceptionalism and dualistic thinking while emphasising mutual becoming.¹⁸⁰ Bees are foreground actors, co-workers in the making of worlds with each other, between their wider floral world and with humans. Their labour - pollinating plants, constructing hives and navigating complex environments - participates in shaping ecological, agricultural and cultural life where the use of beeswax connects us to them.¹⁸¹

179 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 15–16.

180 Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Duke University Press, 2016), 12.

181 Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 69.

Understood as thinking partners, bees hold a special place in Irish life, as they can be regarded as intermediaries between the human and spirit worlds. It was believed they could carry messages to the dead or bring news from the otherworld. If a death occurred in a household, it was customary to ‘tell the bees’, a ritual act of informing them of major life events. Failing to do so could risk offending them or even invoking misfortune. Bees in Irish lore are more than mythic insects; they are world-makers, boundary-crossers and kin.

When I use their wax, the bees are with me. Their presence, the remnants of pollen and the residual smell of honey are present, particularly with my own home-made medium. I source the wax locally, and as noted earlier make it into the media I use. Bees are (as they should be) considered precious; in many folk traditions, bees are associated with purity, industriousness and the divine, and to harm one is to upset the natural or spiritual order. They occupy an interstitial space that, through my process of art making, is central to my ideas of the nature of phenomenology: an embodied, affective convergence of material memory and sensory resonance. The more-than-visible worlds that are painted culminate in works that function as portals into layered temporalities and speculative terrains.

Ultimately, this research proposes that painting as a materially grounded, affectively charged practice can make the unseen palpable while challenging fixed epistemologies and inviting new modes of perception and relationality in an increasingly fractured world. Exploring concepts of the intangible and the in-between as a site of emergence suggests that affect arises not just from materials or marks themselves but from the tensions, resonances and gaps between us. Layers of wax, pigment, and texture form thresholds that bridge past and present gestures, resonating with historical, archaeological, geological, and spatial dimensions. Shifts in space and scale unfold between translucency and opacity, roughness and smoothness, intention and accident.

A mutual becoming evolved out of my first residency in the Burren to become *Meitheal*,¹⁸² as noted earlier, the international collective of women artists that was formed after we returned to the Burren in 2025. Those who couldn’t return to Ireland contributed poetry, audio, and video works to accompany our collaborative work, *Faultlines* (fig. 43). The shared process of making as a group was an artwork itself, as we navigated the complexities of speculation, collectively made decisions around aesthetic choices and materials, and reached a point where the work felt complete. Five of the artists in the collective including myself, travelled with the work to Seyðisfjörður, Iceland.

182 *English-Irish Dictionary (de Bhaldraithe)*, under “meitheal,” <https://www.teanglann.ie/en/eid/meitheal>.



Figure 43. *Faultlines*, 2025, oil paint, charcoal, ink, thread, ash, hair and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 6700x2600mm, collection of the artists. Installed at *World Building* exhibition, Seydisfjordur, Iceland.

World Bending Place

Rive describes the term world-bending as “a speculative art form,”¹⁸³ recognising that it applies to human and nonhuman alike and contains an aspiration to take aesthetic action by “imaginatively and creatively engaging with both the organic and inorganic things all around us.”¹⁸⁴ Rive explains that “we create and recreate this world every morning when we wake up, but if only we could dream, we could bend new worlds out of this one.”¹⁸⁵ These worldly portals re-represented and ‘bent’ through painting are at once seen and unseen, opening and closing, leaving sonic residues where what’s underneath feels both present and absent. Given his emphasis on a phenomenological and affective engagement with the world, I take note of his observation that “world-bending requires a speculative narrative - one that envisions worlds beyond the present; stories of healing, of places we long to visit, and can ultimately inhabit.”¹⁸⁶ These speculative narratives offer notions of an active transformation of reality, not necessarily in a literal sense, but as a shift in affective perception, temporality, or material logic that becomes the essence of my painting and drawing.

183 Rive, *Worldbending: a Survivor’s Guide*, 7.

184 Rive, *Worldbending: a Survivor’s Guide*, 7.

185 Rive, *Worldbending: a Survivor’s Guide*, 70.

186 Rive, *Worldbending: a Survivor’s Guide*, 64.



Figure 44. Detail: *Faultlines*, work in progress, Collection of the artists.2025.

Manifesting through the manipulation of form, texture and colour, world-bending can disrupt or reconfigure a sense of space or time, layering and erasure. As a way of bending thoughts about materials and the worlds that we were encapsulating with the creation of *Faultlines*, the work was pushed beyond a mere painting into a realm of cuts, burns and stitching.

Before starting the work, the title was discussed and agreed as *Faultlines* to guide the painting as we collectively worked on it. Bringing world-building and world-bending concepts into the work could be understood as a way of bridging ineffability and scale through the transformative qualities of materials. Much as the depth of cold wax medium suggests hidden dimensions through its interplay of opacity and translucency suggests hidden dimensions, materials like charcoal, which can be applied, removed, re-applied, and wiped away, embody a dynamic process of revelation and concealment. Adding other materials such as Irish wool

and our own hair into the work hinted at other ways of sensing, layering allusions to spectral traces, echoes of scent, sound or even fleeting shifts in light. Scale shifts destabilised fixed perspectives to make the viewer oscillate in a world-bending experience between vastness and intimacy. World-bending in this context and as it relates to my practice can be framed as a theoretical intervention that engages with ineffability, thin places, distortion, hidden knowledge, deep time, and scale.

One day the group decided to climb a local mountain called Mullach Mór. This magnificent karst limestone summit looks like whipped ice cream as it rises in a landscape renowned for its otherworldly limestone pavements and terraced hills. The mountain's circular stepped formations result from millennia of glacial action, erosion and tectonic uplift that has created a rhythmic, sculptural presence. Walking here was like traversing a natural monument where the terrain holds deep time visibly in its strata and the bones of the earth are laid bare. It is a profound convergence of geology, ecology, myth and atmosphere, ancient and otherworldly. Despite its apparent barrenness, Mullach Mór, like much of the Burren area, hosts an astonishingly rich mix of rare Arctic, Alpine and Mediterranean flora. This improbable cohabitation in such a stony, wind-scoured place evoked wonder when I stopped and looked out towards Galway Bay and beyond to the Arctic ocean.

Spring had just arrived, and Ireland was celebrating this new season with festivals, music, dancing and parades. Turloughs known as seasonal lakes were evident, their sparkling water rested on the surface of the limestone pavement displaying shades of sky: ultramarine and cobalt blue. Here, life clings to the edges as it grows in the grykes and transforms the limestone pavement into a miniature world that embodies resilience and fragility in perfect tension. The light shifted continuously, casting a luminous and disorienting threshold between sharpness and softness. It felt as though the world itself was bending, a place where sky and stone blur, and the horizon seems to breathe. The coloured lichens continued to captivate me with their vivid forms and hues, their intricate entanglement with our lives underscoring their essential role in sustaining human existence.

According to mycologist Merlin Sheldrake, "Lichens are 'extremophiles,' organisms able to live, from our point of view, in other worlds."¹⁸⁷ Their ability to enter an ecosystem, at the same time that the ecosystem enters them, places them in two perspectives, one of 'wholes' and 'collections of parts.'¹⁸⁸ These organisms occupy interstitial spaces, acting as connectors, transmitters, and agents of transformation within their environments. They are, in essence, worlds nested within worlds and could be considered thin with their enigmatic sprawling connections betwixt and between worlds.

187 Merlin Sheldrake, *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds* (Penguin, 2023), 109.

188 Sheldrake, *Entangled Life*, 113.

Similarly, cold wax painting is not confined to surface imagery or intentionality. It dwells in the pressure of a gesture, the opacity or translucency of a waxed surface, or the slow sedimentation of time through stratified applications. Acting as both membrane and matrix, wax holds the abilities to veil, reveal and entrap pigment, mediating the visibility of affective content. As the layers build and erode, they become an archaeology of feeling emerging from embedded intensities. The hidden is a generative field, a site of latency, waiting for the conditions to fruit, much like a lichen melding into and out of its ecosystem.

Mullach Mór is often associated with ancient ritual sites and pathways, resonating as an otherworldly place, a liminal zone where the veil between worlds feels permeable no matter the time of day. With its dolmens, cairns and ringforts, this area offers a spiritual charge that has imbued the landscape over millennia. Magan correlates ideas of landscape with the richness of the Irish language:

Old languages in particular have a range and field-width to their lenses that offer greater perspectives and more unusual angles, allowing us to see underworlds and other realms.¹⁸⁹

His writing evokes the ‘spark’ of memory, moments of walking, sensing, and awareness in places that, as he notes, resist easy categorisation. He writes

We are a momentous tangle of intangible interconnections ... it is this interconnectivity that elicits these unaccountable and untranslatable sensations, intuitions and feelings which appear and then disappear at the edge of consciousness.¹⁹⁰

The action of walking, stepping up and down, stopping and looking at this vast ancient landscape was, as he says, nearly untranslatable, an infusion of senses and feelings that remind me of worlds within worlds, which became nested experiences. The interconnectivity of these elements was profound, not just for me but also for my

189 Magan, *Thirty Two Words for Field*, 354.

190 Magan, *Thirty Two Words for Field*, 355.

artist friends. Walking Mullach Mór inspired us to come back to the studio, continuing our collaboration.

After this event artist Ann Mulcrone, one of the collective's members, and I created the work *Silfra*, approaching it as a piece that might accompany us to Iceland, resonating both with that landscape and with the Burren. We decided to start the early layers with yellow and red signifying the volcanic core of Iceland and referencing Aotearoa New Zealand.

We couldn't agree in advance on a title, so we decided we would leave naming the work until it was installed. As it hung in the studio we were able to consider its density and how it esoterically spoke to the strata in our world, where ancient memories are held in the layers (fig. 45). When we visited Iceland, we spent a day walking between the two tectonic plates in Silfra where the rift between the two plates was monumental both in concept and in reality.¹⁹¹ Once installed for the exhibition, the title (*Silfra*) came easily as the work reflected our experience of the rawness of this area.

191 "The Geology of Silfra," Silfra.org, accessed August 30, 2025, http://www.silfra.org/the_geology_of_silfra.html.



Figure 45. *Silfra*, work in progress, 2025, oil paint, charcoal, ink, ash and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 3000x1800mm, collection of the artists.

The Space/s Between

The spaces between moments, materials, gestures, or sensory experiences can act as ephemeral connective tissues that bind place, time, materiality, painting and affect in both practice and academic enquiry. Interstitial connections, whether ecological, perceptual, or material, are always in play. Work can be held in time and consciousness while the next steps are considered, and choices made as to the next mark or scratch.

Faultlines was left to rest, at which time Ann and I returned to *Silfra* to see whether we could finish this work to also take to Iceland. Following the earlier warm layers, we applied ash and charcoal, and used the wax medium as a binder to hold the dry media in place. Once this was done, we rested the work, coming back to it after a couple of days with white, black, and grey (fig. 46). Surprisingly, in a very short time, we decided that *Silfra* was finished, leaving it to cure for a week before taking it to Iceland with *Faultlines*.



Figure 46. Detail: Silfra, work in progress, 2025.

