



PAINTING *of* TIME

DURATION EMERGENCE SENSATION

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2014

An exegesis submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Auckland University of Technology

Table of Contents

Table of Figures	iii
Attestation of Authorship	vi
Acknowledgments	vii
Abstract	viii
INTRODUCTION	1
Overview	2
The Where & When of Emergence	4
Developmental Givens	5
Bergson's Method of Intuition	11
CHAPTER ONE : MOVEMENT, IMAGE, TIME	15
Does Painting Happen?	16
What is Movement?	17
Bergson's Image	19
Virtual & Actual Images	22
Movement-Image as Sensory-Motor Machine	25
Time-Image	28
Perception, Memory, & Duration	32
Affection & The Virtual	33
Image & Representation	34
Incongruent Realities	36
Questions of Freedom	39
A Theory of Emergence	41
Art & Science	43
Plane of Composition	45
CHAPTER TWO : MOVEMENT & EMERGENCE	50
Introduction: The Eternal & The Fleeting	51
Radicality of the Absolutely New	51
The Paradox-Object of Modern Art	59
Ambivalence Towards The Possible	62
Modernism's Others	65
Contemporaneity	67
The Ends of Painting	70
Provisional Painting	74
Painting As Emergence	76
From Conceptual Art to Matter's Affectivity	80
Problematic of The New	82
The Unpresentable	85

A Logic of Sensation	87
The Figural	89
Absolute Emergence	92
 CHAPTER THREE : OF PAINTING	 94
Introduction	95
The Exhibition	96
Givens	105
Related Practices	106
Clearing Givens	117
Approach	119
Sensation	123
Figure-Field	126
Emergence	128
Trajectory	130
Translating Emergence	136
Fluidity	138
The New	140
Provisionality	142
Decision	145
Finishing	147
 CONCLUSION	 149
Vitality in Painting	150
A Problem Badly Posed	151
Bergson & Deleuze	152
Image-of-Emergence	153
Does Painting Happen?	154
 REFERENCES	 156
List of References	157

Table of Figures

Details are given in a caption footnote for any of my paintings made prior to this study (before 2008). For works made during the tenure of the study, dimensions only are given with the caption. Works that were presented for examination in exhibition are marked with an asterisk*

Cover* Jervis, Ian (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 11x13cm.

Title page* Jervis, Ian (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 85x90cm

Introduction

Figure 1	Jervis, Ian (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 85x90cm.	1
Figure 2	Jervis, Ian (1986). <i>Amphibola crenata</i> . Ink, crayon on paper: 11x16cm.	5
Figure 3	Jervis, Ian (1986). <i>Amphibola crenata</i> . Oil on linen: 15x21cm.	5
Figure 4	Jervis, Ian. (1990) [no title]. Oil on linen: 21x55cm.	7
Figure 5	Jervis, Ian. (1985). [no title]. Ink, crayon, pencil on paper: 11x16cm.	7
Figure 6	Jervis, Ian. (1985). [no title]. Ink, crayon, pencil on paper: 15x14cm.	7
Figure 7	Jervis, Ian. (1991). [no title]. Oil on linen: 160x140cm.	8
Figure 8	Jervis, Ian. (1991). [no title]. Ink and oil on board: 52x68cm.	8
Figure 9	Jervis, Ian. (2003). [no title]. Oil on linen: 70x105cm.	8
Figure 10	Jervis, Ian. (1997). <i>Conjectures</i> . Drawings Gallery, Auckland. Installation view; individual images: oil on paper: 8x6.5cm.	9
Figure 11	Jervis, Ian. (1997). <i>Conjectures</i> . P-P Exhibition 1997, Auckland. Folder of paintings in on oil on paper: individual images, 8x6.5cm.	9
Figure 12	Jervis, Ian. (2003). <i>Conjectures</i> . Ink and toner on paper: 30x42cm.	9
Figure 13	Jervis, Ian. (1994). [no title]. Oil on linen: 160x125cm.	10
Figure 14	Jervis, Ian. (1996). [no title]. Oil on linen: 160x140cm.	10
Figure 15	Jervis, Ian. (2007). [no title]. Oil on aluminium: 60x60cm.	10
Figure 16	Jervis, Ian. (2007). [no title]. Oil on aluminium: 60x60cm.	10

Chapter One

Figure 17	Jervis, Ian. (2009). [no title]. Oil on linen: 85x90cm.	15
Figure 18	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 9x12cm.	17
Figure 19	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 9x12cm.	19
Figure 20	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 10x13cm.	22
Figure 21	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 10x13cm.	25
Figure 22	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 10x12cm.	28
Figure 23	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 10x13cm.	31
Figure 24	Bergson's cone diagram metaphor for the interaction between images accumulating in memory and the focal point of perception.	32
Figure 25	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 9x13cm.	36
Figure 26	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 10x10cm.	39
Figure 27	Jervis, Ian. (2014). [no title]. Oil on linen: 11x13cm.	41
Figure 28	Jervis, Ian. (2014). [no title]. Oil on linen: 10x12cm.	43
Figure 29*	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 10x12cm.	45

Chapter Two

Figure 30	Jervis, Ian. (2010). [no title]. Oil on linen: 85x90cm.	50
Figure 31	Jervis, Ian. (2011). [no title]. Oil on linen: 9x12cm.	51
Figure 32	Jervis, Ian. (2012). [no title]. Oil on linen: 12x19cm.	59
Figure 33	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 10x12cm.	61
Figure 34	Jervis, Ian. (2012). [no title]. Oil on linen: 8x13cm.	65
Figure 35	Jervis, Ian. (2012). [no title]. Oil on linen: 12x19m.	67
Figure 36	Jervis, Ian. (2014). [no title]. Oil on linen: 10x12cm.	70
Figure 37	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 10x16cm.	74
Figure 38	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 11x12cm.	76
Figure 39	Jervis, Ian. (2012). [no title]. Oil on linen: 9x12cm.	80
Figure 40	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 10x12cm.	82
Figure 41	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 14x14.5cm.	84
Figure 42	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 90x95cm.	87
Figure 43	Jervis, Ian. (2009). [no title]. Oil on linen: 85x95cm.	89
Figure 44	Jervis, Ian. (2011). [no title]. Oil on linen: 95x120cm.	91
Figure 45	Jervis, Ian. (2010). [no title]. Oil on linen: 150x150cm.	92
Figure 46	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 9.5x12.5cm.	93

Chapter Three

Figure 47	Jervis, Ian. (2010). [no title]. Oil on linen: 120x150cm.	94
Figure 48	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 95x95cm.	95
Figure 49	Map of exhibition layout, St Paul St. Gallery Three, 17 Feb.–1 Mar. 2014.	96
Figure 50	Exhibition: installation view; towards gallery entrance ramp.	97
Figure 51	Exhibition: installation view; centre gallery return.	98
Figure 52	Exhibition: installation view; gallery centre.	99
Figure 53	Exhibition: installation view; upper level; detail of small work, 10x12cm.	101
Figure 54	Exhibition: installation view; upper level.	101
Figure 55	Exhibition: installation view; long view on entering gallery.	102
Figure 56	Exhibition: Installation view; painting in lower level, 125x120cm. detail of small work, 11x13cm.	103
Figure 57	Exhibition: Installation view; painting in lower level alcove, 125x120cm.	103
Figure 58	Exhibition: Installation view; painting in upper level, 125x120cm. detail of small work, 11x13cm.	104
Figure 59	Prepared blank canvas in the artist's studio, 95x90cm.	105
Figure 60	Millar, Judy. (2012). <i>The rainbow loop</i> . Pigment on band ply. BE DO BE DO BE DO. Brisbane: IMA Institute of Modern Art.	107
Figure 61	Millar, Judy. (2009). <i>Giraffe Bottle-Gun</i> . Ink on vinyl: installation, La Maddelena Venice: Venice Biennale, 2009.	107
Figure 62	Turrell, James. (c.2004). [Untitled]. Hologram, glass (3 views), c.40x25cm.	109
Figure 63	van Rijn, Rembrandt. (1669). <i>Self-portrait at the age of 63</i> . Oil on linen: 84x69cm. London, England; National Gallery.	110
Figure 64	Rae, Jude. (2004). <i>Interior (Meg)</i> . Oil on linen: 35x40cm.	111
Figure 65	Saville, Jenny. (2002-3). <i>Reverse</i> . Oil on canvas: 213x243cm	111
Figure 66	Waller, Mark. (2001). <i>Time and relative dimensions in space</i> . Mirror, police box. London: Hayward Gallery.	112
Figure 67	Rae, Jude. (2002). <i>On time</i> . Oil on linen: 56x76cm.	112
Figure 68	Richter, Gerhard. (1986). <i>Mediation</i> . Oil on canvas: 320x400cm.	113
Figure 69	Richter, Gerhard. (1982). <i>Two candles</i> . Oil on canvas: 140x14cm.	113

Figure 70	Sillman, Amy. (2007). <i>P</i> . Oil on canvas: 130x115cm.	114
Figure 71	Sillman, Amy. (2005). <i>Cliff 2</i> . Oil on canvas: 183x152cm.	114
Figure 72	Marden, Brice. (1989-91). <i>Cold Mountain 3</i> . Oil on linen: 274x365cm.	115
Figure 73	Abts, Tomma. (2011). <i>Weers</i> . Acrylic & oil on panel: 48x38cm.	115
Figure 74	Jervis, Ian. (2010). [no title]. Oil on linen: 85x90cm.	116
Figure 75*	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 125x120cm.	118
Figure 76*	Jervis, Ian. (2014). [no title]. Oil on linen: 125x120cm.	120
Figure 77	Jervis, Ian. (2012). [no title]. Oil on linen: 10x12cm.	121
Figure 78	Jervis, Ian. (2012). [no title]. Oil on linen: 85x00cm.	122
Figure 79*	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 95x95cm.	123
Figure 80	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 90x90cm.	124
Figure 81	Jervis, Ian. (2011). [no title]. Oil on linen: 125x150cm.	125
Figure 82	Jervis, Ian. (2010). [no title]. Oil on linen: 90x120cm.	126
Figure 83	Jervis, Ian. (2010). [no title]. Oil on linen: 90x90cm.	127
Figure 84	Jervis, Ian. (2010). [no title]. Oil on linen: 90x120cm.	128
Figure 85	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 90x90cm.	129
Figure 86*	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 150x120cm.	130
Figure 87	Jervis, Ian. (2011). [no title]. Oil on linen: 125x150cm.	131
Figure 88	Jervis, Ian. (2010). [no title]. Oil on linen: 105x135cm.	132
Figure 89	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 10.5x13cm.	134
Figure 90	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 85x90cm.	135
Figure 91*	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 90x90cm.	136
Figure 92	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 85x90cm.	137
Figure 93*	Jervis, Ian. (2014). [no title]. Oil on linen: 10.5x13cm.	138
Figure 94*	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 11x13cm.	138
Figure 95	Jervis, Ian. (2014). [no title]. Oil on linen: 11x13cm.	139
Figure 96	Jervis, Ian. (2012). [no title]. Oil on linen: 10x12cm.	139
Figure 97*	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 90x90cm.	140
Figure 98	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 10x12cm.	141
Figure 99	Jervis, Ian. (2010). [no title]. Oil on linen: 85x95cm.	141
Figure 100*	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 85x90cm.	142
Figure 101	Jervis, Ian. (2011). [no title]. Oil on linen: 125x120cm.	143
Figure 102	Jervis, Ian. (2010). [no title]. Oil on linen: 120x150cm.	144
Figure 103	Jervis, Ian. (2010). [no title]. Oil on linen: 120x150cm.	145
Figure 104	Jervis, Ian. (2010). [no title]. Oil on linen: 120x125cm.	146
Figure 105	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 9x12cm.	147
Figure 106	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 13x15cm.	148

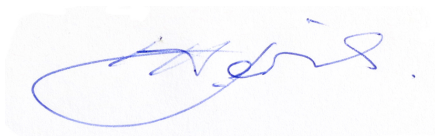
Conclusion

Figure 107	Jervis, Ian. (2013). [no title]. Oil on linen: 12x12.5cm.	155
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Attestation of Authorship

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

Signed

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'A. S. S.', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

11th August 2015

Acknowledgments

I acknowledge and thank Dr. Mark Jackson for his expert advice and guidance, his generosity in helping me develop a more substantial understanding, and his abiding interest in my research.

I also acknowledge and thank Dr. Jan Bryant and Dr. Paul Cullen for the supervisory advice they provided in enabling me to bring my doctoral research to completion.

I would like to acknowledge the support provided by the School of Art and Design at the Auckland University of Technology, and especially the encouragement and support given by my colleagues in the department of Visual Arts.

Finally, I thank Sarah Hillary for her support.

Abstract

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

This study explores, through practice and theory, how painting conducts invention. Henri Bergson’s method of intuition is employed in order to examine the terms of the problem, to reveal that the conundrum results from confusing heterogeneous time with homogeneous space. By bringing image, perception, matter, and memory together into a conception of time as duration, Bergson distinguishes *discontinuous measured time* from the *continuum of qualitative change* that is the living experience of duration. The study finds that it is in this qualitative change that the new emerges, in the virtual and actual movements that constitute a *differing in kind* of psychic states intensive to a painter. Here invention happens unpredictably, unaccountably, and continuously. What a painter ‘pursues’, then, is a *no-thing* that Bergson calls *everything in a work of art*, and which *creates itself as form*. This radical discounting of the material aspect of painting by reframing it in duration dissolves the temporal conundrum, and also absolves a painter of responsibility for invention. In this ontology of becoming, painting emerges continuously as an intensive image-of-emergence, so that the question coming out of the study is: *Does painting happen?*

Painting, however, is a process of both temporal *and* spatial emergence. In exploring how a painter manages to negotiate between the dual and incongruent realities of time and space, Gilles Deleuze’s notion of a *crystal image* provides a means to conceive how emergence, the becoming-image, is in both intensive and extensive movements. Bergson’s philosophy is brought together with Jan Verwoert’s conception for how painting is conducted as a process that has no preconceived outcome, but where criteria for decision-making emerge as painting proceeds. A logic of latency and retroaction in painting, developed by Verwoert as

a rationale for such emergence, is investigated for its potential to evade teleology, retrospection, and representation—and so to mitigate the dilemma that opened this study. As an approach taken to painting, Deleuze’s notion of a process of clearing givens and creating compounds of sensation is explored in practice, where an image-of-emergence coming out of chromatic and achromatic sensation creates affects and percepts that inform decision-making about what action to take next in painting.

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



Figure 1 (85x90cm)

INTRODUCTION

Overview

‘Painting of Time’ investigates how a painter makes decidable the course painting takes—how the accident is a becoming-necessary. Decision is posed continually during processes of painting. When the aim is to create through *terms* that emerge in a future, an obstacle arises concerning what is undecidable. An orientation is needed towards a future—the new. Yet, trajectory can only be presented in terms of the possible, from what is already conceived. *Trajectory is retrograde and not progressive.* This presents a *temporal impasse*, a separation of a future from a present, an impasse that is an essential *raison d’être* for painting, but also an insurmountable obstacle to painting’s invention. This conundrum of a future-orientated trajectory was initially framed in this research as the question ‘*Where is the image?*’ in a research practice that extended over six years of doctoral study primarily undertaken in studio-based painting.

It is true, perhaps, that painting proceeds by following extant but unexplored possibilities, by generating differences in permutations and recombination of extant terms, its already givens. However, is this necessarily invention? Is this how *the new* is understood? As a legacy of Western art history, most especially the ideology of Modernism and its Avant-Gardes, it is taken as a given that painting aims to create *new* images that will *progress* art history by leading in new directions. Such art historical narratives are themselves conceived in a temporality or temporalising that often goes unquestioned. Central to this research project is a fundamental questioning of the temporality assumed in accounts of painting’s processes, essentially a temporality that has been *spatialised* as an unfolding through significant events that demarcate periods traversed by waypoints. As this mode of retrospection-as-progress is translated to ecologies of painting, methods develop a similar logic: paintings are *designed* and not created, or perhaps paintings are offered as alibi or atonement for the absence of any plan for invention. Painting in this study is explored as emergence, where emergence is immanent to processes of painting, rather than an outcome of process. In this, the very notion of *pursuit* is misleading. Nevertheless, the question remains: can a painter be said to direct the course of painting? When *structure* emerges as painting proceeds, how are decisions made, given that what we call ‘structure’ *are* emergent criteria?

In this context, the practical path this study explores, through painting, asks how, in ‘pursuit of the new’, a painting process conducts invention. Invention is not difference of spatial-visual arrangement, but creation of the absolute new. While this quixotic pursuit has been

attributed to Modernist ideology, the project has not been undertaken in tribute to Modernism, but in an attempt to resolve methodological problems attendant on this ideology. *The approach taken explores processes of painting based on emergence*: no preconceived outcomes for painting, no plans, and no representational agendas. Criteria for decision-making emerge in the process of painting, along with emerging visual structures, as a continuous process of *forming*, *de-forming*, and *re-forming*. *Sensation* is the basis for these various ‘formings’, so that painting is conducted as a process of creating sensible aggregates or compounds of sensation—painting with *colour sensation*. In exploring how flow is maintained in the impetus of decision-making and action, painting in this study is conducted on large and small scales, each with different modes, speeds, and durations of action. *Figural* elements de-form representational implications of figuration or abstraction. The figural is, in itself, a de-forming mode. My processes of painting explore how sensations, intuitions, and perceptions fold or unfold in criteria and decision—that is, in emergence-structures that facilitate irruptions as an image-of-emergence.

This exegesis depicts many of the paintings that have been completed during my candidature. None of the works is titled, and captions to each figure give the size of the work only, recognising an *objectification* of painting entailed in such empirical description. Other details are given in the list of figures at the front of the document. Each work has emerged in quite unaccountable interactions between sensations, memories, and matter—notwithstanding my remit (or expectation) to bring these processes to account—and is still considered to be emerging in its processes of reception. Any reference in the work is therefore to *unpredictable* emergence, and to the *continuance* of that emergence. A chronology of production has not been offered, contrary as it is to the realisation of emergence. Moreover, *chronological time* is the basis of the methodological problem I am attempting to resolve. The exhibition of selected works presented for examination is especially discussed in Chapter Three.

The exegesis aims at providing a critical account of my research processes, primarily studio-based painting, in three broad registers. A first chapter engages the critical and philosophical concerns with temporality that I briefly alluded to above. It focuses especially on Henri Bergson’s philosophical investigations into time, the image, and perception, providing a means to examine the nature of the methodological conundrum being investigated in this study, along with the terms of the problem at its basis. The second chapter engages an account, especially from the second half of the twentieth century, of a range of critical understandings of avant-gardism. In doing so, it provides an emphasis on the notion of emergence, alongside a critical encounter with how temporality is accounted for with respect to Bergson’s understanding of duration. The chapter introduces Deleuze’s

understanding of painting as sensation and introduces my own painting practice in this context. The third chapter provides an extended discussion of my doctoral exhibition and, more generally, my painting processes in terms or contexts developed from Chapters One and Two. Thus, *Chapter One* examines the nature of images in Bergsonian terms, as it investigates movements in the actual and virtual actions that are of a body's affective response to sensation, and in processes of perception that interact with memory. It examines how movement is implicated in the changing intensive states that constitute an image-of-emergence, and which are immanent to duration. The problem of dual and incongruent realities for conceiving time is related to the problem at the basis of this study, and to the utilitarian needs of everyday life and of science. In this respect, the chapter sets the work of art into the context of its autonomous emergence, and provides a context for posing the question: *Does painting happen?*

Chapter Two discusses movement in relation to art-historical trajectories that provide a context for the emergence of a *concept of emergence* in painting. It examines the ideological legacies of Modernism and its *Avant-Gardes*, the problem of the possible, and investigates Post-modern developments that prefigure emergence. These include the idea of provisional painting, and debates concerning the ends of painting. From here it moves to a discussion of the problematic of the new and the unrepresentable, and then more directly discusses the role of sensation and the figural in painting based on the ideas of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *Chapter Three* opens with discussion of the exhibition of paintings that emerged in this doctoral research, and proceeds to discuss aspects of method in my own practice, as they relate to principles of emergence. This includes a discussion of some related practices by other artists. Deleuze's concept of *givens* as the "painting before painting" is used as a basis for a discussion on the role in painting of sensation, conventions such as perspective and figure-field relationships, the problem of trajectory and the new, and finally the problem of decision-making on painting's completion.

The Where & When of Emergence

In all painting, an image emerges as the result of a process. However, in the concept of emergence explored in this study, an outcome is not preconceived for the process. Emergence is of painting's procedures, and these emerge differentially throughout the course of painting. Emergence is not of a *material image*, but of an image-of-emergence construing a painter's responding to perceptions of emerging painting. As intensive emergence, aimed at qualifications of emergence within contexts constituting this research, emergence is qualitative change undifferentiated from living experience. In this conception,

immanent to the impetus of temporalising, emergence is *autonomous process* with monadic inscrutability. Though a painter is *present and immanent* to emergence as it is happening, *what happens* is unpredictable and essentially unaccountable. Discussion in this exegesis poses this enigma precisely in terms of its grounding question: *Does painting happen?* While emergence happens *in time*, there are dual conceptions of time, one in which time is divisible and the other in which time is a continuum of change. The *where* and *when* of emergence, therefore, has different connotations for each temporality. This study explores the implications of that difference for the processes of painting as creative practice.

Developmental Givens

This *resumé* of my prior explorations in painting shows how they have brought me to this study, and how they are brought as *givens* into my current painting practice, even if some of these givens then need to be cleared from that practice. What I find on looking back, and what I remember clearly from the time these works were made, is a consistent exploration of ideas about time, movement, and change that developed from a variety of worldly contexts, but based on a conceptualisation of living processes, and how life endures through processes of evolution. It was accompanied by thinking about the agency of processual change, that is, in forces or tendencies that are also behind entropy, gravity, chemistry, and other manifestations of physical change.



Figure 2 ¹

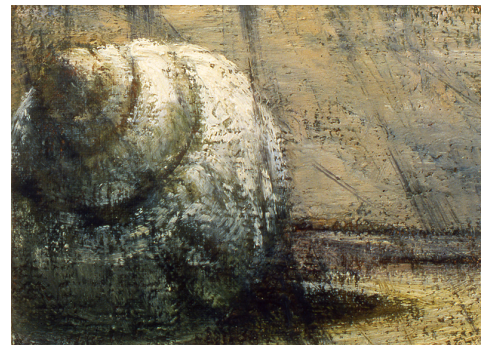


Figure 3 ²

In particular, these ideas came out of my studies into the *ecology of the littoral zone of tidal estuaries and exposed shores*. These are environments characterised by high bio-productivity, transience, and subject to the stresses of extreme and variable conditions, with diurnal and seasonal rhythms, and change due to random weather events. Impinging electromagnetic radiation, as an invisible agent of change, acts on the physiology of organisms with profound

¹ Jervis, Ian (1986). *Amphibola crenata*. Ink and crayon on paper: 11x16cm.

² Jervis, Ian (1986). *Amphibola crenata*. Oil on linen: 15x21cm.

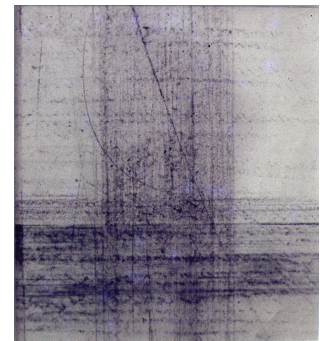
short and long term effects. In the exposed tidal mudflats of estuaries, relationships between biology, physics and chemistry are palpably evident in the tenuous and tenacious life of organisms, and in the movement between individual life, adaptive radiation, and evolution. In these environments, one can sense change moving through the material and living world. Because I was conceiving time and change in terms of *movements in space*, my approach was to reify these abstractions or invisible influences through depicting their material effects, using visual signs in order to divide and articulate the spaces depicted, and to suggest movement within those spaces. Time became either compressed or dilated, and then frozen into the structure of the drawing or painting. Painting was a process of formulating or inventing such signs, that would give visible, albeit *symbolic*, form to the invisible, and that would suggest change, time, energy, and potential—all in terms of spatial movements. For example, in Figures 2 to 6 a structure or architecture of marks is deployed to articulate and divide spaces depicted. The ideas came from consideration of the principles and methods of scientific enquiry, the relationship between *phenomena* and *noumena*, conjecture and the formation and testing of hypotheses, statistics, accuracy and precision, and the untestable. In all these matters, my core interest was in a tendency for change, and so in the provisional, and in the limits of knowing. Subject matter, relating to the specific contexts from which these ideas emerged, was often depicted in drawings or paintings, for example, as organisms with protective carapaces (Figures 2 & 3), or as vials of colour that could be chemical reagents or pigments, depending on the ambiguity of context. They may be referencing a chemistry or ‘alchemy’ of painting (Figure 4). Other works (Figures 15 & 16, for example) were informed by considerations of gravity as a tendency of mutual attraction, and of how forces act at a distance either through a medium or, more mysteriously, when there is no medium.

The basis for thinking about change was the relationship in living things between environment, physiology, anatomy, morphology, behaviour, adaptation, adaptive radiation, and evolution. The overarching relationship concerned endurance in time, through change and movement. My readings of Bergson’s work on creative evolution and duration especially resonated for me with the evolutionary biologist, Stephen Jay Gould, and his analyses of teleological persistence in a commonplace understanding of evolution as a trajectory of progressive *improvements* related to an ideal.³

³ Gould, S. J. (1989). *Wonderful life: The Burgess shale and the nature of history*. (pp.27-52). New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co.

Figure 4 ⁴

Invisible mysteries are sometimes given visible form by the simplest of means: the sprinkling of iron filings to reveal magnetic fields; the vapour trails left by radiation's path through a supersaturated gas; the visual static/noise on a television that is a residue of microwave radiation from the beginning of time; the entropic change of oxidation. As developing technologies allow resolution at increasingly smaller and larger scales, so they open to 'view' what was beyond the limits of perception, and also open questions concerning how interpreted data relates to reality.

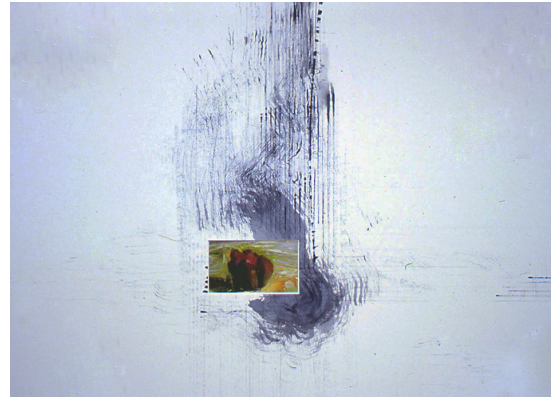
Figure 5 ⁵Figure 6 ⁶

The characteristically broad horizons and expansive skies of tidal estuaries give a sense of exposure, where natural radiations that permeate everything can readily be imagined as filling the emptiness, drenching space. In these drawings (Figures 5 & 6) I imagine such impinging radiation articulating and dividing that space as they exact the radical change of mutation. In referring to invisible forces, these essentially figurative works court abstraction, in a way that refers to how the change brought by these forces courts the deformations that constitute the vitality of living continuance.

⁴Jervis, Ian. (1990). *[no title]*. Oil on linen: 21x55cm.

⁵Jervis, Ian. (1985). *[no title]*. Ink, crayon, and pencil on paper: 11x16cm.

⁶Jervis, Ian. (1985). *[no title]*. Ink, crayon, and pencil on paper: 15x14cm.

Figure 7 ⁷Figure 8 ⁸

Other works, such as in Figures 7 & 8, were informed by thinking about generation and growth evident in the conspicuous inflorescences and fertile buddings of living things. Later works explored ideas of latency, now shifting from a biological context to a concern with the process of making painted images, so that in Figure 9 colour and form in turmoil may be emerging from and folding back into a bloc, pool, or reservoir of potential.

Figure 9 ⁹

In Figures 10 & 11, as examples from different installations, numerous small paintings were collated in groups to create an aggregate work. These *Conjectures*, as they were titled, were presented variously, in grid format on a wall, or along a shelf, or in a folder (Figure 11), or selected by spectators and arrayed in groups (Figure 10). Many of the individual works retained a figurative reference to landscape, through the intersecting horizontal and vertical axes that came from an estuarine horizon, and through colours and morphologies

⁷ Jarvis, Ian. (1991). *[no title]*. Oil on linen: 160x140cm.

⁸ Jarvis, Ian. (1991). *[no title]*. Ink and oil on board: 52x68cm.

⁹ Jarvis, Ian. (2003). *[no title]*. Oil on linen: 70x105cm

reminiscent of living things. These works were, however, moving away from representation in order to explore how painted or drawn forms could invoke tensions, attractions, or repulsions *internally* within the work (see Figure 12).



Figure 10 ¹⁰

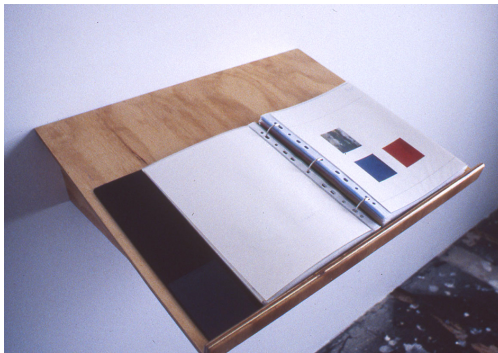


Figure 11 ¹¹

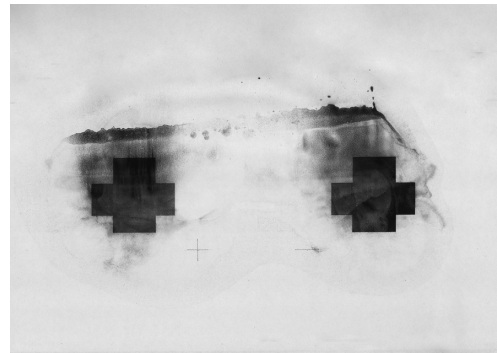


Figure 12 ¹²

In larger paintings, such as those in Figures 13 & 14, where the process of painting is necessarily more protracted, more complex interactions emerged in the layering of paint, and in the interaction between forms as they began to set up rhythms of sensation that served to shift my practice further from representation—a shift aided by the capacity of figural elements to work “outside the grasp of structures, and yet to work within them.”¹³

¹⁰ Jervis, Ian. (1997). *Conjectures*. Drawings Gallery , Auckland. Installation view; individual images: oil on paper: 8x6.5cm

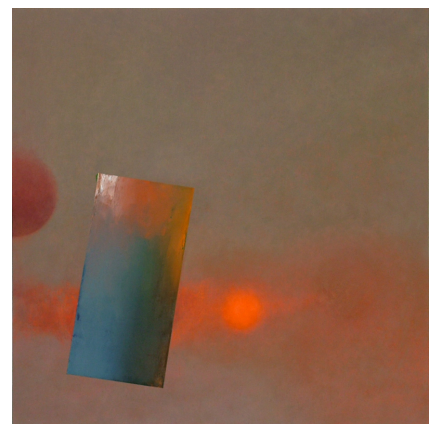
¹¹ Jervis, Ian. (1997). *Conjectures*. P-P Exhibition 1997, Auckland. Individual images, oil on paper: 8x6.5cm.

¹² Jervis, Ian. (2003). *Conjectures*. Ink and toner on paper: 30x42cm.

¹³ Jean–Francois Lyotard’s concept of the figural is discussed in Chapter Two. The citation here is from Crome, K., & Williams, J. (Eds.). (2006). *The Lyotard reader and guide* (p.15). Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press. The term *figural* is coined by Jean-Francois Lyotard (1971), and introduced in Lyotard, J.-F. (2011). *Discourse, figure* (A. Hudek & M. Lydon, Trans.). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Figure 13 ¹⁴Figure 14 ¹⁵

Colour and gesture then began to come to the forefront during painting, so that the processes of painting's sensations became a primary interest (Figures 15 & 16), based on affective responses to colour sensations, emerging in experimental layering and composing. As a consequence, processes of painting, while still exploring attractions within a work, became more occupied with rhythms of sensation that emerged during the process, in the flows and intersections and interactions and recursions of colour, and in the forms that emerge out of these interactions.

Figure 15 ¹⁶Figure 16 ¹⁷

All these prior explorations in painting are brought along as givens, as they prefigure my focus on emergence and painting of time. I return to these givens in Chapter Three in terms of a continual interplay between a clearing of givens in processes of figural deformations of

¹⁴ Jervis, Ian. (1994). *[no title]*. Oil on linen: 160x125cm.

¹⁵ Jervis, Ian. (1996). *[no title]*. Oil on linen: 160x140cm.

¹⁶ Jervis, Ian. (2008). *[no title]*. Oil on aluminium: 60x60cm.

¹⁷ Jervis, Ian. (2008). *[no title]*. Oil on aluminium: 60x60cm.

figuration and abstraction, along with recursive and unavoidable returns of givens as quickly as they are cleared. How do we understand this peculiar recursive process of painting's emergence as *method*, in particular, as Bergson's method of intuition? I approach this via Deleuze's reading of Bergson's method.

Bergson's Method of Intuition

Deleuze delineates three related concepts from Bergson: duration, from *Time and Free Will*; memory, from *Matter and Memory*; and *élan vital*, from *Creative Evolution*. He wants to find the interrelationship between these three and does so by looking at *intuition*. Intuition for Bergson, as Deleuze understands it, is that activity in the life of the mind that sets up and organises problems: "Questions related to the subject and the object, to their distinction and their union, must be set up in terms of time rather than space."¹⁸ What, then, is intuition's methodological character?

In giving definition to Bergson's intuition as method, Deleuze proceeds by drawing out four fundamental characteristics of intuition, four modes of its essential becoming. I will briefly introduce each of these four and in doing so suggest how key notions from Bergson, concerning duration, succession, matter and memory constitute *procedures for composing* states or things, rather than *knowledge of* states or things. With this, we begin to discern how procedurally the work of art may be considered as a *composing procedure*. For Deleuze, intuition's first characteristic questions science's *epistemological* ground, where critical philosophy became nothing more than a reflection on science's knowledge. Bergson restores philosophy to something other than reflection or critique, leading to Deleuze's second characteristic:

We are separated from things: the immediate given is not immediately given. But that separation is not entirely from us, a simple accident, mediation from us. Rather, the movement that changes the nature of things must be founded in things themselves—things must lose themselves in order for us to lose them: being must have a fundamental lapse of memory.¹⁹

Hence, for Deleuze, matter is that in being that prepares and accompanies space, intelligence and science. Matter is an ontological principle of intelligence, rather than intelligence being a psychological principle of matter or space. Scientific knowledge, then, separates us from things—their true nature—though it grasps one of the two movements of

¹⁸ Deleuze, G. (2004). *Desert islands and other texts* (M. Taormina, Trans.). (p.22). Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e).

¹⁹ Ibid. (p.23).

nature—where “nature relaxes and places itself outside itself.”²⁰ There are not two worlds of the sensible and the intelligible but two *movements*, or more precisely, *two directions of one and the same movement*. With one direction, movement congeals in its product, its result, what interrupts that movement; the other direction turns back from the product and retraces its steps: *rediscovers* in the product the movement from which it resulted.

The latter is found beneath the former; hence it is rediscovered. We rediscover the immediate because we must return to find it. At every instant movement is no more but only because it is not made up of instants: “Instants are only its real or virtual cessation, its product and shadow of its product.”²¹ Being is not made up of presents. Thus from another perspective, it is the product that is not and the movement that already was. Bergson shows that it is not the present that is and the past no longer, but rather the present is useful while being is the past, being used to be. Hence Bergson’s two directions of one and the same movement, spirit and matter, two times in the same duration (movement): past and present, co-existing in the same duration, one *beneath* the other and not after the other. Present and past form the same world.

That is to say, being is difference and not the undifferentiated, the difference itself of the thing—*nuance*—a concept only for that thing: “An empiricism worthy of the name ... would measure out for the object a concept appropriate to only that object, a concept of which one could barely say that it was still a concept because it would apply only to that thing.”²² Nuance is not difference of a thing to another thing. This would return us to an exterior spatial relation. Nor is nuance difference to everything it is not—a return to dialectical contradiction: “The being of a sugar cube (its nuance) will be defined by duration—a manner of persisting in the relaxation and tension of duration.”²³ But how does duration have this power of differentiation? This takes us to intuition’s *third characteristic*: the monism of duration’s two tendencies. In that we find ourselves before products or results, we cannot grasp differences in nature for they are not there. That is, between two products or two things there are only *differences of degree or proportion*. What differs in *nature* is a tendency in one and the same thing between two tendencies that traverse it, *two tendencies that encounter one another in it*. That is, the *thing* is already a composite of two tendencies. It is never homogeneous or pure. The *tendency* is pure: “*the substance is the tendency*.”²⁴ Matter and duration are *not* two things but two tendencies or movements in a single thing: relaxation

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid. (p.24).

²² Ibid. (p.25).

²³ Ibid. (p.26).

²⁴ Ibid.

(matter) and contraction (duration). Deleuze emphasises that only one of the two is simple in a single thing (relaxation of matter). The other disturbs it, leading us back to duration.

However, this does not lead us to an essential dualism of ‘contraction’ and ‘relaxation’. Duration differs from matter because *it is what differs from itself in itself*. Thus, the matter from which it differs is still essentially duration. “*Everything is entirely defined in duration, including matter itself.*”²⁵ There are degrees of difference itself, where matter is the lowest, where difference is no longer anything but difference of degree. This leads to *a fourth and final characteristic* of intuition.

Differentiation is the *power* of what is simple, indivisible, of what persists. Duration is *élan vital*, a vital impulse. Evolution and biology, for Bergson, are a production of real differences where differentiation is the mode of that which is realised, actualised, made as divergent series, lines of evolution, species. The essence of a tendency is its divergent directions. *Élan vital* would thus be duration itself to the extent that it is *actualised*, is differentiated, that it passes into act. Differentiation is not matter’s resistance but a *force* that duration carries in itself. Duration, movement and life are virtual, not actual, that in which all actuality, all *reality* is distinguished and comprehended. For Bergson, duration is a change of nature, of quality: “Between light and darkness, between colours, between nuances, difference is absolute. The passage from one to the other is itself also an absolutely real phenomenon.”²⁶ We now see the relation between duration and *élan vital* as that between the virtual and its actualisation, as two extremes. But duration is already *élan vital*, the essence of the *virtual* to be actualised. We thus need a *third* aspect that shows it to us, intermediary of the other two. Under this third aspect, duration is called *memory*.

Bergson presents memory in two ways: recollection-memory and *contraction-memory*. It is the latter that is essential. The first returns us to something that has survived from the past. However, for Bergson, the past survives in itself. *This survival is duration and thus duration is memory*. Hence, recollection is not the representation of something that was. Rather, *the past is that in which we put ourselves from the outset in order to recollect ourselves*. The past has not ceased to be but only to be useful. It survives in itself. The past is not constituted after it was present but *coexists with itself as present*. As for Bergson’s intuition, Deleuze suggests:

Only the method of which we speak allows us to go beyond idealism as well as realism, to affirm the existence of objects inferior and superior to us, while at the same time in a certain sense interior to us, to make them coexist together without

²⁵ Ibid. (p.27).

²⁶ Ibid. (p.28).

difficulty ...Duration is that which at each instant is differentiated, i.e., differentiated into past and present, or the present is doubled in two directions: one towards the past and the other towards the future. These three times correspond to duration, memory, *élan vital*.²⁷

Duration is at each instant differentiation. The taking of time is thus an unforeseeable nothing, a thing's nuance as the everything constitutive of its becoming. Is painting then, for Bergson, a special case of something—an exception? Rather, painting, the artwork, is exemplary of that 'deep introspection' constitutive of the grasp of becoming affective, of grasping *tendency* as substance. That grasp *is* intuition-as-method. The deficit of being is to turn this affective becoming into a subject for whom objects are represented as ideas and for whom perception is the pathway to knowledge. The painter, in Bergson's depiction, is exemplary as the one who, in freedom, lives the differentiations of heterogeneous states, abandoning the measure of things in time. In the following chapter, I engage directly with Bergson, and, to an extent, Deleuze, in discussing the work of art in terms of Bergson's notions of image, movement, affection and temporality.

²⁷ Ibid. (pp.30,31).



Figure 17 (85x90cm)

CHAPTER ONE

MOVEMENT IMAGE TIME

Does Painting Happen?

The painter is before his canvas, the colors are on the palette, the model is sitting—all this we see, and also we know the painter's style: do we foresee what will appear on the canvas? We possess the elements of the problem; we know in an abstract way, how it will be solved, for the portrait will surely resemble the model and will surely resemble also the artist; but the concrete solution brings with it that unforeseeable nothing which is everything in a work of art. And it is this nothing that takes time. Nought as matter, it creates itself as form. The sprouting and flowering of this form are stretched out on an unshrinkable duration, which is one with their essence. So of the works of nature. Their novelty arises from an internal impetus which is progress or succession, which confers on succession a peculiar virtue or which owes to succession the whole of its virtue—which, at any rate, makes succession, or *continuity of interpenetration* in time, irreducible to a mere instantaneous juxtaposition in space. This is why the idea of reading in a present state of the material universe the future of living forms, and of unfolding now their history yet to come, involves a veritable absurdity.¹

Henri Bergson

Everything in a work of art, *everything*, as Bergson asserts, is an unforeseeable *nothing* and *this nothing takes time*. Bergson's account of the artwork radically discounts all of those elements we generally dwell on: painting's materials and tools, painting's subject matter and painting's principal agent, the painter. He says: "nought as matter, it creates itself as form." But, *so of the work of nature!* Bergson then, in this epigraph citation, goes on to mention some of his technical terms: succession, continuity of interpenetration in time, instantaneous juxtaposition in space. In this chapter I aim to engage with Bergson's vitalist philosophy in order to provide an account of this peculiar notion of a "nothing that takes time" constituting the "everything in a work of art." My sense is that what has grounded and guided the emergence—which is to say the movement—of my painting practice resonates strongly with such a Bergsonian conception of matter, temporality, change, process, and life. My basic question, itself emerging within the milieu of Bergson's writings, is simply: *does painting happen?* This implies asking how it is that a "nothing" that is "everything" happens.

In this chapter, I initially introduce the work of Bergson by asking, from a Bergsonian perspective: What is movement? What is an image? What is temporality or duration? In doing so, I introduce aspects of the philosophical writings of Deleuze that engage Bergson,

¹ Bergson, H. (2010). *Creative evolution* (A. Mitchell, Trans.) (p.194). Los Angeles, CA: Indo-European Publishing.

especially on the notions of time, intuition, movement and image. In the next chapter, I address Deleuze's engagement with the painter, Francis Bacon, as a further encounter of philosophy with painting, though it is not in this case Bergson to whom Deleuze turns for this encounter.



Figure 18 (9x12cm)

What is Movement?

Within our everyday reckoning, we encounter movements of all kinds. Works of art are moved from one gallery to another, freighted like other things. To encounter artworks we move from one gallery space to another, or from one site to another. Artists move into their studio space and commence, for example, painting, forever adjusting their distance to the works they are developing. There is no mystery here; we understand that things are in space and are either in motion or at rest. For the most part there is movement relative to things themselves in motion or at rest. We also speak of art movements, general collective understandings that change opinion or direction or aim. They come and go. Movement implies direction, destination, and point of commencement. We commence making something, we are born; we work at something, adjusting, changing things, we mature; we complete a project, reaching finality, we die.

Bergson says something quite different to this, concerning movement, which emerges from his ontology of matter, memory, time and space. He asks us to radically rethink how existence happens and in this, how we think the work of art as something that happens. We need to discuss Bergson's ontology concerning time and image in order to make sense of *movement as a taking of time* that, in a peculiar sense, constitutes that everything and nothing of the work of art. I address some of Deleuze's writings on Bergson though start briefly with a comment from Deleuze's two books on cinema that also constitute a practical Bergsonism: *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. Crucial for us is to define and engage with the key notions of time, image and movement. Deleuze comments in *Cinema 1*:

[M]ovement is distinct from space covered. Space covered is past, movement is present, the act of covering. The space covered is divisible, indeed infinitely divisible, whilst movement is indivisible, or cannot be divided without changing qualitatively each time it is divided. This already presupposes a more complex idea: the spaces covered all belong to a single, identical, homogeneous space, while the movements are heterogeneous, irreducible among themselves.²

The first thing to notice in this brief citation is how time enters in a fundamental understanding of spatiality, or extension, in terms of a past and a present. But the citation also infers something absolute concerning a mathematisation of things. Divisibility means measurement and quantification of nature; indivisibility means qualification or change of nature. The third thing to notice is that movement is an act of covering space: it is action, and not that covered, extension. So we have two series: space, quantity, homogeneity; and movement, quality, heterogeneity. For Bergson these are expressed as two realities that are lived, those of time (duration) and space (extension). Our greatest and most persistent error, for Bergson, is to confuse these two in one particular way: we measure time, as if time too is homogeneous. We quantify time, when time is radically heterogeneous constitutive of the immanence of qualitative difference. In this sense, and correlative with this error, we treat movement as if it too is measurable in homogeneous space rather than recognising movement is a mediating of image and time. But there is much more to be said here.

Life is movement, and movement is common to all things as they interact. Movement passes through a medium that is space, with the quality of extensity. In the traversing of space, positions or waypoints are measured out in regular intervals, or rhythms, which offer a convenient means to translate time, which is qualitative, into the same quantitative terms as space. This mistranslation is behind the problem of trajectory. Time, conceived as a unidirectional succession of events, now reflects back onto movement so that space is conceived in the same terms of linear progression, so that changing orientations are conceived as multiple trajectories, which may become distributed as a web. Movement and trajectory in painting is seldom conceived in terms of undifferentiated and non-directional permeation, diffusion, suffusion, saturation, or smearing. The grain of space suggests rhythm and progression, and it allows mapping and planning of movement. This utility provides a basis for both conceiving and *representing* change and life, in ways that fit with categories of signification and language, and that serve to frame the world in terms of forces and effects. This is the utility that a painter relies on, but which subverts the creation of painting.

² Deleuze, G. (1986). *Cinema 1: The movement-image* (H. Tomlinson & B. Habberjam, Trans.) (p.1). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.



Figure 19 (9x12cm)

Bergson's Image

Every image is within certain images and without others; but of the aggregate of images we cannot say that it is within us or without us, since interiority and exteriority are only relations among images.³

We need to start with the Bergsonian ‘image’, which is to say Bergson’s understanding of perception, Bergson’s ontology:

My perception can, then, only be some part of these objects themselves; it is in them rather than they in it. ... Perception, therefore, consists in detaching, from the totality of objects, the possible action of my body upon them. Perception appears, then, as only a choice. It creates nothing; its office, on the contrary, is to eliminate from the totality of images all those on which I can have no hold, and then, from each of those which I retain, all that does not concern the needs of the image which I call my body.⁴

Bergson here takes up a place between realism and idealism, both of which treat perception as that which leads to knowledge. For Bergson, perception is action—virtual action—leading to actual action. He suggests that immediate consciousness, perception, cannot be separated from action/affection:

Everything will happen as if we allowed to filter through us the action of external things which is real, in order to arrest and retain that which is virtual: this virtual action of things upon our body and of our body upon things is our perception itself.⁵

In this sense, perception *is* our virtual action that is affective, sensate and corporeal. Bergson makes a fundamental distinction between two kinds of image that coincides with his

³ Bergson, H. (1988). *Matter and memory* (N. Paul & S. Palmer, Trans.) (p.25). New York, NY: Zone Books.

⁴ *Ibid.* (p.229).

⁵ *Ibid.* (p.232).

understanding of extensity and affection. My perception indicates the possible action of my body on others: its virtual dimension. My body is in space, extended and is capable of acting on itself as well as on other bodies.⁶ In this sense, something of my body enters my perception. But then there are external bodies, separated from my body by a distance. As that distance diminishes, more possible actions transform to real actions.⁷ There are then two kinds of image: the image that is my body that constitutes a moment when that distance separating bodies is nil. The body perceived is my own—a real and not a virtual action. In this sense, there is a difference between affection and image. Affection is within my body; image is outside my body. Yet, my body is precisely that surface given to me as both sensation and image. Affective sensation constitutes my body's subjectivity. Then, on the other hand, exteriority of images constitutes the images' objectivity. But these are not pure perceptions for the sake of knowledge, constituted in the mathematical points of two bodies. Sensation and perception are entirely concerned with virtual and actual action. We cannot return sensation and image to versions of idealism or realism. Affective sensation constitutes my body's virtual action, my possible action on external images—perceptions—where perception is something of a thing itself and not an idea, or representation. When external images are de-distanced to my body-as-image, virtual action becomes actual. Crucially, *both virtual and actual are real*. Yet, what of the subjectivity of affective sensation—how is it retained? What is recollection and memory? For idealism and realism, memory and perception differ in degree. Bergson notes:

If in the case of a present object, a state in our body is thought sufficient to create the representation of that object, still more must be thought so in the case of an object that is represented though absent. It is necessary, therefore, in this theory, that the remembrance should arise from the attenuated repetition of the cerebral phenomenon which occasioned the primary perception and should consist simply in a perception weakened. Therefore this double thesis: *Memory is only a function of the brain, and there is only a difference of intensity between perception and recollection.*⁸

For Bergson, memory is not a function of the brain. It is not a regression from present to past. On the contrary, memory consists in a progression from the past to the present: "It is in the past that we place ourselves at a stroke."⁹ Crucially, for Bergson, memory is not contemplative but rather sensory and motor: "Our present should not be defined as that which is more intense; it is that which acts on us and which makes us act."¹⁰ That is,

⁶ Ibid. (p.226).

⁷ Ibid. (p.233).

⁸ Ibid. (p.236).

⁹ Ibid. (p.239).

¹⁰ Ibid. (p.240).

perception is not a difference in degree with respect to recollection. Between affection and perception there is a difference in kind that needs to be explored in how Bergson understands matter and memory, spatiality and temporality, simultaneity and succession.

In describing matter as an aggregate of ‘images’ in his introduction to *Matter and Memory*, Bergson clarifies (before proceeding to complicate) what he means: “By ‘image’ we mean a certain existence which is more than what the idealist calls a *representation*, but less than that which the realist calls a *thing*—an existence placed halfway between the ‘thing’ and the ‘representation’.”¹¹ Leonard Lawlor aims at summarising Bergson’s concept of the image in relation to a threefold differentiation: “The Bergsonian image differs from an affection, from a thing, and from a representation.”¹² In the first instance, the ‘pure’ image has no affection within it. In the second, the image has presence in that it “is what it appears to be,” although it is not the thing itself.¹³ In the third instance, the image has an existence halfway between a thing and a representation. Bergson notes:

We will assume for the moment that we know nothing of theories of matter and theories of spirit, nothing of the discussions as to the reality or ideality of the external world. Here I am in the presence of images, in the vaguest sense of the word, images perceived when my senses are opened to them, unperceived when they are closed. All these images act and react upon one another in all their elementary parts according to constant laws which I call laws of nature, and, as a perfect knowledge of these laws would probably allow us to calculate and to foresee what will happen in each of these images, the future of the images must be contained in their present and will add to them nothing new.¹⁴

Bergson’s notion of image does not conform to the usual divisions of subject and object, mind and matter, and he “neither construes the problem of perception or consciousness in representational terms nor does he hold that images are simply in our heads.”¹⁵ For Bergson everything is image.¹⁶ He distinguishes between two systems of image: actual images that are constituted in matter, and virtual images that are to do with spirit. In the former “each image varies for itself,” while in the latter “images change for a single image that occupies a privileged centre.”¹⁷ Keith Ansell-Pearson describes Bergson as giving “primacy to a

¹¹ Ibid. (p.9).

¹² Lawlor, L. (2003). *The challenge of Bergsonism: Phenomenology, ontology, ethics* (p.4). London, England: Continuum Press.

¹³ Ibid. (p.5).

¹⁴ Bergson, *Matter and memory*. op.cit., (p.17).

¹⁵ Ansell-Pearson, K. (2002). *Philosophy and the adventure of the virtual: Bergson and the time of life* (p.145). London, England: Routledge.

¹⁶ Bergson, *Matter and memory*. op. cit., (p.17).

¹⁷ Ansell-Pearson, *Philosophy and the adventure of the virtual*. op. cit., (p.144).

continuity of material extensity.”¹⁸ In this continuity everything is “bound together in relations” that change continually, and which are conceived in logical and spatial terms, thereby “replacing a ‘living unity’ with an empty diagram that is as ‘lifeless as the parts which hold it together’.”¹⁹ Bergson’s conception of a ‘lived body’ is of a unique body that is known both from without, and from within, “in terms of ‘affections,’” which interpose themselves between the excitations a body receives from the outside and the movements it executes in response.”²⁰ Bergson describes how “every image is within certain images and without others; but of the aggregate of images we cannot say that it is within us or without us, since interiority and exteriority are only relations among images.”²¹ The body, then, is not isolated, but is one of an aggregate of images that constitute the material world, so that, as Ansell-Pearson puts it: “the body is a centre of action and not a house of representation.”²² Psychic life, which is the basis of duration, is then “made up of diverse tones and rhythms” that vary “in accordance with the ‘attention to life’,” so that they constitute “zones of indetermination.”²³



Figure 20 (10x13cm)

Virtual & Actual Images

For Bergson, matter has no virtuality, this being solely a quality of mind or spirit; it is only the virtual that has potentialities rather than possibilities.²⁴ The aggregate of images that is the world is in interaction through the centre that is the living being, and assuming that the universe (the totality of all images) is a closed system that operates according to what

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid. (p.145).

²¹ Bergson, *Matter and memory*. op. cit., (p.26).

²² Ansell-Pearson, *Philosophy and the adventure of the virtual*. op. cit., (p.144).

²³ Ibid. (pp.144,145).

²⁴ Ibid. (p.146).

Bergson calls “the laws of nature”: “the future of the images must be contained in their present and will add to them nothing new.”²⁵ In this respect, we are unable to condition the image of the universe; we are unable to expand it through contributing something new. Bergson notes: “images themselves cannot create images; but they indicate at each moment, like a compass that is being moved about, the position of a certain image, my body, in relation to the surrounding images.”²⁶ Because of this interaction, the objects around the sensible body (the centre of action) “reflect its possible action upon them.”²⁷ Matter, then, is the “aggregate of images,” and the perception of matter is “these same images referred to the eventual action of one particular image,” which is the living body.²⁸ Perception, then, is only a choice amongst the possibilities of action that a body can perform on other images, and it creates nothing, but eliminates other images, for which the body has no use.²⁹ Bergson avoids separating subject and object, because in the interiority of affective sensation there is subjectivity, even though there is objectivity in the exteriority of images in general. But if images cannot create new images, and if perception creates nothing but only eliminates unwanted images, wherein lies the new, creation and emergence?

Deleuze and Guattari specify that, while the creating of concepts is the object of philosophy, “artists are presenters of affects, the inventors and creators of affects.”³⁰ Deleuze turns to Bergson for an understanding of the image of and in cinema. In discussing the cinematic image, Deleuze describes an actual image as itself having a virtual image that “corresponds to it like a double or a reflection.”³¹ This uniting of the actual and the virtual, as they pass into each other, he calls a crystal-image; the actual image united in interaction with “recollection-images, dream-images and world-images.”³²

We have seen how, on the broader trajectories, perception and recollection, the real and the imaginary, the physical and the mental, or rather their images, continually followed each other, running behind each other and referring back to each other around a point of indiscernibility. But this point of indiscernibility is precisely constituted by the smallest circle, that is, the coalescence of the

²⁵ Bergson, *Matter and memory*. op. cit., (p.17).

²⁶ Ibid. (p.23).

²⁷ Ibid. (p.21).

²⁸ Ibid. (p.22).

²⁹ Ibid. (p.229).

³⁰ Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1994). *What is philosophy?* (H. Tomlinson & G. Burchell, Trans.) (pp. 5,175). New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

³¹ Deleuze, G. (1989). *Cinema 2: The time-image* (H. Tomlinson & R. Galeta, Trans.) (p.66). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

³² Ibid. (p.67).

actual image and the virtual image. The images with two sides, actual and virtual at the same time.³³

This is the image suspended in a dynamic interaction, indeterminately between the actual and the virtual. Simultaneity is distinct yet inseparable and irreducible.³⁴ The indiscernibility between the actual and the virtual aspects of this crystal image “constitutes an objective illusion; it does not suppress the distinction between the two sides, but makes it unattributable, each side taking the other’s role in a relation which we must describe as reciprocal presupposition, or reversibility.”³⁵ For this reason, Deleuze states that the confusion that arises from the indiscernibility between the real and the imaginary, or the present and the past, or the actual and the virtual, is “not produced in the head or the mind, it is the objective characteristic of certain existing images which are by nature double.”³⁶ In this doubling, the objective and the subjective are brought into clear relation:

The actual is always objective, but the virtual is subjective: it was initially the affect, that which we experience in time; then time itself, pure virtuality which divides itself in two as affecter and affected, ‘the affection of self by self’ as definition of time.³⁷

As Deleuze succinctly states, time permeates this mutual image: “What we see in this crystal is time itself, the gushing forth of time.”³⁸ He explicates further:

What is actual is always a present. But then, precisely, the present passes or changes. We can always say that it becomes past when it no longer is, when a new present replaces it. But this is meaningless. It is clearly necessary for it to pass on for the new to arrive, and it is clearly necessary for it to pass at the same time as it is present, at the moment that it is present. Thus the image has to be present and past, still present and already past, at once and at the same time. If it was not already past at the same time as the present, the present would never pass on. The past does not follow the present that is no longer, it coexists with the present it was. The present is the actual image, and *its* contemporaneous past is the virtual image, the image in a mirror. ... Our actual existence, then, whilst it is unrolled in time, duplicates itself along with a virtual existence, a mirror-image. Every moment of our life presents two aspects, it is actual and virtual, perception on one side and recollection on the other.³⁹

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid. (p.76).

³⁵ Ibid. (p.67).

³⁶ Ibid. (p.68).

³⁷ Ibid. (p.80).

³⁸ Ibid. (pp.79,80).

³⁹ Ibid. (pp.76,77).

From what Deleuze is saying here, we get the sense that the ‘new’ happens in actuality, which is always already present such that its doubling, in a coterminous virtual, accompanies the peculiar temporalising of actualisation by a mirroring pastness. Recollection, memory cannot be severed from actualisation but nor can it be understood as time past. *Time* is regained in this mirror of the crystal. It is what Deleuze recognises in the *substance* revealed in Bergsonian duration. That is, each *thing* is already a composite of two tendencies. It is never homogeneous or pure. The *tendency* is pure: “*the substance is the tendency itself.*”⁴⁰ (Matter and duration are *not* two things but two tendencies or movements in a single thing: relaxation (matter) and contraction (duration). Only one of the two is simple in a single thing (relaxation of matter). The other disturbs it, leading us back to duration. This account of a Bergsonian notion of time, as a ‘snapshot’ of homogeneous reality, outlines the multiplicities, simultaneities, interpenetrations, indiscernibilities, dynamics, and indeterminacies that all fold into heterogeneous duration.



Figure 21 (10x13cm)

Movement-Image As Sensory-Motor Machine

Deleuze relies on Bergson’s philosophy of time to construct a framework for his analysis of the movement-image. Bergson’s conception of consciousness and perception presumes a primal cosmos that is a matter-flow of mutually interacting images—within which the living image emerges as a centre of indetermination, where the ego, eye, brain, and body dissolve as if into a “gaseous state” that is “a world of universal variation, universal undulation, universal rippling: there are neither axes, nor centre, nor left, nor right, nor high, nor low....”⁴¹ This infinite set of all images constitutes a plane of immanence. On this plane the image exists in-itself as matter, so that the movement-image and flowing-matter are

⁴⁰ Deleuze, *Desert islands and other texts*, op. cit., (p.26).

⁴¹ Deleuze, *Cinema I*, op.cit., (p. 58).

identical.⁴² There is nothing hidden behind the image, but only the “absolute identity of the image and movement”, so that the movement-image and matter are identical.⁴³

There is no moving body [mobile] which is distinct from executed movement. There is nothing moved which is distinct from the received movement. Every thing, that is to say every image, is indistinguishable from its actions and reactions: this is universal variation. Every image is ‘merely a road by which pass, in every direction, the modifications propagated throughout the immensity of the universe’. *Every image acts on others and reacts to others, on ‘all their facets at once’ and ‘by all their elements’*.⁴⁴

Bergson tells us that there is no need to look in movement for anything more than we see in it: “external images act on me, transmit movement to me, and I return movement.”⁴⁵ However, going beyond Bergson, Deleuze ontologically equates matter and light and so describes the plane of immanence as being “entirely made up of light” which diffuses as it is propagated without resistance or loss.⁴⁶ Just as matter is light, so the image is movement—and so light is the set of movements (actions and reactions) in the plane of immanence. Visual perception then constitutes a filtering of this light, this movement, through the centre of indetermination that is the living body, which selectively absorbs or reflects various qualities (wavelengths) while allowing others to be transmitted without interference.⁴⁷ As a bloc of light, the ‘thing’ or image-in-itself is a virtual image, while its perception is the actualisation of a portion of that bloc. Visual perception is then *in* thing: “both in the sense that perception takes place at the perceived object and that the perceiver is itself an emergent configuration of light.”⁴⁸ In the movement-image there are only lines or figures of light—as blocs of space–time. For Deleuze as for Bergson, “the eye is in things, in luminous images themselves”, so that “all consciousness *is* something, it is indistinguishable from the thing, that is from the image of light.”⁴⁹ As a position distinct from phenomenological perception, Deleuze reiterates that it is a consciousness which is “diffused everywhere yet does not reveal its source: it is a photo that has already been taken and shot in all things and for all points, but which is ‘translucent’.”⁵⁰

⁴² Ibid. (p. 59).

⁴³ Ibid. (p. 58).

⁴³ Ibid. (p. 59).

⁴⁴ Ibid. (p. 58).

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid. (p. 60).

⁴⁷ Bogue, R. (2003). *Deleuze on cinema* (p. 34). New York, NY: Routledge.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Deleuze, *Cinema I*. op.cit., (p. 60).

⁵⁰ Ibid. (p. 61).

From Bergson's account of perception, Deleuze extracts three types of *movement-image* within the sensory-motor system that analyses received movements and selects executed movements. On the incoming side of the relay between received movement and executed movement Deleuze identifies the *perception-image*, which is in the interval (hesitancy) that is the living image—it is the 'thing' minus those elements filtered out by perception. However perception and action cannot be separated in this interval, because perceptions of the external world are affected by expectations or anticipations, and by the possibilities open to each individual body (centre of indetermination) for future action. Here Deleuze identifies a second type of movement-image as the *action-image*, which is related to the outgoing side of the interval: passing "imperceptibly from perception to action" it puts into effect an "incurvation of the universe" which "simultaneously causes the virtual action of things on us and our possible action on things."⁵¹ The third type of movement-image, the *affection-image*, is what occupies the interval "without filling it in, or filling it up"—relating movement to a "'quality' as lived state", as the coincidence of subject and object in a pure quality.⁵² In parallel with Bergson's linguistic analogy, Deleuze relates the perception-image to nouns, the action-images to verbs, and affection-images to adjectives. While affections (sensation or bodily feelings in general) have an essential relationship with the primary qualities of such 'nouns' and 'verbs', as "proto-adjectives", they are qualitatively different from perceptions—even though "sensation/affection bears a necessary relationship to perception and in fact always accompanies it."⁵³ Whereas our perception indicates the possible action of our body on others, affection is within our body, and sensation is an impurity introduced as "part of our own body which we project into all others."⁵⁴ For Deleuze, the affection-image "marks the coincidence of the subject and object in a pure quality...it relates movement to a 'quality' as lived state (adjective)."⁵⁵ In summary, he describes how each of us, as a special image or contingent centre, is "nothing but an assemblage of three images, a consolidate of perception-images, action-images, and affection-images."⁵⁶

⁵¹ Ibid. (p.65).

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Bogue, *Deleuze on cinema*. op.cit., (p.37).

⁵⁴ Bergson, *Matter & memory*. op.cit., (pp.233-235).

⁵⁵ Deleuze, *Cinema 1*. op.cit., (p.65).

⁵⁶ Ibid. (p.66).



Figure 22 (10x12cm)

Time-Image

Duration is introduced to this “system of the movement-image” by the living image, and so Deleuze identifies two aspects or axes of it. One (vertical) axis is of duration, while the latter (horizontal) axis is of pure perception or movement without duration. The vertical axis is of *differentiation*, where the virtual multiplicity of duration “continually divides or differentiates itself into the closed sets of actual objects in a homogeneous space and an abstract time, while that open whole [duration] remains everywhere indirectly expressed through the movements of the objects within closed sets.”⁵⁷ This relates to the immobile cut, the mobile cut, and the open whole of duration. The horizontal axis is *specification*, where “the movement-image forms three species of movement-images when related to the interval of the living image or center of indetermination.”⁵⁸ Together, in terms of virtual divisions, they constitute a “plane of consistency of image/movement/matter/*durée*”.⁵⁹ He describes this plane as “a plastic mass, an a-signifying and a-syntactic matter, a non-linguistically formed matter, though a matter that is not amorphous and is formed semiotically, aesthetically and pragmatically”—a condition *anterior to what it conditions*, and so not an utterance, but an *utterable*.⁶⁰ While Deleuze has previously identified image/movement/matter with light (in *Cinema 1*), here he broadens the conception (in *Cinema 2*) to include matter/flow, describing the plastic mass as a *signaletic matter* that bears the characteristics of “all kinds of modulation features, sensory (visual and sound), kinetic, intensive, affective, rhythmic, tonal, and even verbal (oral and written).”⁶¹ Language uses this material to make utterances, which then dominate or replace the images and signs—so that language “only exists in its reaction to a

⁵⁷ Bogue, *Deleuze on cinema*. op.cit., (p.39).

⁵⁸ Ibid. (p.39).

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*. op.cit., (p.28).

⁶¹ Ibid.

non-language material that it transforms”, and so that “utterances and narrations are not a given of visible images, but a consequence that flows from this reaction.”⁶²

For Deleuze narrative is a secondary product of a structure of time and space, based around the practical need for a coordinated sensory-motor schema that can apply perceptions and actions towards desires, purposes, or projects. Because of such pragmatism, in order to make relations between signs efficient, non-linguistic signs tend to become subordinated to linguistic signs. In relation to Pierce’s semiotic theory (where he finds such a subordination), Deleuze positions a fourth movement-image, the *relation-image*, which is to do with Pierce’s quality of mediation or “intelligible relation”—“the action of a sign mediating between its object and its interpretant”, related to the tendency to form habits.⁶³ Further to this, Deleuze identifies two additional types of movement-image: the *impulse-image* situated midway between the affection-image and the action-image, and the *reflection-image* situated between the action-image and the relation-image.

As for the question: are there types of image in the movement-image other than the perception-image?, it is resolved by the various aspects of the interval: the perception-image received movement on one side, but the affection-image is what occupies the interval .., the action-image what executes the movement on the other side .., and the relation-image what reconstitutes the whole of the movement with all the aspects of the interval ... Thus the movement-image gives rise to a sensory-motor whole which grounds narration in the image.

Between the perception-image and the others there is no intermediary, because perception extends by itself into the other images. But, in the other cases, there is necessarily an intermediary which indicates the extension as passage. This is why, in the end, we find ourselves faced with six types of perceptible visible images that we see, not three: *perception-image*, *affection-image*, *impulse-image* (intermediate between affection and action), *reflection-image* (intermediate between action and relation), *relation-image*.⁶⁴

As Deleuze indicates here, the necessity of these intermediary images, in relating the perception of Deleuze-Bergson to the semiotics of Pierce, is to translate the latter’s *extension* into terms of the formers’ *passage*. Bergson explains how, instead of containment, the body’s sensory-motor system allows *passage* between images in consciousness and movements in space—between images that are qualitative and without extension, and those that are extended and quantitative. It is for this reason that Deleuze describes the sensory-motor system (schema) as *machine* rather than mechanism, because mechanism implies the

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Bogue, *Deleuze on cinema*. op.cit., (p.100).

⁶⁴ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*. op.cit., (p.31).

containment of the immobile cuts. The *extension* into other types of movement-image happens because whenever affections, actions, and relations occur, there is “always an accompanying *perception of* affections, *of* actions, *of* relations.”⁶⁵ Thus, “if the movement-image is already perception, the perception-image will be perception of perception.”⁶⁶ Because every movement-image manifests movement as both a translation of the parts and an expression of the whole, perception has two poles “depending on whether it is identified with movement or its interval (variation of all the images in their relations with each other, or variation of all the images in relation to one of them).”⁶⁷ On this basis Deleuze develops a number of non-linguistic signs that operate as internal links between situation and action, so that his definition of ‘sign’ is entirely different from that of Pierce—for Deleuze the sign is “a particular image that refers to a type of image, either from the point of view of its bipolar composition, or from the point of view of its genesis.”⁶⁸ The purpose of signs, for Deleuze, is to “articulate the objects of analysis and their interconnections”, so that signs are discursive and generate a proliferation of emerging distinctions, ensuring an “*interplay* in acentred, rhizomatic combinations” that continue to open new territories of relation.⁶⁹ To borrow from Deleuze’s citing of Nietzsche: “it is never at the beginning that something new, a new art, is able to reveal its essence; what it was from the outset it can reveal only after a detour in its evolution.”⁷⁰

Aggregation of movement-images offers an *indirect* image of time as the open whole, but for Deleuze there is a separate category of images and signs that provide a *direct* manifestation of time, as the *time-image*. These include *chronosigns* that present co-existing relations and simultaneous elements of time (the order of time) or a before-and-after in a single becoming (the series of time), and *noosigns* that reveal a new relation between thought and images, and *lectosigns* that manifest a new relation between the visual and the sonic. However it is in the *halyosigns* of Deleuze’s *crystal-image* that we *directly* experience time. In principle, the crystal-image is based on Bergson’s mirroring of the actual and the virtual, in the present, in a way that does not relate to chronological succession. The virtual image in its pure state is distinct from mental images such as recollection-images or dream-images that, while virtual, have been actualised by the needs of perception. It is this pure virtuality, which is “outside of consciousness, in time”, and that corresponds to a particular actual image precisely in the

⁶⁵ Bogue, *Deleuze on cinema*. op.cit., (p.69).

⁶⁶ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*. op.cit., (p.30).

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid. (p.31).

⁶⁹ Bogue, *Deleuze on cinema*. op.cit., (p.104).

⁷⁰ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*. op.cit., (p.41).

present—an “actual-virtual circuit on the spot”, that constitutes the crystal-image.⁷¹ In this crystal-image Deleuze describes an expansive capacity that is both “a little crystalline seed and the vast crystallisable universe.”⁷² The time-image emerges when the actual image enters into relation with its *own* virtual image, to form an image that is “double-sided, mutual, both actual and virtual...to the extent that there is no longer any linkage between the real and the imaginary, but *indiscernibility of the two*, a perpetual exchange.”⁷³ He explains how: “It is time itself that arises in the crystal and which is constantly recommending its dividing in two without completing it, since the indiscernible exchange is always renewed and reproduced.”⁷⁴

What constitutes the crystal-image is the most fundamental operation of time: since the past is constituted not after the present that it was but at the same time, time has to split itself in two at each moment as present and past, which differ from each other in nature, or, what amounts to be the same thing, it has to split the present in two heterogeneous directions, one of which is launched toward the future while the other falls into the past. Time has to split at the same time as it sets itself out, or unrolls itself: it splits in two dissymmetrical jets, one of which makes all the present pass on, while the other preserves all the past. Time consists of this split, and it is this, it is time, that we see in the crystal.⁷⁵

This splitting, “the gushing of time” as a perpetual self-distinguishing, is a limit tendency, and so is endless—as Deleuze describes, “it is itself ‘the vanish-limit between the immediate past which is already no longer and the immediate future which is not yet...mobile mirror which endlessly reflects perception in recollection.’”⁷⁶



Figure 23 (c.10x13cm)

⁷¹ Ibid. (p.77).

⁷² Ibid. (p.78).

⁷³ Ibid. (p.262).

⁷⁴ Ibid. (p.79).

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*. op.cit.,(p.79).