Haraway emphasises that “it matters what thoughts think thoughts. It matters what knowledges know knowledges. It matters what relations relate relations. It matters what worlds world worlds.”¹⁹² Haraway’s reflections align with my own interest in how material processes in painting, such as layering, excavation, and reconfiguration, contribute to the emergence of alternative worlds, or what might be called world-bending. Rather than representing pre-existing realities, the materials and my bodily engagement actively participate in constructing a world upon the canvas. The materials are a becoming of a site of ontological co-creation and knowledge emerges through embodied engagement with materials and place. My work, with its scratches, swipes of paint, remnants of earlier layers and various strata of colour references environmental affect, topography, history and temporal layering, making knowledge a recursive, relational unfolding rather than a fixed, detached epistemology. It can evoke a sense of affective resonance, where thinking isn’t separated from feeling and both are entangled with material gesture and environmental memory. Paintings and drawings can evoke narratives of land, time, memory, and transformation without relying on linear storytelling. Through surface erosion, material buildup, and layered textures, a sense of narrative emerges that is suggestive rather than explicit.

192 Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 35.



Figure 47. Detail: *Silfra*, work in progress, 2025.

The memory of the resonance of the stone and its various colours from our time walking Mulloch Mór was foremost in Ann and my thoughts when making *Silfra* (fig. 47). The strong feelings of connection to this place in the Burren, as well as to the wider art community we were engaged with, also tangentially influenced its creation.

The work has liminal traces of history from scrapes and scratches, as well as the built layers of various colours over time. Liminal or interstitial spaces reflect ideas of ecological attunement where atmosphere, environment and materials merge. Haraway highlights how we are part of a larger ecology, one in which “critters – human and not – become with each other.”¹⁹³ This larger ecology resonates as I consider implications within ecologies such as bees that contribute their wax, weaving their spirit into the material that I use for my paintings. She continues, “including human people, critters are in each other’s presence, or better, inside each other’s tubes, folds, and crevices, insides and outsides, and not quite either.”¹⁹⁴ In this context, the inherent properties of the material serve as a constant reminder of the bees’ contribution. Its distinctive chemical composition plays a vital role in the alchemical nature of cold wax painting and the effects it produces.

193 Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 97.

194 Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 98.

My materially-embedded painting practice with all of its associated materials engages a dialogic worlds within worlds entanglement where matter holds memory, and surfaces are becoming sites of encounter. Just as Haraway foregrounds storytelling as a multispecies act of worlding, my layered, time-sensitive works echo this interweaving, each stratum a sediment of shared affect, environment, and more than human presencing. The threat to bees caused by climate change and similar planetary threats is well known. My practice depends on the contribution that the bees have made through their gift of wax, but more importantly, the disappearance of bees will be a critical threat to the world.



Figure 48. *Faultlines* and *Silfra*, works in progress, in situ with Ann Mulcrone. Photograph © Janet Mazenier. Permission to reproduce provided by A. Mulcrone. 2025.

The processes of making *Silfra* and *Faultlines* (fig. 48) were explored through multiple material transformations where the reworking of the media left traces of previous layers, embedded yet altered. Meaning and form were in flux, reflecting how the push and pull of opacity and translucency could be seen to parallel the space between Ireland and Iceland's terrains. Ingold refers to the idea of "making, as a process of growth.

This is to place the maker from the outset as a participant in amongst a world of active materials.”¹⁹⁵ Haraway writes about “unexpected collaborations and combinations ... we become with each other or not at all. That kind of material semiotics is always situated, someplace and not no-place, entangled and worldly.”¹⁹⁶ With its complexity and colours, *Silfra* refers to material transformation, temporality and ideas of worlds within worlds bent visually.

By intricately layering the media, the anam áite of both the Burren and Iceland was evoked. Residues of sediment, water and organic matter accumulated and eroded in cyclical patterns. The work suggested a dynamic interweaving and entangling of forces, where material and temporal registers coalesced to evoke shifting spatial and affective surfaces. When we travelled around Iceland, what we had imagined had indeed emerged in *Silfra* and *Faultlines*. After walking through the North American and Eurasian tectonic plates in *Silfra*,¹⁹⁷ we then titled *Silfra* (fig. 49) accordingly. In this context, the work was an embodied, tectonic terrain, a place or places constantly in processes of world-bending, distortion and fracture. As a maker and participant in a world of active materials, Ann and I were part of what Ingold references as ‘meshwork,’ where materials do not exist as discrete entities but are always in a state of becoming through interrelations between materials and the maker.¹⁹⁷

195 Ingold, *Making*, 21.

196 Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 4.

197 Ingold, *Making*, 132.



Figure 49. *Silfra*, work in progress, 2025, oil paint, charcoal, ink, ash and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 1800x3000mm, collection of the artists. Initial installation at *World Building* exhibition in Seydisfjordur.

By focusing on universal structures of experience such as time, space and embodiment, I note Merleau-Ponty's comments that "our body is not an object for an 'I think': it is a totality of lived sensations that moves towards its equilibrium."¹⁹⁸ The vital agency of matter and the entanglement of humans with the material world nests ideas of vitalism, world-bending, and phenomenology as they challenge dualisms between subject and object, animate and inanimate, mind and matter. Bennett envisions a world of assemblages where agency emerges from the intra-action of heterogeneous actants.¹⁹⁹ Her ideas could be seen to challenge classical phenomenology by arguing that matter itself has agency, rather than being something passively perceived by human consciousness. New materialist theory prompts me to consider how materials themselves generate affect and meaning independently, yet a work such as a painting can only emerge through the entangled mesh of material interrelations and active human engagement.

198 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 155.

199 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 5.

Initially, *Silfra* was hung on the back wall of the gallery space in Seyðisfjörður. Unknowingly, we had installed it in another artist's space, so the curator shifted the work overnight, rehanging it to face inward in front of the window. Walking into the space, the work had suddenly taken on life as the sun glowed through the back of the painting, lighting the orange and creating material agency as the elements meshed (fig. 50).



Figure 50. Detail: *Silfra*, in situ after being shifted.

Cy Twombly

Cy Twombly's (1928-2011) *Three Studies from the Temeraire*,²⁰⁰ (fig. 51), held in the permanent collection of the Art Gallery of New South Wales (Sydney, Australia), had a profound impact on me when I first saw them.

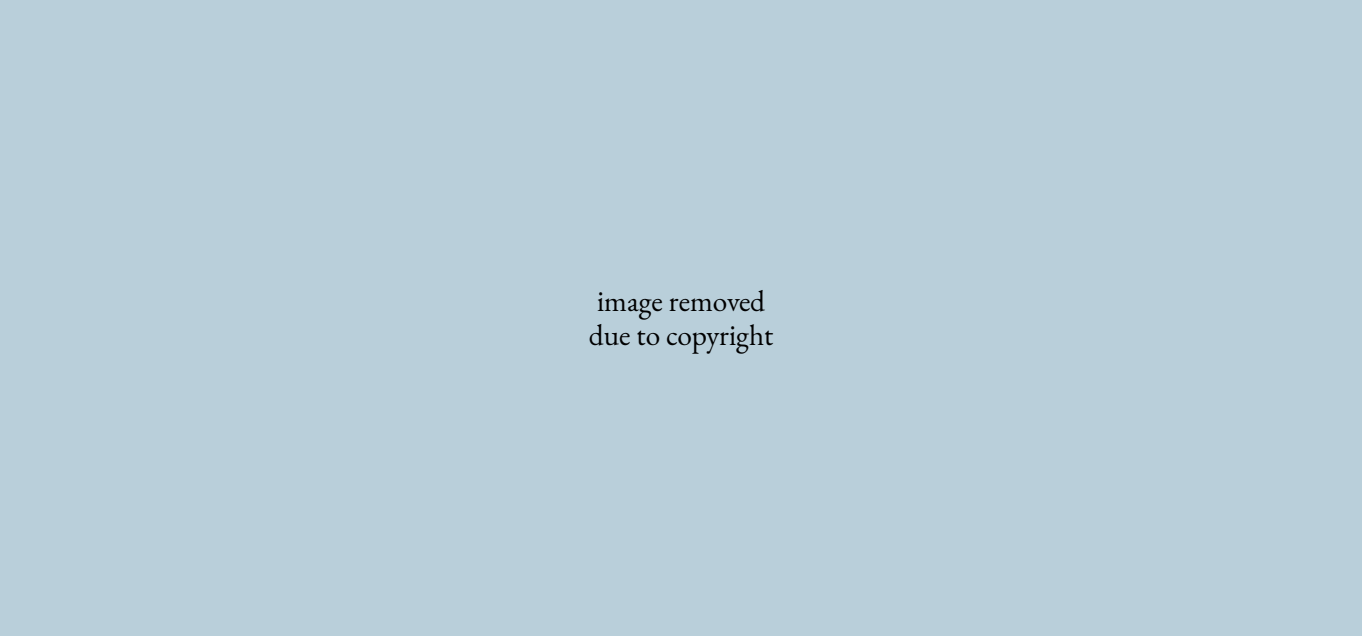


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Figure 51. Cy Twombly, *Three Studies from the Temeraire*, 1988-1999, oil on canvas. 265x761x5.6cm installed, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia.

His large and expansive works engage with materiality, gesture, and an embodied sense of time, but they differ from my work in the ways in which he depicts form and its relationship to history and poetry. His work feels like an extended phenomenological palimpsest of memory and movement, where the gestural marks, scribbles, and drips interact with the surface in a way that evokes ephemerality, line and opacity. His use of scale amplifies the performative nature of his mark-making, creating an immersive experience where the viewer is enveloped by layered inscriptions of time and affect. Bending space through a fusion of textual, gestural, and material processes, the work evokes a tension between presence and absence. Twombly had no intention of the works becoming a triptych, but after his death they were shown as such, eventually becoming one combined work that reveals the forms as they become one work from three.

200 Cy Twombly, *Three Studies from the Temeraire*, 1998–1999, oil on canvas, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, <https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/239.2004.a-c/>.

I am reminded of the complexity of our world, where the struggle to protect the environment and define ourselves as individuals and communities makes life inherently challenging to navigate. When I pick up a stick of charcoal or a graphite pencil and I lose myself in the moment of making, life suddenly becomes simple. Haraway's notion of the alignment between 'cooperating or competing units' resonates with Rive's concept of world bending, particularly in relation to speculative design and the imaginative framing of 'what if' scenarios.²⁰¹ Paintings can be understood to pose 'what if' questions, unfolding through processes of becoming, world-bending, and palimpsestic manoeuvring. As layers accumulate, through mark-making, reflection, and renewed activity, the artist becomes a silent partner in a co-creative act, where the work appears to shape itself. Pigments, wax, and material interactions converge in a slow, deliberate dance of emergence.

Knowledge Through Perception

Merleau-Ponty asserts that knowledge originates in our lived, bodily experiences by suggesting that perception itself is a form of thinking, an active, embodied engagement with the world.²⁰² This suggests that human understanding emerges not solely from abstract reasoning, but through direct sensory engagement, shaped by personal experience, cultural context, historical background, and the meanings we construct through these embodied encounters. It is through this entangled process that perception takes form. Experience is thus not just passive reception but an active, affective, and situated process of world-forming. In creative practice, this is where working with cold wax as a material exploration has become a key method of enquiry for my practice.

As noted earlier, Magan links Irish culture and language to a "multidimensional weave of reality ... maybe imperceptibly at first, but over time it deepens and enriches."²⁰³ As an example, he speaks of the legend of the old woman of Beara, which holds an other-worldly relevance to my experience in Ballinskelligs of the *colladh na Cailli Béarra*. He describes the "the witch's current manifestation on earth ... a huge boulder looking into the Atlantic at the tip of the Beara Peninsula in Co. Cork."²⁰⁴ The rock is a legendary reminder of the remnant of the goddess revered by the people of *Corcu Duibne*. These people's lands are those at the end of the Dingle Peninsula in County Kerry.²⁰⁵ According to legend, the rock retains her essence: it is "a forlorn, craggy

201 Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 64; Rive, *Worldbending: A Survivor's Guide*, 267.

202 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 40.

203 Magan, *Thirty Two Words for Field*, 244.

204 Magan, *Thirty Two Words for Field*, 238.

205 Magan, *Thirty Two Words for Field*, 238.

lump that has been badly eroded, but within it is the essence of what she once was.”²⁰⁶ Holding the essences of wind, rain and salt, she looks out on the land and the ocean, her memories absorbing, shifting and growing over time. She and the rock she occupies are silent witnesses to life, a seemingly solid reminder of things that have gone before and things that are yet to come. This translated to one of the soul places that were captured in the work *Silfra* as well as *Ephemeral Song*.

Silfra is the result of how a shift in location can create a dialogue between permanence and disappearance. After it was reinstalled in front of the window, the painting’s heartbeat quickened. Magan writes of the heartbeat of the *Cailleach* and how people say that this can be heard within the stone “though it is so slow now that it is in rhythm with the retreating motion of the waves.”²⁰⁷ Is this the song that I heard so many nights when I was cold and lonely at the residency in Cill Rialaig opposite the Beara Peninsula? A year later, one night in the Burren, I thought I heard the same song coming over the water from Galway Bay. Is it possible that my attunement with Ireland may be a fantastical phenomenological experience where the land, stone and ocean are speaking to me? *Silfra* and its resultant light shining through the work was an unexpected delight, providing possible ideas for future work and continually reminding me of the old woman’s heartbeat. The work *Ephemeral Song*, as well as all my work now evokes the memory of this heartbeat and that of Aotearoa New Zealand and Ireland. While I was in Ireland *Ephemeral Song* was resting, awaiting my return and the continuation of the making processes to complete it.

206 Magan, *Thirty Two Words for Field*, 238.

207 Gregory Wright, “Celtic Goddess Cailleach,” in *Mythopedia*, November 29, 2022, <https://mythopedia.com/topics/cailleach>.



Figure 52. Detail: *Ephemeral Song*, work in progress, oil paint, pastel and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 22000x2640mm..2025.

Considering the Irish term *anam áite* as an evocation of landscapes, memory, and the unseen forces of place in alchemical traditions, certain locations are believed to hold power. Power can manifest as the ephemeral sensation of walking into a house that has records of sadness, a landscape that holds the memory of people brutally treated, or stone monuments that remind us of life that has lived before us, and whether human or not, will live long after us. Through layering and abstraction, the paintings are conduits for place and memory, summoning the essence rather than the representation of an environment where works embody time not as linear but as layered and woven, much as alchemy can collapse past, present, and future. The works feel as if they hold legends and time within them, much like a ritual object imbued with traces of its past. *Ephemeral Song* (fig. 52) was continued on my return, the recent memories of *being in place* in Ireland at the forefront of my mind.

Between Elements

As my work is situated between abstraction and landscape: material, memory and agency; solidity and dissolution, my thinking about the world sits between phenomenology and a more alchemical way of thinking. The world offers alchemy, while phenomenological experience is rooted in the lived sensations of being-in-the-world. Across many traditions, transformation is believed to occur within liminal spaces and I perceive my paintings as inhabiting these in-between spaces, allowing them to function as visual incantations which evoke uncertainty, possibility, and transformation.

I am reminded of the conceptual ambitions of Kiefer, Dean and Twombly as they reposition painterly abstraction as a materially contingent and phenomenological mode of thought. Their practices mobilise surface accretion, inscription, erasure and gestural temporality as repositories of memory, history, effect, and embodied perception. Kiefer's sedimented matter evokes geological and cultural duration; Dean's atmospheric contingencies register the instability of time and place and Twombly's calligraphic traces perform corporeal and affective presence. In my practice, layered material processes similarly produce a haptic and durational abstraction in which surface becomes an active site of phenomenological encounter, spatial memory and world building and bending affect.

Silfra and *Ephemeral Song* are the result of engagements with perception, memory, and embodied experience, connecting with place as a living, dynamic presence, but doing so through an introspective, phenomenological and materially driven abstraction. At times, as materials can mix unpredictably, textures form through chemical processes, layers of wax shift as they are attended to over time, and these phenomena point to an autonomy in materiality that can exceed my intention.

This work has led me to the eventual conclusion that the red/yellow first layer of *Silfra* speaks to the fiery volcanic cores of all three countries - Ireland, Iceland and Aotearoa New Zealand – and their eventual emergence as the Earth's mantle, shifting and erupting as the tectonic plates move. By applying layered textures, veiled forms, and colours that result in the striated, textural work, *Silfra* embodies an atmospheric quality that evokes both a seen and unseen presence, the plates hidden but erupting via the presence of light. *Ephemeral Song*'s first layer of deep blue is a reference to the very bottom of the ocean, where light is not present. Subsequent layers build in an echo of both land and oceanic strata speaking to layers of rock, glaciation, clashing tectonics and arctic flora. There is an echoing of the yellow of kōwhai and the volcanic soils of Aotearoa New Zealand within the work.

When making *Silfra*, Ann and I used our hands frequently to apply various media, allowing for the creation of marks that rejected the usual control that is managed with tools. By layering materials and introducing spontaneous disruption, such as solvent sprays, drips, and palette knife scrapes, the work allowed for time-based transformations. Drying, reworking, and reactivating layers invited unpredictability and the emergence of the unknown. Another challenge arose as to how we could transport the work from Ireland to Iceland. As it had only a week to cure, we folded it within a soft cover. When we unfolded it in Seyðisfjörður, the work had pleated from the folds, after 10 days of travel on aircraft and in the car. We had little control over this, given the constraints of travel and curing time, but decided to install the work despite its resultant folds (fig. 53). These stayed in the work after I brought it back to Aotearoa New Zealand. The folds are a reminder of this time that conceptually reflect material interruptions, those contributions to the work's topology, temporality and ontology.



Figure 53. *Silfra*, 2025, oil paint, charcoal, ink, ash and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 1800x3000mm, collection of the artists.

Considering the concept of world-bending, control and release function as methods of shifting perceptual space within a work, I will sometimes use precise edges or structured compositions that are then

juxtaposed with blurred, chaotic areas, allowing for a destabilised or distorted spatial reading as various colours bleed from earlier layers. Affect and phenomenology suggest that control and release also have an emotional and perceptual dimension that I ponder on when painting. How does relinquishing control affect my engagement with the painting process? When do I feel the need to assert control, and when do I allow the painting to ‘lead’? How do these dynamics shape the affective charge of the work? By reflecting on my painting and decision-making processes via these lenses: material, gestural, temporal, conceptual, and affective, my understanding of control and release as a dialogical process rather than a binary opposition is better understood and accepted. It is within the space between these forces that new possibilities for painting emerge.

Working on stretched canvases, panels or paper at a more reduced scale allows for the work to be placed on the ground or on a table for flat working processes to occur. I can more easily apply some materials to a work that is lying flat on the ground or a table. Drops of odourless mineral solvent can be placed on the surface and, once ready, wiped off, allowing for a distortion through the layers beneath. In this way, the work is collaborating with me on a different plane, one that I can look down on to manipulate in ways that are not possible when the work is hung on a wall surface and is so large it can’t be easily moved.



Figure 54. Detail: *Ephemeral Song, work in progress*, oil paint, pastel and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 22000x2640mm.2025.

Ephemeral Song, painted vertically as a looped, continuous work (fig. 54) required me to ‘think’ horizontally in terms of its future installation as it was distorted in portrait orientation. Initially my intention was to photograph and record every section so that the work would remain coherent however as it progressed, I became less concerned with trying to control its execution and rather allowed the work to present itself to me, section by section.

Memory and Painting

Memories can be considered nested experiences, senses and perceptions. Why is it that one person can remember an event clearly and yet another has an entirely different recollection of the same event? As professor of psychological sciences Lisa Phillips notes “recall and recognition are the two ways one can access memories. Recall is the act of remembering an event, fact, or object that is not physically in one’s presence. Such an act necessitates the direct accessing of information from one’s memory.”²⁰⁸ My work resonates with the mutable, affective nature of memory as the work often evokes liminal and non-specific spaces that function like the atmospheric texture of a half-remembered place. These abstracted landscapes mirror how memories emerge that are sedimented, obscured, and refigured over time, reflecting layered, unstable elements. They operate as material metaphors for the works of memory: layered, affective, unstable and deeply rooted in the phenomenological bodily encounter with place as time. They present as ‘felt residues’ that are ambiguous, emergent and atmospheric. With *Ephemeral Song* (fig. 55) I was more conscious of memory as I continued the work section by section, the memories of previous residues of the earlier sections with me. I was excited to work like this, not knowing how the final work would look until it was installed on the gallery wall.

208 Lisa Phillips, “Recall (Memory),” Research Starters, EBSCO, accessed August 30, 2025, <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/psychology/recall-memory>.



Figure 55. Detail: *Ephemeral Song*, work in progress, oil paint, pastel and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 22000x2640mm.2025.

Writer Turtle Bunbury in his book *Ireland's Forgotten Past*²⁰⁹ prompts readers to consider every bush, rock, tree, field, monument and river as they all hold meaning that speaks to the past. He echoes Magan when he argues that legends relate to and between all elements in the landscape, as they intersect around themes of cultural memory, the transmission of forgotten or occluded narratives, and the way history and personal experience interweave to shape collective identity. The works *Silfra* and *Ephemeral Song* engage with the palimpsestic surfaces of Ireland, Iceland and Aotearoa New Zealand.

209 Turtle Bunbury, *Ireland's Forgotten Past: A History of the Overlooked & Disremembered* (Thames & Hudson, 2020), 8.



Figure 56. Detail: *Silfra*. Showing ash and charcoal from fire pit, Burren College of Art.2025.

Just as Bunbury unearths lost or hidden stories from the strata of Irish history, the works *Silfra* and *Ephemeral Song* and their materials, present archaeological surfaces that appear to be excavated with ghost marks and suggestions of barely visible past forms that invite the viewer to read, decode, or remember. These works occupy a liminal space between surface and depth and presence and erasure, functioning as both a visual palimpsest and a material site of memory. The layered, weathered texture and gestural traces recall my interest in how memory resides within materiality and how surfaces can bear the affective weight of absence, time, agency, and transformation.

The works resonate with Bunbury's ideas of Ireland's forgotten past in his evocation of hidden narratives and buried histories.²¹⁰ Where Bunbury recovers overlooked stories through archival excavation and narrative reassembly, these paintings enact a form of visual archaeology, as their surfaces became a silent archive that is sedimented with the ghosts of marks and movements. Together, these references foreground the paintings as an embodied inquiry into the entanglement of materials, memory, and place, an act of world-bending in which forgotten pasts emerge through the textures of the present.