Perception, Memory, & Duration

What Bergson calls ‘pure’ perception, which is instantaneous perception, is only an ideal conception, whereas every perception “fills a certain depth of duration, prolongs the past into the present, and thereby partakes of memory.”⁷⁷ Perception, then, is a synthesis of pure memory and pure perception, as perception–recollection. Lawlor’s formulation that “duration equals memory plus the absolutely new” indicates that perception cannot be separated from recollection.⁷⁸ Perception does not refer back to a representation of the past that has been lodged, as in memory, but brings the past along with it, into the present, and into perception. Bergson argues that, while the process of imagining involves recollection, the image on the screen of consciousness does not refer to the past unless it was sought in the past, so that the process of referring then becomes a following of “the continuous progress, which brought it from darkness into light.”⁷⁹ As an assemblage for how recollection integrates with perception, Bergson gives his diagram of a cone where the point indicates the present, while the cone expresses a dynamic of the accumulating past.⁸⁰ What memory recalls are multiplicities and singularities, rather than identities and universals.⁸¹

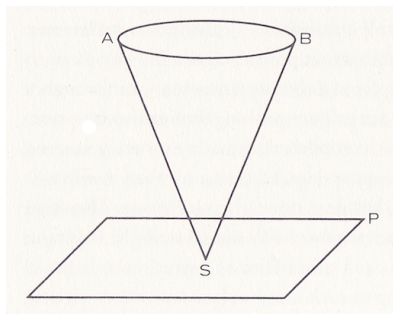


Figure 24. Bergson’s cone diagram metaphor for the interaction between images accumulating in memory and the focal point of perception.

Bergson describes a process of contraction, whereby images from the past are brought up to the present, and then relaxed back into the past—this being how memory maintains the past in the present. In this conception, the past remains vital, as images are continuously being drawn down through the cone’s vortex to interact with perception in the present as perception–recollection. The focal point ‘S’ in the diagram can be taken as equivalent to the focal point of vision, that inscribes an image as it roams across a surface (the plane of a

⁷⁷ Bergson, *Matter and memory*. op. cit., (p.244).

⁷⁸ Lawlor, *The challenge of Bergsonism*. op. cit., (p.ix).

⁷⁹ Bergson, *Matter and memory*. op. cit., (p.135).

⁸⁰ Ibid. (p.152).

⁸¹ Lawlor, *The challenge of Bergsonism*. op. cit., (p.x).

painting, for example). This is also the crucible where invention happens.⁸² This is *not* a representation of the past assembled through memory, nor the representation of a thing through visibility, but living-experiencing, where sensation directly invokes the interaction that is perception-recollection.

But we forget that states of consciousness are processes, and not things; that if we denote them each by a single word, it is for the convenience of language; that they are alive and therefore constantly changing; that, in consequence, it is impossible to cut off for a moment from them without making them poorer by the loss of some impression, and thus altering their quality.⁸³

Affection & The Virtual

Bergson describes perception as if it were a process of filtering out the real action of things upon our body, in order to retain what is virtual: “the virtual action of things upon our body and of our body upon things is our perception itself.”⁸⁴ This is a process whereby a body receives stimuli in order to determine “nascent reactions,” as possible actions the body might take in response.⁸⁵ Because these internal processes continuously “sketch out” possible actions, they correspond exactly to perception.⁸⁶ Bergson explains that they are not, however, “its cause, nor its effect, nor in any sense its duplicate,” but they “merely continue it, the perception being our virtual action and the cerebral state our action already begun.”⁸⁷ Where the body that is perceived is not external to us but is our own body, “then it is a real and no longer a virtual action that our perception sketches out.”⁸⁸

‘Pure’ perception, that is a fragment of reality, is complicated by being mingled with such perceptions of its own body, its affections.⁸⁹ Bergson argues that while sensations are the basis of experience, they are not “the materials from which the image is wrought” in perception, but “appear as the impurity which is introduced into it, being that part of our own body which we project into all others,” namely affections.⁹⁰ Such affection is localised within a body, and if, as Bergson describes, we “restore to the body its extensity and to perception its duration,” then affectivity and memory are restored to consciousness, as its two subjective elements: “Between the affection-felt and the image-perceived there is thus

⁸² Bergson, *Matter and memory*. op. cit., (p.162).

⁸³ Bergson, H. (2001). *Time and free will: An essay on the immediate data of consciousness* (F. Pogson, Trans.) (p.196). New York, NY.: Dover Publications.

⁸⁴ Bergson, *Matter and memory*. op. cit., (p.232).

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid. (p.233).

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid. (p.235).

this difference: that the affection is within our body, the image outside our body. ...In this interiority of affective sensation consists its subjectivity; in that exteriority of images in general, their objectivity.”⁹¹

Image & Representation

Bergson attests that a body, “an object destined to move other objects, is, then, a centre of action; it cannot give birth to a representation.”⁹² The body does not store the past, but prolongs the actions that precede the present. As the aggregate of images that constitute the external world are perceived by the body as a centre of action, Bergson describes them being “entirely changed by very slight alterations of the image I call my body,” including the act of prolongation which is memory.⁹³ As Bergson stresses, perception does not provide an image analogous to a photograph taken from a fixed point, but constructs an image in duration, and through the zone of indetermination that is the body, and which takes from what “should be the image of the whole,” but “is in fact reduced to the image of what interests you.”⁹⁴ In this respect, Bergson summarises: “neither in perception, nor in memory, nor a fortiori in the higher attainments of mind, does the body contribute directly to representation.”⁹⁵ Where intuition may also access immediate knowledge above the decisive turn, “there is no possible transition from the order which is perceived by our senses to the order which we are to conceive for the sake of our science—or, if we are dealing more particularly with the Kantian idealism, no possible transition from sense to understanding.”⁹⁶

Now, here is the image, which I call a material object; I have the representation of it. How then does it not appear to be in itself that which it is for me? It is because, being bound up with all other images, it is continued in those which follow it, just as it prolonged those which preceded it. To transform its existence into representation, it would be enough to suppress what follows it, what precedes it, and also all that fills it, and to retain only its external crust, its superficial skin. That which distinguishes it as a *present* image, as an objective reality, from a *represented* image is the necessity which obliges it to act through every one of its points upon all the points of all other images, to transmit the whole of what it receives, to oppose to every action an equal and contrary

⁹¹ Ibid. (p.234).

⁹² Ibid. (p.20).

⁹³ Ibid. (p.226).

⁹⁴ Ibid. (pp.39,40).

⁹⁵ Ibid. (p.226).

⁹⁶ Ibid. (p.229).

reaction, to be, in short, merely a road by which pass, in every direction, the modifications propagated throughout the immensity of the universe.⁹⁷

Bergson explains that “our representation of matter is the measure of our possible actions upon bodies: it results from the discarding of what has no interest for our needs, or more generally, for our functions.”⁹⁸ Because representation is cut out of the whole, Lawlor describes it as “a decomposition of the whole” that “breaks up the natural continuity of images.”⁹⁹ Any re-composition of the whole then becomes an artifice, and it is in this zone of artifice, which is less than art, that the imagination constructs “only relations and figurations; it is the zone of lines and drawings, schemas and symbols, language and sense.”¹⁰⁰

Within these critical contexts, painting could not be conceived as a representational project, and the image that results from painting—the image of painting and *not* a painted image—can itself be neither translated nor represented. Instead painting becomes an act of living, an active engagement in the world through responding to immediate sensation, and through the action of prolonging the past, and through engaging new conditions that are unfolding in duration. It is, in its own limited way, a constituting of becoming as being-in-a-world:

But if we could assemble all the states of consciousness, past, present, and possible, of all conscious beings, we should still only have gathered a very small part of material reality because images outrun perception on every side. It is just these images that science and metaphysic seek to reconstitute, thus restoring the whole of a chain of which our perception grasps only a few links. But in order thus to discover between perception and reality the relation of the part to the whole, it is necessary to leave perception to its true office, which is to prepare actions. This is what idealism fails to do.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Ibid. (p.36). (Previously cited, in part, on p.26.)

⁹⁸ Bergson, *Matter and memory*. op. cit., (p.38).

⁹⁹ Lawlor, *The challenge of Bergsonism*. op. cit., (p.10).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Bergson, *Matter and memory*. op. cit., (p.229).



Figure 25 (9x13cm)

Incongruent Realities

Homogeneous reality, for Bergson, is divisible into discrete units that occupy separate positions in space, and so this reality has extensity. Homogeneity characterises the world of matter, and the space that it occupies. Material objects derive their exteriority to us (and to one another) from the homogeneity of a medium that inserts intervals between them, and so “sets off their outlines.”¹⁰² This spatialising of experience is the habit of memory that is “accustomed to place alongside of each other, in an ideal space, the terms it perceives in turn, because it always represents past succession in the form of juxtaposition.”¹⁰³ This is the treatment that the mind gives to things external to it, where their changing states are not successive, “except for a consciousness that keeps them in mind.”¹⁰⁴ Where time is considered within a homogeneous framework, it is divided into instants, with each successive instant set apart as a discrete unit. Time then becomes represented in terms of spatial movement between these instants, as if each extensible unit were on a conveyor moving from the present back into an accumulating past. In this conception, the past is set apart from the present, so that it no longer affects the present. As Bergson explains, this homogeneous reality reflects our utilitarian habit of measuring the passage of time, and thinking about time in terms of movement and accumulation, and of cause and effect. This is the basis of the Aristotelian conception of time, essentially contested by Bergson.

By contrast, heterogeneous reality is constituted of qualitative multiplicities that are affective (psychic) states constituted of feelings, sensations and ideas. These psychic states permeate each other as an intensive multiplicity, and as a continuum of flux that is indivisible into

¹⁰² Bergson, *Time and free will*. op. cit., (p.98).

¹⁰³ Bergson, *Creative evolution*. op. cit., (p.194).

¹⁰⁴ Bergson, *Time and free will*. op. cit., (p.227).

extensible units.¹⁰⁵ This is the reality of living-experience. The past endures in these interpenetrating multiplicities, so that heterogeneity is the nature of duration (temporalising) as Bergson conceives it. He describes pure duration as a pure heterogeneity, which is “nothing but a succession of qualitative changes, which melt into and permeate one another, without precise outlines, without any tendency to externalize themselves in relation to one another, without any affiliation with number.”¹⁰⁶ He further describes a “succession without distinction ... a mutual penetration, and interconnexion and organisation of elements, each one of which represents the whole, and cannot be distinguished or isolated from it except by abstract thought.”¹⁰⁷ As an account of duration that might be given by someone who was “ever the same and ever changing,” it is “the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself live, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states.”¹⁰⁸ Duration is lived as an experience of changing and permeating psychic states, and Bergson identifies an enduring vital impetus or *élan vital* that drives this change. Movement is constituted in duration and not in space. This is the vital impetus of life, which is “like a current passing from germ to germ through the medium of a developed organism.”¹⁰⁹ As *élan vital* endures through continually unfolding time, so “duration means invention, the creation of forms, the continual elaboration of the absolutely new.”¹¹⁰ In Bergson’s succinct estimation, “time is invention, or it is nothing at all.”¹¹¹

Bergson describes what happens when, through habit, we (unwittingly) introduce space into our feeling of pure succession:

[W]e set our states of consciousness side by side in such a way as to perceive them simultaneously, no longer in one another, but alongside one another; in a word, we project time into space, we express duration in terms of extensity, and succession thus takes the form of a continuous line or a chain, the parts of which touch without penetrating one another. Note that the mental image thus shaped

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. (p.89).

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. (p.104).

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. (p.101).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. (pp.100-101).

In explanation, Bergson offers two analogies. In *Time and free will* (p.100) he gives a musical analogy, whereby each note is musical only as it connects within the rhythm of the whole musical phrase, which can be compared with a living being. In *Creative evolution* (p.10) he gives an analogy with how sugar dissolves in a closed system “as if it occupied a duration like our own,” so that while its duration coincides with an observer’s (impatient) duration, the observer can neither protract nor contract the duration of dissolving. Bergson describes the duration of dissolving as something lived, rather than thought; no longer a relation, but an absolute. He describes the whole within which all the elements involved in the dissolving are understood, as having been cut out by the observer’s senses, in the manner of consciousness.

¹⁰⁹ Bergson, *Creative evolution*. op. cit., (p.19).

¹¹⁰ Ibid. (p.10).

¹¹¹ Ibid. (p.194).

implies the perception, no longer successive, but simultaneous, of a *before* and *after*, and that it would be a contradiction to suppose a succession which was only a succession, and which nevertheless was contained in the one and the same instant.¹¹²

In this conflating of incongruent realities, the notion of extensity persists and so allows the paradox of infinite succession (as exemplified by Zeno). *However the paradox dissolves in heterogeneous reality, which has no extensity.* It is revealed to be a false problem arising from the confusion that space and movement can be treated in the same way, where movement is divided.

While Bergson describes this habit of thinking as illusory, he also acknowledges the persistence of “an illusion that is natural, and that will last as long as the human mind!”¹¹³

Concrete extensity, that is to say, the diversity of sensible qualities, is not within space; rather it is space that we thrust into extensity. Space is not a ground on which real motion is posited; rather it is real motion that deposits space beneath itself. But our imagination, which is preoccupied above all by the convenience of expression and the exigencies of material life, prefers to invert the natural order of the terms. Accustomed to seek its fulcrum in a world of ready-made motionless images, of which the apparent fixity is hardly anything else but the outward reflection of our lower needs, it cannot help believing that rest is anterior to motion, cannot avoid taking rest as its point of reference and its abiding place. Therefore, it comes to see movement as only a variation of distance, space being thus supposed to precede motion. Then in a space, which is homogeneous and infinitely divisible, we draw, in imagination, a trajectory and fix positions afterwards, applying the movement to the trajectory, we see it divisible like the line we have drawn, and equally denuded of quality. Can we wonder that our understanding, working thence-forward on this idea, which represents precisely the reverse of the truth, discovers in it nothing but contradictions?¹¹⁴

Imagining *trajectory* remains a common aspect of method, even if for the purely pragmatic purpose of generating an impetus for action. In this respect, the undoing of trajectory is also inherent to method. Within homogeneous reality, when one trajectory is lost another is established in a new orientation, and so action proceeds in a rhythm of shifting trajectories. From a perspective obtained from deep introspection within heterogeneous reality, this might be perceived as a rhythm of emerging and dissolving images, or an image in the continuous flow of change.

¹¹² Bergson, *Time and free will*. op. cit., (p.101).

¹¹³ Bergson, *Creative evolution*. op. cit., (p.194).

¹¹⁴ Bergson, *Matter and memory*. op. cit., (p.217).



Figure 26 (10x10cm)

Questions of Freedom

Every demand for explanation in regard to freedom comes back, without our suspecting it, to the following question: “Can time be adequately represented by space?” To which we answer: Yes, if you are dealing with time flown; No, if you speak of time flowing. Now the free act takes place in time which is flowing and not in time which has already flown. Freedom is therefore a fact, and among the facts which we observe there is none clearer. All the difficulties of the problem, and the problem itself, arise from the desire to endow duration with the same attributes as extensivity, to interpret a succession by a simultaneity, and to express the idea of freedom in a language into which it is obviously untranslatable.¹¹⁵

The issue that is central to the disjunction between homogeneous and heterogeneous reality is that of freedom. Whereas space is privileged in homogenous reality—a realm of scientific investigations—duration is privileged in heterogeneous reality—a realm of “inner phenomena in their developing,” that is “in so far as they make up, by their interpenetration, the continuous evolution of a free person.”¹¹⁶ Bergson points out that it is because of the conflation of space with time that homogeneous reality has been led to deny freedom, while heterogeneous reality has been led to define freedom, and “thereby, involuntarily, to deny it too.”¹¹⁷

They ask in fact whether the act could or could not be foreseen, the whole of the conditions being given; and whether they assert or deny it, they admit that this totality of conditions could be conceived as given in advance: which amounts, as we have shown, to treating duration as a homogeneous thing and intensities as

¹¹⁵ Bergson, *Time and free will*. op. cit., (p.221).

¹¹⁶ Ibid. (p.229).

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

magnitudes. They will either say that the act is *determined* by its conditions, without perceiving that they are playing on the double sense of the word causality, and that they are giving to duration at the same time two forms, which are mutually exclusive. Or else they appeal to the principle of the conservation of energy, without asking whether this principle is equally applicable to the moments of the external world, which are equivalent to one another, and to the moments of a living and conscious being, which acquire a richer and richer content. In whatever way, in a word, freedom is viewed, it cannot be denied except on the condition of identifying time with space; it cannot be defined except on condition of demanding that space should adequately represent time; it cannot be argued about in one sense or the other except on condition of previously confusing succession and simultaneity. All determinism will thus be refuted by experience, but every attempt to define freedom will open the way to determinism.¹¹⁸

For the most part, we are unconscious of our inner states when living freely in duration. As Bergson suggests, it is only in rare moments that we *grasp* ourselves by living our own becoming in this way. For this reason he says, “we are rarely free.”¹¹⁹ We only reach the psychic states that constitute duration “by deep introspection, which leads us to grasp our inner states as living things, constantly becoming, as states not amenable to measure, which permeate one another and of which the succession in duration has nothing in common with juxtaposition in homogeneous space.”¹²⁰ To return to Bergson’s *nothing that takes time* and which is everything in the work of art, the question of freedom and the working of art (how it is free to do its work) are here intimately linked. The external image whose perception is the affective action of and on a body, of a grasping of this body’s own living-becoming, *is* this working of art, without distinguishing for a moment an ‘objective’ measure that would constitute a difference between the artist producing and the spectator receiving that ‘work’.

If such deep introspection can give access to the immediacy of living, it is in Bergson’s method of intuition that an explanation is given for how that immediate action might avoid us having to live outside ourselves: “hardly perceiving anything of ourselves but our own ghost, a colourless shadow which pure duration projects into homogeneous space.”¹²¹

Not only, by its memory of former experience, does this consciousness retain the past better and better, so as to organize it with the present in a newer and richer decision; but, living with an intenser life, contracting, by its memory of the immediate experience, a growing number of external moments in its present duration, it becomes more capable of creating acts of which the inner

¹¹⁸ Ibid. (p.230).

¹¹⁹ Ibid. (p.231).

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

indetermination, spread over as large a multiplicity of the moments of matter as you please, will pass the more easily through the meshes of necessity. Thus, whether we consider it in time or in space, freedom always seems to have its roots deep in necessity and to be intimately organized with it. Spirit borrows from matter the perceptions on which it feeds, and restores them to matter in the form of movements, which it has stamped with its own freedom.¹²²

This account of freedom presented by Bergson, a freedom passing through “the meshes of necessity” runs against-the-grain of a thinking of freedom as caprice, as indeterminacy, as antinomy to necessity. It also asks us to consider carefully how emergence itself is to be thought in terms of determinacy and creation. It also casts a consideration on how we have come to think of science and art, their relations and, generally, what is thought of as their antithetical relations with respect to freedom, determination and truth. In concluding this chapter, I will focus particularly on a question of emergence as that question opens a consideration of art and science constituted in Bergson’s thinking, as well as in some developments by Deleuze and Guattari concerning the plane of immanence.



Figure 27 (11x13cm)

A Theory of Emergence

The concept of emergence, in its broad application, recognises that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. At each level of complexity in the whole, “new and often surprising qualities emerge that cannot, at least in any straightforward manner, be attributed to known properties of the constituents.”¹²³ Thus, as an ontological principle, emergence is essentially anti-representational in recognising that emergent new qualities cannot be directly attributed to the conditions from which they emerge. In reverse

¹²² Bergson, *Matter and memory*. op. cit., (p.249).

¹²³ Clayton, P., & Davies, P. (Eds.). (2006). *The re-emergence of emergence: The emergentist hypothesis from science to religion* (p.x). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

perspective, emergence is associated with an anti-reductionist principle that the emergent quality cannot be applied to its parts (or to the various conditions from which it emerged).¹²⁴ Emergence therefore precludes analysis—in the strict sense of that term—of the quality that has emerged holistically, and so is irreducible. It also precludes causality, and while analysis may be fruitful in providing a retrograde methodology, its reductionist account is neither accurate nor complete, especially if emergence is within an open system such as an evolving universe.

Emergence may be weak or strong, epistemological or ontological, according to how it is perceived. In weak or epistemological emergence, the emergent quality is perceived as reducible to, or determined by, the intrinsic properties of, for example, a work of art, even though that quality is difficult to explain, predict, or derive on the basis of what can be observed. Epistemologically emergent qualities are then considered to be “novel only at the level of description.”¹²⁵ By contrast, for strong or ontological emergence, the emergent quality cannot be reduced to, nor determined by, constitutive elements. Causation then becomes immaterial in relation to the ontologically emergent quality, which cannot, even in theory, be deduced from knowledge of the conditions from which it emerged.¹²⁶

Emergence, in its ‘weak’ or epistemological form, was embraced by the British school of philosophy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly by the biological sciences.¹²⁷ The then popular notion of an *internal* mystical vitalism, driving emergence, was externalised by Bergson as *élan vital*, the impetus driving all life, and which is the basis of creative impetus of evolution, and of duration. This Bergsonian conception provides the foundation for the concept of emergence as it now underpins a post-conceptual revitalisation of painting, as we see it today.

¹²⁴ Ibid. [Davies cites John Stuart Mill on the phenomena of life, in *A system of Logic*, bk.III, ch.6, §1.]

¹²⁵ Ibid. (p.8). [Clayton cites Silberstein and McGreever, (1999). The search for ontological emergence. *The philosophical quarterly*. 49, 145 (April), 201-214. DOI: 10.1111/1467-9213.00136]

¹²⁶ Ibid. In *Conceptual foundations of emergence theory* (p.5), Clayton describes how precursors to the concept of emergence can be traced to Aristotle’s principle of entelechy, which he posited as “a principle of growth within organisms that was responsible for the qualities or form that would later emerge.” In this context the organism emerged from its (pre-ordained) potential state into its actual state. Clayton indicates another precursor in Plotinus doctrine of emanation (3rd century CE) that was developed by neo-Platonists as a simultaneous “downward movement of differentiation and causality, and an upward movement of increasing perfection, diminishing distance from the Source, and (in principle) a final mystical reunification with the One.” Emanation allowed for a gradual process of becoming, and Hegel’s philosophy of universal becoming offered a temporalised ontology that prefigures a theory of emergence.

¹²⁷ Ibid. (p.x).



Figure 28 (10x12cm)

Art & Science

Science operates, predominantly, in the homogeneous medium that allows for measurement, in terms of quantitatively identical units in space. Time, then, is conceived in similar spatial terms, as movement between successive units. This is a matter of convenience for science, because it allows all the successive states of the world to be spread out simultaneously in space, “without his having to change anything in his science or to cease talking about time.”¹²⁸ In truth, there is no ‘succession’ in the homogeneity of spatiality and quantifiable time inasmuch as there is no enduring temporalising but solely the simultaneity of measurable states, no pastness but only the disconnection of states encounterable strictly in their degrees of difference. ‘Movement’ enters somewhat phantasmatically as that which accounts for difference between discrete states. All the while, that movement exists, is only encounterable in the heterogeneity of qualitative difference—nuance—of a thing’s differing in-itself, duration’s double movements between matter and memory. As Bergson points out, the physicist is not concerned with the nature of the units, but only with the number of units that any physical process fills.¹²⁹ This culturally dominant mode of thinking about time and change, in terms of movement, causes the process of painting to be conceived as a method of production, one that moves systematically towards its objective, like a design process, or a science project. However, when the *objective* is to encounter the new, this mode is not instrumental. In this respect, art and science struggle with the same problem of invention.

The persisting stereotype is of an opposition between the indeterminacy of art and the determinist agendas of science. However, this does not acknowledge the determinist leanings (yearnings) of Modernism, or an artist’s yearning for a systematic method with evaluative criteria. It also does not recognise how science acknowledges that its territory is

¹²⁸ Bergson, *Creative evolution*, op. cit., (p.193).

¹²⁹ Ibid.

limited to matters that are testable, and how its methods are limited by multiple and unknown contingencies and the need to control (fix) variables. The stereotype also discounts those interests and practices held in common: speculation, exploration, concern with the invisible and the unrepresentable, and with the relationship between order and chaos (whether conceived in terms of aesthetics, or predictable rhythms). Just as biology can be permeated by religiosity in an often-prevalent assumption that evolution progresses towards an ideal, so art can be permeated by a similar teleology in its conception of future destinations.¹³⁰

As a way around this problem of teleological method, the concept of emergence brings the focus back to the immediate moment of unfolding, into the continuous crisis of decision-making and movement in the almost-already changing present. As a concept that has been applied to both science and art, emergence occupies an intermediary position between mystical thinking about internal vitalism where art becomes a mode of fulfilling the essence of life, and a conception of the organism as a complex machine whose novel behaviours are determined by (and could be explained in terms of) universal physical laws.¹³¹ When Bergson talks of creative evolution in the context of both science (life) and art, he connects the two disciplines through his philosophy. As he describes the emergence of form in a work of art, so he relates it to an equivalent emergence in the natural world:

The sprouting and flowering of this form are stretched out on an unshrinkable duration, which is one with their essence. So of the works of nature. Their novelty arises from an internal impetus which is progress or succession, which confers on succession a peculiar virtue or which owes to succession the whole of its virtue — which, at any rate, makes succession or *continuity of interpenetration* in time, irreducible to a mere instantaneous juxtaposition in space. This is why the idea of reading in a present state of the material universe the future of living forms, and of unfolding now their history yet to come, involves a veritable absurdity. But this absurdity is difficult to bring out, because our memory is accustomed to place alongside of each other, in an ideal space, the terms it perceives in turn, because it always represents *past* succession in the form of juxtaposition. It is able to do so, indeed, just because the past belongs to that which has already been invented, to the dead, and no longer to creation and to life. Then as the succession to come will end by being a succession past, we persuade ourselves that the duration to come admits of the same treatment as past duration, that it is, even now, unrollable, that the future is

¹³⁰ Gould, *Wonderful life: The Burgess shale and the nature of history*. op. cit., (pp27-52).

¹³¹ In *The re-emergence of emergence* (p.x) Clayton describes how, with or without a teleological or mystical aspect, emergence was embraced in its weak or epistemological form, by the British school of philosophy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was adopted at that time by many biologists, who generally conceived evolution as a trend towards monistic unity, rather than emerging (differentiating) out of the unity. On emergence in art also see Henry, M. (2009). *Seeing the invisible: On Kandinsky* (S. Davidson, Trans.) (pp.123;124). London, England: Continuum Press.

there, rolled up, already painted on the canvas. An illusion, no doubt, but an illusion that is natural, ineradicable, and that will last as long as the human mind!¹³²

It is this illusion that causes difficulty when attempting to account for how painting proceeds, for how it happens. The problem is that the homogenous medium of space does not translate into the heterogeneity of duration, and the attempt to negotiate between them confuses matters further.



Figure 29* (10x12cm)

Plane of Composition

The three planes, along with their elements, are irreducible: *plane of immanence of philosophy, plane of composition of art, plane of reference or coordination of science; form of concept, force of sensation, function of knowledge; concepts and the conceptual personae, sensations and aesthetic figures, figures and partial observers.*¹³³

In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari develop a thinking of intrinsic or fundamental relations between philosophy, science and art. Certainly each has its specific methods, objects and subjects, though the question they pose, radically, is how these three planes fold, or construe a juncture. What, though, is a ‘plane’? Deleuze and Guattari suggest a plane is what we throw over chaos, how we put a frame over chaos for the sake of order: “Art, science and philosophy ... cast planes over chaos.”¹³⁴ They suggest that art forms “composed chaos ... chaoid sensation as variety,” while science coordinates chaos, forming a “referenced chaos that becomes Nature.”¹³⁵ Philosophy, through the inventing of concepts, constitutes a plane of consistency, struggling with chaos “as undifferentiated abyss or ocean

¹³² Bergson, *Matter and Memory*. op. cit. (p.194).

¹³³ Deleuze & Guattari, *What is philosophy?* op.cit., (p.216).

¹³⁴ Ibid. (p.202).

¹³⁵ Ibid. (p.206).

of dissemblance.”¹³⁶ Concepts render chaos consistent.¹³⁷ Creation is a crosscutting movement, the emergence of variables on a plane (aesthetic, scientific, conceptual) that “crosscut chaotic variability.”¹³⁸ How do we best discern the difference between philosophy’s plane of consistency of concepts and science’s plane of reference of functions? Do they not meet or converge as the grounding of knowledge? Don’t science and philosophy have the same truth? Deleuze and Guattari suggest:

The first difference between philosophy and science lies in their respective propositions of the concept and the function: in one a plane of immanence or consistency, in the other a plane of reference. The plane of reference is both one and multiple, but in a different way to the plane of immanence. The second difference concerns the concept and the function more directly: the inseparability of variations is the distinctive characteristic of the unconditioned concept, while independence of variables, in relations that can be conditioned, is essential to function.¹³⁹

With functions, degrees of variation are conditioned, which is to say, what is discerned as chaotic variation is expressed as regularity or relation. With respect to the invention of concepts, their inventing is unconditional in the sense that concepts are not the outcome of discerning an underlying order of reason, but rather emerge from out of chaotic variability. What is *inseparable* in thinking’s variations or variability is the concept. Thus Deleuze and Guattari amplify the difference between philosophy’s consistency of concepts and science’s relations of function precisely in terms of concept’s emergence in inseparable variations “subject to ‘a contingent reason,’” and “a set of independent variables subject to ‘a necessary reason,’” determining functions.¹⁴⁰ From this perspective, philosophy and science are not so much convergent, but divergent: “It could be said that science and philosophy take opposed paths” in that concepts *consist* in events, while functions *reference* states of affairs.¹⁴¹ In this diversion we already recognise the thinking of Bergson, in discerning the temporalising of the event of ‘thinking’, what Deleuze elsewhere calls a sense-event (*The logic of sense*), and the essential homogeneity of functions’ states-of-affair. But what of sensation and the plane of composition, how do Deleuze and Guattari figure the work of art in this schema of divergence?¹⁴² If concepts are unconditioned though inseparable variations and

¹³⁶ Ibid. (p.207).

¹³⁷ Ibid. (p.208).

¹³⁸ Ibid. (p.207).

¹³⁹ Ibid. (pp.125, 126).

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. (p.126).

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Deleuze, G. (2004). *The logic of sense* (M. Lester & C. Stivale, Trans.) (pp.21,22). London, England: Continuum Press. Deleuze states that “the event belongs essentially to language” which is “said to be of things,” whereas sense “does not exist outside the proposition which expresses it” and “what is expressed

function are conditioned though independent variables, what construes the modes of assembly of sensation's compositions? Moreover, if Deleuze and Guattari suggest philosophy and science take divergent paths, how do we understand their junction or fold, and especially in relation to art?

In the first case sensation is realized in the material and does not exist outside of this realization. It could be said that sensation (the compound of sensations) is projected onto the well-prepared technical plane of composition, in such a way that the aesthetic plane of composition covers it up. The material itself must therefore include mechanisms of perspective as a result of which the projected sensation is realized not solely by covering up the picture but according to a depth.¹⁴³

As inferred from this citation, Deleuze and Guattari suggest there are in fact two planes of composition, what they term a “technical” plane and what they call an “aesthetic” plane. We see they present a conundrum as to how these two planes coincide, whether or not one needs to cover over the other for a work of art to exist. One they call a *faux* plane, the other the genuine plane. They suggest:

Composition is aesthetic, and what is not composed is not a work of art. However, technical composition, the work of the material that often calls on science (mathematics, physics, chemistry, anatomy) is not to be confused with aesthetic composition, which is the work of sensation. Only the latter fully deserves the name composition and a work of art is never produced by or for the sake of technique.¹⁴⁴

The milieu of the work of art inveighs all manner of considerations of this *faux* plane of technical composition. No work exists without its materiality so composed and considered, just as this milieu of art implicates a plane of consistency, the inventing of concepts accounting for a logic of sense, production of signs, a realm of competing discourses and meanings. Equally, this milieu of the work of art complicates a plane of relations, a chaoid of functions whose trajectory is to discern a state-of-affairs with respect to the *knowledge* of art. But none of these constitute what essentially is the composing of sensations. What, then, are sensations such that they enter into what Deleuze and Guattari call a “bloc”? In a sense, this is the core of Bergson's thinking. Deleuze and Guattari emphasise an understanding of sensation in terms of affection, how a self is affected by and in turn affects a being. We think here of Bergson's perception/affection, where perception is action on oneself and on other

has no resemblance whatsoever to the expression.” Sense, then, is “*both the expressible or the expressed of the proposition and the state of affairs*. It turns one side towards things, and one side toward propositions ...It is exactly the boundary between propositions and things.” Sense is an ‘event’ “*on the condition that the event is not confused with its spatio-temporal realization in a state of affairs*.”

¹⁴³ Ibid. (p.193).

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. (pp.191,192).

beings. Crucially, Deleuze and Guattari emphasise a difference between perception and percepts, and affection and affects. Percepts and affects construe an a-personal encounter. They are not reducible to a self's lived experience or emotional states. In this sense of the a-personal, a work of art "stands up" as a being not reducible to an author-origin, or to a finalised meaning, but ex-ists solely as a bloc of sensations.¹⁴⁵ Art is not so much what artists do, but what a being is when encountered on a plane of composition, where this being coincides with our becoming-impersonal.

Provisionally Deleuze and Guattari will discuss art as if there are these two planes of composition and a question of a depth that must be negotiated between them. They present two scenarios, one where technical concerns abound and the other where sensation's composing abounds: "Take two states of oil painting that can be opposed to each other ..."¹⁴⁶ In the first it is a technical question of preparing the work with considered planning, sketching out contours in preparation for the application of colour. In the second, colour is directly applied, colour becoming the "architecture" of the work. Deleuze and Guattari discuss the "thickness" or "depth" that results in each approach, how aesthetic composition covers over technical requirements in the first case and how in the second depth itself is a pure dimension of aesthetic composition. This is not a distinction between representational and non-representational art: "[N]o art and no sensation have ever been representational."¹⁴⁷

They suggest that modern painting turns towards this second pole. In the first case "*sensation is realized in the material*," which is to say, in Bergson's terms, duration or that peculiar double movement of tension, relaxes or congeals into matter.¹⁴⁸ Sensation, that affective action on the image-event of one's body-image, affects the external image in its congealing. Sensation is in this sense becoming-matter. With the second pole, "*material passes into sensation*."¹⁴⁹ They suggest that this technical plane "ascends" into the aesthetic plane of composition, and deride those who insist that modern painting is composed in flatness. What they in fact emphasise is this dimension of depth. This is a thickness "independent to any perspective or depth."¹⁵⁰ For Deleuze and Guattari, one needs to consider a history of art from the vantage point of the divergences, borrowings, crossovers and crosscurrents of these two poles that

¹⁴⁵ In *What is Philosophy?* (p.164) Deleuze and Guattari note: "The artist creates blocs of percepts and affects, but the only law of creation is that the compound must stand up on its own. The artist's greatest difficulty is to make it *stand up on its own*."

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. (p.192).

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. (p.193).

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. (p.194).

may well be encountered in Bergsonian terms: in one case the congealing of duration's substance in matter and in the other the counter-movement of contracting of duration's substance in memory. It is neither memory nor matter that is the genuine stake of a plane of composition, but rather a bloc of sensations that is composed from out of materials that pass into sensation.

In this chapter, I have introduced some key aspects of the philosophical work of Bergson, especially derived from his key writings, *Matter and Memory*, *Creative Evolution*, and *Time and Free Will*. My aim has been to develop a working knowledge of some crucial notions or concepts of Bergsonian philosophy, in concert with some of the work of Deleuze and Guattari, that most certainly has been affected by Bergson's thinking. In concluding this chapter, I have introduced how Deleuze and Guattari engage with the distinct notions of philosophy, science, and art, notions that equally engaged Bergson in his own work. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that the work of art is concerned solely with a composing of forces of sensation and suggest that the history of art's producing may well be engaged in considering two poles by which sensation and matter can be considered: sensations realised in matter and matter passing into sensation. It is the latter that they suggest predominates in modern painting. In the following chapter, my aim is to introduce and discuss a range of understandings of how in Modernism the new, or emergence, has been problematised and discussed. In short, Chapter Two deals with the field of the *Avant-Gardes*. My aim in this discussion is to bring the concerns of key critics and theorists back to my particular understandings of Bergson and Deleuze. I conclude Chapter Two with an introduction to my own painting practice in relation to the preceding discussion. In Chapter Three I discuss my painting exhibition and particular works from it in detail, along with a discussion of other key practitioners who appear germane to my practice.



Figure 30 (85x90cm)

CHAPTER TWO

MOVEMENT & EMERGENCE

Introduction: The Eternal & The Fleeting

This chapter aims at discussing key concerns in the critical discourse of art theory concerning questions of change, the new and evolution. Here I discuss how, in the context of Bergson's conception of time as duration, the ideology espoused by Modernism and its *Avant-Gardes* is revealed by Peter Bürger (among others) to embody the same confusion of the temporal and the spatial that was causing problems for my own painting. I discuss Bergson's relegation of the possible to the lifeless past, and Deleuze's refusal of 'the possible' as having any concern with the new, with emergence, with evolution and with life, as images never produce new images. While the *avant-garde* results from a fundamental break from classical mimesis in search of the eternal and the new, Boris Groys describes the paradox-object of modern art as constraining the apparent pluralism of possibilities available for contemporary art by insisting on a radical self-contradiction. Selected movements within Modernism are discussed as precursors to the concepts of provisionality and of emergence, as these embrace the fleeting and the eternal in reaction to the paradoxical legacy of Modernism's constraint.