210 Bunbury, *Ireland's Forgotten Past*, 8.

At the heart of this inquiry lies a recognition that perception, embodiment, and ecology are not discrete categories but are instead deeply entangled processes of becoming. They are worlds within worlds. Rive proposes world-bending as a way of rethinking the world we occupy. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology foregrounds the primacy of embodied perception, while Haraway's concept of situated knowledge challenges the illusion of objective detachment, encouraging an ethics of 'response-ability' grounded in relational awareness. Magan's reflections on the resonance of language and landscape open a poetics of place that is echoed in Bunbury's narrative cartographies, which both map and mythologise the terrain of cultural memory. Ingold furthers these ideas through ecological and ontological frameworks that reject anthropocentric separations, instead suggesting that humans are always already embedded in multispecies worlds and atmospheric flows. Bennett's notion of vibrant matter underscores this entanglement, animating the material world with affective charge and agency.



Figure 57. Detail: *Ephemeral Song*, work in progress, oil paint, pastel and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 22000x2640mm. 2025..

After re-entering the studio after my return from Ireland in July 2025 I felt overwhelmed with the remaining work required to finish *Ephemeral Song* (fig. 57). Memories of painting earlier layers and my more recent experiences in Ireland, as well as reconnecting with my home in Te Hau Kapua Devonport in Aotearoa New Zealand, gave me the impetus to recommence painting this work.

Recollections extended beyond the visual to sounds such as the reminder of the ephemeral ‘song’ mentioned earlier that I heard most nights while in Cill Rialaig. Magan, in his book *Listen to the Land Speak*, writes of the three great waves of Ireland²¹¹ and the legend which holds that these waves protect the island, calling out on stormy nights to warn of danger or approaching threats. Apparently, they are not only physical waves, but also sound and vibrational currents. Some geographers suggest they may be linked to inland access corridors, a theory that echoes and is enriched by local folk stories.²¹² Lippard’s speculation on whether we can ever really know the history of a place, its temporality and/or perceived permanence connects with Magan’s writing. She notes that the imposition of human habitation on the landscape is an overlay ... the rhythms of the body transferred to the earth, those of the sky to the land or water. Christianity is overlaid on “paganism, urban on rural, stasis on motion.”²¹³

She argues that artists long for nostalgia, speculating about the people who have lived before, the artefacts they left and considering the function of art that is “looking back to times and places where art was inseparable from life.”²¹⁵ In this sense, life without art and cultural memory could be considered commodified, a position with which I wholeheartedly agree. *Ephemeral Song* (fig. 58) evolved from a response to the sound I heard on the lonely, cold nights I spent in Cill Rialaig to become a capture of the violet of the Irish heather, the pink and yellow orchids, the dark blue gentians and surrounding mountains and also my home in Te Hau Kapua Devonport.

211 Magan, *Listen to the Land Speak*, 18–19.

212 Magan, *Listen to the Land Speak*, 19.

213 Lippard, *Overlay*, 4.



Figure 58. Detail: *Ephemeral Song*, work in progress, oil paint, pastel and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 22000x2640mm.2025.

Memories continuously erupt into my imagination. I vividly recall looking for a wedge tomb around a bog area in Valentia Island in Kerry, examining the ground beneath me with its molecular memory that holds the footprints of ancient walkers. In this context, painting allows me to bring a visual voice that connects to the hidden elements of place, prompting me to reflect on Relph's words: "We live in a fleeting, temporary and ephemeral world."²¹⁴

214 Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 6.

The work *Ephemeral Song* continued to evolve by referencing the clay cliffs at Ōperetu Narrowneck beach and the many colours of stone and vegetation in the Burren, as well other places in Ireland I spent time exploring. Glimpses of memories, time spent breathing, stopping, looking, absorbing colours, surfaces, marks, dents, smells, stone colours, earth and soil colours all combine in a type of melee, sifted and channelled through the process of making. Work created in this manner modifies information, changing memories into perceptual traces that are processual, one layer following another, randomising marks with whisperings of gestural and material traces. The shifting scale within this work's visual field in particular, given its scale, requires working both close up and from afar to see the whole composition as it develops, while keeping a connection to a concept of place. This method of practice means that the first layers do not need any added colour or marks although I do scrape through layers to reveal earlier colours and textures. When nearing completion, the final layers require more focused decision-making and conscious mark-making.

Creating *Ephemeral Song* posed unique challenges. For all large works on unstretched canvas I need to ensure that layers remain thin while still achieving a richness of visual texture to convey depth, especially when considering shipping works from Ireland to Aotearoa New Zealand. The process of making is guided by improvisation, which serves as both a method of control and a space for freedom. Serendipitous moments often emerge, introducing new ideas, formats, and techniques that can shift the direction of the work entirely. Small excavations were carried out and decisions continuously made about drawing or applying solvent, which colours to use, as well as how to balance translucency and solidity. For this work, the penultimate layer changed as each section was rolled down for the next iteration of work and the previous section rolled away.

By spending time in Ireland over successive visits I was able to experience its seasons as well as the different histories in the various places. When undertaking the residency in Cill Rialaig the experience of an Irish winter was starkly apparent. For most of my time there, the weather was bleak, and the wind howled around the cottage. As a reconstituted famine cottage, the ghosts of the people who had lived and died in this place felt palpable. The village is hundreds of years old, and while I was able to enjoy some modern conveniences it was cold and dark, I was very conscious of the privations of those who had lived there before. Its isolation and my experience of this period were unsettling. Later, attending the Burren College of Art in Spring, flowers were blooming, cuckoos were calling and, despite variable weather, the longer days stayed golden late into the evening. Lippard comments that art links us to our past: [standing] “stones raised tantalising questions about nature and

culture, about the domination of nature.”²¹⁵

Collectively, the cultural and natural conditions and their complications challenge linear and hierarchical models of knowledge, proposing instead a meshwork of intersubjective and inter-material relations. This chapter and my work traces a cartography not of surfaces but of depths, those liminal zones where the visible and invisible coalesce, and where the world between is felt as much as it is known. By attending to these hidden connections, we come to inhabit a more attuned, responsive stance toward the environments in which we dwell and co-create. Such an orientation invites an ethics and aesthetics of attention, one that honours the interstitial, the ephemeral, and the entangled, positioning perception not as a fixed faculty but as a dynamic, world-making act.

215 Lippard, *Overlay*, 12.

CHAPTER FIVE: TEMPORAL STRATA CONCEPTS

This chapter unfolds as a reflection on painting as a durational, embodied act that, within my painting practice is an inquiry into the interrelation of time, materiality, and phenomenological perception. Reflecting on my site-specific experiences in Aotearoa New Zealand and Ireland initiated a process that is as much philosophical as it is physical. These landscapes, marked by their own deep geological timescales, became resonant sites for material engagement, with the media serving as a conduit for production. My painting practice is not necessarily a linear engagement; however it is concerned with strata, palimpsests, and recursive gestures, where each mark is a trace of presence and decision that then becomes a temporal condition.

Informed by accumulated gestures and the unpredictable dynamics of the medium the works become artefacts of duration that contain traces of ecological, ancestral, and perceptual time. This chapter recognises painting as an attentive practice; an ongoing negotiation with the world that opens space for slowness, care, and inquiry. As both a record and a reconfiguration of lived experience, painting becomes a form of worlding, where spirit, matter, and memory converge.

Deep Time and Existence

Zalasiewicz highlights aspects of Earth's history, including its earliest creation processes and how matter was, and continues to be, built over time. Matter became a surface or ground for the next iteration of material, ad infinitum. Minerals and zircon crystals “become chronometers for events in deep time”²¹⁶ in that they hold traces and records of these formation processes. While massive tectonic shifts and volcanic outbursts have occurred, he asserts that “these individual events are smeared out to the extent that individual events count for little, that it is the broad sweep that counts, within which details are lost.”²¹⁷ Deep time surfaces in my paintings through their stratified, materially sedimented layers, which operate as temporal cross-sections where geological memory, atmospheric shifts, and the slow accumulation of place are held in visual suspension.

216 Zalasiewicz, *The Planet in a Pebble*, 49.

217 Zalasiewicz, *The Planet in a Pebble*, 50.



Figure 59. *Tidewoven*, 2025, oil paint and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 10000x1800mm. Shown in situ at *World Building* exhibition in Seydisfjörður, Iceland.

While *Ephemeral Song* was resting in Aotearoa New Zealand and after spending time in the Burren in 2025, I installed the work *Tidewoven* in a repurposed net factory in Seyðisfjörður, Iceland for the *World Building* exhibition held in May 2025 (fig. 59). Shipped from Aotearoa New Zealand to the exhibition in Iceland, it was unrolled then installed vertically in a double-height stairwell. As it hung in space, the work was intended to convey the immenseness and conceptual connectedness of oceans, and at the same time, it provided an invitation to the viewer to come closer to see the detailed marks on its surface. Deliberately evoking ideas of oceanic tides, currents, and swells, my intention was to create a work that spoke to the vastness of the oceans that connect the islands of Aotearoa New Zealand, Ireland, and Iceland.

When painting, I consider processes of temporality and the mechanisms of deep time creation as they apply to land as well as ocean. The processual nature of my practice, as well as the time taken to make the work, addresses the collisions, merging, sub-merging, covering up, opening out, clashing, and splitting that continually occur within our planet's ecosphere and in outer space. The striated surface is evident in my memory of walking around Te Hau Kapua Devonport, where varied hues of the ocean in different light lingered in my mind, guiding the naming as a quiet act of recognition.

Asserting that place cannot exist without deep time, writer and natural historian Helen Gordon, in her book *Notes from Deep Time*, states

If human time is measured in seconds and minutes, hours and years, then deep time deals with hundreds of thousands of years, with the millions and the billions. Thinking about it engenders a sort of temporal vertigo.²¹⁸

There is a growing movement towards encouraging a better understanding of concepts of deep time, which aims to help humans relate more closely with our planet and the threats facing it. A global initiative called *Deep Time Walk Community* was established to raise awareness of this, particularly in the context of climate change and its potential impacts.²¹⁹ In considering how humans have occupied Earth and the resultant damage within the last 10,000 years of occupation, compared with the billions of years of earlier evolution, the Community seeks to highlight how important an understanding of deep time is. Earth's genesis as a mere

218 Helen Gordon, *Notes on Deep Time, A Journey Through Our Past and Future Worlds* (Profile Books, 2022), 1.

219 Harding and Oswald, *Deep Time Walk*.

glimpse of stardust with a heavy bombardment of asteroids, stars, and gravitational lurching, eventually became a planet with bacterial life.²²⁰ Earth's genesis and evolutionary steps resonate in my work through the layered, metamorphic surfaces that echo the planet's primordial formations and ongoing processes of emergence, erosion, and renewal.



Figure 60. *Tidewoven*, work in progress, oil paint and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 10000x1800mm.2025.

The size and the constraints of my home studio wall space meant that I was limited to working on horizontal sections of *Tidewoven* (fig. 60). As the work proceeded, finished stages were moved to the right and rolled around a vertical tube, hiding the earlier stages of the work and requiring me to utilise memory and photographs to influence the next section of the painting. This emergence echoed Earth's beginnings that anticipated eventual potentialities. It was exciting (and slightly nerve-wracking) to work on it while not being able to see the earlier sections, and even more exciting to unroll the work in Iceland to install it.

220 Paul Hilton et al., *Deep Time Walk: Earth History*, Android and iOS mobile app, released 2019, <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/deep-time-walk-earth-history/id1163814608>.