Figure 31 (9x12cm)

Radicality of the Absolutely New

The concept of avant-garde in critical theory comes out of the transformative and emancipatory project of the Frankfurt School of Western European philosophy and sociology. The challenge to determinism, that is found in Bergsonian duration and its vital impetus, is prefigured in the vital power that Nietzsche finds in the capacity of art's aesthetic to effect self-rejuvenation, self-transmutation, and self-transfiguration—and so critique social forces. The epistemic basis is shifted from collective truths established in the past, towards individual experience—so that critical theory attempts to elude convention or dogma—becoming closer to actual life, and avoiding location in either materialism or idealism, or becoming confined by its own ideology. Ironically, the critique of ideology

inherent to the concept of avant-gardism, has resulted in ideology that permeated from the tenets of modernism up to the (global) institution of ‘contemporary art practice’—still dedicated to production of the new, even if no longer to progress. Whereas the avant-garde is closely associated with historical modernism and its post-modernisms, in a retrograde trajectory an awareness from the eighteenth century onwards of how linguistic conventions are rooted in socio-political conditions suggests that avant-garde notions permeate the historical narrative of art movements reaching back through aestheticism, to symbolism, to romanticism. For example, romanticism embraced a “cult of novelty and strangeness” before it came to typify the avant-garde that, premised on the critical dichotomy between conventionality and originality, explored experimental form as a means to dislodge clichéd language and convention.¹ Bürger describes how an “apartness from the praxis of life” that always constituted the institutional status of art in bourgeois society, then becomes the *content* of the works in avant-gardism.² The historical avant-garde movements highlight the significance that *art as an institution* has on the reception of individual works, when the social effect of a work is determined by the institution within which the work functions, so that it cannot be evaluated just by considering the work itself.³ As a legacy of the avant-garde, the social conditions within which a work of art is constituted then become a significant aspect of the work.

Within twentieth century Modernism, vanguardist discourse around the concept of originality is interpreted by Rosalind Krauss as more than simply rejection or dissolution of the past (revolt against tradition), but as a “literal origin, a beginning from ground zero, a birth.”⁴ Krauss identifies the self, with its actual and symbolic capacity to continually differ from itself, as an origin that has the “potential for continual acts of regeneration, as a perpetuation of self-birth.”⁵ The claim of the avant-garde is then precisely this claim to originality—that an absolute distinction can be made between “a present experienced *de novo* and a tradition-laden past.”⁶ Originality is then a “working assumption” that “itself emerges from a ground of repetition and recurrence”, leaving open the question of how new

¹ Bürger, P. (1984). *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (M. Shaw, Trans., Vol. 4) (p.x). Minneapolis, MN. University of Minnesota Press. Here Bürger describes how Renato Poggioli draws a parallel between commercialisation and degeneration language in the marketplace, and avant-garde scepticism of language—indicating causes for the avant-garde in socio-political tensions of bourgeois, capitalistic, and technological origin.

² Ibid. (p.27).

³ Ibid. (p.90).

⁴ Krauss, R. (1985). *The originality of the Avant-Garde and other Modernist myths* (p.156). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

⁵ Ibid.(p.157). Krauss cites the Futurists’ promise to destroy museums, and Marinetti’s claim to symbolic rebirth after a motoring accident.

⁶ Ibid.

qualities might be conceived in temporal terms, but also in terms of developing a *project* of avant-gardism.

From what he calls “the failure of avant-gardiste intentions” Bürger deduces that post avant-gardist art is also post-romantic, where hierarchy between style and form has dissolved so that neither can claim to be more *advanced*. Before the historical avant-garde, a developing autonomy of the aesthetic had already been pre-figured in Hegel’s proposition that “what should enchant us, is not the subject of the painting and its lifelikeness, but the pure appearance which is wholly without the sort of interest that the subject has.”⁷ The opposition between inwardness and external reality that was in romantic art, is already transforming into a concern with aesthetic phenomena, and with how art’s reception and representation is framed by phenomenological approaches to perception. It is in this context that the question of the new now presents itself—how the new emerges between production, creation, and perception. The focus now shifts from the manifestation of the new in the production of art within its institutional/historical framework, to consider the underlying temporality, and the question of how the present, past, and future relate—a question that is central if latent in the avant-garde, but central to the process of perception.

In distinguishing between presentational immediacy (perception) and causal efficacy (symbolism) in the work of art, Alfred North Whitehead suggests that artists deal with the former—with direct experience which is infallible because it *is* what is experienced. By contrast, symbolism is fallible because the actions, feelings, emotions, and beliefs that are induced by symbols, amount to mere notions about things—without “that exemplification in the world which the symbolism leads us to presuppose.”⁸ Theorist Donald Kuspit questions an implication that, because artists do not use direct sense experience to symbolic purpose, the presentational immediacy of their experience is therefore not subjected to “the correction of reason.”⁹ While Whitehead’s elevation of art above symbolism aims to clear it of the past, Kuspit points out that this implies that perception is limited to aesthetic response—to “enjoying sense presentations aesthetically.”¹⁰ He describes Whitehead’s double idealizing of the artist, whose special sensibility is then profoundly realistic, as being absurd in its “absolutizing one aspect of art and suggesting a blindspot”, while noting that this is a standard modernist belief about art.¹¹

⁷ Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. op.cit., (p.93).

⁸ As cited in Kuspit, D. (1993). *The cult of the avant-garde artist* (p.4). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid. (p5).

In sum, the myth of the avant-garde artist involves the belief that he is initiated in to the mysteries of the primordial experience. He is able to display the sensuous density of being with a primordial sensuousness equal to its own, to produce works of art as enigmatically dense as being itself. His art is an amazing act of primordial mimesis, in which he unlearns or suspends ordinary symbolizations of experience – one might say the inhibitory symbolizations of experience that make it ordinary – in order to display its primordial givenness. The intensification of color and shape that art seems to effect – the unusual presence it gives them – bespeaks its power to present them with primordial immediacy. Presentation is all, representation nothing in authentic art.¹²

Such unlearning of symbolization prefigures Deleuze's concept of the diagram as a clearing of givens and cliché. However, reiteration of the past that is inherent to the primordial mimesis and givenness, belies presentational immediacy or newness. Nevertheless, it is as if Kuspit invokes both Bergsonian duration and the Deleuzian time-image when he states: "the primordial immediacy of the sense presentation suggests that it is in the perpetual process of self-formation, and as such is always new. At the same time it seems the totality of experience."¹³ It is through Bergson that we obtain clarification of how the past and present relate to perception, and to the future that is the new.

Publication of Bergson's philosophy of time, perception, and creative evolution follows in the wake of debate on Darwinian evolution, and a resurgence in vitalist thinking that drew on Aristotle's conception of life's endurance in the flux of the world, either interpreted through anti-materialist filters of mystical romanticism, or through the filter of mechanistic (scientific) materialism. Bergson's temporality, contemporaneous with Einstein's publication on relativistic time, appears within a socio-historical context of prevalingly negative perceptions of the present, whereas the future was perceived as promising, or *containing*, hope for change—with science and technological developments, at that time, providing a basis for hope. Instead of the mechanistic evolutionary philosophy of Herbert Spencer's determinism, Bergson proposes a *continuous creative process*, as the basis of evolutionary *indeterminism*, driven by a constant vital impetus—*élan vital*.¹⁴ Whereas Spencer immobilises time, for Bergson time is duration—with continual emergence of the new immanent to duration, as a continuous actualising of the future. This flow of the *absolutely new*, as it irrupts continuously, then constitutes a critique of Kantian causality that denies the possibility of

¹² Ibid. (p.5).

¹³ Ibid. (p.6).

¹⁴ For Spencer evolution follows a process of adaptation from the simple to the complex according to a universal law as a "continuous disclosure of the order of the universe." [Guerlac, S. (2006). *Thinking in time: An introduction to Henri Bergson* (p 26). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.]

absolute knowledge.¹⁵ In extension of this critique, Bergson disputes all ‘mechanical’ philosophies based in what he describes as a confusing of the homogeneous with the heterogeneous—confusing space with time. Here Bergson sets himself apart from neo-Kantian epistemology, including positivism. While Heidegger argues that Bergson’s rejection of analyses that divide things quantitatively merely reverses Aristotle’s numerical definition of time, Bergson eludes this attachment to Platonism because memory, for Bergson, is ontological—giving a *new* sense of being in terms of the past rather than the present, or the unconscious instead of the conscious.¹⁶ His critique of extension as a concept within the Eleatic philosophical tradition, comes from the emphasis he places on the *absolutely new*, so that “the whole is not given.”¹⁷

When Bergson criticizes the Eleatic tradition, he in effect criticizes the entire logic of the same and the other. He does this in what we could call a ‘philosophy of language’. Through the concept of the dynamic schema, Bergson furnishes us with a new concept of sense (a new concept of the concept) in which there is no alterity, but, instead of representation, there is alteration, variation, movement, and therefore, life.¹⁸

This emphasis on fluidity (continuum) of movement and change is the basis from which Bergson refers to an *advance* “against the mechanical philosophers” that came with Berkeley’s assertion that the secondary qualities of matter (as we perceive it) were as important as the primary qualities (as it exists in itself).¹⁹ When Bergson defines matter as an aggregate of images, he returns to the situation before idealism and realism brought about dissociation between matter’s existence and its appearance. That is, he returns to process before signification or coding.²⁰ For Bergson, the ‘image’ that is matter, exists as “more than what an idealist calls *representation*, but less than that which the realist calls a *thing*.”²¹

For Bergson, phenomenological *realism* does not satisfactorily address the question of how the new is *created*. In phenomenology perception is prioritized over memory—so that “to perceive is not to remember”, and “there is no call from the present to memory without the ‘immanent sense’ that perception makes available”.²² From Bergson’s position *between idealism and realism*, consciousness refers to matter so that his primacy of memory is *not* a

¹⁵ Ibid. (p 21). Guerlac writes: “Kant’s critique of dogmatic metaphysics (which aspired to knowledge of the absolute) legitimized the relative knowledge of appearances that, according to the critical philosopher, is framed transcendently through the *a priori* conditions of space and time.”

¹⁶ Lawlor. *The challenge of Bergsonism*. op.cit., (p.x).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Bergson, *Matter & memory*. op.cit., (p.10).

²⁰ Ibid. (p.10). See also Guerlac, *Thinking in time*. op.cit., (p.4).

²¹ Bergson, *Matter & memory*. op.cit., (p.9).

²² Lawlor, *The challenge of Bergsonism*. op.cit., (p.ix).

primacy of perception—not a phenomenology of perception.²³ For Bergson, perception is a process that engages in an archaeology and genealogy of originary experience.²⁴

The ontology of becoming that is Bergsonian duration provides the foundation for Deleuze and Guattari's becomings or bringing-forths, in their own philosophy of immanence. Their aim is to deregulate thought in order to “unleash it from the referential rudiments of traditional philosophy (i.e. contrariety, similitude, identity, analogy)” —the classical image of regulated thought being, for them, a “profound betrayal of what it means to think.”²⁵ For Deleuze, every ‘truth’ is “solely the creation of thought” — “the relationship of thought to truth in the ambiguities of infinite movement has never been a simple, let alone constant, matter.”²⁶ The problem presented by the notion of truth, is that it founds a “vast moral system that hijacks thinking”, and overtakes creation.²⁷ In this sense, Deleuze suggests, “time has always put the notion of truth into crisis”, and as a critique of idealism in order to give room for *creative* emergence, their notion of *being (living) as becoming* accommodates reality as the field of action in which a lived body is immersed, and which is always to be greater than the sum of its parts.²⁸

Deleuze notes a philosophical reversal in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* when he defines time as an a priori form of intuition—no longer the ground against which change was gauged as succession, but “the form of everything that changes or moves”, so that succession, simultaneity, and duration become *modes* of time.²⁹ In order to mitigate Kant's unhinging of time from space, Deleuze draws on Bergson to frame the movement-image and conceive the time-image in terms of virtual and actual movements. From Bergson's concept of virtuality in perception, Deleuze provides a ‘model’ for interaction between the distinct, yet inseparable, virtual and actual—as a time-image that is the source of continual production of the new. His method of intuition, developed from Bergson, then brings the past and the present together in perception as immediate knowledge, that then informs decision-making—bringing the philosophical framing of perception to bear on the praxis of art.

Whereas the radically different and transgressive quality of the avant-garde work of art is conceived chronologically as a rupture with past convention, for Deleuze and Guattari there

²³ Ibid. (p.1).

²⁴ Ibid. (p.xi).

²⁵ Flaxman, G. (Ed.). (2000). *The brain is the screen: Deleuze and the philosophy of cinema* (p.3). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. See also: Patton, P. (Ed.). (1996). *Deleuze: A critical reader* (p.7). Oxford, England: Blackwell.

²⁶ Deleuze & Guattari, *What is philosophy?* op.cit., (p.54).

²⁷ Flaxman, *The brain is the screen*. op.cit., (p.3).

²⁸ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*. op.cit., (p.126).

²⁹ Flaxman, *The brain is the screen*. op.cit., (p.4).

is neither chronology nor rupture. For them, the ‘contemporary’ is an ontological term marking “the emergence of something new as the construction and expression of being in becoming.”³⁰ In such emergence the present ‘is’ constitutes a pragmatic start for ‘becoming’—in a way that is not hierarchically privileged, and so differs from the constitutive realities of the present tense given by Hegel or Heidegger. In Hegel’s Idealism no outside logics or perspectives are needed to explain any given phenomenon, with the problem of how to reconcile a Totality that encompasses change, movement, and progress as integral to any concept. In Hegel’s dialectical formulation of Universality there is always already a self-satisfying and teleological synthesis of thesis plus antithesis—‘all that there is’, plus ‘all that there is not’—synthesised into a totality.³¹ The becoming of itself (as True or whole) is here “nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development.”³² For Heidegger, there is a repeatedly presenting or “bringing forth’ of the relations of being (entity)-to-Being (Da-Sein), so that our ability to grasp the ‘out There’ (Da) is in the *technē* that belongs to the bringing-forth or *poiesis*.³³ In this bringing-forth the present is the interaction between identity and difference, and in the aesthetics or rhythms of how this happens, so that time enters as the *timing* of these fleeting rhythms.

For Deleuze and Guattari art and philosophy have *thinking* in common—but with the significant difference that artists do not create concepts; rather, they create “percepts” and “affects.”³⁴ The role of art is then to “mobilize the ‘powers of the false’ in order to supersede the representational categories that have been “invented, procured, and ultimately naturalized for the purpose of judgement.”³⁵ In order to transcend the limits of such categories it was necessary for the avant-garde to define the limits by conceiving art as an institution, and then turning against both “the distribution apparatus on which the work of art depends, and the status of art in bourgeois society as defined by the concept of autonomy.”³⁶ In relation to such anti-ideology and the appropriation of iconoclasm as an artistic device, Boris Groys describes the artwork as positioning itself as a paradox-object that, simultaneously, is an image and a critique of the image. The museum then provides both a reference point and a given destination for the making and reception of art—demonstrating what art can no longer look like, so that the artist’s inner curator can

³⁰ Zepke, S. (2010). Anita Frick: contemporary painting as institutional critique. In *Deleuze and contemporary art* (p.64). Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press.

³¹ Golding, J. (2010). Fractal philosophy (and the small matter of learning how to listen): attunement as the task of art. In S. Zepke & S. O’Sullivan (Eds.), *Deleuze and contemporary art* (p.135). Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press.

³² As cited by Golding: Ibid. (p.135).

³³ Ibid. (p.145).

³⁴ Flaxman, *The brain is the screen*. op.cit., (p.3).

³⁵ Ibid. (p.4).

³⁶ Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. op.cit., (p.22).

prescribe what is or is not possible before painting starts. The default strategy is then to produce difference rather than newness, while it is the museum that produces *new* differences. In this context, avant-garde ideology does not open art to a greater freedom, but to a “new taboo.”³⁷

Deleuze argues that each painter recapitulates the history of painting in his or her own way, and it is the artist’s inventing of blocs of sensations that frees subjectivity from its existing conditions.³⁸ In this respect art’s making of new modalities of subjectivity as a realisation of autonomy is tradition as much as it is contemporary. Yet, because art produces sensations in an a-temporal genesis that exceeds any pre-given conditions of possibility, it is “forever out of time”—in a way that reflects Nietzsche’s concept of the ‘untimely’.³⁹ In this context, the avant-garde assumes a contradictory temporality, whereby it immediately refers the a-temporal genesis, that is the immanent expression of being in becoming, to the chronological hierarchies of the art institution and, in particular, to the museum. Deleuze’s conception of painting as recapitulation as well as creation, and Jan Verwoert’s notion of painting as an unfolding of latent contingency, both follow from Kant’s concept of immanent critique as revealing its conditions. They also follow Clement Greenberg’s early account of modern painting where, in his conception, painting constitutes an immanent critique of its own transcendental conditions—of surface (flatness) and colour—through the production of abstract visual sensations.⁴⁰ Again in conjunction with Kant, Deleuze with his emphasis on sensation, Greenberg with his emphasis on opticality, and Verwoert with his emphasis on emerging qualities and contingencies, all identify sensation as the realm of the aesthetic. However, as Stephen Zepke points out, it is Deleuze’s ‘contemporary’ sensation that “expresses art’s *‘real conditions’*; the becoming-active forces of ‘Life’.”⁴¹

The contemporary in art would therefore emerge, according to Deleuze, as part of a *tradition* of the new, one which was not defined by the traditions of ‘art’, but neither was it denied to them. So although it is tempting to see the tradition of the new as equating with the avant-garde trajectory, the ‘contemporary’ in art does not emerge simply through a critique of the present, or of its history, which both retain the ‘before’ as the condition of any conceivable ‘after’...The autonomy of art, at least when it is realised, is not a bourgeois institutionalization that must be rejected, but a radical alterity introduced into the social body as sensation. This sensation affirms a body uncontained by its institutions, a body that evades its

³⁷ Groys, B. (2008). *Art power* (p.30). Cambridge, MA. MIT Press.

³⁸ Zepke, Anita Fricek: *contemporary painting as institutional critique*. op.cit., (p.65).

³⁹ Ibid. (p.63).

⁴⁰ Ibid. (p.65).

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

negation in the critical ‘consciousness’ of the avant-garde and institutional critique.⁴²

As an examination of such a-historical emergence in contemporary painting practice, Verwoert analyses the process of painting *while it is happening*, and so examines emergence *as it happens*, and as the artist *perceives it happening*. Here, in the dynamics of action with interacting movement-images and time-image, conditions for the artist’s decision-making emerge together with the decisions, along with the latent contingencies which form conditions for emergence itself. This *image-of-emergence*, immanent to Bergsonian duration, relates closely to the Deleuzian time-image and his blocs of sensation—relegating mimesis, representation, to historical (chronological) conceptions of painting, but also sustaining the radicality of the *concept* of avant-garde. This essentially constitutes a critique of the art institution, and so becomes an extension of avant-garde politics that were aimed primarily at the art institution. As Zepke explains, this was a politics that *was* art—the avant-garde’s critical relation to *art* was actually a critique of the *art institution*—a critique that was for the avant-garde “a condition of possibility to art being ‘new’.”⁴³



Figure 32 (12x19cm)

The Paradox-Object of Modern Art

In Bergson’s conception of duration, the changing intensities of our psychic states, qualitative intensities, become translated as extensive quantities that are associated with progression, with movement through space.⁴⁴ In this way, the conception of intensive change and of what emerges new in change, becomes associated with movement in space, which is the conception of the ‘new’ that predominated in Modernism, and which the *Avant-Garde* adopted as its *raison d’être*. This misconstruing (in relation to Bergson) of how ‘new images’ are created in space rather than in duration, leads to emphases on the *production* of

⁴² Ibid. (p.63).

⁴³ Ibid. (p.64).

⁴⁴ Bergson, *Time and free will*. op. cit., (pp. 2-6).

works of art as a process of construction rather than creation. It is the legacy of this instrumental conception of how an artist creates ‘new’ works that has proven to be methodologically problematic for me as a painter. It is central to this thesis problematic.

Within Modernism, the role predominantly taken by avant-gardism is one of unfolding an extant ideology in new terms: in short, to being *radically conservative*. The artist works to create the new, but only with respect to that quality of newness that remains in the service of Modernism’s implicit understanding of progress. The artist is then attempting to follow a trajectory towards a future destination, conceived in teleological terms as successive improvement towards an optimal (utopian) state.⁴⁵ In this situation, the new is conceived as *emerging* within constraints that have been imposed by the past. Only change recognised as significant within these extant terms can be conceived as valuable, although such significance will be established *and verified* retrospectively. This is the artist’s methodological dilemma.

We recognise Modernism’s cultural production of an abundance of artists, but also an abundance of art historians, critical or otherwise and so, within Modernism, a plethora of possible *avant-gardes* have emerged, each a contender for historical pre-eminence. The Modernisms we have in the history books are the result of a winnowing of possibilities; the others possibilities having been thwarted. In the context of multiple proliferating possibilities, “*inflation*” is a more appropriate qualifier for avant-gardism than is the term “cutting edge.” Despite its spatial connotations, it relates better to durational change, and to current models of an expanding universe in continuous change. In the image of inflation, the cutting-edge dissolves, along with the concept of avant-gardism as such.

In his introduction to Bürger’s book on the *Avant-Garde*, Jochen Schulte-Sasse describes how within the plurality of modern art, an “ensemble of concepts” becomes gathered as a proposition that “permits one to grasp the field in its contradictoriness.”⁴⁶ In a conception that embraces the contradictions rather than attempting to resolve them, Boris Groys describes modern art as “not a pluralistic field but a field strictly structured according to the logic of contradiction.”⁴⁷ Within this field “every thesis is supposed to be confronted with its antithesis,” so that “contemporary art has the equality of all images as its *telos*.”⁴⁸ Under this conception, artists can produce unlimited possibilities, so that contemporary art has no

⁴⁵ An equivalent utopian teleology persists in representations of biological evolution where change is interpreted as adaptive improvement.

⁴⁶ Schulte-Sasse, J. (1996). Introduction: theory of the avant-garde and theory of literature.

In Bürger, P. (1996). *Theory of the avant-garde* (M. Shaw, Trans.). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

⁴⁷ Groys, *Art power*. op.cit., (p.2).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

single mode (or trajectory), but has “an excess of taste, including the pluralistic taste.”⁴⁹ This appearance of unlimited plurality is specious because the work of art is a “paradox-object” that is required to invoke a “perfectly paradoxical, self-contradictory reaction,” and whose “radical self-contradiction” includes a contradiction to its own commodification.⁵⁰

The territory of Western modern art is described by Groys as “organized around the lack of, or rather, the rejection of any aesthetic judgement.”⁵¹ He attributes art’s autonomy to this absence, the abolishing of “every such hierarchy and establishing the regime of equal aesthetic rights for all artworks.”⁵² In this respect, the historical categories that constitute the genealogy of contemporary art are an “heteronomous intrusion into the autonomous sphere of art—as the effect of pressure exerted by external forces and powers.”⁵³ The *avant-garde*’s own intrusion into the autonomy of art attempts to preclude or erase other intrusions by nullifying aesthetic judgement as a criterion. Through this means, the historical or classical *avant-garde* has “opened up the infinite horizontal field of all possible pictorial forms” so that there has been an “equalizing of art practices.”⁵⁴ This is not to say that contemporary artists experience equal inclusiveness, even within their own critical perspectives applied both outwardly and turned inwardly. The critical marketplace and history both rely on exclusive commodification.



Figure 33 (10x12cm)

⁴⁹ Ibid. (p.3).

⁵⁰ Ibid. (p.4).

⁵¹ Ibid. (p.13).

⁵² Ibid. (pp.13,14).

⁵³ Ibid. (p.14).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Ambivalence Towards The Possible

In the 1970s Bürger acknowledges the problematic teleology associated with a vanguard, by attempting to frame a theory of art around the notion of an *avant-garde* in a way that can “avoid the burden of an anterior decision” about the value of an art work.⁵⁵ Within the broad context of cultural development, he emphasises the *avant-garde*’s break with art as an institution, and identifies a key question as being one “regarding the preconditions of cognition that are embedded in social development,” that is, how the possibilities for thinking about art are constrained by how trajectories of thinking have developed from the past.⁵⁶ In summary of Friedrich Schiller’s estimation, Bürger emphasises the concept of the autonomy of art as emerging through “*historical process*,” with its inherent contradiction between the category of autonomy which purports to be “the apartness of art from the praxis of life,” and the context of its historical development.⁵⁷ Here an “element of truth” (the apartness) coexists with an “element of untruth (the hypostatization of the fact, which is a result of historical development as the ‘essence’ of art).”⁵⁸

This is a contradictoriness akin to that discussed by Groys.⁵⁹ For Bürger, the *avant-garde* is, in principle, an “hostility to tradition” where *newness* is not conceived as a “calculated effect,” but as a radical break with tradition, where “it is no longer artistic techniques or stylistic principles which were valid heretofore but the entire tradition of art that is negated.”⁶⁰ This self-abnegation of the *avant-garde* is the paradox of its legacy that resonates in conceptions of contemporary art practice as progressive, where its leading edge is cutting a way forward, just as it cuts off the past that might allow a forward orientation. In such a context, cognition is both mimetic of past modes of thinking but is also a form of production that includes production of the new. While cognition precedes the work of art, it also emerges differently in response to the work of art, and may itself be a work of art.

Hal Foster identifies a problem between the “deferred temporality of artistic signification” in relation to *avant-garde*’s rhetoric of rupture, and the residual evolutionism that suggests such rupture *is* “entirely significant in its first moment of appearance.”⁶¹ Where Bürger conceives history as “punctual and final,” and then uses it to affirm the autonomy of *avant-garde* art, the effect according to Foster is to turn the “antiaesthetic into the artistic, the

⁵⁵ Schulte-Sasse, *Theory of the avant-garde*. op. cit., (p.li).

⁵⁶ Ibid. (p.lii).

⁵⁷ Bürger, *Theory of the avant-garde*. op. cit., (p.46).

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid. (pp.59,60).

⁶¹ Foster, H. (1994). What's neo about the Neo-Avant-Garde? *October*, 70 (Autumn), (p.13). DOI:10.2307/779051

transgressive into the institutional.”⁶² He argues, instead, that in art just as in history, “creative analysis is *interminable*,” and that “the project of the avant-garde is no more concluded in its neo-moment that it is enacted in its historical moment.”⁶³ If, as Foster suggests, “the aim of the avant-garde as Bürger conceives it, is to destroy the institution of autonomous art in order reconnect art and life,” then “life is conceived here paradoxically – not only as remote but also as immediate.”⁶⁴

For the most acute avant-garde artists such as Duchamp, the aim is neither an abstract negation of art nor a romantic reconciliation with life but a perpetual testing of the conventions of both. Thus, rather than false, circular, and otherwise affirmative, avant-garde practice at its best is contradictory, mobile and dialectical, even rhizomatic. The same is true of neo-avant-garde practice at its best, even the early versions of Rauschenberg or Allan Kaprow. “Painting relates to both art and life,” runs a famous Rauschenberg motto.” Neither is made. (I try to act in that gap between the two).”⁶⁵

Whereas the tension of separation between art and life is here given as providing an impetus (aim) for painting, the self-conscious separation between the past, the present and the future that allows such a notion of the avant-garde, also extracts it from duration in the Bergsonian understanding of this term. While the gap that Rauschenberg identifies *is* a spacing between processes of living and those of living’s engagements with art, this ‘gap’ is closed when an artist *constitutes* that contingent *process* that is art. In the context of painting, life and the work of art e-merge together. From our readings of Bergson, life and painting cannot be separately discerned without recourse to a temporalising of either in terms of differences in degree, which is to say in terms of the homogeneity of quantitative spatiality coterminous with an ontology that falls either into an idealism or a strict realism. In response to Rauschenberg, perhaps we say: don’t mind the gap! Don’t look after that spacing. Don’t fall into space.

If the neo-avant-gardes of the 1950s/60s did not seek to collapse art and life together, but aimed to sustain a tension between them, then they also did not seek to undo the “traditional identities” of art forms, but instead to continually test the “frames or formats” of aesthetic experience within contemporaneous lived experience.⁶⁶ The art institution and its (paradoxical) radical–conservative conventions may continually be updated, fine-tuned, essentialised, and overturned, but never abandoned:

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid. (p.14, 16).

⁶⁴ Ibid. (p.17).

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid. (p.18).

What exactly was effected by the signal acts of the historical avant-garde, as when Rodchenko presented painting as three panels of primary colors in 1921? “I reduced painting to its logical conclusion, and exhibited three canvases: red, blue and yellow. I affirmed: this is the end of painting. These are the primary colors. Every plane is a discrete plane and there will be no more representation.” Here Rodchenko *declares* the *end* of painting, but what he *demonstrates* is different. It is the *conventionality* of painting: that it could be delimited to primary colors on discrete canvases in his artistic political context with its specific permissions and pressures – this is the crucial qualification. *And nothing explicit is demonstrated about the institution of art.* Obviously convention and institution cannot be separated, but they are not identical. To collapse convention into institution produces a type of determinism; to read institution as convention produces a type of formalism, the institution of art *enframes* conventions, but it does not *constitute* them, not entirely. However heuristic, this difference does help to distinguish the emphases of historical and neo-avant-gardes: if the first focuses on the conventional, the second concentrates on the institutional.⁶⁷

Foster identifies a second neo-avant-garde that “sometimes succumbs to apocalyptic impulses,” but that now extends the process of testing to “different institutions and discourses in the ambitious art of the present.”⁶⁸ Contemporary artists involved with this second neo-avant-garde are concerned more with “subtle *displacements*” or “strategic *collaborations*,” than with “*grand oppositions*,” concerned with what Foster calls “a formula of practice.”⁶⁹ These neo-avant-garde performances he describes as “immanent and allegorical,” proceeding in relation to Modernism and its avant-gardes, rather than breaking with them.⁷⁰ While the prefix ‘neo’ suggests a *renaissance* rather than a rupture, we note that when Jean Francois Lyotard describes the rupture associated with the suffix ‘post’, he describes ‘neo’ as a way of “forgetting or repressing the past, that is, repeating it and not surpassing it.”⁷¹ In multiple instantiations and subtle shifts, the core ideology of the avant-garde with its problematic temporality, teleology and ambivalence towards embracing or rejecting the possible, continues to permeate art institutions and haunt art-making methodologies.

⁶⁷ Ibid. (p.19).

⁶⁸ Ibid. (p.25).

⁶⁹ Ibid. (p.26).

⁷⁰ Ibid. (p.31).

⁷¹ Lyotard, J.-F. (1997). *The postmodern explained* (D. Barry, B. Maher, J. Pefanis, V. Spate, & M. Thomas, Trans.) (p.76). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

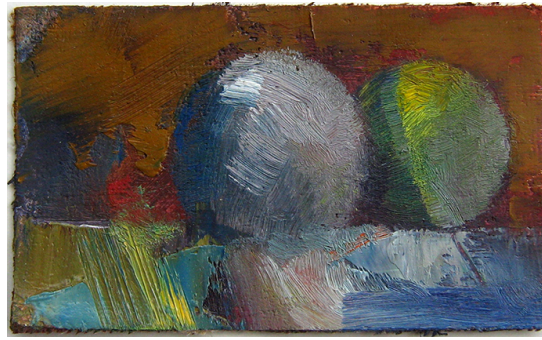


Figure 34 (8x13cm)

Modernism's Others

Throughout the 1970s the experimental Fluxus movement that developed on Futurist and Dadaist disdain for tradition, offered a proliferation of variety in performances, discourses, debates, exhibitions, and other events. As a loosely formed movement of diverse activities Ken Friedman describes it as “an active philosophy of experience that only sometimes takes the form of art,” but that subsequently became “a symbol for much more than itself.”⁷² In particular, it became a sign that “something is happening.”⁷³ Both the foregrounding of experience and the flux of spontaneous happenings provide a context for *emergence* as a concept for how art making happens, and how art institutions evolve. This notion of a vanguard is sustained in other versions of Modernism, such as Conceptualism, where creative cognition is the work of art, and even in the recursive quotations of Postmodernism, the exploration of neglected and temporarily thwarted possibilities is framed as *progressive*. It would seem that no perspective on change is future-proof!

In proposing a revised or supplementary historical category, Nicolas Bourriaud coins the term ‘Altermodernism’ to evoke the linked ideas of a “Modernism of the others” and an “otherly” Modernism, one that is different in kind from earlier versions.⁷⁴ This notion of an Altermodernism is characterised by Terry Smith as:

[T]hat moment when it became possible for us to produce something that made sense starting from an assumed heterochrony, that is, from a vision of human history as constituted by multiple temporalities, disdaining nostalgia for the avant-garde and indeed for any era — a positive vision of chaos and complexity. It is neither a petrified kind of time advancing in loops (postmodernism) nor a linear vision of history (modernism), but a positive

⁷² Friedman, K. (Ed.). (1998). *The Fluxus reader* (p.ix). Chichester, England: Academy editions.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Smith, T. (2011). *Contemporary art: World currents* (p.322). London, England: Laurence King. See also Bourriaud, N. (Ed.) 2009. *Altermodern: Tate triennial 2009*. London, England: Tate Gallery.

experience of disorientation through an art form exploring all dimensions of the present, tracing lines in all directions of time and space.⁷⁵

This heterochrony disperses the leading front that might constitute a vanguard, yet a ‘paradoxical’ nostalgia for the *idea* of an avant-garde remains in the trceries (albeit divergent) of Altermodernism. “Tracing lines” is the retrograde practice of marking the passage of homogeneous time, a framework reinforced in the description of direction, time conflated with space, and retrograde trajectories (even if multiple) still imply a leading edge, even if the Altermodernist gaze has been averted from it. The “positive experience of disorientation” masks the possibility offered by subsequent serial orientation into a trace that has been straightened by the lever of retrospection. The retrograde trace is only the mirror image of trajectory—a stereoisomer of temporal alchemy. The Altermodernist ethos reflects the artist’s “total embrace of everyday life as the domain of affective experience,” although within this situation Smith identifies *risks*. Such risks include a possible tendency towards increasingly vacuous self-promotion or reversion to institutionalised Modernism. Another is the possibility of slippage into postcolonial aestheticism where “the distinctive poetics of the visual arts, their fundamental nonconformity, will vanish into the excited normalities of instant communication — with everyone, everywhere, about everything — that have become typical of contemporary life.”⁷⁶

Smith describes how, since the 1980s, museums, artists, galleries, auction houses, and collectors have developed brand-images in response to contemporary art-industry needs to profile their institutions as dynamic, and in the vanguard of “the kinds of change that characterize contemporary life.”⁷⁷ In this respect, Smith sees contemporary art acknowledging life’s other pursuits as competitors for an audience’s attention, even if art still maintains its separateness and autonomy. Within this context, he describes “Contemporary” art as having become a style, “an aesthetic category and a cultural force as powerful as modern art had been in its own time.”⁷⁸ He describes art today as the product of a “mix of cultural, technological, social, and geopolitical forces” where “by absorbing imaginable futures, and by contemporizing various competing visions of the past, this mix of forces has ‘thickened’ the present, and created a state of permanent transition, of perpetual contemporaneity.”⁷⁹ Such presentation of an eternal ‘presentness’, a constancy of a contemporary, glimpses the radicality of Bergsonian duration, a motile ‘present’ whose actuality, affective corporeal action happens in the de-distancing of the totality of images to

⁷⁵ Ibid. (p.322).

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid. (p.79).

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid. (p.316).

a body-image, coincident with memory's intensive flexing of matter's congealing. This is but a glimpse, however, as Smith's account of a 'style' of the Contemporary reverts temporalising and action to spatialising coordinations, and to subject positions that find human agency operating in and with a world of things objectively present. Thus, this condition of continual movement that is also a constant, is *analogous* to the continual emergence of the present in duration, when the present remains constant while in continual change as it differs from itself.

Bergson has shown that spatial movement and durational change are not equivalent. From the point of view of Bergsonism, such discussion needs to encounter the radicality of two non-coincident understandings of time, that by which Bergson defines simultaneity in spatialising motility without any pastness and that of succession, not assimilable to a series of 'now-moments' but recognised in duration whereby the past is contemporaneous with a present. In Deleuze's terms, these are approached in the differentiation of *chronos* (simultaneity) and *aion* (duration).⁸⁰ The historical avant-gardes, their critics, and commentators never leave, despite the radicality of their prognoses on time, a strictly Aristotelian dimensionality of time.



Figure 35 (12x19cm)

Contemporaneity

Peter Osborne indicates that the term “contemporary,” as it indicates presentness to a “single historical time of the present,” was used mainly in the twentieth century as a qualifier for ‘modern’, at least until the term ‘postmodernism’ emerged in the 1980s to

⁸⁰ As Deleuze explains: “We have seen that past, present, and future were not at all three parts of a single temporality, but that they rather formed two readings of time, each one of which is complete and excludes the other: on the one hand the always limited present, which measures the action of bodies as causes and the state of their mixtures in depth (Chronos); on the other, the essentially unlimited past and future, which gather incorporeal events, at the surface, as effects (Aion).” Deleuze, G. (2004). *The logic of sense*. op. cit., (p.61).

imply that this period might also be post-contemporary.⁸¹ However, the *idea* of contemporaneity and presentness remain correlative, despite the contemporary having epochal reach when the label is used to signify a category. When the term contemporary continues to be used for modern art from half a century ago, as well as for art today, the past in memory is drawn close up to the present, just as the present is relaxed towards the past, so that there is a question of what constitutes presence. As Osborne notes, the idea of con-temporaneity is a “problematically disjunctive conjunction.”⁸²

[A] coming together not simply ‘in time’ with our contemporaries — as if time itself is indifferent to this existing together — but rather the present is increasingly characterised by a coming together of different but equally ‘present’ temporalities or ‘times’, a temporal unity in disjunction, or a disjunctive unity of present times.⁸³

For Bergson such differentiating and integrating of ‘timelines’ is a spatial metaphor that confuses the conception of time, whereas the present is immanent to duration. That is, it is not a coming-together of separate positions or trajectories, but a creative emergence of change in duration, and as such there is no contemporaneous other present. When used to designate what is current or up-to-date, the term’s tautological aspect belies its polemical aspect. The residue of political avant-gardism is evident in the term’s ambition to sustain the “neo-avant-garde art-historical consciousness” by delimiting a significant art of today, that art which presupposes the future, and therefore presupposes the significant past.⁸⁴ Osborne observes that this politicised notion of the contemporary continues to “derive its historical intelligibility from its claim on the future, albeit increasingly an abstractly projected (imaginary) future or mere horizon, rather than a politically actual one.”⁸⁵ Groys discusses how the term ‘contemporary’ is appropriated by the marketplace and distributed across a diversity of art works, producing “a certain blindness to what is contemporary and present,” because the global marketplace lacks “the historical memory that would enable the spectator to compare the past with the present and thereby determine what is truly new and genuinely contemporary about the present,” or what is merely fashionable.⁸⁶ He argues that it is only the museum that allows us to “differentiate between old and new, past and present,” and to see for ourselves what “really is different, new, and contemporary.”⁸⁷ He suggests that the role of museums today is not only to diagnose what is contemporary about

⁸¹ Osborne, P. (2013). *Anywhere or not at all: Philosophy of contemporary art* (pp.22,17). London, England: Verso Books.

⁸² Ibid. (p.17).

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid. (p.21).

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Groys, *Art power*. op. cit., (p.20).

⁸⁷ Ibid. (p.21).

the present, but also to “generate the present through the comparison between old and new.”⁸⁸

As spectators, we are then reliant on, and our sense of the contemporary in art is contingent upon, the propensities of curators. While in Groys’ conception what is deemed to be contemporary emerges as a consensus in discourse with the museum, Osborne refutes a more utopian conception of the contemporary as having a unity that could be reached in the present. This, he argues, is not possible because “human existence remains socially disjunctive,” and there is no shared subject-position from which the totality of currently coeval times “could be lived as a whole.”⁸⁹ Nevertheless, he suggest that the concept of the contemporary operates as if there is such utopian unity, and then turns to utility for justification, saying that it has a negative aspect that involves a disavowal, but a positive aspect that is “both an act of the productive imagination and the establishment of a task.”⁹⁰ That *task* is that of the avant-garde, founded here on shaky grounds:

The concept of contemporaneity involves a disavowal – a disavowal of its own futural, anticipatory or speculative basis — to the extent to which it projects into existence an *actual* total conjunction of times. This is a disavowal of the futurity of the present by its very presentness; essentially, it is a disavowal of politics.⁹¹

That elusive “unity” may be considered in the immanence of Bergsonian duration, although this does not allow for customary discourse about art as a project that could be planned. *In fact, it would make such discourse one of radical silence at best.* As a consequence, the work of art’s *emergence* is its reception as contender for contemporary significance. Emergence’s predominant *image* is that of a realm of movements, forces, and strategies constituting representation and quantifiable time. This is correlative with expectation or intentionality such that an artist is deemed mindful of progress, and employs processes of art-making that are methodical and accountable in these terms. The virtual museum then remains the ultimate destination for art, and it is in relation to this end that painting is curated, and critiqued, not least by the artist during the process of art making.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid. (p.23).

⁹⁰ Osborne, *Anywhere or not at all*. op. cit., (p.23).

⁹¹ Ibid.



Figure 36 (10x12cm)

The Ends of Painting

Within heterogeneous duration, as Bergson has explained, ends are artifices. However, when the prevailing conception of time is of successive fixities in homogeneous space, and where history is conceived in terms of periodic succession, so art becomes periodised in terms of approach and style, beginnings, endings, and transitions. Art history is here conceived as a punctuated narrative of successive ideological projects. Foster describes how the neo-avant-garde continually engages with art institutions via a creative analysis that is “at once specific and deconstructive,” that “enacts its project for the first time — a first time that, again, is theoretically endless.”⁹² When Benjamin Buchloh points to the end of the avant-garde celebrated with the advent of postmodernism, it can be seen to follow a cyclical pattern of collapsing modernist paradigms that accompany crises, often in reaction to particular conditions outside of art, and where ‘end’ actually signals *continuance*.⁹³

In postmodernist stylistic recursions, ends and beginnings become interchangeable so that they blend into one another. Lyotard demonstrates how “a work can only become modern if it is first postmodern,” so that postmodernism is “not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant.”⁹⁴ No matter whether it is couched in terms of exhaustion, or resolution, or dissolution, the pronouncement of an end also heralds a continuation, a beginning-again, as a renaissance. Almost a century of painting’s ‘beginnings’ have followed various declared ‘ends-of-painting’ in the twentieth century. Such would be the case when Rodchenko claimed to have collapsed the project of representation through his own definitive abstract painting, even though the claim would

⁹² Foster, *What's neo about the Neo-Avant-Garde?* op. cit., (p.20).

⁹³ Buchloh, B. (1981). Figures of authority, ciphers of regression: Notes on the return of representation in European painting. *October*, 16 (Spring), 39-68. DOI: 10.2307/778374

⁹⁴ Lyotard, *The postmodern condition*. op. cit., (p.79).

subsequently be repeated by Ad Reinhardt in relation to his own more reductively minimal style of abstract painting. His absolutism acclaims:

The one art that is abstract and pure enough to have the one problem and possibility, in our time and timelessness, of the ‘one single grand problem’ is pure abstract painting. Abstract painting is not just another school or movement or style, but the first truly unmannered and untrammelled and unentangled, styleless, universal. No other art or painting is detached or empty or immaterial enough.⁹⁵

It was his sort of art that Reinhardt believed would bring the historical project of painting to an end, and so make the avant-garde redundant.⁹⁶ However, critic Barry Schwabsky points out that abstraction was but “a specific kind of painting, one type among many others — an addition to the vocabulary of painting and not necessarily a revelation of painting at its best or most basic.”⁹⁷ Abstraction *could* be identified stylistically, and differentiated into various styles of abstraction. The fact that painting continued to shift into various non-abstract genres demonstrates that abstraction fails to “communicate the essence of all painting.”⁹⁸ If, as Schwabsky suggests, Minimalism and Conceptual Art furthered the quest for a more universal art that is more “nothing in particular,” then this “totalizing project” has evidently failed.⁹⁹ Painting has continued to unfold in ways that would not be contained by a singular totalising ideology.

Writing in 1967, Allan Kaprow describes an increasing nominalism in modern art, with its “interminable avalanche of categories.”¹⁰⁰ In this context, Anne Peterson suggests that the “cul-de-sac” of painting in the 1960s was caused by the Modernist attempt to restrict its activities to exploring “the formal aspects of painting, on the theory that all painting is basically about painting.”¹⁰¹ Since then, painting has seen the dissolution of such restraints, following a contestation of categories, boundaries and fixities through the influx of new media and the flux of art practices. Rosalind Krauss (initially in relation to sculpture) coined the term ‘expanded field’ to describe this increasing pluralism of practices, and the historicising effect of a preoccupation with categorisation.¹⁰²

⁹⁵ Rose, B. (Ed.). (1991). *Art-as-art; The selected writings of Ad Reinhardt* (p.55). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Schwabsky, B. (2002). Painting in the interrogative mode (sect.1). In V. Breuvert (Ed.), *Vitamin P: New perspectives in painting*. New York, NY: Phaidon.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ As cited in Osborne, *Anywhere or not at all*. op. cit., (p.103).

¹⁰¹ Petersen, A., Bogh, M., Christensen, H., & Larsen, P. (Eds.) (2010). *Contemporary painting in context* (p.124). Copenhagen, Denmark: Museum Tusculanum Press.

¹⁰² Krauss, R. (1979). Sculpture in the expanded field. *October*, 8 (Spring), 30-44. DOI: 10.2307/778224

With the transferrable (and so generalised) notion of an expanding field, Peterson describes how it has become a mythical truth that an “age-old demarcation dispute between the fine arts” was closed after art moved into a post-medium condition, subsequent to its experiments in the 1960s and 70s.¹⁰³ Nevertheless another “end of painting” was heralded, definitively, in the 1980s, this time by Douglas Crimp in response to his rhetorical question: “To what end painting in the 1980s?”¹⁰⁴ The reactions to it, as demonstrated by the arguments that followed, suggest a general excitement about the idea, and the expansion of painting as an art practice since then has shown how that question acted as a stimulus. Crimp’s thesis comes out of critiquing historicist conceptions of art as a narrative, and so his question is not about temporalising finality, but about what ultimate *purpose* painting has as a project, and what might be the putative end or destination for painting. Thus, he writes of contemporary art that its “natural end is the museum, or, at the very least, in the imaginary museum, that idealist space that is art with a capital A.”¹⁰⁵ By tying the practice of painting to a trajectory of history, he collectivises individual practices and subsumes them under a prevailing concept: the Modernist Project. The entity of Modernism he describes as “not only a canon of art works but an entire epistemology of art,” and reminds us that Art, as we think about it today, “*only came into being* in the nineteenth century, with the birth of the museum and the discipline of art history,” a period that aligns with Modernism.¹⁰⁶

Within the Modernist conception of art, Crimp tells us that painting is “understood ontologically” as having an origin and an essence that is unchanging within the span of its historical development, wherein variation—contingency or accident—happens in *styles* of painting understood as the outward manifestation of this unvarying essence.¹⁰⁷ Art history then becomes a discourse about those changing styles that he describes as “unpredictable in their vicissitudes,” and governed by the choices of individual painters when they exercise their “boundless imaginations.”¹⁰⁸ However, when curated, this boundlessness is constrained within a conceptual territory, and within the bounds of the curator’s imagination. Such conceptual bounds, as Crimp indicates, are framed retrospectively: “the idea of art developed as autonomous, as separate from everything else, as destined to take its place in art history, is a development of modernism.”¹⁰⁹ In this respect the virtual museum is

¹⁰³ Petersen et al., *Contemporary painting in context*. op. cit., (p.123).

¹⁰⁴ Crimp, D. (1981). The end of painting. *October*, 16 (Spring) (p.74). DOI: 10.2307/778375.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. (p.81).

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. (pp.80,81).

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. (p.81).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

painting's end destination. As evidence of painting's "terminal condition," Crimp points to certain "deserters of the ranks of painting" —Flavin, Judd, LeWitt, and Morris.¹¹⁰

If this "desertion" is a symptom of a propensity for painters to explore and to find new approaches, then the signalling of further ends might be taken as a sign of good health, a 'natural' rhythm in the *life* of art. Where the end is conceived in less catastrophic terms, as an attenuation, or fragmentation, or disorientation, this can be taken as a positive development within the context of the neo avant-garde's aim of "forgetting or repressing the past, that is, repeating it and not surpassing it."¹¹¹ Even if there is risk of painting "vanishing" into everyday chatter "with everyone, everywhere, about everything," this end might be construed as having a positive prospect.¹¹²

As Foster says: "[P]ost-war culture in North America and Western Europe is swamped by *neos* and *posts*." A myriad of repetitions as 'revolutions' begin and are undone, while dormant formations "stir again with uncanny life."¹¹³ He refers to the problem of differentiating between archaic forms that return to bolster "conservative tendencies in the present," and lost models of art that return in order to "displace customary ways of working."¹¹⁴ He questions, for example, how the "register of history" can distinguish between "a revisionist account written in support of the cultural status quo and a genealogical account that seeks to challenge it."¹¹⁵ Both accounts would be retrospective, selective, and partial. The move that is implied by the recurring prefixed 're', is identified by Foster as temporal, while the prefix 'dis' indicates a move that is spatial. Both are intended "to open a new site for work."¹¹⁶

By the end of the 1990's a broad eclecticism suggested boundless possibilities, and that painting could escape stylistic categorisation. Painters drew on influences from throughout the history of art, including those that Schwabsky describes as previously off-limits to serious painting (for example, the painted kitsch/porno/sentimental confections by Jeff Koons). This pluralistic *mêlée* displayed "sometimes earnest, sometimes slackerish technique — at times academic, at other times approaching the simplicity of the Sunday painter or the extreme stylisation of the decorator."¹¹⁷ In this the spectator might also encounter what

¹¹⁰ Ibid. (pp.75,82).

¹¹¹ Lyotard, *The postmodern condition*. op. cit., (p.76).

¹¹² Smith, T. *Contemporary art: world currents*. op. cit. (p.322).

¹¹³ Foster, *What's neo about the Neo-Avant-Garde?* op. cit., (p.5).

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. (p.7).

¹¹⁷ Schwabsky, B. (2005). An art that eats its own head: Painting in the age of the image. In Holborn. M., & F. Huber (Eds.), *The triumph of painting* (p. 8, 9). London, England: Jonathan Cape.

Schwabsky describes as “the homely distraction of crafts and hobbies into the artistic field.”¹¹⁸ The fields of practice that were claimed by or nominated under painting already included printmaking, collage, and drawing, but now included aspects of performance and conceptual art, often with little reference to any painting tradition and negligible or no actual use of paint. Art historian, Jonathan Harrison, describes painting as having become experientially as well as theoretically ineffable, a condition found throughout the “material fabric of contemporary art.”¹¹⁹ Harrison lists hybridity, hegemony, and historicism as three terms that are intricately connected with the fortunes of painting, all of which have their own complex, disputed, and interconnected histories.¹²⁰ The life of painting is evident in its evolving fields of practice, as new and diverse approaches continue to emerge. This evolution need not be interpreted as progression in the contentious term of *advancement*, or as a moving on from the past, but as a more catholic incorporation that brings the past into the process of emergence as vital continuance, perhaps even *élan vital*.



Figure 37 (10x16cm)

Provisional Painting

In 2009, Raphael Rubinstein writes of a trend that he notices in recent painting, where the work looks “casual, dashed-off, tentative, unfinished or self-cancelling.”¹²¹ He analyses this as “turning away from ‘strong’ painting towards something that seems to constantly risk inconsequence or collapse.”¹²² He senses a restlessness or dissatisfaction such as Cezanne demonstrates in his “infinite, agonised adjustments of Mont St Victoire,” or as Giacometti demonstrates in his “endless obliterations and restartings of his painted portraits,” and or as Paul Valéry indicates in his dictum that a poem “is never finished, only abandoned.”¹²³ He

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Harrison, J. (2010). 'Contemporary', 'common', context', 'criticism': painting after the end of postmodernism (p.34). In A. Petersen, M. et al. (Eds.), *Contemporary painting in context*. op. cit., (pp. 25-41).

¹²⁰ Ibid. (p.29, 32).

¹²¹ Rubinstein, R. (2009). Provisional painting: Part I. *Art in America*, 9, 5 (May), (p.123).

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

links the approach to Modernism's "strategies of refusal and acts of negation," and tentatively names it 'provisional painting'.¹²⁴ To form this category, itself provisional, Rubinstein gathers artists whose work appears to correlate with his idea. The intention is not to establish a genre, but to form a loose sensibility that emerges out of actual paintings, which are themselves still in the process of being formed, and still forming their own concerns.

While these concerns could coalesce and consolidate into critical standpoints about cultural politics, aesthetics and ideas, the work seems disinclined to do this. Instead, Rubinstein finds in the works of Raoul de Keyser, Albert Oehlen, Mary Heilmann, Tomma Abts and Michael Krebber amongst others, qualities such as a modesty of scale, nonchalance of approach, and the absence of any apparent programme or express agenda.¹²⁵ He finds no evidence of an incisive or reductionist strategy, nor any attempt to hide hesitancy, or stuttering, or doubt, or laborious adjustment, and he points to the paradoxical confusion in Krebber's exhibition title: *Unfinished Too Soon*. The 'state' of being unfinished holds latency that is an impetus for finishing, even if the idea of an eventual finished state is symbolic and ironic. The provisional has this latent vitality, which provides a rejoinder to prophecies for the end of painting. *Provisional painting always has unfinished business*.

Rubinstein's conception for provisional painting is that it rejects "the idea of a finished, durable work," is unencumbered by conventional expectations of object, colour and form, and is disinclined to pursue any polemic.¹²⁶ He suggests that its critical standpoint lies in such refusals or disinclinations to adopt received ideas about painting, and that it operates as a kind of *vanitas* by questioning the ambition to make paintings that are historically significant.¹²⁷ Provisional painting is not consumed by anxiety about progress, or its role in art history, and does not "feel compelled to finesse or outmaneuver art of the recent past."¹²⁸ Rubinstein describes *provisional* as being "born in the moment when the painter hesitates between painting and not-painting—and then begins to paint nonetheless," so that

¹²⁴ Ibid. (pp.122-135).

¹²⁵ Modern Art Galley, London, in a press release for an exhibition in April 2011 curated by Rubinstein, describes Provisional paintings "as those that might appear unfinished or incomplete; that court intentional awkwardness, physical fragility and instability; that reject the display of conventional skills; that discover beauty in the most unassuming materials; that sometimes grapple with painting's 'impossibility'." Amongst these artists are several that Jan Verwoert discusses in terms of his concept of emergence.

¹²⁶ Rubinstein, *Provisional painting: Part 1*. op. cit., p.127.

¹²⁷ Ibid. (p.129).

¹²⁸ Rubinstein, R. (2012). Provisional painting: Part 2; To rest lightly on earth. *Art in America* 100, 2, (Feb), (p.82).

provisionality becomes “an index of the impossibility of painting and the equally persistent impossibility of not painting.”¹²⁹



Figure 38 (11x12cm)

Painting As Emergence

Provisional painting supposes or pre-supposes change or moving-on. The provisional keeps secreted in its hesitancies and in-completions a vision of something final, finalised, total, if only to keep itself warded-off from such a destination. Though, destination, as a falling-into the un-provisional never escapes becoming a snare to the very conception of the unfinished. Emergence is then a double move: a trajectory that falls off the path of falling into completion. Emergence effectively shrinks the temporal interval, the temporariness of the provisional, into the moment of decision-making that is continually presenting itself throughout the process of painting. Where everything is in a flux of change as it is emerging in the process of painting, any ‘snapshot’ taken of conditions during that process is also provisional. This includes every condition for decision making, every decision, every consequence, every shift in the developing painting. In developing a theory of emergence that follows from the provisional, art theorist-historian Jan Verwoert shifts focus from consideration of the made painting, the painting finalised or completed, to look at the *process* by which it was made: how painting might happen in each moment of action when decisions are necessary, and when there is no preconceived destination. In his emphasis on process, on the incompleteness of a work and on the pre-conceptual, Verwoert seems in one respect to be close to our Bergsonian concerns. However, we need to assay how he eventually accounts for artist and work, whether his ontology of process reverts to some version of idealism or realism, whether he returns painting to an intentional agent and the work to an object to be inspected in some context. Essentially, our questioning concerns his ontology of temporality.

¹²⁹ Ibid. (pp.82-83).

Verwoert's work comes out of thinking critically about Modernism's predominant tenets, in which he discerns a yearning for determinism, evident in Minimalist art, and in Conceptual Art's striving for precision in how it articulates ideas. He argues that this reductive tendency works against the vitality and inventiveness of art practice, and proposes a concept of emergence that better relates to how paintings are made. It develops on Modernist suppositions, at the same time as it repudiates key Modernist tenets that would impose a pre-emptive conceptual framing for how painting was approached and interpreted. He finds that the concept of emergence has an openness and expansiveness that is revitalising, as well as being "accurate."¹³⁰ In this respect, it offers an alternative that was not afforded by Postmodernism, even if its extravagances gave some relief from the prescriptions of Modernism. He suggests that the field of painting has long been poised to react against this constraint.

Verwoert explains that his sponsoring of the concept of emergence comes from observing painters at work, hearing them describe their process of painting, and wanting to develop a theory of practice that explains *what actually happens during painting*. His aim was to go "beyond explicit intentions in order to inquire into the attitude, the ethos of the work – *how* the work delivers information."¹³¹ He identifies a need to distinguish between the ethos of production and the implications of reading the work, in order to avoid the fallacy where a theory of production is based on a theory of reception, whereas these are not equivalent. He focuses on the method of production, and on a shift from the representation of the process of painting in terms of strategic method, towards painting as a process of emergence. In this conception, painting is a process of becoming that has no preconceived end, where logic of conditions of possibility is not already given or predefined, but has to be created by the artist through the process of painting.

These conditions are created initially at the outset of painting, where "the first act of production is to produce the very possibilities of that work."¹³² Thereafter they continue to emerge in each moment of painting, in the unfolding of the material image and its image in perception, and in the momentum of painting's continuance. In this situation and at any moment of painting, an artist does not know exactly where painting is going. Instead, the painting "emerges from a process of deciding something previously undecided," so that throughout the duration of painting, emphasis is placed on the *making* of a decision, rather

¹³⁰ Verwoert, J. (2010, April). *Why are conceptual artists painting again?; Because it's a good idea*. Paper presented at the 36th Association of Art Historians Society symposium, Glasgow University, Glasgow, Scotland. [Video file]. Retrieved from <http://vimeo.com/31955412>

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

than the *correctness* of the decision.¹³³ Structure and complexity emerge during painting, so that there can be no deliberation in the deciding. The approach to painting is then akin to “working one’s way out of a crisis.”¹³⁴ ‘Correctness’ in this context has neither meaning nor criteria; it could only be provisional, and could only be construed retrospectively.

There is then no definitive point of beginning for a painting, but a continuous stream of beginnings without ends, continual change in a continual process of emergence, where each move is conditioned but not determined by the previous, and where all perspectives are provisional. What might be described as the gestures of painting are in the flux of duration. However, Verwoert emphasises that when a gesture is reduced to the span of a moment, within a unit isolated in homogeneous space, it becomes so basic that it cannot be invested with, or appropriated by, ideology.¹³⁵ The ‘immunity’ to influence that is afforded by his concept of emergence constitutes, in Verwoert’s terms, its own form of utopia, where painting is released from having to deal with semiotic pragmatics.¹³⁶ Essentially there is no signifying practice, no meaning-making, at least in the pre-conceptual moment of decision of what is essentially un-decidable. Certainly, this resonates with Bergsonian temporalising of duration’s two movements, between contraction and relaxation, between the motile becoming of matter and memory, where ‘decision’ happens in the immediacy of intuition as method.

The painter is continually dealing with the problem of deciding, but without being decisive, and without resolving the problem of criteria for decision-making, each decision being made under its own terms. Instead, the protracted rhythms of decision-making, each based on newly emerged and still emerging conditions, serve to prolong the impetus of painting. In this way the painted image continually develops structures, complexity, its own grammar, and its own logic as the process of painting gives form to a work of art.¹³⁷ Again, this would be that ‘nothing’ invoked in each moment of indecisive decision, forgoing criteria, whose givens are essentially time-for-the-taking. Form is the happening of duration’s movement-in-relaxing, the medium of matter’s sensation: painting in-itself and for-itself. All these aspects remain in flux, so that Verwoert likens the logic of emergence to that of the Fluxus movement and performance, where a new grammar of art emerges through the form given to an artwork. Emergence happens within its own emerging terms, reasons, and

¹³³ Verwoert, J. (n.d.) *Emergence: On the painting of Tomma Abts* (sect 1). Selected press, December 2005, David Zwirner Gallery, New York, NY. Retrieved September 6, 2013, from <http://www.davidzwirner.com/artists/tomma-abts/selected-press/page/2/>

¹³⁴ Ibid. (p.2).

¹³⁵ Verwoert, *Why are conceptual artists painting again?* op. cit.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

consequences so that it has “a specific form of rationality, the rationality of emergence, which is the rationality of painting.”¹³⁸ Here, the making process is a making of meaning.¹³⁹ Painting follows a process of emergence and is in continuous crisis, with a continual demand-for-action in the face of an ever-present question of how painting should proceed next. However, unlike the crisis of the sublime, there is no urgency or acceleration of tempo attached to this crisis of emergence, it being a ‘natural’ condition. In its energising crisis, without any apparent decision having been taken, painting can proceed unpredictably and largely unaccountably. In a way that resonates with Bergson’s “unforeseeable nothing which is everything in a work of art,” Verwoert describes a special quality that gives more to the whole than the sum of its parts.¹⁴⁰ He does not specifically identify it as ‘the new’, but states that the emergence of this special quality is dependent on the painting being *successful*, where success is defined in terms of it having life—or otherwise, not having life. As this quality becomes evident in a work, so it becomes apparent that the painting is precisely what it is because its emergent properties were unpredictable, and irreducible.¹⁴¹ In Deleuze’s terms, a painting “stands up” when successful in that movement from perception to percept and from affection to affect, thereby becoming an a-personal encounter with something without origin or finality.¹⁴²

Verwoert argues that because the making of painting is process, so the understanding of painting must relate to process, just as Bergson also asserts that time—duration—is essential to the work. Because of this, Verwoert eschews connoisseurship, which he describes as involving only the routine application of an apparatus of criteria. In her essay on Tomma Abts’ painting, Suzanne Hudson concludes that it is “about the painting becoming itself, an autonomous thing in the world that can become, or maybe inherently is, congruent with nothing except that very painting.”¹⁴³ This is not a logic of rational synchronisation, and so there is a question about how a painting becomes finished, how a decision emerges that causes the process to stop when the process is continually opening up new fields of possibility, and so sustaining its own impetus, its own life. In response to this question, the

¹³⁸ Verwoert, *Emergence: on the painting of Tomma Abts*. op. cit., (sect.1).

¹³⁹ When discussing the painting of Tomma Abts (whose work Verwoert considers as an example of emergence), Suzanne Hudson senses the issue of reconciling the “very potent thing-ness of Abts’ making with making meaning.” She cites Richard Tuttle wanting “to make something that looks like itself,” and in relation to this self-sameness, she cites another writer saying “Imagine making an object which will maintain its integrity in all circumstances yet which exerts absolutely no demands on its situation.” : Hudson, S. (2008). *The best laid plans: On accidentally not reading Tomma Abts*. In B. Curiger (Ed.), *Parkett*, 84, (p.22). New York, NY: Parkett Books.

¹⁴⁰ Bergson, *Creative evolution*. op.cit., (p.194). See also: Verwoert, *Emergence: On the painting of Tomma Abts*. op. cit., (p.3).

¹⁴¹ Ibid. (p.3).

¹⁴² Deleuze discusses ‘standing up’ in *What is philosophy?* (p.164). See also discussion in *Plane of Composition* in chapter 1, and, later in this chapter, discussion on *The figural*.

¹⁴³ Hudson, *The best laid plans: On accidentally not reading Tomma Abts*. op.cit., (p.23).

painter Tomma Abts explains: “You know when the painting is finished when you know how it began.”¹⁴⁴

Because intuition as method is never ‘pure’, never immediate, never absolute, but complicated in hesitation, the process of emergence is informed by memory, and because it creates new conditions, this is not a closed system that is preoccupied with its own hermetic ontology of becoming, not simply painting about painting. It is, however, an anti-authoritative and anti-Oedipal engagement with the structures of art, and so has its own modes of social-political engagement as a critique of Modernism, and a development of Modernism, albeit one that escapes capture by its gravitational field.¹⁴⁵



Figure 39 (9x12cm)

From Conceptual Art to Matter's Affectivity

By encompassing new media and practices within traditional categories, painting becomes situated between medium-specificity and a post-medium condition described by Rosalind Krauss, and appraised by Osborne as “suffering from the indeterminacy of its constitutive negation, rendering it an empty, periodizing term awaiting determination,” that is to say, a provisional term.¹⁴⁶ Just as the prefix ‘post’ signifies a trans-category with distanced connection to Modernist concerns, so some art practices in the expanded field of contemporary art might be described as ‘post-painting’. Such a trans-category could cohere as an ethos that is based on fluidity, crisis, and the flux of change—an ethos that is evolutionary rather than traditional. Some such ethos is felt strongly enough for the artist-painter John Hurrell to write:

Painting is so robust these days that anything goes. It is sufficiently loved by artists using diverse technical methods that it doesn't need past traditions involving say,

¹⁴⁴ Verwoert, *Why are conceptual artists painting again?* op. cit.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Osborne, *Anywhere or not at all*. op.cit., (p.236, #13). See also: Krauss, R. (1999). *A voyage on the north sea: Art in the age of the post-medium condition* (pp.5-7,32). London, England: Thames & Hudson.

canvas, gesso or canvas. Those materials are not essential, and painting doesn't need them to survive.¹⁴⁷

Whether painting is a site of “indeterminate certainty” or a non-site of “determinate uncertainty,” Osborne argues that conceptual interpretation of works of art is needed in order to “acquire social objectivity — beyond the received conception of medium.”¹⁴⁸ He thinks of the trans-categorical leading to a “meltdown” of categorisation that signifies a shift away from an historical ontology of art-making mediums, and from Conceptual Art’s “ideational ontological purity,” towards a “postconceptual ontology of art in general, and hence a fundamentally *transcategorical* practice.”¹⁴⁹ He calls this “postconceptual art” arguing: “critically speaking, ‘contemporary art’ *is* postconceptual.”¹⁵⁰

The shift is towards emphasising the experience of art, of whatever media, as an affective-perceptual encounter. This shift towards affection is the ‘affective turn’ that Patricia Clough describes as proposing a “substantive shift in that it returned critical theory and cultural criticism to bodily matter” pointing to a “dynamism immanent to bodily matter and matter generally — matter’s capacity for self-organization in being informational.”¹⁵¹ Affection, as Bergson describes it, is movement-response to sensation, and so the affective turn is literally a shift towards the lived experience of encounter with a work of art, a corporeal emergence in encounter, in the immediate—unmediated—intuition that Bergson describes as preceding interaction-with-memory, and so preceding art-institutional ‘knowledge’.

For the artist, the shift is from the structure of a conceptually pre-framed image that is the object of pursuit, to an image *expressed* by art making, emerging as affective-experience. This experience of an emerging image that Brian Massumi describes as an *image-event*, also an expression-event, *is* process-emergence of the new.¹⁵² As Massumi says: “structure is the place where nothing ever happens, that explanatory heaven in which all eventual permutations are prefigured in a self-consistent set of invariant generative rules” while “nothing is prefigured in the event.”¹⁵³ It is the collapse of structure distinction into intensity,

¹⁴⁷ Hurrell, J. cited in Gardiner, J. (2009). Checking painting’s pulse. *ArtNews New Zealand*, 29 (Winter), 82-87.

¹⁴⁸ Osborne, *Anywhere or not at all*. op. cit., (p.107).

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. (p.108).

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Clough, P. (2010). The affective turn: political economy, biomedica, and bodies p.207). In M. Gregg & G. Seigworth (Eds.), *The affect theory reader* (pp. 206-225). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

¹⁵² Massumi, B. (2002). *Parables for the virtual: Movement, affect, sensation* (pp.27,28). Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Brian Massumi defines emotion as “qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formal progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning. It is intensity owned and recognized.” (p.28).

¹⁵³ Ibid. (p.27).

of rules into paradox.”¹⁵⁴ We are here in the milieu of that “nothing” that Bergson cryptically suggests is the “everything” of art, a *nothing that takes time*. In this context, Massumi suggests that it is the suspension of invariance that allows concepts to come out of experience (rather than vice-versa), and he speculates: “Could it be that it is through the expectant suspension of that suspense that the new emerges?”¹⁵⁵ If it is time that is primordially given—as duration—it is perhaps the ‘new’ that essentially takes it.



Figure 40 (10x12cm)

Problematic of The New

The problematic of the new lies in the question of what constitutes the new, how it comes into being, and how it can be identified. As Bergson has shown, it is a quality that is inconceivable and unrecognisable, except in terms of nuance, or unaccountable difference. This presents an evident problem for the artist whose *objective* is to create a work in new terms. The only conceivable indicator is one of difference from the past, but this does not suggest what the nature of that difference will be, or how it will be identified. The purely new is absolute difference—immediate, unmediated difference—a difference in kind rather than in degree. From Bergson it is clear that the new emerges as the present, which is continuous change succeeded (in homogeneous terms) by the future. The new is not prefigured by the past, and it does not prefigure the future:

If the future is bound to *succeed* the present instead of being given alongside of it, it is because the future is not altogether determined at the present moment, and that if the time taken up by this succession is something other than a number, if it has for the consciousness that is installed in it absolute value and reality, it is because there is unceasingly being created in it ... something unforeseeable and new. ¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Bergson, *Creative evolution*. op. cit., (p.193).

The new emerges continuously in heterogeneous duration, as it is experienced in the changing psychic states of an artist. However, as this is happening, a painter is preoccupied with how the painted image is emerging in its visual-material relations, and in space *and not in the image of emergence* that constitutes the radical perception-affection image of corporeal action underway. This disjunction between the creative emergence of the new, and the unfolding of a painting, suggests a problematic disjunction between painting and invention, and even with or within the concept of invention, which Groys describes as “the fiction of subjective, individual creativity.”¹⁵⁷

Groys suggests that it is in reaction to the museum that the artist is compelled “to go into reality — into life — and make art that is seen as being alive,” which means “nothing more nor less than being new.”¹⁵⁸ He describes the most general formula of modern art as being the impossibility of continuing to do the old, rather than being free to do something new.¹⁵⁹ The museum shows what the new does *not* look like, so that if the artist cannot identify what is new, his/her ‘inner curator’ can at least ensure the work differs from the old. However, as Groys points out, what is recognisably different cannot be new. He states that, for Kierkegaard, “the only medium for a possible emergence of the new is the ordinary, ‘nondifferent’, identical — not the Other, but the Same.”¹⁶⁰ In building a case for art’s necessary relationship with the museum, Groys suggests it is also necessary to “dissociate the concept of the new from the concept of history, and the concept of innovation from its association with the linearity of historical time”—so that artistic innovation is not in terms of linear time, but in the spatial relationship between an inside and an outside of the museum.¹⁶¹

However, within the process of painting, invention happens as emergence in duration. To return to Bergson’s scenario about painting—the citation that opened Section 1:

The painter is before his canvas, the colors are on the palette, the model is sitting—all this we see, and also we know the painter’s style: do we foresee what will appear on the canvas? We possess the elements of the problem; we know in an abstract way, how it will be solved, for the portrait will surely resemble the model and will surely resemble also the artist; but the concrete solution brings with it that unforeseeable nothing which is everything in a work of art. And it is this nothing that takes time. Nought as matter, it creates itself as form. The

¹⁵⁷ Groys, *Art power*. op. cit., (p.31).

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. (p.24).

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. (p.27).

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. (p.29).