Figure 61. *Tidewoven*, work in progress, oil paint and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 10000x1800mm. 2025.

Intra Actions

When painting, time can be lost and found as layers are built, likening the process to an accreted terrain that simultaneously hides and discloses its genesis (fig. 61). Time, pressure and temperature impact the work with an elapsed multi-dimensionality that combines with actions conducted in the moment of making records and traces of past processes. Time is considered for curing, reflecting, and amassing the strata of the painting as it becomes a minute example akin to a dynamic evolutionary process. In *Tidewoven*, tiny scratches, drawn marks, hints of below-surface colour, and smears of media are seemingly insignificant when viewing the entire work; however, these traces remain part of the making processes and contribute to the whole. Pressure is applied and resisted with the material yielding more easily with more layers, regardless of whether the temperature is warm or cold. A soft roller delivers the medium gently, while a hard roller will skid across the surface. As theorist Karen Barad states, “dynamics are about change.”²²¹ The world is in a constant state of flux and change:

221 Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway, Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Duke University Press, 2007), 179.

Iterative intra-actions are the dynamics through which temporality and spatiality are produced and iteratively reconfigured in the materialisation of phenomena and the (re)making of material-discursive boundaries and their constitutive exclusions.²²²

Barad's emphasis on intra-action, through the unfolding of relations, shapes and reshapes the contours of time and space. In each encounter, phenomena take form, dissolving, and re-emerging, while boundaries of meaning and matter are drawn and redrawn. Material, gesture and environment are not discrete or static. They emerge together, transformed through an iterative process of application, erasure, pressure and chance. The surface is a site of becoming that is an ongoing negotiation between intention and material agency; time thickens, space folds, and a new material expression is born.

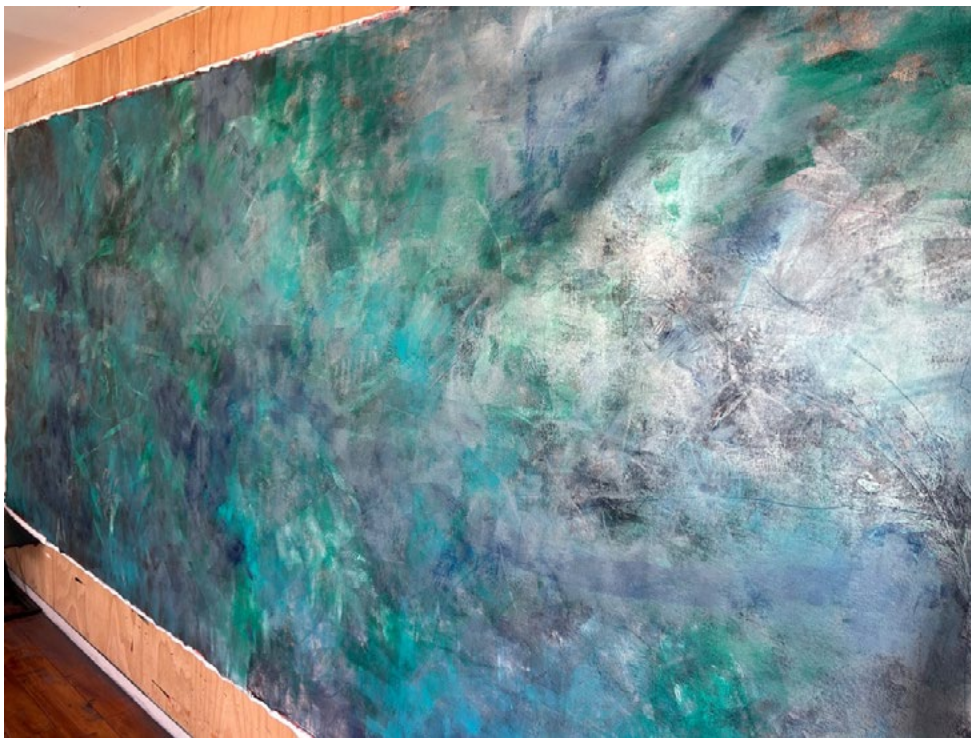


Figure 62. *Tidewoven*, work in progress, oil paint and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 10000x1800mm. 2025.

My work performs transformation and, in turn, is transformed by the act of making. Performance in this context relates to processes of execution, demonstration of knowledge with materials and techniques, and the creative application of its conceptual underpinning. Figure 62 displays the final layer of iridescent paint, a finish that changed the painting's resolved surface to present the idea of the shimmering ocean that is reflected on a sunny day. Like Barad's dynamics of intra-action, it is not about capturing change but being within change. The

222 Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 179.

work embodies ideas where the edges of forms are never fixed but rather become thresholds, liminal, thin zones, where figure and ground co-emerge. In this light, my painting practice shapes a world in flux, a field of entangled agencies where the material is always becoming.

Methods of applying materials over periods of time create agency in the work dictating my behaviour in a call and response between the media and me. Time is embedded in the work between layers and elapsed time over the period of making the work. Unfolding phenomena have a temporality; as Barad notes, “time has a history.”²²³ Therefore, spending time painting is an intra-act, noting Barad’s comment “it is an enactment, not something that someone or something has ... agency is ‘doing’ or ‘being.’”²²⁴ She writes, “*crucially agency is a matter of intra-acting; it is an enactment, not something that someone or something has* [emphasis in original].²²⁵” The action of painting is discontinuous and continuous, melding, shaping, forming, becoming, erasing and shifting. Matter, space and time, according to Barad “are mutually constituted through the dynamics of iterative intra-activity.”²²⁶ Agential dynamics create possibilities for change. Merleau-Ponty notes

It is an atmosphere, a horizon, or even the “settings” that assign consciousness a temporal situation—such is the presence of the past that makes distinct acts of perception and remembering possible.²²⁷

Perception is an immanent sense that occurs without specific reference to memory and that “to perceive is not to remember,”²²⁸ therefore it can be seen as a temporal occurrence. This temporality is fleeting and momentary, unable to be fully described as it is a possible merging of past, present and future. *Tidewoven* was made over several weeks, and the interactions that occurred between layers were as important as the layers themselves. The time taken for each layer to cure and to allow for the next resulted in different effects in the work.

223 Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 179.

224 Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 180.

225 Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 178.

226 Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 178.

227 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 23.

228 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 23.



Figure 63. *Tidewoven*, work in progress, oil paint and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 10000x1800mm.2025.

Tidewoven was made concurrently while I continued to paint *Ephemeral Song* (and other works). While working on these paintings I was conscious of recent memories of walking and spending time in places around Te Hau Kapua Devonport and Ireland, and how these two works - although different - were speaking to the same places. The intention behind *Tidewoven*, however, as earlier noted, was to portray a connectedness of oceans, as I was aware that it would eventually speak to this in situ in Iceland.



Figure 64. Detail: *Tidewoven*, work in progress, 2025.

How, then, does painting have the capacity to hold meaning as a mediated experience between what is exterior and also interior for the artist? Although I am conscious of intention, often I will try to step away from an initial idea to allow the media to hold its own durational agency. Bachelard writes of the importance of day-dreaming, and how memory “does not record concrete duration.”²²⁹ My works create a space for expression, a

229 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 8.

place where intention, unforeseen manipulations of materials and accidents occur. In my painting practice, I am both focused on and, at times unaware of perceptual shifts, material encounters, and the play between presence and absence. Time stops me as I become aware of my body, its abilities and limitations, affected by how I feel in the moment, especially when I grow tired. Larger tools tire my hands, whereas smaller tools can frustrate me. Standing for long periods of time can cause my feet to burn painfully. Sometimes, I will turn away from a larger unstretched canvas painting to work on a smaller piece (usually a drawing, sometimes a cold wax work on paper or panel), allowing for more experimentation and closer movement in the process of making. This allows me time to reflect before the next steps are taken. I am a conduit, holding space, time, memories and action, an intermediary who has gathered and sifted before acting with the vital materiality of the work.

Thinking About Thinking

Through reflection, I have come to understand that the processes and individual movements of cold wax painting convey intentions despite the freedoms associated with the media. The relentless practice of art-making over time creates opportunities to learn from earlier works, to consolidate and introduce possibilities. Knowledge built over time allows for acceptance of the unexpected and accidental occurrences as they enter the artwork. Questions are asked of the work as it is in motion and, while time is passing, whether I'm asleep, dreaming, awake, showering, driving or writing. As Merleau-Ponty comments

I am thrown into nature, and nature appears not only outside of me in objects devoid of history, but is also visible at the center of subjectivity. Theoretical and practical decisions in my personal life can certainly grasp my past and my future from a distance; they can give my past along with all of its accidents, a definite sense by following it up with a certain future.²³⁰

By drawing on all that I have learned in the past through action and reflection, my practice becomes the sum of everything that has occurred to that very moment in time when I am standing in front of it, holding my breath in anticipation of the next action.

230 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 361.



Figure 65. Detail: *Tidewoven*, work in progress, 2025..

How, then, does time relate to the intentions of artworks such as *Tidewoven* (fig. 65). Years of painting have provided infinite opportunities to ask questions of myself about how and why my work and I exist in the world. Reflecting on Merleau-Ponty's thinking about subjectivity and objectivity and how this relates to the interior self, I consider how I brought intention to *Tidewoven*. The work pushes and pulls through its striations, with overlapping edges and colours, dark patches taking the eye further back into the work. The layers are thin, speaking to volcanic terrains, shifting and moving beneath the ocean, while subliminally attributing a non-objective meaning to the work where the intention (of the whole work and in each layer) is known only to me. Drawing on past experience, I decided to include early layers such as red (fig. 66) that might never be recognised in the final work. However, this knowledge accretes and provides a richer final surface.



Figure 66. Detail: *Tidewoven*, work in progress, 2025.

Ingold writes that “the only way one can really know things – that is, from the very inside of one’s being – is through a process of self-discovery. To know things, you have to grow into them, and let them grow in you, so that they become a part of who you are.”²³¹ I have discovered that the ‘doing’ of painting is how knowledge arrives, with its frustrations, mistakes, joyous moments, opportunities to collaborate, and the moments when a work ‘sings.’ The work *Ephemeral Song* provided other challenges as I have worked with the strata of the work. There is joy in knowing there are no mistakes with this method of painting – the processes of covering up and scraping back provide a freedom of expression that is not constrained by a sense of failure.

231 Ingold, *Making*, 1.

Rebecca Crowell

In 2016, I met Rebecca Crowell, an American artist who works with oil paint and cold wax medium. Crowell is an expert with this medium and was an important influence in the eventual shift of my work from hyper-realistic oil painting of empty buildings to a more expressive, fluid investigation of materials and their voice. She writes that “I paint in response to ancient and rugged places that I love, interpreting them intuitively, abstractly, through memory and emotion.”²³²

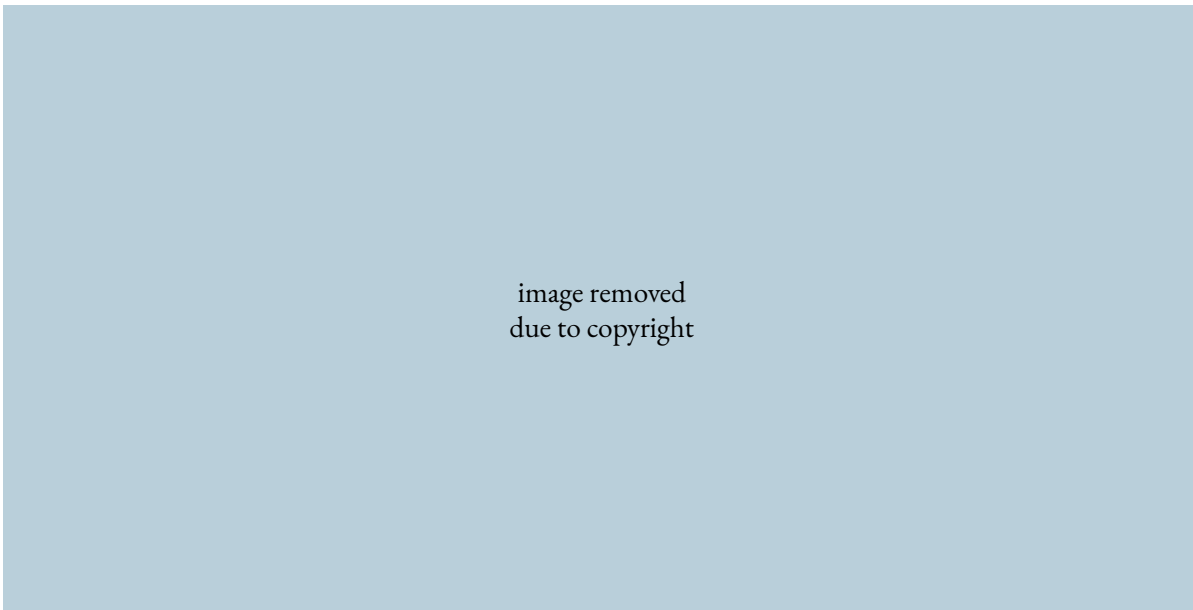


Figure 67. Rebecca Crowell, *Traversing*. 2023, oil/cold wax on panel, 48”x96” collection of the artist.

The qualities of the medium that she wants her work to embody include “complexity, presence, exploration and mystery ... contrast and connection in an open-ended way, as was evocation.”²³³ She, like me, is influenced by wild, rugged landscapes and walking in place, noting that her works are the end result of many processes that are experienced over time, including looking, seeing and feeling. Her work is now influenced by a deep knowledge of how the medium works, so that “it has become an extension of who I am. With it, I can speak effectively, intuitively, authentically.”²³⁴ Crowell’s paintings such as the work *Traversing* (fig. 67), are usually conceived in colours such as greens, blues and umbers, although she will sometimes add a smear or dash of bright red or orange to the final surface of a work, to resolve it. She has described her work as an ‘inner landscape,’ that is an intuitive and evolving process that depicts more subtle aspects of intricate, organic colour

232 “About,” Rebecca Crowell, accessed August 30, 2025, <https://www.rebeccacrowell.com/about>.

233 Crowell and McLaughlin, *Cold Wax Medium*, 189.

234 Crowell and McLaughlin, *Cold Wax Medium*, 282.

and texture and the luminosity of the atmosphere. Relating these visual impressions to personal memories, thoughts, and emotions, Crowell takes time to absorb her surroundings on her daily walks, and regards her work as “a blend of intuition and intention centering around core ideas of emotions, spirituality and memories of certain wild, rugged places.”²³⁵ She visits Ireland annually to maintain a fellowship in County Mayo and, although she’s not Irish, the landscape there continues to draw her interest and speaks poignantly to her work.

Her practice is grounded in a material poetics of landscape and memory. Her paintings generally emerge through an accumulative layering process that evokes the erosion and sedimentation of geological time. Working through intuition and erasure, she builds strata of pigment and wax that mirror natural processes of compression, abrasion, and accretion. In this sense, her work resonates with phenomenological ideas of embodied seeing in the way perception arises through touch, time, and repetition. Her works’ surfaces are maps of lived duration, as they index the material history of process and the affective resonance of place. In contrast, my work extends these material and temporal concerns into world-bending, where my paintings actively reconfigure the ontological boundaries of the worlds being created. Using cold wax medium processes creates a site of material flux and metamorphosis where associated media enacts elemental forces such as air and time. Surfaces breathe within states, as they oscillate within liminal ‘spaces between’; emergence, dissolution, visibility and obscurity.

Durations

Time is important, especially ensuring there is time to learn, make, reflect, and allow the work to sit while contemplating the next step. Time is manifested between the layers of paint and drawn marks and their eventual surface, with its push towards the painting and its pull towards place. As well as materials and colour, the work responds differently to pressure and time, each layer inviting a response, at times rejection, where it is at a point where nothing more can be usefully undertaken. Paintings can sometimes sit for a year or more waiting for me to return. They ask questions of me, often dictating a need for more breathing space and time but not so much time that the next step can’t be taken, particularly if I am working to deadlines or wish to work on a less cured surface. Conceptually, when I completely paint over a work that hasn’t spoken to me of a happy resolution, could this be related to the underlying contextual ground of my work that speaks to separation from my ancestral home in Ireland and my home in Aotearoa New Zealand?

235 Crowell and McLaughlin, *Cold Wax Medium*, 282.



Figure 68. *Tidewoven*, work in progress, 2025, oil paint and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 10000x1800mm. 2025.

Repetitive large and small gestures, marks, swipes of media, as well as various colour choices created an agential rhythm as they were applied throughout the layers of the work over periods of time (fig. 68). Revisiting places then returning to the studio is part of the cyclical repetitiveness of idea creation. Time and space between layers and marks can be critical to allow the work to breathe. Gestures may be sweeping (emanating from my shoulder), compared with smaller chips and mark-making (emanating from my hands), which can be circles, dots and minute scratches. Gloved hands can scoop the media onto the work to smear it around. Oil pastel and charcoal marks may be smudged with fingers, and brushes can be used to control the marks (or not, if odourless mineral spirits are applied to thin the marks that resulting in dribbles).

There is a relentless, durational approach that is required to maintain and evolve a painting practice. Working in multiples or with a singular large painting requires a deterministic attitude over weeks, months or years. Ingold discusses participant observation and engagement, noting “we owe our very being to the world we seek to know. In a nutshell, participant observation is a way of knowing *from the inside* [emphasis in original].”²³⁶ The durational aspect of the work, its intermittent nature, the daily and yearly practice, starting and stopping and managing interruptions are all aspects of my creative process. Crowell doesn’t tend to work this way, but rather completes paintings in a shorter timeframe, as her works are smaller. Working with the relentlessness of time and reworking of older paintings has become a key part of my practice, although this

236 Ingold, *Making*, 5.

method has not (yet) been applied to later works on unstretched canvas.

The unforeseen can erupt in unexpected ways during my meanderings, offering glimpses of inspiration. As I walk, I try to remain present, mindful of my surroundings and their ability to influence my work; it is easy to lose time by not being conscious of it. Similarly, I need to remain mindful when painting and wrangling with decisions such as whether to roll or swipe, how hard to push, which colours to use, whether to scrape or spray and when it is best to walk away from the work. There are many reasons for doing this. At times, I will be away from the studio which allows the work to rest while I contemplate the next steps. The nature of painting with this medium allows for an extended approach. Even when a surface on panel is fully cured and some years old, I can (and often do) paint over it, creating history in the work while at the same time regenerating it as something new.



Figure 69. *Tidewoven*, work in progress, oil paint and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 10000x1800mm. 2025..

Figure 69 shows *Tidewoven* curing, in the space of waiting between the application of layers allowing time to contemplate the next steps. The strata shape histories that have collectively merged to create an effect.

Realms

Tidewoven refers to an emerging of places and feelings that connect to the islands of Ireland, Iceland and Aotearoa New Zealand's oceanic mauri.

During the making processes, it followed a path through to a zone of possible resolutions where layers accreted. The work didn't speak to me until the end of the first section when the final two or three coats of iridescent green-gold were applied and then scraped back in places. Once these later layers were in place, the work gave me the sense of its provenance as it related to both the process of making and of completion.

Ingold discusses the division between realms of knowing and of being where "realms of knowing and of being is presupposed ... the world is given to science ... as a reserve or residue that is there for the taking."²³⁷ My work is no longer my work once it enters a realm of existence. It is open to interpretation by the viewer and then recontextualised for an exhibition. As earlier noted, it can also be painted over at a future point, at which point it will enter a completely new realm of existence. Ingold discusses making "as a process of *growth* [emphasis in original],"²³⁸ where movement and tension between intentional and accidental processes eventually become the resolved work. *Tidewoven* is a composite of memories, interactions and glimpses of colour from Kerry shore edges, where ancient graveyards hold coffins that were borne on the shoulders of mourners as they made their way from the sea inland to bury their dead. I walked with my cousin along some of the same paths, where traces of their footfalls remained in the ground. As I experienced Ireland's wild oceanic mornings with spindrifts off the breaking waves, the wash and flow of the water smashed against the sand and raised cliffs. Sweeps of Ballinskelligs beach, clouded in mist, were thumped by the breakers as they rolled in from the wild Atlantic Ocean. Time stood still while I was there, where I could feel my ancestors, their pain and their joy, the smallest things that would have kept hope alive. This work is also an echoing whisper of the shoreline of Ōperetu Narrowneck beach in Te Hau Kapua Devonport.

Interactions occurring between layers, colours, marks, decisions and time eventually accumulate to become the thing that is called a painting. There are moments of hesitation as decisions are made, elapsed periods of time, slow and fast gestures, mindful marks, as well as accidental happenings.

237 Ingold, *Making*, 5.

238 Ingold, *Making*, 21.

Noticing, Reflecting

As an artist, I spend time, pay attention and have learned to be critically reflective by asking questions of the work and noticing issues that arise. I hold conversations with the work; the process of creating requires explanations to myself so that questions and issues can be explained to others. As artist-in-action or viewer-in-contemplation, painting temporal strata is a continuous process until the final resolution is made. Every step is provisional and holds potentiality that suggests the work may never reach completion. At times it is mute and/or unintelligible requiring it to be rested until I can find a path forward with it. When it ‘speaks,’ and only by listening and watching, reflecting and acting does it take its next steps towards its final endpoint.

Curing requires space and time between and away from the work. The time can be variable depending on the room temperature and the thickness of the media. A fully cured surface will behave differently from a freshly applied surface. Only by working with the media through multiple processes and years can any degree of knowledge and experience be gained. As Ingold states, “the mere provision of information holds no guarantee of knowledge ... it is, in short, by watching, listening and feeling - by paying attention to what the world has to tell us, that we learn.”²³⁹ At this stage of my life, I find myself increasingly immersed in learning. The ongoing journey of discovery, through painting, research, and creative practice, has become a profound and enriching gift, continually deepening my understanding and connection to the world around me. As a physical, practical construction, the painting holds traces of gesture as well as my resultant spirit.

The ongoing process of painting *Ephemeral Song* continued (fig. 70) while I worked on other paintings such as *Tidewoven*. As it proceeded I became less concerned as to how it would flow from section to section, instead looking at the previous section (flat on the floor), standing on the cured surface then carrying through the composition, almost like a singer.

239 Ingold, *Making*, 1.



Figure 70. Detail: *Ephemeral Song*, work in progress, oil paint, pigment and cold wax medium on unstretched canvas, 22000x2640mm.2025.