¹⁶¹ Ibid. (p.34).

sprouting and flowering of this form are stretched out on an unshrinkable duration, which is one with their essence.¹⁶²

Bergson tells us that *invention* is a process of emergence, and that it happens though painting as process of emergence, and it happens through emerging psychical states of a painter as painting transpires. For this reason the duration of the process cannot be contracted or dilated without modifying “both the psychical evolution that fills it and the invention which is its goal.”¹⁶³ It is this evolution of psychical states, as they are permeated by the past and continuously changing in the present, that a painter brings to painting and invention, what for Deleuze and Guattari constitutes a “plane of composition” of percepts and affects. Emergence can neither be accelerated nor slowed, contacted nor dilated, because “the time taken up by the invention is one with the invention itself.”¹⁶⁴ Bergson describes this invention as akin to “the progress of a thought which is changing in the degree and measure that it is taking form. It is a vital process, something like the ripening of an idea.”¹⁶⁵ It is in this essential respect that painting happens in duration, and as a process of emergence. However, the conundrum remains as to how we are able to speak to or address this milieu of invention, especially given Bergson’s understanding that the opening of language precisely prepares us for the translation of duration to spatial terms. It is, perhaps, Jean François Lyotard who has most profoundly approached this question of a radical disjunction between the heterogeneity of duration’s nuance and difference of degree. Though his starting point is not Bergson, but Kant, especially the Kantian sublime, Lyotard broaches the complexity of understanding that separates the conceivable and the unrepresentable.



Figure 41 (14x14.5cm)

¹⁶² Bergson, *Creative evolution*. op. cit., (p.194).

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

The Unpresentable

When Lyotard suggests that modernity “takes place in the withdrawal of the real and according to the sublime relation between the presentable and the conceivable,” he identifies two modes of approach.¹⁶⁶ In the first mode, emphasis is on the “faculty of presentation, on the nostalgia for presence felt by the human subject on the obscure and futile will which inhabits him in spite of everything.”¹⁶⁷ Here, the concern is with “the power of the faculty to conceive, on its ‘inhumanity’ so to speak ... since it is not the business of our understanding whether or not human sensibility or imagination can match what it conceives.”¹⁶⁸ In the second mode, emphasis is on “the increase of being and the jubilation which result from the invention of new rules of the game, be it pictorial, artistic, or any other.”¹⁶⁹ In these two respects, painting addresses both the mode of presenting concepts, and the mode of image making. This becomes complicated when that which is to be presented, is essentially unpresentable:

I shall call modern the art that devotes its ‘trivial technique’, as Diderot called it, to presenting the existence of something unpresentable. Showing that there is something we can conceive of which we can neither see nor show — this is the stake of modern painting. But how do we show something that cannot be seen? Kant himself suggests the direction to follow when he calls *formlessness*, the *absence of form*, a possible index to the unpresentable. And, speaking of the empty *abstraction* felt by the imagination as it searches for a presentation of the infinite, its *negative presentation*.¹⁷⁰

Lyotard identifies ideas for which there is no possible presentation, giving as an example the idea of the simple; an idea that cannot be illustrated “by a sensible object that would be a case of it.”¹⁷¹ Similarly, there is no conceivable presentation for the absolutely great, or powerful, or the sublime—which is a feeling that happens when the imagination “fails to present any object that could accord with a concept, even if only in principle.”¹⁷² Such unpresentable ideas “provide no knowledge of reality (experience),” and they “prohibit the free accord of the faculties that produces the feeling of the beautiful,” so obstructing the “formation and stabilization of taste.”¹⁷³ The “axioms of the avant-gardes in painting” are

¹⁶⁶ Lyotard, *The postmodern condition*. op. cit., (p.79).

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. (p.80).

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. (p.78).

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

found, according to Lyotard, in this restlessness, and to the extent that painting dedicates itself to producing “allusions to the unrepresentable through visible presentations.”¹⁷⁴ As a further example of how painting might address the unrepresentable idea of the sublime, he suggests that, as painting, “it will of course ‘present’ something though negatively; it will therefore avoid figuration or representation.”¹⁷⁵ If modern art, in his estimation, is devoted to presenting the unrepresentable, then in this service:

[T]he various avant-gardes have, as it were, humiliated and disqualified reality by their scrutiny of the pictorial techniques used to instil a belief in it. Local tone, drawing, the blending of colors, linear perspective, the nature of the support and tools, ‘execution’, the hanging of the work, the museum: the avant-gardes continually expose the artifices of presentation that allow thought to be enslaved by the gaze and diverted from the unrepresentable.¹⁷⁶

Lyotard contends that the unrepresentable can become perceptible in the mode of art making, especially where new modes are tried without being constrained by (syntactical) givens, conventions, or rituals.¹⁷⁷ In this respect, he describes the postmodern as:

[T]hat which, in the modern, puts forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable.¹⁷⁸

Within the context of such an approach, a painter sets out to be inventive, while relying on sensation to open the senses to the unrepresentable, trying, as Francis Bacon describes, for painting to be “deeply suggestive or deeply unlocking of areas of sensation,” even as he simultaneously attempts to be “as factual as possible.”¹⁷⁹ Bacon seeks in painting that which “unlocks all kind of valves of sensation within me which return me to life more violently.”¹⁸⁰ It is Deleuze’s logic of sensation that perhaps most fully explores this conundrum between presentation and the unrepresentable in discussion on the painting practice of Francis Bacon. In Deleuze’s writing on painting as well as the work by Deleuze and Guattari on the work of art, from *A Thousand Plateaus* and *What is Philosophy?* we recognise an extended thinking resonant with that of Bergson that opens a critique and commentary on this history of

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. (p.79).

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. (p.80).

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. (p.81).

¹⁷⁹ Sylvester, D. (1975). *Interviews with Francis Bacon, 1962-1979* (p.56). London, England: Thames and Hudson.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. (p.141).

modern art's thinking of the new that we have broached in this chapter. In what follows, we engage more fully with Deleuze on the matter.



Figure 42 (90x85cm)

A Logic of Sensation

Deleuze and Guattari describe the work of art as “a bloc of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects” that is independent of any model, and of its creator, and of any beholder.¹⁸¹ From the body’s internal actions that are a response to sensation (when looking at a work of art, for example) they differentiate out percepts, affects, and concepts, as “*beings* whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived,” with the corollary that “the work of art is a being of sensation and nothing else: it exists in itself.”¹⁸² However, from an artist-spectator’s perspective, affect is a dynamics of processes of response, and so the nature of its being is *becoming*, where “affects are passages of intensity, a reaction in or on the body at the level of matter.”¹⁸³ Affection, then, is “the body’s passage from one state of affection to another” and, as Simon O’Sullivan explains, it is the name given to the “risings and fallings—the becomings—of my own body, especially when it encounters another body.”¹⁸⁴ The perceptual image of the work of art that initially arises from affection, is therefore a becoming-image. It is affected by the differing nature of sensation, which influences both the capacity of this body to act, and how it acts.

¹⁸¹ Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. *W?* op. cit., (pp.163,164).

¹⁸² Ibid. (p.164).

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ O’Sullivan, S. (2006). *Art encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought beyond representation* (p.41). New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

As examples of affects, Deleuze and Guattari refer to the harmonies found in consonance and dissonance, and in tone and colour, and they identify various compounds of sensation such as the tensions or resonances in vibration, resonance, embrace, clinch, withdrawal, division, or distension. These are compounds they describe as: “vibrating sensation—coupling sensation—opening or splitting, hollowing out sensation.”¹⁸⁵ The purpose of painting is then to “wrest the percept from the perceptions of objects and the states of a perceiving subject, to wrest the affect from affections as the transition from one state to another: to extract a bloc of sensations, a pure being of sensations.”¹⁸⁶ The difficulty for an artist is to make the compound that is the work-of-art “stand up on its own,” to make it “solid and lasting like the art of the museums” so that the percept or affect is preserved in itself.¹⁸⁷ Even where the material image is changing continually during the process of painting, a fleetingly emergent presence gives sensation “the power to exist and be preserved in itself in the eternity that coexists with this short duration.”¹⁸⁸ A painter uses processes of “creative fabulation that has nothing to do with memory” in order to make such an enduring bloc of sensations, specifically using achromatic and chromatic colour “to raise lived perceptions to the percept and lived affections to the affect.”¹⁸⁹ Perhaps what “stands up” as a plane of composition of percepts/affects in Deleuze and Guattari’s sense, is what could be termed, in Lyotard’s understanding, as the figural. It is certainly the case that my own thinking concerning the making of painting shuttles between aspects of Lyotard’s work on the unrepresentable and the figural, and Deleuze’s work on Bergson and Bacon, a logic of sensation. In concluding this chapter, I begin to introduce my painting practice in these terms, somewhere between sensation and the figural.

¹⁸⁵ Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F., *What is philosophy?* op. cit., (p.164).

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. (p.167).

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. (p.166).

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. (pp.170; 171).

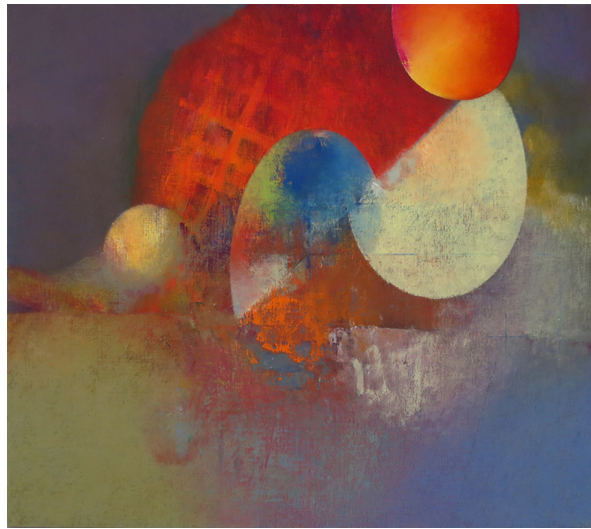


Figure 43 (85x95cm)

The Figural

The paintings ‘de-picted’ in this exegesis do not make direct, conscious reference to particular objects, or sites, or scale. The paintings are not figurations, representations, or allegories of some thing or things. The motifs are *figural* rather than figurative or abstract, constituted through interaction between visual terms drawn from memory, in-formed by external images selected and brought near in the corporeal action of painting. However it is precisely memory as a given that continually needs clearing such that creative fabulation is released from memory’s taint. For Lyotard, the term ‘figural’ refers to a capacity to work “outside the grasp of structures, and yet to work within them.”¹⁹⁰ In this respect, a painting is figural in the way it always goes beyond any description of it or theory about it: “neither an objective figure or shape, nor a figure in a language: it is a process between the two.”¹⁹¹ For Deleuze, figural motifs are “the sensible form related to a sensation,” and which “acts immediately on the nervous system.”¹⁹² Thus, the figural avoids the problem that attaches to both figuration and abstraction where, for each, the motifs refer to givens held in memory. Figuration does not “liberate the figure” for use by the painter in creating new visual experience, nor does abstraction free the abstract motifs from their art-historical reference.¹⁹³ By contrast, the figural is a spoiling of figuration that serves to *release* forms from clichéd signification, while colour also provides unlimited means to spoil harmonic expectations, and thereby allow scope for invention.

¹⁹⁰ Crome, K., & Williams, J. (Eds.). *The Lyotard reader and guide*. op. cit., (p.15).

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Deleuze, G. (2003). *Francis Bacon: The logic of sensation* (D. Smith, Trans.) (p.31). London, England: Continuum Press.

¹⁹³ Ibid. (p.32)

In relation to this *liberation through spoiling*, Deleuze conceives a mode of painting that he describes as diagrammatic, and which creates an analogical language for painting. This diagrammatic action consists of making a/signifying and non-representative marks and patches of colour that disrupt any figurative givens, by causing a chaos that removes painting from an “optical organisation that was already reigning over it and rendering it figurative in advance.”¹⁹⁴ He identifies a triple liberation with this process, wherein perspective is replaced by a junction of vertical and horizontal planes, while the modulations of colour draw attention away from the tonal modulations of chiaroscuro, and from the “mass and declination of the body” that disrupts the figure-field relationship.¹⁹⁵ In this process of diagrammatic painting, preliminary to ‘actual’ painting, the liberating actions provide a “germ of order or rhythm” that suggest possibilities and so will lead into actual painting, and out of chaos.¹⁹⁶ In this context, the function of the ‘Figure’ in painting is to provide a form that conveys sensation *directly* to the nervous system, and that bypasses or renounces any codes of figuration.¹⁹⁷ Deleuze proposes that a new order will then be able to emerge—painting created in its own new terms. Keith Crome describes how, for Lyotard, a painting’s figural sense is “neither meaning, nor a referent, but an effect of disturbance and transformation” that cannot be accounted for by the significations of language, or by the designation of things.¹⁹⁸

As Deleuze suggests, when painting in a diagrammatic mode it is easier to resist subordinating visual qualities to the service of a visual whole, and so it is easier for them to act independently in providing “the germ of rhythm in relation to the new order of the painting.”¹⁹⁹ In this way, then, it is, in actuality, *sensation* that ‘I’ paint, creative liberation of painting, aiding the figural in de-forming and re-forming clichés of figuration and abstraction.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. (p.82).

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. (p.96).

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. (p.83).

¹⁹⁷ Smith, D. (2003). Deleuze on Bacon: three conceptual trajectories in *The logic of sensation*. Ibid (p.xii).

¹⁹⁸ Crome, *The Lyotard reader and guide*. op. cit., (p.15).

¹⁹⁹ Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The logic of sensation*. op. cit., (p.83).

²⁰⁰ Ibid. (p.32).



Figure 44 (95x120cm)

Within my practice, forms that are figural elements, such as those in Figure 44, have no determining referent, and the logic of what, for example, appears to be a shadow below and to the left of the figural elements is not consistent with codes of figuration. Un-decidably and ultimately indecisively shadow, it takes an act-of-will to *make* the image conform to a spatial logic, even as the figural works to de-form that logic. This is a troubled painting, troubled in its own terms, resistant to mirroring givens, standing up on its own. The power of chromatic sensation is its attentive draw-ability, de-forming how we see, and reforming habits of visual perception. For Deleuze “sensation is the opposite of the facile and the ready-made, the cliché, but also of the ‘sensational’, the spontaneous etc.”²⁰¹

While painting, I experience the rhythms of changing sensations, and the rhythms of change in sensation, and I experience the deformations that sensation is able to effect as it emerges in painting. More correctly phrased, the ‘I’ experiencing is a corporeal affection, an action-image encountering other images. It is not, in duration’s nuance, a reflective ‘I’ constitutive of an ego-will. It is none-the-less real and not a cerebral phantasm of imagination. This deformation is part of the clearing of givens that under-or-over-take me through painting. The immediate ‘knowledge’ of sensation is dynamic ‘action’ that is motile with durational change—an inter-action that is sensation–affection effecting the action-of-painting. The painting-image/image-of-painting emerges in this dynamic in duration, and in the immediacy of the continuously emerging new present, even as that present is permeated by a contemporaneous past.

²⁰¹ Ibid. (p.31).



Figure 45 (120x150cm)

Absolute Emergence

In the *hesitation* of perception—mediation—that prolongs sensation so that it can interact with memory, givens attendant on the blank canvas re-emerge, so that the image is no longer de-formed by sensation, but is re-formed in terms that have been brought from the past. These ‘givens’ include recombined and synthesised fragments and images, each with elusive references that I sense but cannot locate in memory. I am, for example, aware that my painting field implicates change, process, emergence, and evolution, concerns that were initially brought to painting from ‘outside’, and that have subsequently become more reflexive concerns about the nature of painting itself, its principles and processes. All these givens now fold into the currents of painting’s flows, into the question-of-method within this context. Painting draws on givens, while focusing on how the image-of-painting emerges in utter contingency, a processual ‘new’. This is not a *possible* future projected forward as a distanced destination for painting’s realization, but the virtual that is nonetheless real, continually emerging as it is actualised in a changing-present. That is, my *focus*—though not my reflection—is on what emerges *immediately* as painting proceeds. Reflection ushers in the homogeneity of a space-time, rationality of consciousness and the grammar of language. I ask what my decisions mean, what actions to take, gestures to make, in regular cycles of feeding back to myself what I am genuinely unable to account for: the immediacy of intuition and heterogeneity of psychic states.

As painting proceeds by changing the chromatic/achromatic relations of sensation, so a perception-image emerges along with new possibilities for painting. As the conditions for painting keep changing with the emerging image, so givens proliferate and need to be

cleared, and so the process of painting continually reconditions its grounds for emergence. These are also the grounds for the affective, perceptual, and conceptual ‘response’ to that emergence. My painting process involves *clearing* givens, releasing potentials, creating possibilities, generating more givens, and reconditioning of the terms for painting, endlessly—until painting stops. Impetus *of* change is the fundamental requirement for emergence, and the action of painting—what stands up—gives life to the process.

This chapter has aimed at providing, if not provoking, a critical understanding of especially late twentieth-century accounts of how the ‘new’ happens in creative art practices. Generally defined within discourses of the avant-gardes, this accounting for change, emergence or movement in art practices has broached and raked over Modernism’s fundamental tenets: art’s relation to autonomy—what autonomy means in such contexts; art’s relation to history and institutional practices construing historicity’s structures; and art’s relation to life, to process, to artifice and construction. I have especially aimed at determining how predominant critical accounts of understanding of emergence and the new have recourse, in Bergson’s terms, to a badly-formed problem, inasmuch as an essential temporalising, or primordial temporality essential to avant-gardism is itself essentially considered in the continuum of a spatialising of time’s modalities of past, present and future. In this the radicality of Bergson’s ontology of time as heterogeneous duration is missed. The chapter concludes in considerations of an “affective turn” in art-theoretical considerations of the new, a turn ushered-in in part by the writings of Deleuze and, in turn, the influence of Bergson. In concluding this chapter, I introduced some explicit considerations within my painting practice. In the chapter that follows, my aim is to more fully engage in my practice, discussing my final exhibition and specific works in some detail, as well as broaching consideration of the art practices of a range of painters whose concerns have especial resonance or bearing on aspects of my work.



Figure 46 (9.5x12.5cm)



Figure 47 (120x150cm)

CHAPTER THREE

OF PAINTING

Introduction

This chapter initially introduces the exhibition I curated of my painting practice undertaken for this PhD research. The exhibition had no pre-scribing title. The chapter goes on to examine the *ecology* within which these paintings have emerged. In this discussion, I bring together notions of movement, image, time and emergence in elucidating my practice of painting and its relationship with emergence and production: how a painter negotiates between incongruent yet inter-dependent realities. One ‘reality’ concerns the action of painting unfolding *matter* as paint in space. The other discerns an image emerging in duration. From my own standpoint as a painter working with an understanding of emergence, I discuss the approach and methods I employ as a means to accommodate this duality of painting’s realities. In particular I discuss how to ameliorate the difficulties of conducting painting that, for myriad reasons, is conceived as progressing along a trajectory. I also discuss how I conduct painting when, in consideration of the ideas of Bergson and Deleuze, it is conceived as proceeding without trajectory, as an image emerging in perception’s interactions with memory. In looking at how painting happens in these circumstances, this chapter also reflects on the *nothing that is everything* that Bergson has as essential to painting, and how within these terms and in the context of my own painting, a response could be given to the question *Does painting happen?* As this response encounters those two ‘realities’ determined in Bergsonism, I discuss the question of what *completion* could mean in emergence, and how a painter determines when painting ceases.



Figure 48 (95x95cm)

The Exhibition

The exhibition was held at St Paul St. Gallery Three. 17 February–1 March 2014.

39 Symonds St., Auckland Central

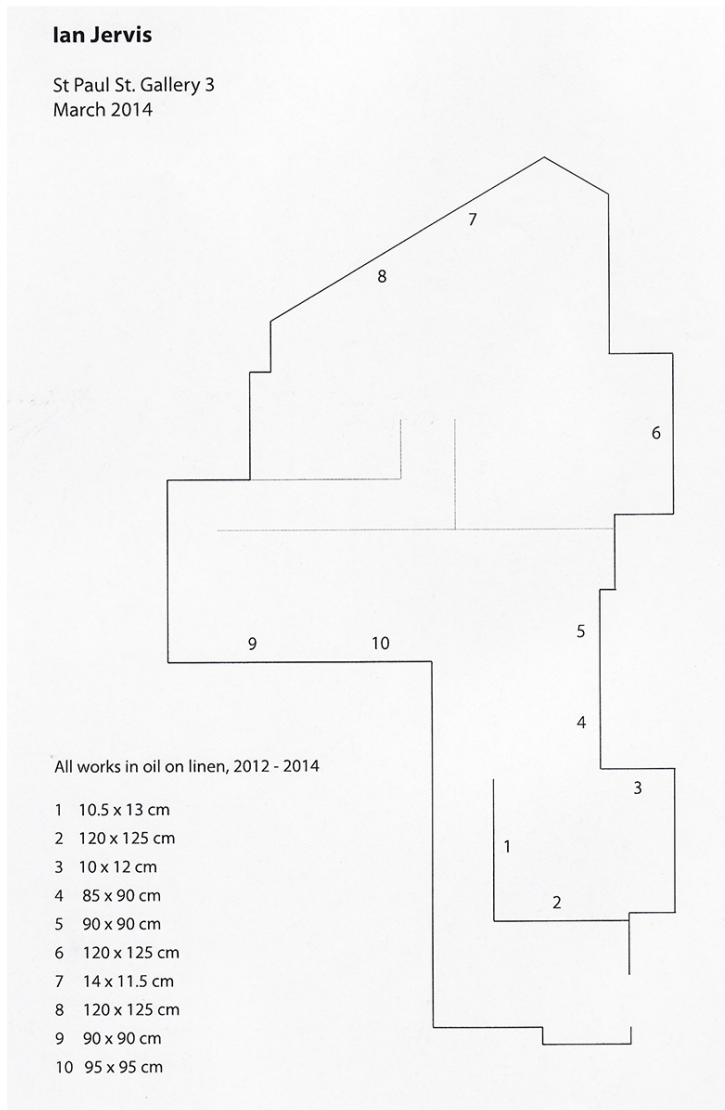


Figure 49 Map of exhibition layout.

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



Figure 50 Installation view; towards gallery entrance ramp.

The paintings in this exhibition came out of what could be termed the complex ecologies of my studio, a littoral zone of tidal changes. It is clear that these paintings took time to make, and that each took a different time. A time-line could be drawn up, delineating the first ones, their periodicity, and their overlaps with subsequent ones, their abeyances, re-workings and so on. What is not so evident is how they unfolded time, and how that unfolding brought with it that *unforeseeable nothing* which Bergson describes as being *everything* in the work of art, or how ‘time’ has two incommensurable registers from one scene of studio encounter to another, from one ecology to another. This marks the studio’s ecologies as estuarine, as *élan vital*, as a creative evolution. From the colours in these works, we experience *form* as rhythms of sensations, but we do not see that essential form which was *nought as matter*, and which creates itself. As a ‘painter’ I cannot account for this *nothing which is everything*. Perhaps I am perennially too early. As ‘spectators’ we may infer that this nothing emerges during processes of painting, processes that are not simply completed with the cessation of applications of paint. As ‘spectators’ we, perhaps, miss the sprouting and flowering of its creation. We may well be perennially too late. While I can testify to having been present and actively engaged with the material unfolding of these paintings, I cannot say that *I was present* to the creative emergence of what was essential in painting. This emergence was immanent to the continuous emergence of my own living, as it was experienced in the intensity of my changing psychic states, as duration. What happened was duration, and what happened in its continuum of creative change was everything, and *it was unforeseeable*. I cannot differentiate painting out from duration to say that it happened distinctly, just as I cannot differentiate certain qualitative states of change as being novel.

Because it happened as duration, the nothing which is everything did not emerge in time with the progressively unfolding painting, but it did emerge in coincidence with the precise time that it took to make that painting.

As we encounter the works now, it is only the action of painting, in a narrow sense of painter-as-agent, that has finished, while emergence continues for the *unforeseeable nothing which is everything* in the work of art, but now in the changing psychic states of spectators which cannot exclude the painter-as-spectator. From the point-of-view of time flown—homogeneous and quantifiable time—we are always too early or too late to coincide with that present of a painting’s presentation. Yet, from the point of view of time flowing in heterogeneous duration, that present of painting’s presentation is continuous evolution. In this flux is sensation’s unforeseeable emergence—matter and memory flexing in contracting and relaxing. Here is painting’s essential incompleteness: time itself, pure time showing itself, as Deleuze’s “crystal image” (see Chapter One) is construed or folded in that mirror-reciprocity of the doubling of the virtual image and the actual image. Paintings offer a basis for that image, while we—intuition—provide a method for emergence. What we experience in our encounter with each of the exhibited works is a totality of contingency present at the beginning of painting, but which is still just emerging—as a bloc—as we look. This is not the contingency of a studio-ecology, but a contingency of virtual sensation immanent to duration. As we look *now*, we see the latency that took precisely this time to emerge in each of the works, as we experience emerging in ourselves the vital *nothing—everything*, which keeps us, the work-of-art, and creativity alive. This is the work that we have arrived to undertake, and it is so *natural* that it is no work at all.



Figure 51 Installation view; centre gallery return.

My painting ‘evolved’ over the ‘duration’ of this study, and the works assembled for this exhibition are recent rather than early within the time-line of my painting production. In Bergsonian terms, each may be considered from a doubling of viewpoints: we consider, from the reality of objects in space and quantifiable time, the specifics of materials unfolding in space, the labour of applications of paint by a subject-painter, along with all of the requirements of technical composition that generally preoccupy descriptions and evaluations of painting processes. Then there is Bergsonian duration, concern with how the virtual and the actual relate, how matter and memory, image, time and emergence are complicating in any attempt at description. Although all of these paintings emerged within my studio ecologies, for each conditions were *different*, and each emerged in differing from itself, as nuance rather than as difference with respect to other paintings in this ‘collection’, notwithstanding that we generally define each work in relation to other works in the grouping. Each emerged in its own terms, and in its own time. I could assemble a retrospective account for how each painting unfolded in space, but this would not account for how decisions were made that affected that unfolding, because they were made in the temporal flowing of emergence, and because retrospection could not account for what actually happened in the dynamics of decision. There was no *plan* for any of these paintings, no preliminary drawings or studies, and there was no trajectory beyond an initial foray along a possible path. During painting, I was concentrating on responding directly to changing sensations emerging in interactions with unfolding-painting. My body-image-action responded, as affective responsibility for emergence, in close encounter with the totality of images, some of which become bodily encounter: painting sensation directly.



Figure 52 Installation view; gallery centre.

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

This gallery site is a spatially eccentric and visually active volume that features differing floor levels, with pipes, ducts, nooks, ramps and railings, and recursions. This ecology of *utility* hosts a residuum of Modernism, where sections of plain white wall are installed with the po-faced rectitude of strict geometries. At their margins we find remnants of another past, where architectural features refer to the turn of the twentieth century, when a nascent Modernism had hardly touched what was then home for a medical practitioner and his family, a building designed for generous if conventional living. Despite the busyness of this site, much of it has suffused light, and there is an overall quietude inside that stands in contrast to the movement, change and life that surrounds it outside. There is, for example, a continual in-flux of light coming from reflections and the changing day, and there is a flux of sound and vibration from passing vehicles, and the diurnal and seasonal flux of passing pedestrians and student volleyball players in the next-door hostel courtyard.¹ The consequence is that experience of these paintings is permeated by all manner of sensations and memories, so that these paintings are not abstracted or divorced from life, but actively engaged in life. With their exuberant colours, they are no wallflowers.

¹ This affect is one that I associate with *The dream of light*, a film in which a painter, working *en plein air* within a high-walled courtyard, struggles to capture an image of a tree that is constantly changing, in constantly changing light conditions. Meanwhile the sounds of everyday life filter in from outside, as part of the diurnal rhythm of time passing. ([Erice, V. (Director), (Moreno, M.(Producer). (1993). *The dream of light* / *The quince tree sun*. [Motion picture]. Spain: Facets Multimedia Distribution USA.]).



Figure 53 Installation view; upper level; detail of small work, (10x12cm)



Figure 54 Installation view; upper level.



Figure 55 Installation view; long view on entering gallery

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

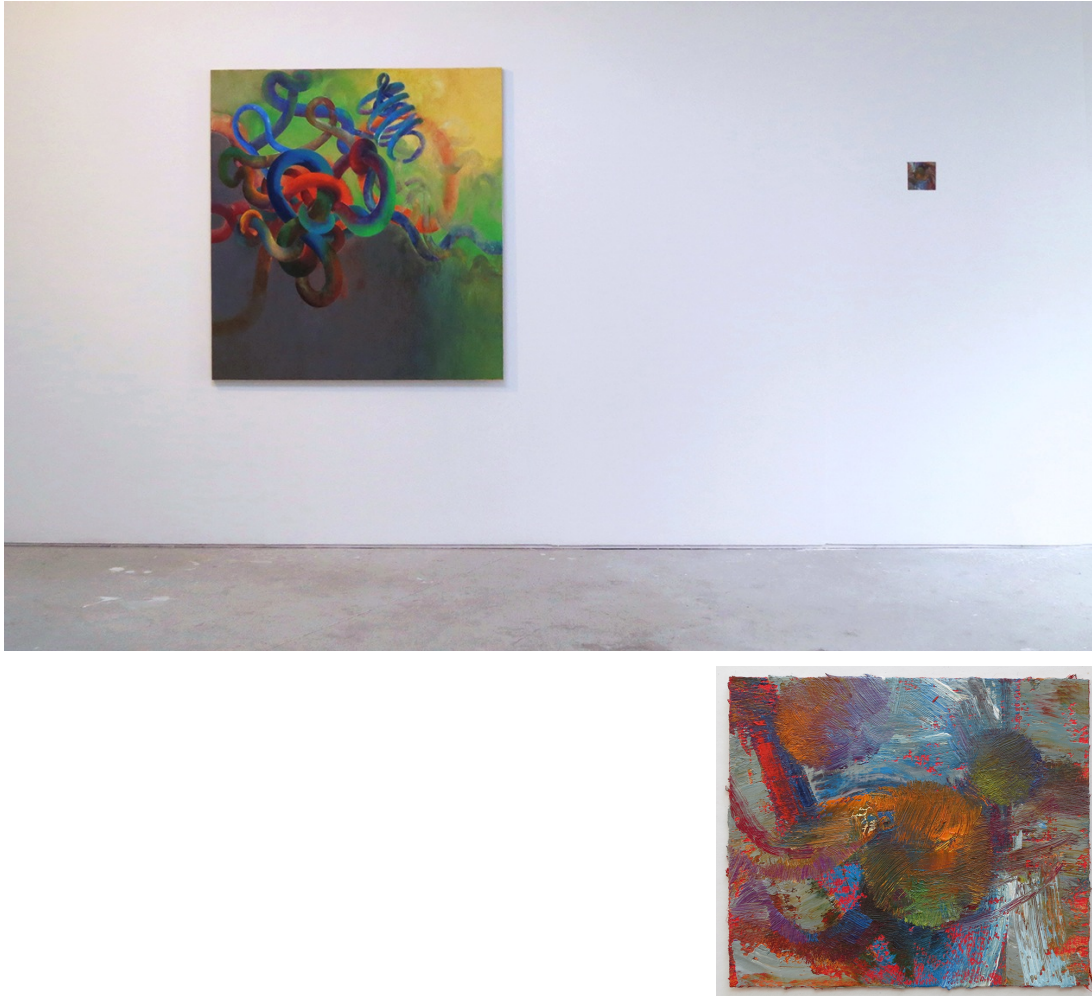


Figure 56 Installation view; painting in lower level (125x120cm); detail of small work, (11x13cm)



Figure 57 Installation view; painting in lower level alcove, (125x120cm)

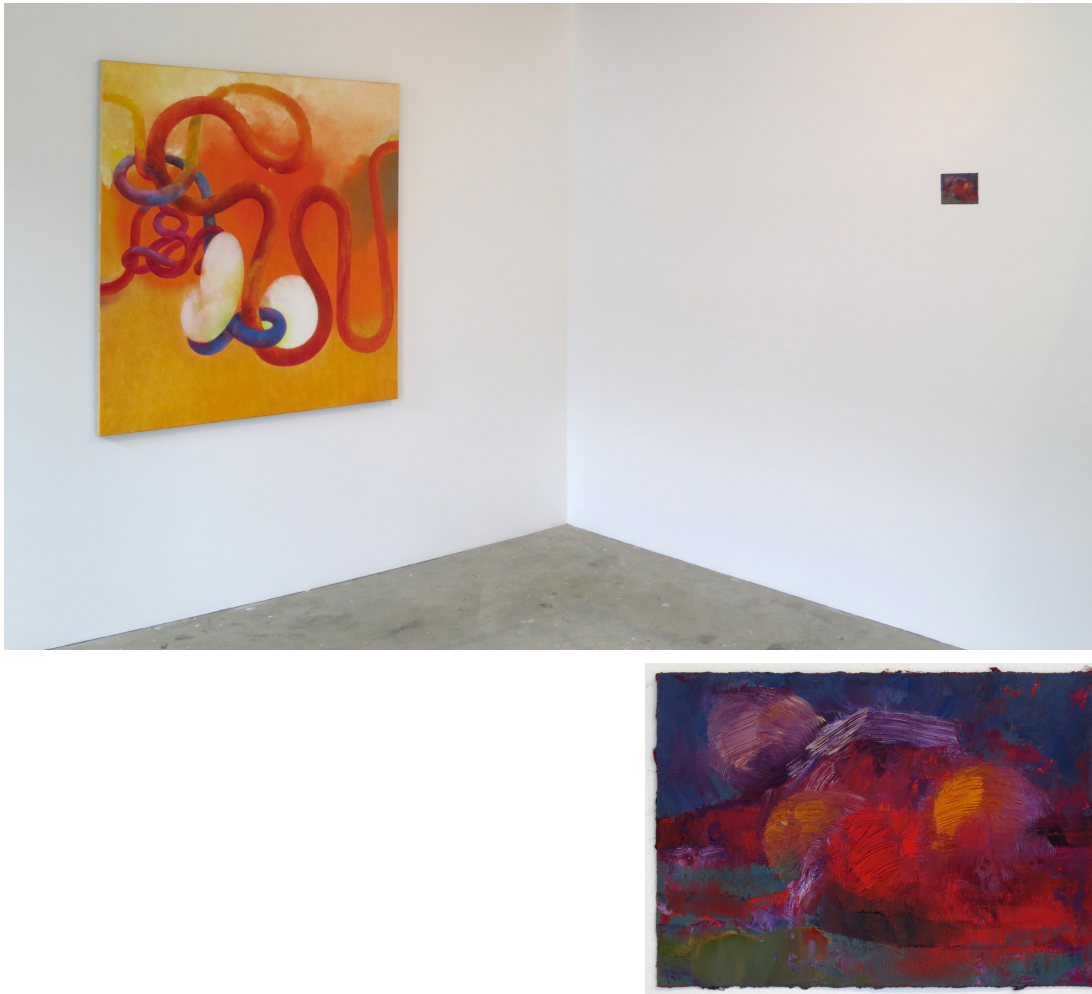


Figure 58 Installation view; painting in upper level (125x120cm) ; detail of small work, (11x13cm)

Givens

Figure 59 Prepared blank canvas in the artist's studio (95x90cm)

As Deleuze explains in his writing on the painter, Francis Bacon, even before painting starts the blank canvas is crowded with a profusion of images that precede painting, and that are identified by him as everything that is in the artist's mind and memory, and around the artist, and in the studio.² These images, he says, connect through "pure memory identical to the totality of the past," and are "already in the canvas, more or less virtually, more or less actually."³ Although these images come from the past, they are continually reconstituted in memory. As Bergsonian duration is permeated by the past in this way, these images are active in the emerging psychic states of a painter, and so already 'on the canvas' as givens. They include all the necessary conceptions that a painter has for how painting could unfold, and all the possible outcomes that could ensue. Each *blank* canvas is populated by images from my past painting pursuits, and by images that emerged from and informed actions of painting over its duration at that time, and all the images that have subsequently emerged in my perceptions of those works—the totality of images converging on this body-image. Importantly, for my practice, the *givens* include the unexplored (thwarted) potentialities that have emerged along the way, and all the images attendant on these potentialities. The blank canvas is also freighted with the image of a cultural history of art and of painting, along with all the images that have emerged in the evolution of this history. In short, it is potentially populated by the totality of images. Signs are prominent amongst the givens, even as they refer to other signs, endlessly. Certain instrumental givens come from past experience, such as facility with tools and media that will allow painting to proceed fluidly, or familiarity with

² Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: the logic of sensation*. op. cit., (p.71).

³ Ibid.

conventions of signs such as atmospheric and linear perspectival devices: the assemblages of a plane of technical composition.

My painting starts when, from amongst these givens, I conceive a possible trajectory that has yet to be explored and use it as a basis for moving into action. As I come to discuss it in this chapter, this is a *faux*-beginning which none-the-less establishes the doxa of painting's commencement. As painting proceeds, other givens drawn from memory interact with what is emerging in my perception, so that *form* is a becoming image-of-emergence, how a bloc of sensations opens to a becoming-sign. In the process, my preconceived trajectory has become one of the givens that is now immanent to processes of emergence, as they continually reconstitute my conception of trajectory even as that trajectory is transitory and an artefact of spatialised thinking that is alien to emergence. In these problematic terms, painting proceeds as a continuous process of emergence, interaction, and relegation, with transitory givens continuing to swarm around my painting even though the canvas is no longer blank.