Learning to paint in layers with wax fundamentally changed my painting practice resulting in my paintings portraying a declaration of their material enquiry through the enactment of my methodological practice. In an expansive approach to concepts of thinking and making, in concert with the vitality emergent within and between matter, the work puts pressure on a human tendency to proclaim priority in an active engagement with the life forces of the things around us.

Traversing unconscious and conscious processes and re-envisioning our relationship with the physical world, the key to my work is the need to maintain a close focus on process-oriented making, speculative

questioning, and methods that seek to make sense of the vitality of the media. The presence of matter through the interconnectedness of things is based on being with those things, for example, dogs, bees, oceans, sand, mangroves, oozing mud, drains, gravel, leaves, branches, manhole covers, wax, charcoal, paint and markers. The work contemplates imaginative explorations, attending to what things or vital matters can do with and to the artistic process. Maintaining relentless practical experimentation and reflection leads to methods of practice that suggest human ways of being. The works make me more attentive to the whole of the world around me.

Aotearoa New Zealand photographer Fiona Pardington titled her 2017 book *A Beautiful Hesitation* “to describe photography’s power to arrest time and to alter our relationship with what a photograph both places under our gaze and withholds from it.”²⁴⁰ This hesitation reflects the temporal moment that occurs when the photographer sees an image via the camera lens, the split instant of time it takes to pause, then the moment when the button is touched, then pressed.²⁴¹ When facing a new canvas such as the one shown in Figure 71, I often recall the excitement of blank exercise books as a child, when there were immense possibilities for writing, drawing and expression. Blankness is exciting with possible worlds waiting to be created, ground waiting to be broken.



Figure 71. *Tidewoven*, work in progress, unstretched canvas, 10000x1800mm.2025.

240 Fiona Pardington, *A Beautiful Hesitation* (Victoria University Press, 2017), 1.

241 “Pause for Effect: Fiona Pardington; A Beautiful Hesitation Comes to Auckland Art Gallery,” Auckland Art Gallery, accessed September 3, 2025, <https://www.aucklandartgallery.com/page/pause-for-effect-fiona-pardington-a-beautiful-hesitation-comes-to-auckland-art-gallery>.

This chapter explores the interrelationship between temporality, materiality, and painting practice. Deep time is considered not only through geological processes but also as a metaphor for layered artistic creation, where each mark, layer, and gesture carries the trace of iterative intra-action. Cold wax medium, with its translucency and buildable texture, allows for a durational mode of expression, where layers emerge, recede, and transform, mirroring natural processes like erosion or sedimentation. The materials become an active agent, co-producing meaning through their interaction with gesture, time, and environmental conditions. Works are described not only in terms of their visual attributes but also in how they resonate with lived experience, ancestral memory, and ecological awareness. Ultimately, my practice is presented as a form of worlding, world building and bending, where spirit, time, and material converge in the unfolding act of making.

CONCLUSION

As I come to the close of this research journey, I find myself returning to the question that first propelled me into this inquiry: how might painting evoke the soul of place, its soul, mauri, atmospheres, and resonances of anam áite that exist beyond description? This question has guided me through years of practice, reflection, and writing, and yet it remains as open, as generative, and as full of mystery as when I first asked it. If anything, the research has revealed not a final answer but a widening horizon. Painting, as I have come to know it, is never finished, never conclusive, never capable of capturing place in its entirety. Instead, it is a process of correspondence, a dwelling within material and spirit, a bending of worlds that allows glimpses of the ineffable to emerge. In this sense, the conclusion I write here is not an ending but another threshold, another layer in the sediment of practice, another mark that rests among many.

Throughout this research, my painting practice has become a site of encounter with place, time, and matter. Working between Aotearoa New Zealand and Ireland has allowed me to inhabit both the familiarity of home and the unknown aspects of ancestral land, to experience what it is to belong and not belong, to feel the weight of memory and the lightness of possibility. I have walked the karst pavements of the Burren, the basalt cliffs of Óperetu Narrowneck beach, the bogs and fields of Kerry and the volcanic ridges of Rangitoto. Each of these places has imprinted itself upon me, and through painting I have sought to respond, to mark, to layer, to scrape back and to remember. Place has revealed itself as layered, porous, and affective, a manuscript of traces and atmospheres. To paint place is not to describe it but to enter into relation with it, to let its resonances move through the body and into the surface of wax, pigment, and oil.

Cold wax medium has been central to this process. Its behaviour, its tendency to resist, to crack, to absorb, to transform, has taught me again and again that matter is not passive but agentive. The wax does not simply carry intention; it shapes it, redirects it, resists it. In this way, painting is most certainly a collaboration, not a unilateral imposition of form. Each layer is a negotiation between control and release, between human gesture and material vitality. This aligns with Ingold's notion of dwelling and correspondence. Making is not about imposing design upon inert matter but about joining with materials in their flows, potentials, and histories. Painting, for me, has become a way of dwelling in this meshwork of relations, where every mark is both archive and trajectory, both sediment and emergence.

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology has also guided my reflections, particularly his insistence that

perception is an embodied, situated encounter with the world. Perception does not stand outside of matter; it is of it, entangled with it. In painting, I experience this as the intertwining of hand, eye, surface, and atmosphere. The gesture of the tools is already a response to what has come before: a crack in the wax, a trace of colour beneath the surface, the memory of a cliff face or a bog pool. Perception, like painting, is never neutral; it is always embodied, affective, and temporal. This is why I turn to painting not as representation but as correspondence, as a way of being in relation with place and time.

Affect theory has enabled me to recognise the atmospheres that exceed representation: the moods, resonances, and intensities that places carry. Rive's environmental aesthetics, Magan and Bunbury's evocation of the Irish language, Lappin's reflections on the soul of place and Tabb's exploration of thin places have all provided language for what is otherwise considered ineffable. These writers remind me that places vibrate with unseen forces, that atmospheres are as real as rock strata, that memory and myth are as formative as soil and stone. When I walk the Burren or Rangitoto, I do not only encounter geology but also presence: the murmur of ancestors, the lingering of myth, the persistence of story. Painting has allowed me to dwell with these presences, to evoke atmospheres that are felt rather than seen, which resonate in the body as much as in the eye.

Worlds within worlds - this phrase has come to encapsulate much of what I have sought to articulate. Painting, in its layering, is a world within a world, a threshold that holds both concealment and revelation. Every scrape reveals something buried. Every layer covers and transforms what lies beneath. In this sense, painting mirrors the strata of the earth itself, where each layer carries histories, presences, and absences. To paint is to build worlds, to bend worlds, to invite viewers into world-bent spaces as they draw on the capacity of painting to evoke atmospheres that are not fixed representations but porous, entangled resonances.

Time has been another crucial dimension. Paintings are durational artefacts; they hold traces of process, memory, and temporality. Just as landscapes bear strata of geological and cultural time, so too do paintings sediment the gestures and decisions that made them. Cold wax, in its capacity to hold translucency, to crack and absorb, becomes a material archive of temporality. In this way, my works hold both deep time and lived time. Painting, in this research, has become a temporal practice as much as a spatial one: an act of marking time, of layering memory, of holding presence and absence in tension.

The cross-cultural dimension of this research has been deeply impactful and formative. To stand in Aotearoa New Zealand, my place of birth, is to feel the *mauri*, the life force of *whenua* and *moana*. To stand in Ireland, the land of my ancestors, is to feel *anam áite*, the soul of place, where memory, myth, and spirit

converge. Bringing these perspectives together has enabled me to recognise that both mauri and anam áite speak of vitality, of presence, of the unseen dimensions of land. They remind me that place is not backdrop but participant, not inert but alive.

This research has contributed to contemporary painting by proposing an approach that is both materially and philosophically grounded. It suggests that painting is not representation but correspondence, relationship rather than image, artefact not object. It positions painting as an ethical and attentive practice, one that is responsive to the vitality of matter, the resonance of place, and the temporality of process. It also contributes to practice-led research by demonstrating how theory and practice can intertwine, how concepts of phenomenology, materiality, and affect can be lived and tested through making. In this way, the research does not simply apply theory to practice but allows practice to generate theory, to bend worlds of thought as much as worlds of matter.

The major works that have emerged and that are discussed in this document, *Ephemeral Song*, *Field of the Unsaid*, *Walking the Terrain*, *Faultlines*, *Silfra*, and *Tidewoven*, hold within them traces of this inquiry. They are not conclusions but companions, artefacts that carry within them the correspondences of place, time, and matter. These major works sit alongside many other works that have emerged along the way, forming part of a much larger body of work. My paintings are thresholds where the viewer might also enter, feel, and dwell. They invite an openness, an attentiveness, a recognition that what is seen is always accompanied by what is unseen, that what is present always vibrates with absence. They are not answers but invitations.

As I reflect on the journey, I recognise that the research remains unfinished. This is faithful to both the nature of painting and place, always in process, always becoming, always exceeding capture. To claim finality would be to close down the openness that has been central to this inquiry. The research has shown me that painting can evoke anam áite, not by representing it, but by corresponding with it, by dwelling with its resonances, by allowing atmospheres to move through matter and gesture. This is both the gift and the responsibility of painting: to attend, to care, to remain open to the vibrancy of the world.

In this way, the conclusion is not an ending but another layer, another mark, another threshold. It is a pause, a moment of reflection, a gathering of threads before they disperse again into practice. The work continues. The places call. The wax awaits. And I, as artist and researcher, remain in correspondence, dwelling within the meshwork of matter, memory, and spirit. This is the true conclusion of the research, not closure, certainty or answer, but continuation, resonance, and invitation.

APPENDIX 1. EPHEMERAL SONG: REFLECTIONS

Ephemeral Song, exhibited as part of my PhD exhibition *Soul Place: Anam Áite* at AUT in March 2026, emerged to occupy a position between painting, installation, and spatial experience. The work is an unfolding experience bending around corners and responding directly to the built environment of the gallery space. Doing this challenges traditional distinctions between artwork and site, inviting viewers into a reflective encounter where memory, embodiment, and place become inseparable.

The title *Ephemeral Song* speaks to the song I heard in Cill Rialaig after the wind died down, suggesting emergence, resonance, and fading. Within the installation, these ideas are expressed materially through layered surfaces, translucent veils of colour, gestural markings, and traces that appear to hover between permanence and disappearance. The work is concerned with evoking the sensation of remembering fleeting, sensed memories.

The installation's physical form is central to the experience of the viewer as it stretches continuously across multiple walls and negotiates the architectural corner of the gallery, refusing a singular viewpoint. Viewers must move alongside it, allowing perception to unfold gradually which invites them to engage in a bodily act of navigation. The work is seen and encountered immersively. While traversing the space, colours, varying intensities reveal shifting fields of indigo, violet, charcoal, misted whites, and occasional luminous accents. The painting changes according to distance, angle, and duration of attention, mirroring the instability of memory itself and the experience I had while hearing the sounds at night.

Soul Place: Anam Áite as a title for the exhibition and exegesis invokes ideas of belonging, identity, ancestry, and the relationship between myself and environment. As a lived and remembered experience, place emerges through layers of emotional attachment, cultural memory, sensory encounter, and personal history. The work's surface operates like a palimpsest, where marks accumulate without fully obscuring what lies beneath. Earlier gestures remain visible as traces, suggesting that place, like identity, is constituted through overlapping histories rather than singular narratives. The painting's visual language is atmospheric, speaking to how I have created a field of ambiguity and openness as an abstracted landscape work. This ambiguity allows viewers to project their own memories and associations onto the work. Areas of darkness recede into depth, while passages of light seem to emerge from within the surface. Heavy and delicate linear markings and floral-like motifs intermittently appear and dissolve back into the surrounding layers. These moments evoke the way memories

surface unexpectedly before fading again, never fully recoverable yet persistently present.

In its relationship to temporality, the work appears to be simultaneously ancient and immediate. Layered paint with associated media suggests sedimentation, weathering, and geological processes, while the gestural marks retain a sense of immediacy and presence. This tension creates a dialogue between duration and momentariness. The painting records acts of making that have occurred over time, yet it also captures transient states of becoming. With a heightened sensitivity to materiality, the surface reveals and conceals processes of scraping, erasure, staining, layering, and overpainting. These processes generate a tactile richness that encourages close observation. One comment made about the installation was that “it was like a million paintings all in one”. Marks appear as residues of action, carrying traces of my engagement with the work over its 15 months of creation. These traces are a contribution to a broader meditation on how experiences become embedded within material forms, such as the sound of the song at night I heard once the wind dropped.

Phenomenologically, *Ephemeral Song* is an invitation to viewers into a heightened awareness of their own presence within the space the work occupies. Its scale exceeds immediate comprehension, requiring movement and duration to be concurrently experienced. As viewers walk alongside the installation, they are invited to become conscious of the relationship between body, space and artwork. This embodied encounter recalls phenomenological theories that understand perception as an active, situated process rather than a detached act of observation. Meaning emerges through the interaction between viewer and environment, reinforcing the exhibition’s broader exploration of place as relational and experiential.

The work’s emotional resonance derives largely from its refusal of certainty with no singular focal point, narrative, or interpretive resolution. Instead, the installation operates through suggestion, atmosphere, and affect. Its layered surfaces evoke states of contemplation, melancholy, wonder, and introspection without prescribing a particular reading. This openness enables the work to function as a reflective space in which viewers may encounter their own memories, emotions, and associations. In this sense, *Ephemeral Song* becomes less an object of observation than a catalyst for reflection, echoing how I felt when in Cill Rialaig, slowed-down and reflective.

Ultimately, *Ephemeral Song* demonstrates how contemporary painting can extend beyond the limits of the canvas to become an immersive and spatial practice. Through its expansive scale, layered abstraction, and sensitive engagement with the gallery space, the work creates a poetic environment in which viewers are invited to reflect on memory, place, and transience. It stands as a significant contribution to the themes of *Soul Place:*

Anam Áite, embodying the exhibition's exploration of how identity and belonging are formed through lived experience. The work is a reminder that place is not merely where we are, but what remains within us as an ever-changing constellation of memories, sensations, and connections that continue to resonate long after the moment has passed.

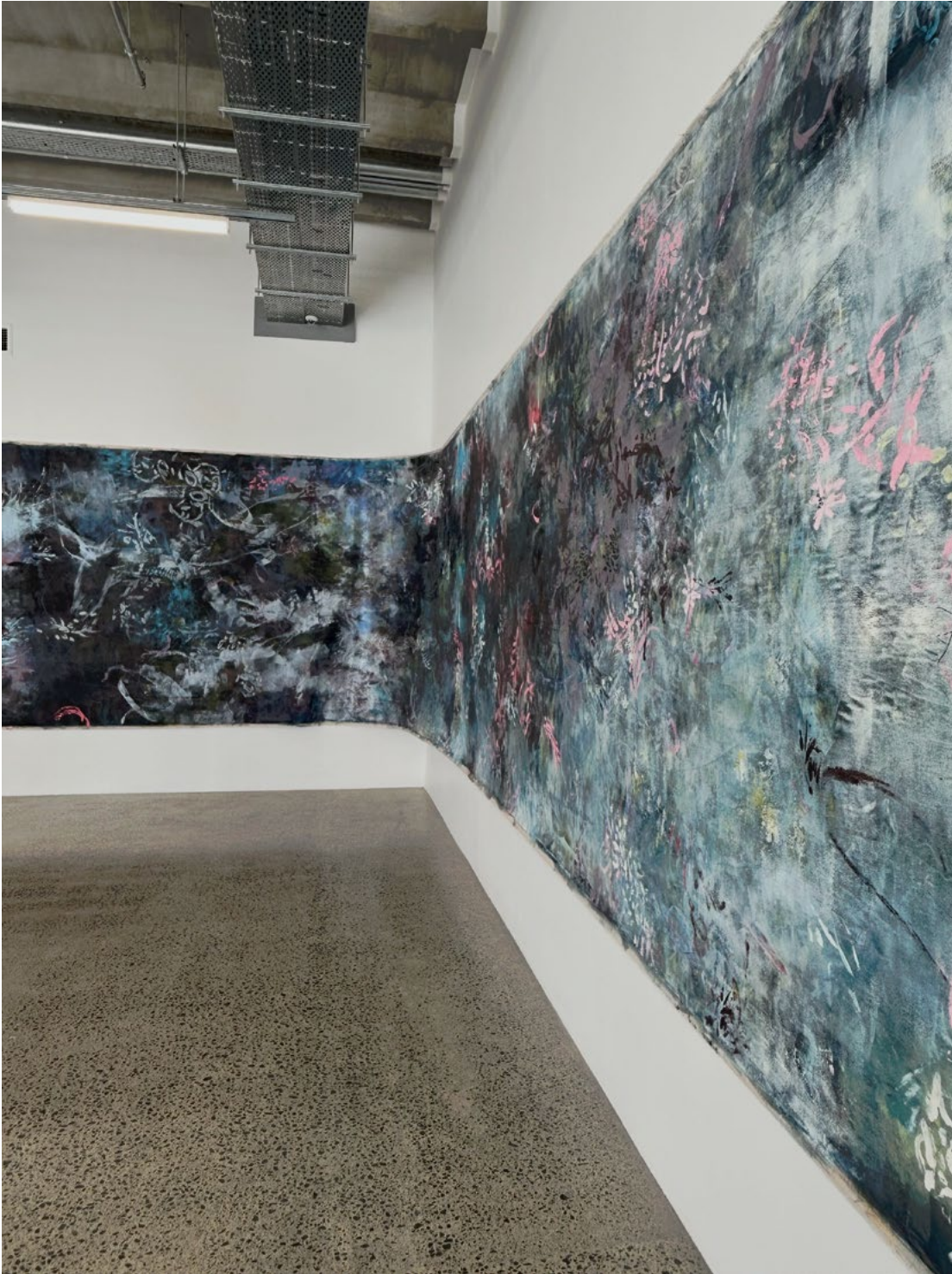


Figure 72. *Ephemeral Song*. 2025. In situ at Gallery 2, Te Wai Ngutu Kākā Gallery, Auckland University of Technology. Oil and pastel with cold wax medium on unstretched canvas. 22000x2640mm. Photograph © Samuel Hartnett. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 73. Ephemeral Song. 2025. In situ at Gallery 2, Te Wai Ngutu Kākā Gallery, Auckland University of Technology. Oil and pastel with cold wax medium on unstretched canvas. 22000x2640mm. Photograph © Samuel Hartnett. Reproduced with permission.

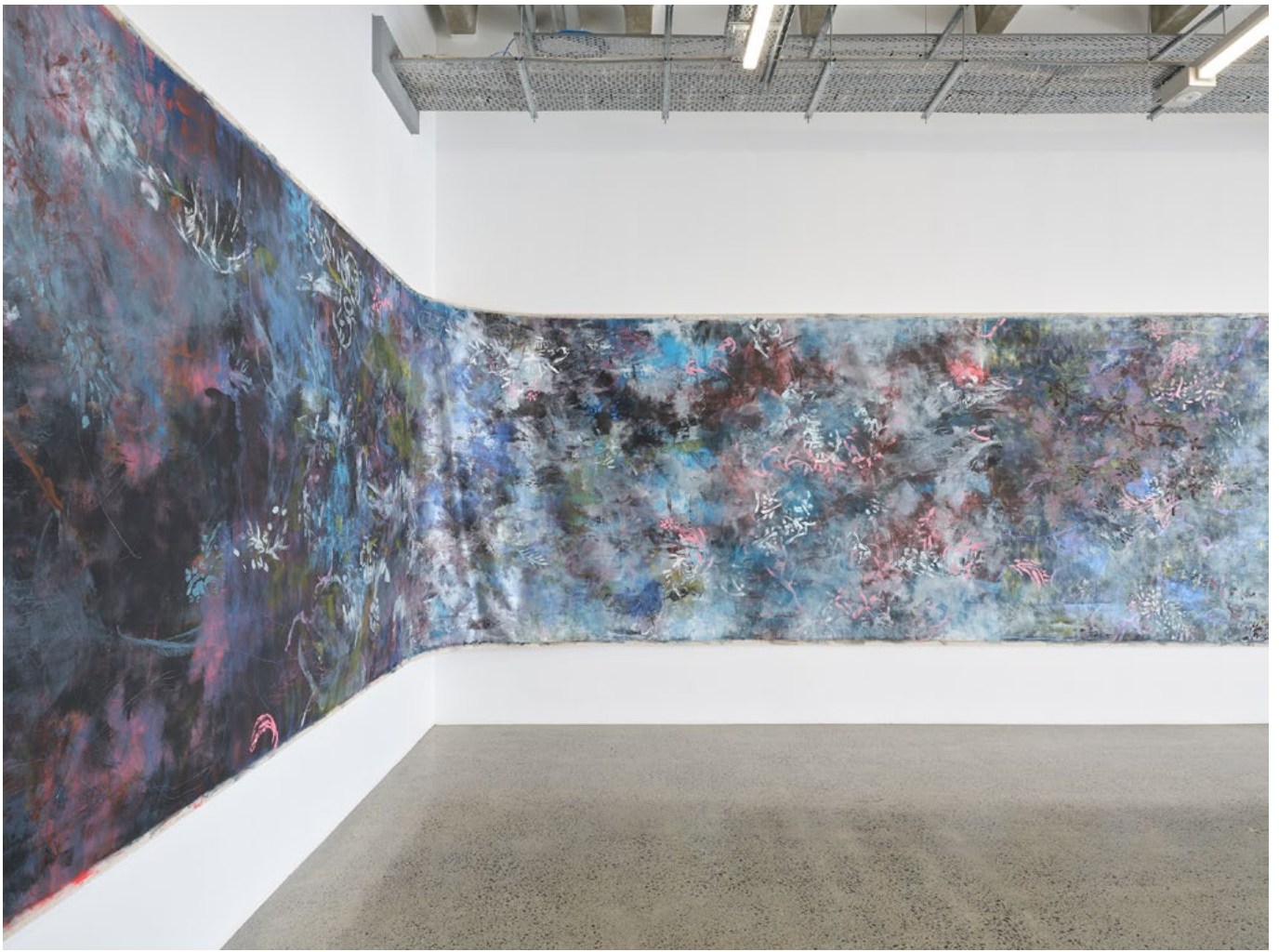


Figure 74. Ephemeral Song. 2025. In situ at Gallery 2, Te Wai Ngutu Kākā Gallery, Auckland University of Technology. Oil and pastel with cold wax medium on unstretched canvas. 22000x2640mm. Photograph © Samuel Hartnett. Reproduced with permission.

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