Related Practices

As I experience works of art by other artists, an image emerges in my perception and I am inclined to frame them (my experience of them) in terms of emergence. The intentional fallacy that is based on future-orientated trajectory is a problem for both artist and spectator. As a spectator I cannot defer to a contextual framing that ignores this issue, even as I understand that customarily it is ignored in much of the discourse with which artists engage. More often than not, these discourses by and on other artists do not establish a reference field akin to that of Bergson when discussing the notion of emergence, if such notion is discussed at all. Nevertheless these works, for me, evoke experiences of movement, of time, change, and emergence as virtual images, though actualised or counter-actualised as my acts of painting.

As someone who *plays* on historical concepts of painting, of intention and authorship, the painter, Judy Millar, describes her work in terms that seemingly coincide with emergence, although strictly speaking she doesn't use that term. She makes no preliminary studies. Her method is experimental. The outcome is treated as provisional, and she resists interpreting her work or discussing it in terms of intention, other than in her interest in de-forming the conventions and habits of thinking about painting. In this respect, she seems to be less interested in re-forming painting, and she leaves the work of interpretation to spectators, not only as their right, but also as their responsibility.

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Figure 60 ⁴Figure 61 ⁵

For example, in her installation *The rainbow loop* (Figure 60), the spectral array rolling out across the floor suggests that the artist might be testing whether colour should be used at all, before deciding which colours to select and combine in a more nuanced and assured deployment. In its raw chromatic state, as we encounter the work, the elemental units of painting are exposed, bluntly, as chromatic and achromatic differences. There is a provisional or temporary quality to the work, as if it might physically unfurl, slump, or be rearranged by the artist at any moment. It could be, for example, that we have arrived when the artist was still thinking things through, with the installation yet to be completed. This impression is reinforced when we find that the artist would install the work differently in another place and time. Millar indicates that she has no particular destination in mind: “I work stuff out by painting. Painting is how I figure things out.”⁶ However, in the context of Bergson’s *nothing which is everything in the work of art*, it is in this work of ‘figuring out’ that an image-of-emergence comes into being, so that a work of art emerges in this action and not as a result of that action. There is *no-thing* to figure out. She demonstrates this in her changing dispositions during the installing process, and as it changes in response to different sites. In its labile state, the image that is the work of art continues to emerge, partially virtual image and actual image: materially, conceptually, as sensation, in spectator and artist reconfiguring the work. All this serves to emphasise how the work remains in process, in movement, in change. Millar describes this process in relation to the transposition of her work *Giraffe Bottle-Gun* (Figure 61) from one venue to another: “the work doesn’t really exist, it’s not a physical thing, its a combination of context and reflection of things around it, and

⁴ Millar, Judy. (2012). *The rainbow loop*. Pigment on band ply: installation for BE DO BE DO BE DO, Brisbane: IMA (Institute of Modern Art).

⁵ Millar, Judy. (2009). *Giraffe Bottle-Gun*. Ink on vinyl: installation, La Maddelena, Venice: Venice Biennale, 2009.

⁶ Gracewood, G. (n.d.) *Judy Millar: The artist is present*. (Artist interview, 2010). Retrieved August 11, 2014 from <http://toomuchpersonality.com/2013/09/26/judy-millar-the-artist-is-a-present/>

things that have historically taken place.”⁷ In this simple evocation of Bergson’s concept of duration, Millar ‘locates’ the work not in any specifics of spatio-temporal encounter with the spectator, but in a virtual realm of interpenetrating past and present.

Giraffe Bottle-Gun is ‘timely’ in the sense of being sited in a contemporary international art exhibition, yet it is out-of-time and out-of-place, installed in a remodelled eighteenth century Venetian church. Transposition and reconfiguration are inherent to the work. A global separation spans between a site of conception and manufacture (New Zealand) and that of installation (Italy), while a temporal span of more than two centuries separates the tropes of contemporary art from those of Baroque architecture. Across this divide, Millar brings the secular and the religious together, again, as an equivocal accommodation—reconciliation that serves to reinvigorate questions held in common by host institutions: art, architecture, church, museum.

This initial response to Millar’s gestural extravagance changes as we discover that these gestures are translations from one medium to another. They are enlarged in scale and have been distanced from human agency through a mechanical printing process. The expressive connection between artist and spectator unravels on approaching the work, as the flat evenness of tone and colour emerges in perception and as it becomes evident that the apparently fluid gestures are fragmented into a myriad of uniform dots. Changeability and crisis are inherent to Millar’s approach, where her works emerge in interactions between a provisional plan and unplanned contingencies or emerging possibilities. Millar emphasises: “painting is not about paint, or even about paint on a support. For me, it is about structures: illusionistic structures, logical structures, worldly structures, all sorts of structures.”⁸ However, as discussed in Chapter One, Massumi tells us that “structure is the place where nothing ever happens, that explanatory heaven in which all eventual permutations are prefigured in a self-consistent set of invariant generative rules.”⁹ What Millar recalls experiencing as an emerging image (what Massumi describes as an image-event) is the spatial-material emergence of an installation, whereas the *everything that is nothing* in her work is still emerging in time. Millar figures things out as she proceeds, and what emerges is the total structural contingency that only becomes visible as painting proceeds, so that as Verwoert says: “the beginning of a painting, paradoxically would only become visible at its

⁷ Millar, Judy. (n.d.) filmed in conversation: *Contemporary focus: Judy Millar’s ‘Giraffe Bottle-Gun’*. Wellington, New Zealand: Toi Te Papa Tongarewa. [Video file]. Retrieved 14 October, 2014, from <http://www.tepapa.govt.nz/new-zealand-art-toitepapa/ContemporaryFocus/Giraffe-Bottle-Gun-Video.html>

⁸ Leonard, R. (n.d.). Robert Leonard interviews Judy Millar. *Robert Leonard: Contemporary-art writer and curator*. Retrieved 10 October, 2014, from <http://robertleonard.org/judy-millar/>

⁹ Massumi, *Parables for the virtual*. op. cit., (p.27).

very end.”¹⁰ We see this play of reversals in Millar’s commenting on her work: “space will turn into time, and time into space. What was behind will suddenly be in front, edges will become lines and lines will become edges—everything will be turned inside-out.”¹¹ Millar translates an image into these terms of dynamic unfolding—enfolding between space and time, as dual realities to be negotiated as an artist.

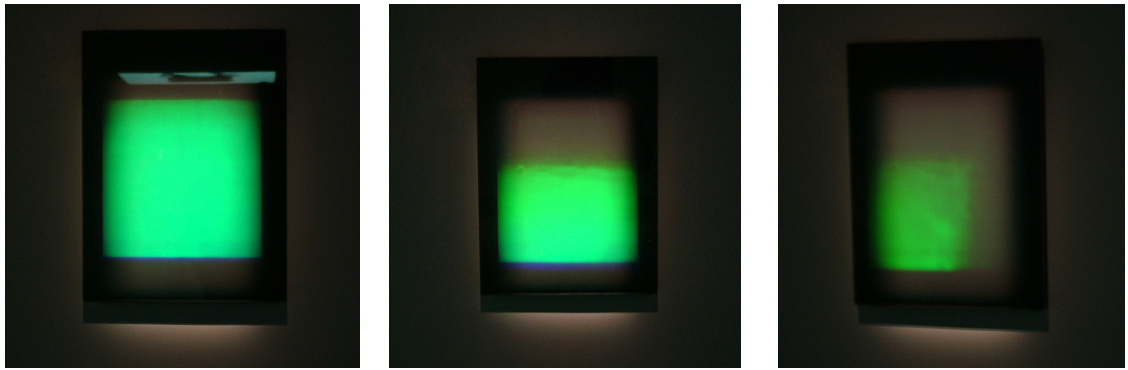


Figure 62 ¹²

James Turrell provides an exemplar of an artist’s preoccupation with creating an experience of emergence within a spectator, although his process is not one of emergence, and his work is planned, carefully designed, and constructed with precision. Nevertheless his work, as I experience it, brings that ‘nothing which is everything’ in the work of art, and which emerges slowly as a liminal quality on the limits of perceptibility. Time is central to this experience, and in an environment of sensory deprivation that he often creates to allow emergence to happen in this way, a spectator becomes acutely aware of how an image-of-emergence *is* intensive body-experience. In this respect, Turrell’s installations are composite blocs of sensation’s image, matter, memory, and duration. Representations of his work do nothing to convey its essential nature. The three slightly shifted points-of-view in the holographic work shown in Figure 62 indicate how form emerges, recedes, or disappears with every minor movement by a spectator, yet none-the-less this presentation seems to emphasize a *faux*-plane of technical acuity in lieu of the locus of sensation’s a-personal percepts/affects. With Turrell’s works, what promises to become distinct form never materializes with clarity within the transparency of its medium. This image (of completion) remains temporally and spatially evanescent, and is available only as a virtual—which is to say potential—image-of-emergence for a spectator. In this experience, spectators become acutely aware of the dynamics, contingencies, temporality, and (in most of Turrell’s work)

¹⁰ Verwoert, *Why are conceptual artists painting again?* op. cit.

¹¹ Leonard, *Robert Leonard interviews Judy Millar*. op. cit.

¹² Turrell, James. (c. 2004). [Untitled]. Hologram, glass (3 views), c.40x25cm.

the liminality of their own perceptions. This is no different for any of the various artists' works discussed here, all of which are considered within art historical/critical discourse to 'stand up' as works of art, as if the processes of affection and perception had become reified as those affects and percepts that Deleuze and Guattari describe as "*beings* whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived."¹³ However, it is in the irresolution of the continuing emergence of these works that vitality lays. The subjective 'I' in my discussion is immanent to the particular emergence that is translated and then related here, but a work of art as differential emergence happens in the passing to sensation of this materiality of Turrell's installation, or Millar's coiled band ply, or Rembrandt's paint (Figure 63). In the case of Turrell, the 'materials' are evanescent space, light, and time, so that these works create in me a particular experience of temporality in the fleeting, the fugitive, and the enduring.

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Figure 63 ¹⁴

My 'experience' comes out of sensations: light reflecting, emanating or refracting from materials, responses to ways they have been handled, so that in Rembrandt's late self-portrait (Figure 63), for example, an image of indeterminacy in change emerges from painting gestures that both model and undo (de-figure) facial form so that it appears to be modelled softly, tentatively, provisionally. While, yes, this is a portrait, we would say a likeness of the face of Rembrandt, a representation, a facial image, what *strikes* me, encounters me, is an indecisive temporalising and formalising—figuring and de-figuring—its emergence in (my) memory and imagination.

Similarly, in Jude Rae's painting *Interior (Meg)* (Figure 64) an intermittently broken surface of paint has been dry-brushed across a chromatically saturated and luminous *imprimatura*.¹⁵ As

¹³ Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. *What is philosophy?* op. cit., (p.164).

¹⁴ van Rijn, Rembrandt. (1669). *Self-portrait at the age of 63*. Oil on canvas: 84x69cm. London, England; National Gallery.

a spectator approaches this painting, sensations of colours emerging from the substrate through a myriad of small surface fissures, effects de-formation of the figure depicted. An image-of-emergence is then suffused by chromatic sensations, as figuration recedes. These de-figuring chromatic stimuli emerge from the interior of this material object, such that the very foundation of the painting is a becoming formless. I recognise a convergence between Rae's approaches to technical composition and those I activate or employ.

In Jenny Saville's self-portrait (Figure 65) an image emerges directly from the sensation of reflected light that is perceived as a quality of wetness, and so connects with a perception of compromised integuments, osmotic leaching, and exchange between interior and exterior. She effects another de-figuring strategy by turning the head sideways in order to obstruct habitual modes of reading a face. The image that keeps emerging when I turn away from this painting is of this sensation of wetness and movement, and this emerges through a 'synaesthesia' in memory as sensory qualities of tactility, sound, taste, and smell.

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Figure 64 ¹⁶Figure 65 ¹⁷

In all these works, nuance in the articulation of paint with its particular tonal and chromatic differences, along with the nuanced ways in which a work is constructed, become fundamental to how we receive these works. For example, in Mark Wallinger's *Time and relative dimensions in space* (Figure 66), blemish-free lacquer prevents one's gaze from locating this object's surface, so that a viewer focuses instead on a virtual image mirrored in that surface. The illusion is that we are seeing into the interior of this form, whereas it actually reflects our gaze back outside. The effect is to cause a massive object to appear transparent, weightless, and insubstantial, in contravention of the laws of physics, and in breach of the trust we place in perception. The object appears to dematerialise and re-materialise with a

¹⁵ A foundation layer of colour on a white ground, intended to chromatically modify subsequent layers.

¹⁶ Rae, Jude. (2004). *Interior (Meg)*. Oil on linen: 35x40cm.

¹⁷ Saville, Jenny. (2002-3). *Reverse*. Oil on canvas: 213x243cm.

spectator's shifting point of view, and there is a confusion between the actual and the virtual in Bergsonian terms, so that as Deleuze describes: "the actual optical image crystallizes with its own virtual image."¹⁸ In this crystal image the virtual and the actual exist simultaneously, so the image we have cannot be attributed solely to either the real or the imaginary. As Adrian Searle describes, the effect is "to realise that what you see isn't always what you get. I feel a fault line opening up, between what I see and what I think I know."¹⁹

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Figure 66 ²⁰Figure 67 ²¹

Again, as if neither perception nor matter could be trusted, Jude Rae in her work *SL131* (Figure 67) depicts objects that seem to be materially as well as perceptually constituted in light. Reflected light dissolves edges as if these were in the flux of exchange between the particle and wave properties of light, suspended in a dynamic equilibrium between sublimation and dissolution. Rae describes this effect as a "structural ambiguity, the play of illusion and materiality."²²

Gerhard Richter's painting *Mediation* (Figure 68) invokes in me a tic whereby I scan for spatial cues that would allow me to establish a figure-field relation from these random marks, to rescue order from threatening chaos, but also to then reconstitute the cliché that the artist was working to clear. The a-signifying gestures of Richter's squeegeed paint are a means to de-form figuration, even as the spectator subsequently works to undo this clearing.

¹⁸ Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The time-image*. op. cit., (p.67).

¹⁹ Searle, A. (2009, February 16). Lets' do the time warp again. *The Guardian* (art review). Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2009/feb/16/mark-wallinger-the-russian-linesman>

²⁰ Wallinger, Mark. (2001). *Time and relative dimensions in space*. Mirror, police box. London: Hayward Gallery.

²¹ Rae, Jude. (2002). *On time*. Oil on linen: 56x76cm.

²² Rae, Jude. (2011). *Sight undone* (artist's essay). Sydney. Australia: Jensen Gallery.

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Figure 68²³Figure 69 ²⁴

What we may perceive as chaotic colour in this painting (Figure 68) is also the taxonomic disorder of the formless that Yve-Alain Bois describes: “nothing in and of itself, the formless has only an operational existence: it is a performative.”²⁵ It is this performative that I connect with emergence, and here the semblance of the formless lies in its ability to “disappoint expectation” and so clear the ground for emergence.²⁶ For Immanuel Kant the formless becomes something that, perceived by our senses, is “given a form by our intuition, and conceptualised by our understanding,” so that “we may only *feel* and never know the formless.”²⁷ Between this intuition and Lyotard’s sublime intuition of *Is it happening?* the formless for both Kant and Lyotard “undercuts and challenges the viability of any and every form of thought and action.”²⁸ In this respect, what I habitually perceive as *incipient form* eludes my will to have it emerge as form in my reception of this painting. Richter employs this radical clearing so that the ‘*content*’ of the work becomes the performative operation of painting, a position consistent with the concept of emergence. Bois describes how this operation “splits off from modernism, insulting the very opposition of form and content—which is itself formal, arising as it does from a binary logic—declaring it null and void.”²⁹ When considered in the context of these squeegeed paintings, in his figurative evocation of *Two Candles* (Figure 68), the question of what we are perceiving in terms of the actual and the virtual and how they are both real, performs a similar deforming operation.

²³ Richter, Gerhard. (1986). *Mediation*. Oil on canvas: 320x400cm.

²⁴ Richter, Gerhard. (1982). *Two candles*. Oil on canvas: 140x14cm.

²⁵ Bois, Y-A. (1997). The use value of “formless”, In Y-A. Bois & R. Krauss (Eds.), *Formless: a user's guide* (p.18). New York, NY: Zone Books.

²⁶ Ibid. (p.15).

²⁷ Murphy, S. (2005). Forms of the ‘Avant-Garde’. In Crowley, P. & P. Hegarty (Eds.), *Formless: ways in and out of form* (p.68). Bern, Switzerland: Peter Long AG.

²⁸ Ibid. (p.74)

²⁹ Bois, op. cit., (p.16).

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Figure 70 ³⁰Figure 71 ³¹

Even though she will discuss subject matter, performance is central to Amy Sillman's approach to painting (Figures 70, 71), where painting is deliberately a process of emergence. For her painting is a "physical thinking process" that is "a way to engage in a kind of internal discourse, or sub-linguistic mumbling."³² Sillman's insistence on the central relevance of space, matter, and bodily action tacitly acknowledges the primacy of sensation and affective responding. As spectators we can surmise from the traces of figuration, that as figures started to emerge in the process of painting, she took steps to de-figure them by a process of "unpainting" that confuses signs and introduces a-signifying marks.³³ Perhaps these figures are *my* image-of-emergence? During painting, they simply came out of "handwriting in a language that isn't language yet," so that Sillman only "aspire[s] to the condition of painting."³⁴ Linda Norden describes Sillman's painting/un-painting process as "relentlessly labor-intensive." Just as Millar labours to figure things out, so Sillman works to un-figure things out so that they emerge unencumbered by structure.³⁵

In Brice Marden's *Cold Mountain 3* (Figure 72) form emerges in traces left by a brush attached to the end of a long crooked stick. Marden's actions are translated capriciously into a continuously drawn line that twists and wanders in *reconnoitre* of the canvas arena. This intervention of an unreliable mechanical process is strangely analogous to Millar's intervention by a more predictable printing process, as ways to de-figure an authorial 'I' in their work.

³⁰ Sillman, Amy. (2007). *P*. Oil on canvas: 130x115cm.

³¹ Sillman, Amy. (2005). *Cliff 2*. Oil on canvas: 183x152cm.

³² Sillman, Amy. Any Sillman, artist notes . London, England: Saatchi Gallery. http://www.saatchigallery.com/artists/amy_sillman.htm. (Retrieved 3 Oct., 2014).

³³ Norden, L. (2007). Amy Sillman: The elephant in the painting (p.240). *ArtForum International*, 45, February, (pp.239-245). <http://artforum.com>

³⁴ Ibid. (p.240).

³⁵ Ibid. (p.245).

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Figure 72 ³⁶Figure 73 ³⁷

In those paintings in Marden's *Cold Mountain* series, he describes a strategy for de-figuring. He started this series by translating grid structures, with which he had previously worked, into a process of four layerings or sequences of painting, based on four couplets in a Chinese poem. Then, he uses the caprice of his crooked-stick technique to force a further de-figuring of the grid geometry, and later in the process he adjusts the paintings by inserting "counter-figures."³⁸ The painting emerges through this process of forming, de-forming, and re-forming.

Tomma Abts' approach to painting (Figure 73) is to follow a rigorous method of emergence where there is no preconceived destination, no plan or preliminary drawings, and where she makes decisions in response to an image-of-emergence continually infolding her as she paints. As structures emerge in the painting, they become restructured, as Verwoert suggests:

The emergent quality of the pictures lies in their almost imperceptible but persistent animation of structures. It is, one might say, a sort of trembling floating or flowing that enfolds the entire structure of the composition of the picture, as it becomes progressively clear, that the state of necessity, which it mediates derives from a condition of pure, limitless possibility. ...In these pictures decisions are made according to one or more standards. The criteria for making decisions changes from moment to moment and from form to form...the particular impression of a structure, which is animated by a subliminal, but nonetheless

³⁶ Marden, Brice. (1989-91). *Cold Mountain 3*. Oil on linen: 274x365cm.

³⁷ Abts, Tomma. (2011). *Weers*. Acrylic & oil on panel: 48x38cm.

³⁸ Marden, Brice. (n.d). *Brice Marden on cold mountain*. Art Babble, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. [Video file]. Retrieved September 2, 2014 from <http://www.artbabble.org/video/sfinoma/brice-marden-cold-mountain>

sustained dynamic instability, therefore arises precisely from this variability of the criteria used in the construction of the composition.³⁹

This opportunistic abandonment of trajectory in the advent of a more interesting possibility is clearly not random, because the resultant paintings cohere aesthetically in ways that suggests certain images in memory are constantly in interplay within perception. The shifting orientations more often come out of Abts changing preoccupation with detail, more than radical shifts due to freshly emerging possibility. They may well not be apparent if it were not for the palimpsest of visible ridges and textures that come from constant over-painting. She makes no effort to eliminate these traces of earlier emergent states that are inherent to painting. Any perception that the work is designed could only have emerged retrospectively. As previously mentioned, she explains that she knows when a painting is finished when she can see how it began.⁴⁰

In Bergson's ontology, works of art emerge in duration, and in the interactions that are affects and perceptions. My painting inevitably folds with a range of works in a variety of media. From aggregates of sensation, each work emerges in me as affects and what I affect, virtual and actual images, memory and matter: constituting junctions of concepts, functions and affects. In this respect they emerge in interaction with all the images in my past and, potentially, with the totality of all images.



Figure 74 (85x90cm)

³⁹ Verwoert, *Emergence: on the painting of Tomma Abts*. op. cit., (Sect. 3).

⁴⁰ Verwoert, *Why are conceptual artists painting again?* op. cit.

Clearing Givens

These givens are brought to the painting undertaken in this research, and while my painting is reliant on them, I also need to clear them so that the image I have of an emerging work of art is not framed in terms of the past. My so-called ‘blank’ canvas is full of ways, furrows, traces, and histories. Painting’s task or effort is that of clearing: becoming *tabula rasa* in ever-repetitive procedures of readiness for something new to emerge. As Deleuze quips: “the painter does not have to cover a blank surface, but rather would have to empty it out, clear it, clean it.”⁴¹ My sense is that I affect a *clearing* rather than a cleaning. In fact, my painting depends on givens: a plane of immanence of painting’s concepts—the unconditional, a plane of relation of painting’s functions—the conditioned, a *faux*-plane of composition of painting’s techniques. These givens are constitutive of a realm of signs, a logic of sense, visual terms, codes and conventions that determine and are determined by painting’s reception, even if they are exterior to processes of emergence. Processes of painting clear this clutter of givens so that a composite of percepts/affects, an aesthetic order can frame the chaos. In particular, *I* need to be cleared from those possibilities continually representing themselves during painting that offer an *apparent* solution to a problem, albeit one that is exhausted of life.

While givens are being cleared *by* painting, more emerge as painting continually reconditions its grounds for emergence. Hence, decisions made in this process of clearing are provisional, taken in the flows of emergence. The grounds for decision-making change as painting proceeds, as my affective responses change with changing sensation. Yet, these very responses have the capacity to become clichéd. Deleuze suggests: “even the reactions against clichés are creating clichés.”⁴² Within the continuum of duration such responses constitute an image-of-emergence. Although I attempt to clear clichés through the actions of painting, there is no end to this cycling of clearing and emergence of givens and clichés, and so processes of painting continually create a need for further clearing. Painting is nothing other than this creating. For painting, this is without end—perhaps that one half of painting that is eternal, according to Baudelaire. The other half is the fleeting.⁴³ Deleuze suggests that a painter cannot escape from clichés by transforming them, but that it would instead be

⁴¹ Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The logic of sensation*. op. cit., (p.71).

⁴² Ibid. (p.73).

⁴³ Baudelaire, C. (1964). The painter of modern life (p.12). In J. Mayne, (Trans. & Ed.) *The painter of modern life and other essays* (pp.1-35). London, England: Phaidon. In this seminal essay of 1863, Baudelaire suggests: “By ‘modernity’ I mean the ephemeral, the fleeting, the contingent, the half of art, whose other half is the eternal and the immutable.”

better to “abandon oneself to clichés, to collect them, accumulate them, as so many prepictorial givens.”⁴⁴

As the actions of painting unfold as matter in the homogeneous simultaneity of space, they also unfold in memory as a virtual image-of-emergence which is a continual differing in kind, as fluid succession. This both clears cliché yet retains it in memory, as the past continues to permeate emergence, just as it permeates duration. Clearing, were it possible, is a Sisyphean task. Nevertheless, in the face of a confusion or chaos of givens, painting is processual ‘editing’ of givens: clichés—obstacles to painting. A persistent cliché, continually being cleared, is the habit of considering time as something lapsed or lapsing, that passes, which is to say, measuring time. This is what Bergson describes as “imaginary homogeneous time” which is “an idol of language, a fiction.”⁴⁵ It causes painting to be conceived as *pursuit*, with a teleological finality, a future objective already given, or pre-given. The new becomes the already planned, fashioned fashion, contrary to the notion of emergence. Spatial thinking continually threatens to return my painting to the question ‘where is the image?’ which in fact originally framed this study, revealed as a ‘false’ problem when stated in these spatial rather temporal terms. This is the same problem that holds painting in thrall to art historical agendas. The habit of conceiving the heterogeneous in terms of the homogeneous is the most *pernicious* impediment to my painting as process of emergence.

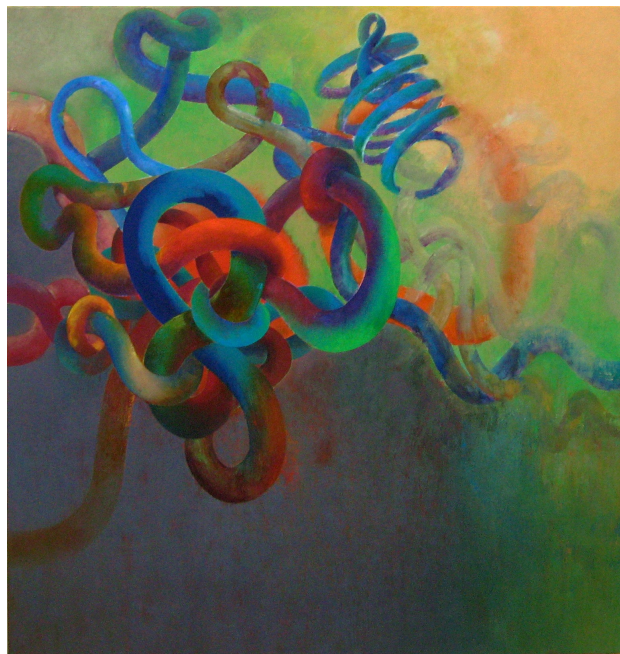


Figure 75* (125x120cm)

⁴⁴ Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The logic of sensation*. op. cit., (p.76).

⁴⁵ Bergson, *Matter and memory*. op. cit., (p.207).

Approach

My painting is conducted in a studio environment, which provides an ecology of at-hand resources: paint and other related media, various tools, trolleys for mixing paint, devices for communications and research, publications, controllable light conditions, facilities for cleaning, and so on. These facilitate unexpected and spontaneous interactions during the process of painting, and so emergence in painting happens readily within this ecology—much as emergence happens within the interactive dynamics of those ecosystems where I originally came to dwell on the importance of change as basis for biological evolution. There are ways to approach this spatiality of the studio, its workshop character as a temporalising-nearing locale of potentiality of intensive encountering. There is a curious register here with Bergson, in how space becomes nullified in action: distance diminishes to nil as external images are neared to a body image, thereby exacting virtual to actual in a percept/affect/action image.

This ecology incorporates everything from my past, including all my past painting and the images and ideas that informed them, and that emerged from them. I conceive of these past paintings in terms of emergence, and of their emerging within a Bergsonian understanding of duration, even if that was not considered at the time as I was in the habit of thinking about time, painting, and evolution in terms of progression and spatial movements. In these currently exhibited paintings, there are rhythms, patterns, and motifs that could be seen as having figurative or biomorphic associations. However, these formal qualities, if they are indeed there at all, emerged during the process of painting contingently, without thinking such associations. What I remember emerging were rhythms—refrains—open interactions between colours and forms, becoming complicated, amplified, and extending painting, as a becoming outside itself. I see these phantom biomorphic registrations, retrospectively, as having a *figural function* within the work, disrupting figurative givens read into painting. I am still inclined to do this when, for example, I relate the perceived rhythms of sensations to those of change and growth. Painting was flowing, without the intercession of conscious decision-making, and without the discontinuity that comes from continually evaluating direction and progress. That is, in so much as I was able to paint direct affective responses to sensations, painting sensations, this was painting proceeding without trajectory, and without apparent crisis.



Figure 76* (125x120cm)

In each painting an image-of-emergence unfolds in ways that are unexpected and unplanned, such that the work always surprises me. The work's nuance, difference in kind that cannot be predicted, nor expected, now emerges in my consciousness. In retrospect, I feel intimately bound within each work, as each seems to register or sign a logic of sensation in my name. Or, rather, my name is most palpably, most substantially, that logic of sensation, such that 'I' emerge along-with the work of art. However, I also feel *removed* from it because of the givens that were brought to the processes of emergence, and because I have no influence over how duration unfolds—a personal percepts/affects of a work on its own, a 'no longer' of my perceptions and affections, "standing up" as Deleuze says. I do know that because it emerged in my body-image of (its) emergence, it emerged in the interactions of conditions, images, matter and memory, contracting and relaxing, affecting 'me' and being-affected by 'me' at the moment of painting. While the painting-as-thing appears to unfold in space progressively, with coherence, its becoming-actual is continuously in change, without trajectory. From this point-of-view, the processes of painting were in continual crises of orientation, in framing chaos, bringing it to aesthetic order, and it is not surprising that I am surprised by how the paintings turned out. The decisions that affected the course painting took as it unfolded in space, emerged as part of the image-of-emergence—one might even here say *emergency*—inseparable from the emergence of my own life, and inseparable from duration. Whatever it is that was 'new' or 'created' in these paintings emerged *despite* those decisions, and without my knowing how it happened. Nevertheless, it is the experience of new qualities in my *image-of-emergence* that gives vitality to painting, while the doxa would

have it that they were attributes of material unfolding in homogeneous space. The new—unpredictable and indeterminate—could not emerge by way of the measure of things.



Figure 77 (10x12.5cm)

Each painting commences within processes of clearing the clichés that are “precisely what *prevents* the genesis of an image.”⁴⁶ These processes—crises of decision-making—create what Deleuze describes as conditions for *catastrophe*, conditions for the destruction of cliché.⁴⁷ In his discussion of Bacon’s *diagrammatic* approach to painting, Deleuze likens catastrophe in painting to “the emergence of another world,” invoked by a-signifying traits or insignificant marks that are “irrational, involuntary, accidental, free, random.”⁴⁸ Signs attach to a system of givens, and readily become clichéd. While I am unable to clear signs from painting, as qualities emerge that could become attached to signification, I am able to disrupt their operation by such catastrophic means. *Emergence is emergency.*

As a given, the white gesso ground is already replete with colour, with a full chromatic spectrum folded into white light incident on and reflecting from its surface. Paradoxically, in Modernist painting white symbolises the ideal of reductive minimalism. Here the apparent chromatic impoverishment that white enjoys implies (belies) conceptual refreshment associated with a clearing of the past with its aesthetic clichés. While white may be perceived as *depleted* sensation, its ability to reflect all visible colours means that it is fully charged with chromatic and achromatic potentials. For my painting, the richness of white lies in its latent potential. It needs only the suppression of incident light for that latency to be released as sensation of relative brightness, and it needs only the subtraction of certain chromatic qualities in order to discharge a chromatic efflorescence. All I need to do in order

⁴⁶ Smith, D. (2003). Deleuze on Bacon: Three conceptual trajectories (p.xxiii). In Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The logic of sensation*. op. cit.

op. cit

⁴⁷ Ibid. (p.xxiii).

⁴⁸ Ibid. (p.82).

to discharge this potential is to subtract colour, and this I achieve by adding pigments that selectively absorb certain colours within white light. Painting becomes an additive process with a subtractive ‘purpose’. This capacity to unfold chromatic and achromatic difference is the basis for painting to clear givens (including the conception of white as depleted), and to generate sensations becoming composite.

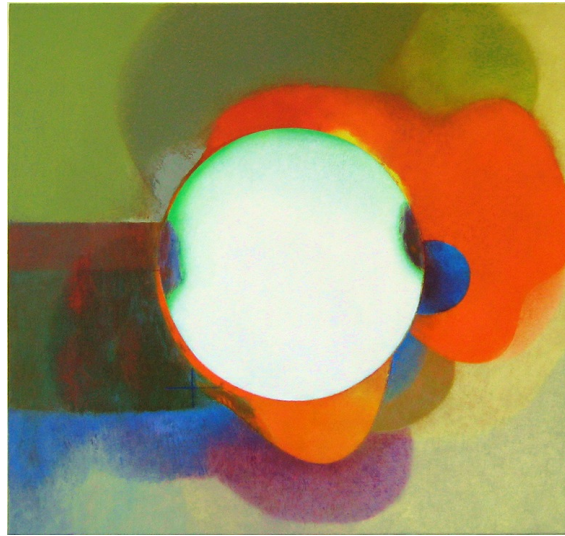


Figure 78 (85x90cm)

For each work images emerge in interactions between givens held in memory, and sensations of colour / light reflecting off painted surfaces. Because memory is constantly in the process of being reformed through its interactions internally and with sensation in the present, my perceptions of how painting is emerging is also constantly being reformulated. It is therefore also continually emerging newly in the context of all that has transpired since painting stopped, and all that continues to transpire in the unfolding present. Consequently, the works cannot be located chronologically, especially as chronology is measured in homogeneous space, whereas I conceive of emergence as happening in heterogeneous duration. Consequently the series of paintings in this document are not presented in terms of any progression (whether chronological, conceptual, or methodological). Nevertheless, the works are all provisionally complete in that painting has ceased and shows no signs of being rekindled in these works. For the convention of customary discourse, they have been given dates indicating when the action of painting last happened.

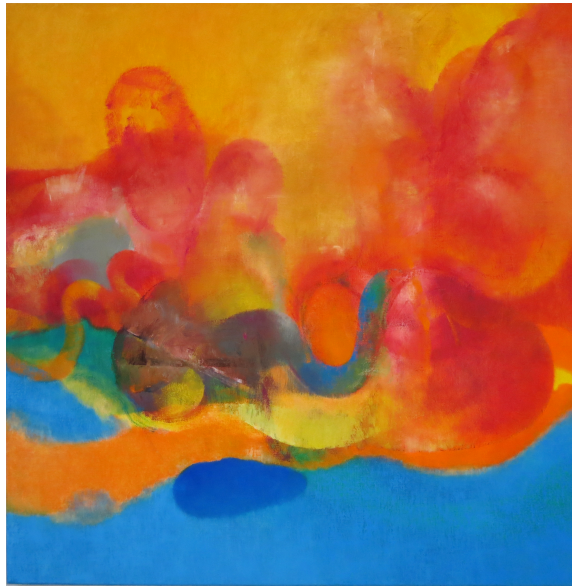


Figure 79* (95x95cm)

Sensation

What emerges from my processes of painting, as a work-of-art, is what (as I have previously mentioned) Deleuze and Guattari describe as a “bloc of sensations, that is to say, a compound of affects and percepts...being of sensation and nothing else: it exists in itself.”⁴⁹ My painting creates such sensible aggregates, which emerge in my affective responding to sensation. What is preserved is a material object from which stimuli for sensations derive. My decisions when painting are directed towards creating sensation, as Deleuze suggests: “sensation is what is painted.”⁵⁰ Deleuze describes how, from a phenomenological context, while looking at colour I “become in the sensation and something happens through the sensation, one through the other, one in the other.”⁵¹ That is, “colour is in the body, sensation is in the body, and not in the air.”⁵² As Bergson points out, it is the same body that both generates and receives sensation, so that as a spectator “I experience the sensation only by entering the painting, by reaching the unity of the sensing and the sensed.”⁵³ My decisions are responses to sensation, in that internal interaction which is the interpenetration of the sensing and the sensed. That is, my decisions emerge in duration. These decisions happen *in* me rather than are made *by* me—as actions and not ideas. ‘I’ am immanent to the image-of-emergence and so am continually being reconstituted in that

⁴⁹ Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. *What is philosophy?* op. cit., (p.164).

⁵⁰ Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The logic of sensation*. op. cit., (p.32).

⁵¹ Ibid. (p.31).

⁵² Ibid. (p.32).

⁵³ Ibid. (p.31).

process of emergence. That is, change happens without a decision having been taken. If I introduce the hesitation that allows an ‘I’ that has been constituted in memory to analyse this process of decision-making, it happens in response to the *immediacy of experience* that is in sensation and that Bergson situates *above* the ‘decisive turn’ where perception turns toward utility.

The form related to sensation is a rhythm that comes not only from sensations of changing chromatic–achromatic relations as painting proceeds, but from layers or orders within sensation, the nature of which is “to envelop a constitutive difference of level, a plurality of constitutive domains.”⁵⁴ These levels come from the shifting psychic states of durational change, and from the transference of sensation through the nervous system as it interacts in different levels of organisation. They come from the plane of action, and the plane of memory, and the myriad planes of consciousness between these two.⁵⁵ Hence, Deleuze describes sensation as having an “irreducibly synthetic character” where every figure that might be found within a painting is “already an ‘accumulated’ or ‘coagulated’ sensation.” This *synthetic* nature of sensation then provides the capacity for sensation to be the “master of deformations,” such as happens with figural elements in a painting.⁵⁶ This capacity for deformation is used in my painting as figural elements emerge, dissolve, and re-emerge differently in the flux of the painting process.



Figure 80 (90x90cm)

⁵⁴ Ibid. (p.33).

⁵⁵ Bergson, *Matter and memory*. op. cit., (pp.241,242).

⁵⁶ Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The logic of sensation*. op. cit., (p.33).

Sensations of colours constitute my primary experience of emergence. Sensations emerge in layers, orders, and rhythms constituting refrains. As actions in painting respond to sensations, colours change, persist, or become deleted in an image-of-emergence, and so painting proceeds in ways that I subsequently interpret as an affective inclining-toward or withdrawing-from certain sensations, so that they are either prolonged or withheld in further painting. Immediate experience of a painting is thereby continually being refreshed by actions of painting, and by actions of changing sensation-affectation. This is before the action of perception turns that experience towards the past, towards memory and the utility of decision-making.



Figure 81 (125x150cm)

In the painting shown in Figure 81 for example, colour relations have emerged in processes of negotiation, as shifting rhythms of sensations have eventually settled into a prolonged state we encounter in the (provisionally) finished work. These negotiations involve continuous painting over a whole area, in layers, with continual remixing of pigments in response to whatever emerged during previous applications. The decisions I make in this process are distributed indeterminately between a direct utility of the autonomic nervous system and a mediated utility of the brain, where memory intercedes in determining the nature of response. As blocs of sensation emerge during painting to be received in an interplay that is my affective response to changing sensation, I attempt to tune-in to these “risings and fallings—the becomings—of my own body,” so that I am present to the immediate experience of their emergence.⁵⁷ This experience of ‘being in the moment’ is the

⁵⁷ O’Sullivan, *Art encounters*. op. cit., (p.41).

experience of being immanent to one's own becoming, of being as one with the becoming-image that is emerging in the body's passage through changing states of affection. These are the 'becomings' that aggregate or accumulate to constitute the image emerging in sensation. My painting is (in) these becomings while 'I' ex-ist, am outside or radically exterior to 'my' painting.

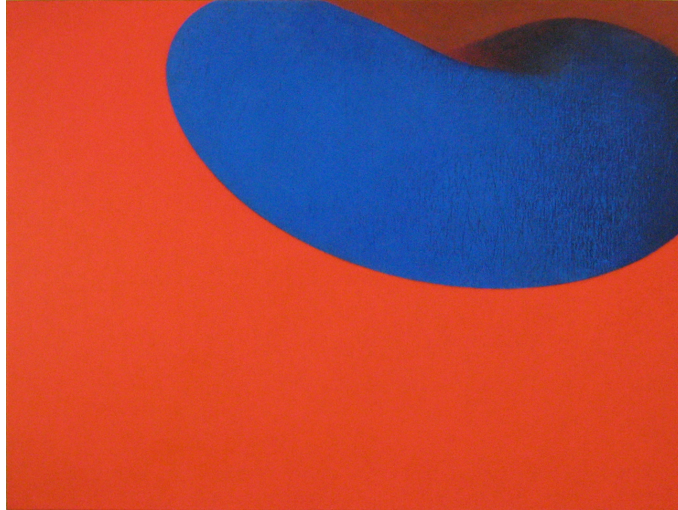


Figure 82 (90x120cm)

Figure-Field

Subjective colour response is categorised according to qualities of chroma, saturation, and brightness. When tonal and chromatic gradations (differences of degree) are codified in perspectival convention, they allow the depiction of three-dimensional form, and allow spatial relations to emerge in the reception of a painting, as figure-field relationships. This codification is vision's utilitarian response to the exigencies of living and moving in space. These habitual codes are so familiar that they are highly resistant to being cleared, even in abstract painting as minimal as Ad Reinhardt's unmodulated white or black fields. My habitual response to visual sensation is to organise it in similar spatial modulations. This happens even when there are no immediately evident figurative or figural elements in the work. For example, while the blue motif in Figure 82 is coded to be perceived or 'read' as three-dimensional, I perceive a deformation and reformation emerging as orange competes with blue for my attention. I perceive the orange as if it were advancing spatially, so that it starts to assume the status of figure, while the blue form becomes relegated to background status. This is the challenge that colour presents to other conventional signs indicating figure versus field. This 'competition' is between my response to the immediate datum of

sensation, and my response to sensation referred to memory. The habit of spatially coding sensation causes me to perceive this painting as rhythms of spatial modulation.

Chromatic and achromatic sensation, as an architecture of a work, here competes on the plane of reference as spatial signs, as these signs act to deform one another, and consequently to subvert spatialising codes. For my painting, these codes are not in the service of representation, and in the context of Bergson's *nothing which is everything in the work of art*, as Deleuze and Guattari assert: "no art and no sensation have ever been representational."⁵⁸ In this respect, these competing sensations question distinctions between stylistic approaches of figuration and abstraction, by showing how each persists in the other. What is not evident in this image of this painting (Figure 82) is how the orange area is constituted in layers of varying colour and tone, so that latent forms emerge as the apparently flat plane of orange begins to assume an indeterminate depth, as if it also had spatial form. The blue figural element then suffers its own deformation from orange's double tendencies of advancement, and spatial recession. It is in this process of layering that, as Deleuze and Guattari describe, a plane of technical composition that is to do with the material paint, encounters a plane of aesthetic composition which is the composing of aggregates (blocs) of sensation as "the work of sensation."⁵⁹

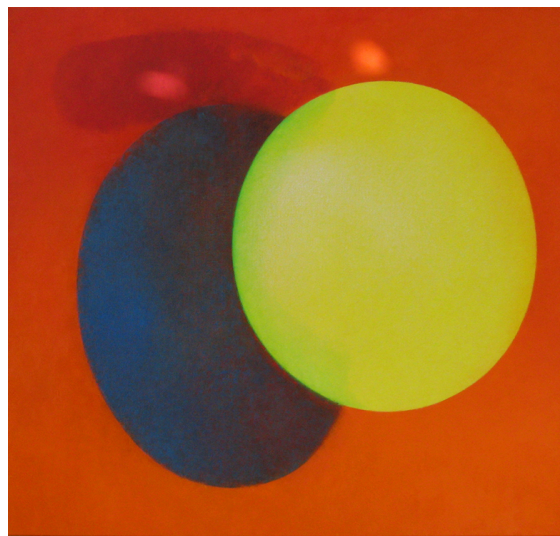


Figure 83 (90x90cm)

In the case of my work where figural elements are built on a luminous ground, the material includes "mechanisms of perspective" so that as the compound of sensations is projected

⁵⁸ Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. *What is philosophy?* op. cit., (p.193).

⁵⁹ Ibid. (p.192).

onto a technical plane of composition, there is a depth emerging in the covering up.⁶⁰ On the other hand as I paint colour on and adjacent to colour, the architecture of the work emerges in colour as it is aesthetically “assured by the ‘contrast of complementaries and the agreement of analogues’.”⁶¹ In this case, as Deleuze and Guattari say, it is not sensation that is “realised in the material” but “the material passes into sensation.”⁶² The image emerges in this double action of covering by planes of technical and aesthetic composition. There is latency in this depth of covering, and in the dynamic intensities of sensation within the image that keeps painting vital. In Figure 83 we see the luminous flare of two spots on the orange or the incipient form within the yellow (evident in the greenish edge and adjacent highlight). As material passes into sensation, I perceive ‘shape’ with overtones of form, colour and tone, field and figure, all in continual dynamic interaction as they negotiate the terms in which the image is experienced and how it is prolonged in memory.

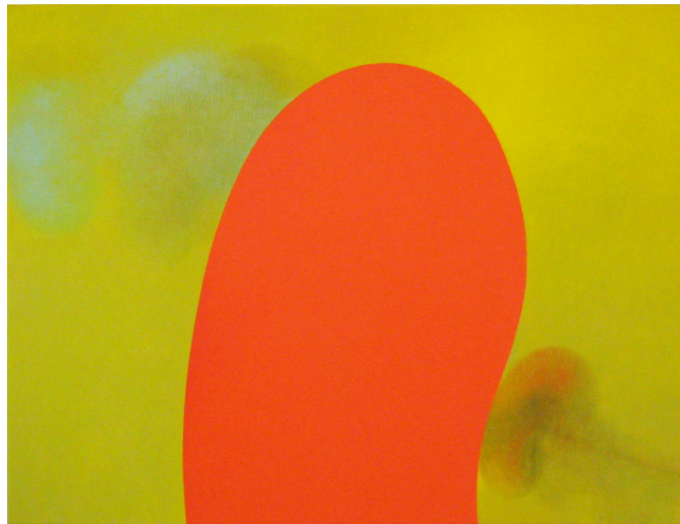


Figure 84 (90x120cm)

Emergence

In that hesitation of perception prolonging sensation and interacting with memory, a contamination of ‘pure’ intuition, givens attendant on the blank canvas re-emerge such that the image is no longer de-formed by sensation, but is re-formed in terms that have been brought from the past. These include recombined and synthesised fragments and images,

⁶⁰ Ibid. p.193).

⁶¹ Ibid. (p.192). Here Deleuze and Guattari reference van Gogh. They are discussing the authentic plane of composition: “[I]ncreasingly the colors become accents, the architecture being assured by ‘the contrast of complementaries and the agreement of analogues’ (van Gogh); it is through and in color that the architecture will be found, even if the accents must be given up in order to reconstitute large colouring units.”

⁶² Ibid. (p193).

each with elusive references that I sense but cannot locate in memory. I am, for example, aware that my painting is informed by thinking about change, process, emergence, and evolution, concerns initially brought to painting from outside, and that have subsequently become more reflexive concerns about the nature of painting itself, its principles and processes: a junction of concepts and sensations, consistency and composition. All these givens now fold into the current exploration of painting's capacity to be creative, and into the investigation of what method might mean in this context. While my painting continues to draw from these givens, focus now is on how painting will yet emerge in a future, and how new terms emerge in the process. This not a future projected as distanced destination *for* painting, but the virtual that is continually emerging as it is actualised in a changing present. That is, *my* focus is on what is emerging immediately as painting proceeds, and on the terms in which it is emerging, and on how these changing conditions in the present affect my deciding about what action or gesture to take next. Sensations' affects are elsewhere than *here*, in me pondering a 'next'.



Figure 85 (90x90cm)

As painting proceeds by changing chromatic-achromatic relations of sensation, so a perceptible image emerges as new potentialities for painting. As the conditions for painting keep changing with an emerging image, so givens proliferate and need to be cleared, and so the process of painting continually reconditions the grounds for emergence. These are the grounds for affective, perceptual, and conceptual responses to emergence. My painting processes involve clearing givens, releasing potentials, creating possibilities, generating more givens, and reconditioning terms for painting, endlessly, until painting comes to a halt. The action of painting gives life to the process.

With Figure 85, sensations—composites of colours and forms—comprise an entanglement recognised in the completed work. As painting draws out colours from white, they in turn draw out other colours, as if drawn toward each other. As colours emerge, they delineate forms that extrude from, fold into, and twist around each other, emerging fluidly in this mutual interaction. While painting *this* work, I had no explicitly conscious conception of where it was going, or how and when it might finish. Eventually it finished in a ‘state’ that I would earlier have described as provisionally incomplete, particularly the yellow rhythm at the bottom of the painting. This emerged as a ribbon of unmodulated colour, as *shape*. Conceived as an *imprimatura*, the yellow remained in this *provisional* state until it eventually emerged as heterogeneous quality: nuanced differing in itself. Such emergence continues after ‘painting’ has ceased, or been suspended. Again, this suggests *painting* to be a curious temporalising and not a discrete act or sequence that commences and concludes with a painter.



Figure 86* (125x120cm)

Trajectory

For Bergson, the past is not given, but is continually being constituted in the present, as the succession of qualitative multiplicities that is duration. My habit of thinking about the future in terms of the past conflicts with this, although I persist in throwing possible trajectories into a ‘virtual’ future. Provisional planning sets out along a path towards a destination whose location is yet to be established, though thrown forward, and already present and waiting in a future, laid out in the simultaneity of space. This conception of a future

available to the present contradicts temporality and the concept of emergence, and undoes creative potentials of painting. It is simply a convenient fiction that I employ in order to get painting underway, and one that I intend to abandon as soon as an image-of-emergence starts to displace this spatial thinking—yet that *intention* itself is the ruse of a further convenient fiction. As there is delay or hesitation between an image of immediate intuition, and an image of perception—the too-and-fro of movement’s doubling—I continue to conceive of trajectories emerging, no matter how transitory they might be, and no matter that they are conceived retrospectively. Further, because language essentially spatialises, I continue to imagine that I can plan painting in these *metaphorical* terms, so that I conceive myself *directing* the course of painting. Even as I understand that emergence is not in those terms, it is their apparent utility that leads to their retention as givens, albeit clichéd and false. I think of these givens as inevitable, necessary, and ruinous to painting. They may lend impetus to painting, but they offer no vitality and are an obstacle to emergence. Unlike the simultaneities that are given in the medium of space, duration has succession and immanence. For this reason, there can be no trajectory towards a future, nor is there any pre-existent future destination for my painting. The future only emerges in durational succession—an ever changing present though *not* to be thought as a sequence of now-moments—and any destination for my painting will only emerge precisely when painting stops, though as painting it is incessant, and thus without destination.



Figure 87 (125x150cm)

My painting starts with a possibility because it translates into a trajectory along which painting may commence. However, the possible is already given and, although it may seem new, it is constituted in a recombination of extant terms, as a spatial trajectory that offers

“nothing other than location, the environment, the totality of differences in degree.”⁶³ For this reason, trajectories are *givens* that I am trying to clear from painting, as they would lead painting on a recursive path, and so cannot serve any creative purpose: *painting the possible leads to illustration*. Possibilities are excessive in the largesse they offer. However they include previously thwarted possibilities that have yet to be explored through painting, and so offer the prospect of a different, if not a ‘new’, experience. In this Bergson distinguishes between possibility and potentiality, wherein potentiality inheres to a radical immanence of the virtuality and actuality of perception-affection. A body image has potentiality or capability in becoming. An external image is one of an infinity or totality of images, an external possible. The value of the possible is that it provides scope and enticement sufficient for me to generate impetus to start painting. For this reason I continue to conceive trajectories for painting, but treat them as provisional and only for this purpose. I have no commitment to them, but instead I plan to shift to more interesting or promising possibilities as they emerge. My consistent plan is to abandon trajectory entirely when painting is in the flow of emergence, and this I will do by clearing it from painting. This will also be a clearing of any planning, so that emergence happens unpredictably in duration, which is the realm of emergence of the new.



Figure 88 (105x135cm)

In the meantime, I am preoccupied with maintaining impetus in unfolding a material image in space. I am caught in both of these incongruent frameworks, the heterogeneous and the homogeneous, and so practice happens in both, neither essentially simultaneously nor successively. Time, essentially is out-of-joint: a crystal image—painting’s crystal image. This

⁶³ Deleuze, G. (1991). *Bergsonism* (p.32). New York, NY: Zone Books.

is a where and when of emergence: neither homogeneous time nor quite homogeneous space. If I were to succeed in painting in duration, I would have no need for method, but I would also have no means to plan or direct painting, and nothing to say about what happens. At this stage, I am still practicing the clearing of givens, and possibilities are proving to be among the most obdurate of them.

Despite my efforts at clearing space from time, while painting I am in the habit of constantly *evaluating* proceedings in terms of orientation, trajectory, and progress, even as I remind myself that emergence is not in those spatial terms. I do this in order to be able to make decisions that will maintain impetus in painting. However, this translating of temporality's peculiar coincidence of past and present into spatial progression, serves to reverse the clearing of space from time, so that I begin to clear the image-of-emergence from my conception of how painting proceeds. I proceed to paint images in time with recourse to questioning the meaning of this activity and the images produced.⁶⁴ I do this because language operates in homogenous reality, and this allows me to frame concepts, and to plan and direct the course painting takes. Despite the potential for confusion, this translation of the temporal into the spatial does not interfere with or stall emergence. Painting happens within the incongruent realities of heterogeneous duration and homogeneous space. Emergence happens in duration, while my reflection on emergence happens in space.

My use of trajectory is pragmatic: simply to generate impetus for emergence. But this—pragmatism—is my phantom. Emergence happens irrespective and, indeed, in spite of my pragmatism. The *nature* of any particular trajectory is of limited relevance except in how it provides conditions within which supposedly new qualities will emerge in a context that has currency, in the sense that it has a critical context that facilitates its unfolding through a consistent plane of concepts. For my painting, such planes of consistency are those being explored in this study. However, when new qualities are perceived to have emerged in a painting, any possibility will retrospectively be judged to have had latent creative potential. The problem I have is how to select from the multitude of possible trajectories on offer and so in the first instance painting becomes a reductive process of limiting rather than extending possibilities.

⁶⁴ While Verwoert does speak of emergence in terms of what a painter sees unfolding as a material painting, his constant reference is to the temporality of emergence.



Figure 89 (10.5x13cm)

In a manner that resonates with the spatial paradox of extensity, my process of painting in homogeneous space is conceived as proceeding via serial decisions, each of which extends the path of painting, and each of which is theoretically reversible, as much as the trace of these decisions could be used to construct a retrograde trajectory. In this problematic scenario, which ignores the non-linear nature of temporal change, each decision is necessary for painting to proceed. Painting sets out with a decision to make the first mark, while the second and all subsequent decisions re-orientate the previous—even if that is to confirm the orientation. Painting then proceeds in extensity as a staccato of crises-of-(re)orientation until painting stops. Such serial decisions are untraceable in my experience, untraceable in terms of cause and effect, and untraceable in the continuum of duration. By introducing extensity to painting, they make it incompatible with the continuum of emergence. I can evade this problem by conceiving the trajectory as being traversed in a “single unique bound” that admits no extension.⁶⁵ However, the only trajectory available is retrograde, and it will not serve my purpose for painting. The corollary is that the crisis of painting is a false crisis, an artefact of spatial thinking.

However, I do make decisions. When thinking in spatial terms, I continue to conceive of a crisis that is reiterated in each decision and each act of painting, a rhythm familiar as if it were a continuum. These decisions are incidental to emergence, and disadvantageous when their crises impede painting’s impetus and flow. However, there is one critical decision: when does painting stop? In the meantime, I am reliant on spatial thinking that allows me to plan, while I am dependent on emergence proceeding, heedless of my plan.

The qualities that I perceive to be emerging in the unfolding painting are framed as limits differentiated out of dynamic change, and out of the chaos of interacting sensations. That is,

⁶⁵ Bergson, *Creative evolution*. op. cit., (p.177).

I perceive the qualitative in terms of the quantitative, as fragments of change that succeed each other in the homogeneous medium of space. This contradicts the continuum of emergence by fragmenting it into the simultaneity of comparative episodes. In painting, emergence happens with no hiatus or crisis, without decisions being taken. As Bergson states: “The duration *wherein we act* is a duration wherein our states melt into each other. ... The duration *wherein we see ourselves acting*, and in which it is useful that we should see ourselves, is a duration whose elements are dissociated and juxtaposed.”⁶⁶ Emergence resists substituting for real experience what Bergson describes as “the factitious unity of an empty diagram as lifeless as the parts which it holds together.”⁶⁷ As painting creates compounds or aggregates of sensation, the logic of sensation is one of interactions between these as an aesthetic plane of composition.⁶⁸ This requires me to clear the logic of sense that has been brought to painting from the past: from sense-event to image-event, from perception and affection to an a-personal percept/affect.



Figure 90 (85x90cm)

In order to become acutely tuned to the dynamic immediacy of emergence, I attempt to clear my mind of concepts, images, and terms brought from the past and that continually refer to the past. By doing this, I am attempting to be present to my changing psychical states, aware of what is transpiring in terms of changing sensation, but without translating that awareness into sense. This involves relaxing memory, so that sensation translates readily into action, before being complicated and turned towards the past through perceptual processing. By this means I attempt to have decisions emerge just as the painted

⁶⁶ Bergson, *Matter and memory*. op. cit., (p.186).

⁶⁷ Ibid. (p.183).

⁶⁸ Deleuze, G., & Guattari, *What is philosophy?* op. cit., (p.196).

image emerges, and for painting's actions to respond without any apparent decision having been made. If this can be achieved, painting emerges in its own composing-ordering, "stands up." Criteria for decision-making emerge within that same composite bloc. The act of painting *is* the act of deciding. I paint in the immediacy of emergence, as if responsive to the intuition of sensation's affects before it is complicated in perception. I clear any tendency to critically *analyse* what is emerging as painting proceeds. This clearing is a radical break in painting, not a reorientation-to, but a dissolving-of all concepts of orientation. This is tantamount to 'pure' emergence, time's auto-affection, or painting happening in 'pure' duration where painting is simply differing from itself, continuously



Figure 91* (90x90cm)

Translating Emergence

I experience emergence happening, but my perception of that temporal experience is tainted by the intercession of memory, language, and space. Given that I have been trying to clear are reintroduced in the hesitation of perceptual processing. The dynamic of continuous change that is emergence is untranslatable. Any translation would be a deficit of an event-image, entangled in its immediate intuition thereby constituting some infinite regress, impoverished, as emergence would have been extracted from duration. Yet in order to be able to even discuss, let alone evaluate, processes of painting it is necessary for me to conceive of emergence in spatial terms: "artificially decomposed for the greater convenience of customary knowledge."⁶⁹ This is the utility of translation which serves the "facility of

⁶⁹ Bergson, H. *Matter and memory*. op. cit., (p.186).

action and of language” and so allows me to evaluate proceedings, but which Bergson identifies as problematic: it “holds to the terms and neglects the relations.”⁷⁰ It fragments the continuum of emergence into successive, quantitative, and artificial events that exclude the impetus of qualitative change in duration. This “parcelling of the real” as Bergson calls it, supplants the real intuition of painting as a living intuition in duration.⁷¹ This living affection of emergence is “experience at its source, or rather above that decisive *turn* where, taking a bias in the direction of utility, it becomes properly human experience.”⁷² While representations of individual lived experience in shared terms may serve to unite human experience, *it is not that actual experience*, which can be neither represented nor shared. About the immediate experience of emergence nothing can be said, apart from the “it is happening?” of Lyotard’s almost-already sublime moment where the vital impetus of Bergsonian duration is sustained in a continuing emergence.⁷³



Figure 92 (85x90cm)

⁷⁰ Ibid. (p.183).

⁷¹ Ibid. (p.183).

⁷² Ibid. (p.184).

⁷³ Lyotard, *The sublime and the avant-garde*. op. cit., (p. 198).



Figure 93* (10.5x13cm)

I am unable to abandon either of these realities in my painting practice. While the methodological conundrum dissolves in heterogeneous duration, practice's drive to meaning making constitutes an obstacle to undertake painting solely in those terms. While temporal emergence and spatial unfolding accompany one another, my experience of the former precedes my knowledge of the latter.



Figure 94* (11x13cm)

Fluidity

In the small paintings, I am able to make radical and rapid changes to the overall image by minor actions, such as the twist of a brush, a smear, or a slip. Because of this, the nature of what emerges during painting tends to be more surprising, giving the appearance of significant reorientation in direction. The crisis of decision-making is acute here, because of the profound effect that each decision has on the whole image, but it is also of less consequence because of the rapidity and ease with which it then can be changed. Painting tends to proceed quickly, freely, and fluidly when making these works, and I am not so prone to hesitation, reflection and givens. It is in this enhanced state of psychic *freedom* that I

sense painting being more directly informed by immediate experience, in a way that is more closely attuned to Bergson's method of intuition.



Figure 95 (11x13cm)

Each of these small works is made in one session. Paint remains wet and malleable. This is aided by the paint's slowness-of-drying and the viscosity of oil paint, allowing wet layers to be applied cleanly over one another, or with controlled levels of material disturbance between layers. An *appearance* of fluidity is enhanced by the transparency of the medium.



Figure 96 (10x12cm)

With Figures 92 to 97, for example, such fluidity instils a palpable sense of emergence-in-action, a responsiveness to nuance. For this reason, I *feel* I am *conducting* painting as immediate experience, sensitive to emerging novelty, and heterogeneous emergence. These works surprise me, and so remain alive to me. There is sense of provisionality that comes from that lambent quality that, for me, feels to have freshly emerged as if still in change—still emerging—to my surprise.

In these works, process eliminates many traces of how painting emerged, and so I am less likely to formulate any retrospective trajectory. 'Artist' closes to 'spectator' where, after

painting has ‘finished’, I continue to engage in processes of emergence. The provisional quality of the work opens to a demand for further work from me.



Figure 97* (90x90cm)

This fluidity is also *apparent* in larger paintings, though is less apparent especially when figural elements are delimited by distinct outlines. Despite what might appear to be planned (for example in paintings such as Figures 75, 76, or 81), the coils, colours, forms, and fields emerge through a fluid interacting during processes of painting.

The New

As an image-of-emergence, I intuit changing compounds of sensations that emerge in processes of painting, and experience them in ways that are different and new. Virtual images—affects as the new—emerge through painting, in perception and in an efflorescence of forms that painting generates. This emergence of a ‘new’ in my changing psychic states is the impetus of change giving vitality to painting. The painted image is *alive* in a way that is, as Groys describes: “nothing more nor less than being new.”⁷⁴ This experience is what I am ‘looking for’ when painting, a quality that sustains joy—Deleuze might say *jouissance*—of painting, a vital impetus of living-and-painting. For the most part, I understand this *joy* as derived from an internal quality that is mine that I impart to materials in the working processes of painting, thereby conveying this joy that is mine to any spectator in general. Yet, this understanding is essentially a turn away from emergence, towards shared human

⁷⁴ Groys, *Art power*. op. cit., (p.24).

experience and the question of how painting could make a “bid for entry in the book of art history.”⁷⁵



Figure 98 (10x12cm)

The new emerges in duration as both nothing and everything in that it is virtual, immanent to duration, and so is immanent to the totality of all images. It remains a virtual quality that is a tendency towards action, whose ‘presence’ I intuit. As a plane of composition, a composite bloc of sensations, the work-of-art stands apart from me. I am neutral, im- or a-personal to its becoming, neither author-creator nor destination-of-meaning. As I ‘sense’ this quality in painting, it is an unrecognisable and mysterious “difference without difference, or a difference beyond difference.”⁷⁶ It is because of its liminal-virtual presence, that I strive to be attuned to the intuition that might herald its actualisation in painting, and so inform my subsequent actions.



Figure 99 (85x95cm)

⁷⁵ Verwoert, *Why are conceptual artists painting again?* op. cit.

⁷⁶ Groys, *Art power* op. cit., (p.28).

My actions as a painter painting serve to condition the grounds for emergence of new qualities, so that the new, “nought as matter,” can create itself as form.⁷⁷ When this nothing that is everything does emerge, its emergence is immanent to duration’s double movement, as Bergson tells us: “it is this nothing that takes time.”⁷⁸ The emergence of the new is unpredictable and there is no sign to indicate that it is happening. While I may continually assay the emerging image for new qualities, I am unable to recognise the new as it emerges, even though I experience it in that emergence. Instead, through intuition, I encounter sensations familiarly unfamiliar, unaccountably different, a difference without difference. Such a tentative sense of the new remains provisionally novel, until inevitably I find that it has become familiar, recognisable, and no longer new. And so, painting continues with its infinite conversation. For this reason, I cannot claim to be responsible for new qualities in my painting, even though I provide impetus essential to the process. I am unable to account for how the new emerges.



Figure 100* (85x90cm)

Provisionality

My focus when painting is on an emerging present, and I conceive what is emerging as provisional, changing. The temporality of the provisional is conceived in homogeneous reality as a metaphor of suspended movement. While painting, I make provisional decisions that will later be confirmed or rescinded, or I may decide to postpone decision-making about some possible act. However, the emergence of any decision, including the decision

⁷⁷ Bergson, *Creative evolution*. op. cit., (p.194).

⁷⁸ Ibid.

not to decide, is in itself inseparable from emergence. Emergence is not provisional. It happens and is what happens. Painting emerges in its own time and not in stages, or recursions, or false avenues, but through processes that take *that* time to happen. On a plane of technical composition, method may divide the process into phases that are provisional, until painting progresses to the next, such as *imprimatura* to *grisaille* to glaze, but this planning excludes emergence, and progression is in the grip of spatial thinking. Emergence happens outside of method conceived in this manner.

In Figure 100 the lower half emerged fluidly and quickly, in a process that I would retrospectively describe as negotiation between colours and forms, as they tried to accommodate one another in changing conditions. They remained provisionally in this negotiation until, after a long break, I returned to work further on this painting. However, instead of changing the lower area about which I was unsure, I changed a more settled area above it, which created a different tension that then either distracted my attention, or dissipated the tension of that undiagnosed problem which had caused me to consider the work unfinished. The truth or falsity of the problem remains undiagnosed, but a way of moving past—though not entirely past—the provisional eventually emerged through painting, and since then the work has remained provisionally complete in my estimation of it. Inasmuch as I remain surprised and puzzled by how the painting turned out, I *sense* rather than *perceive* new qualities in this work, and so as a spectator the work remains provisional for me while the question of how this novelty might be comprehended remains unresolved. It is because this *liminal quality of the new* remains provisional, enigmatic, unlocatable, and untranslatable for me, that the painting remains vital.

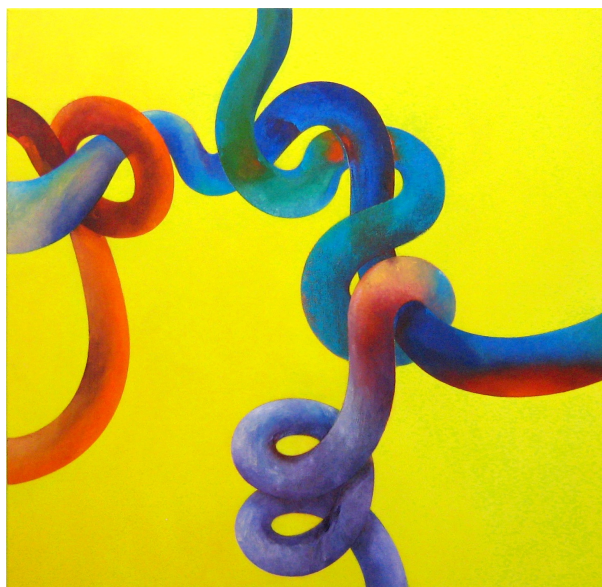


Figure 101 (125x120cm)

The yellow field in Figure 101 is constructed experimentally by layering several different yellow pigments over a pure white ground. Various yellow paints are layered, with each subsequent layer added while the previous is barely touch dry. When the next layer is applied it softens, and all the layers slowly merge across the interfaces. Transmission and reflectance of light is mediated through this composite, so that colour emerges in nuanced and unpredicted ways. This is a physically and optically dynamic area of paint, so that a ‘subjective’ experience of what is named ‘yellow’ is emerging as this colour composite is continually changing, long after the action of painting as such has finished.

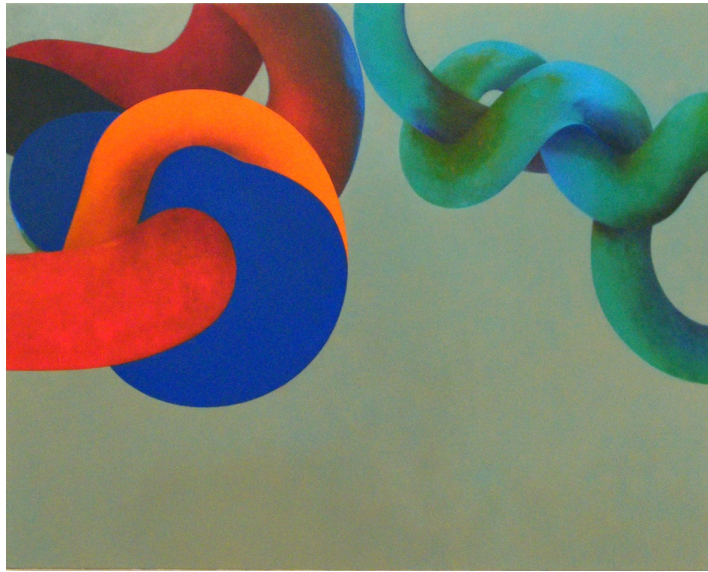


Figure 102 (120x150cm)

The principles of this method of painting are historical givens modified by my experimentation and for my purposes. The technique is the basis of the *pentimento*,⁷⁹ but no longer with the connotation of error. I originally employed the technique as a means to sustain *looking*, as rhythms of chromatic and tonal modulation slowly emerge from within an apparently uniform field of colour. I describe such fields as ‘optical greys’ because the chromatic indeterminacy causes them to be perceived primarily in terms of their achromatic values. For example, the field in Figure 102 is painted in layers with very different chromatic values, but similar achromatic values, bright orange layered over bright blue. The latency and life of colour experience is in the dynamic equilibrium between these different chromatic experiences, similar to the optical mixing strategies used by Constable or Seurat. In retrospect, the development of optical grey in my painting prefigures ideas of provisionality, temporality, change and emergence that have now become central to my

⁷⁹ The reappearance of elements of a painting that have previously been painted over, usually with the intention of hiding a mistake or alteration – from Italian *pentirsi*: ‘to repent’.

exploration as I connect these with Bergson's concepts of duration and creative evolution. Like the *pentimento*, the emergence of colour within the yellow field of the painting in Figure 101 or the optical grey in Figures 102 and 103 is a trace of time and change. As underlying colours slowly emerge, what we see as a palimpsest in the present is not a past revealing itself, but a new image of emergence. It has taken precisely that time for this grey that is orange-blue to emerge in my painting, as qualitative difference that has come out of the quantitative difference of distributed pigment, materials passing into sensation.

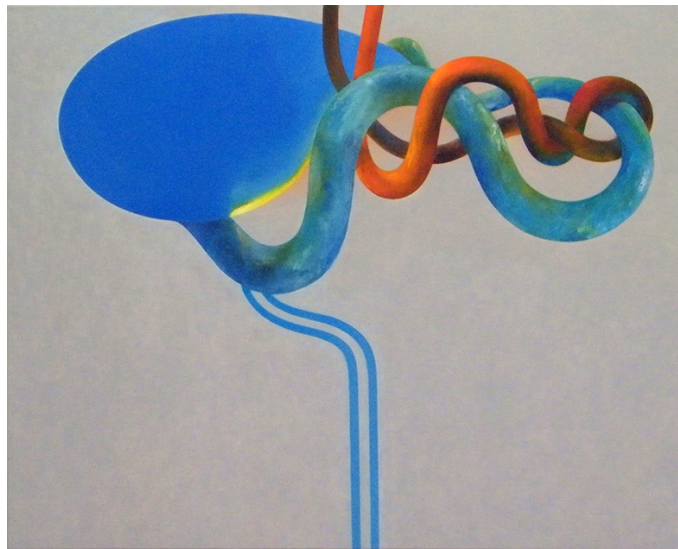


Figure 103 (120x150cm)

As with all my paintings, the orientation for decision-making was modified continually in response to changing perceptions of the emerging image. Just as the resolved appearance of Tomma Abts' painting belies the non-programmatic processes from which they emerge, so my own painting emerges in response to the emerging image I have of its emergence. From a homogenous perspective, the course of painting is continually being reorientated by my decisions, as situational exigencies emerge.

Decision

As painting proceeds, it unfolds a continuous provisional destination, which may at any time be transposed to the homogeneity of a finalised state. *Painting* is interminable while this or that painting is a becoming-finality. This transformation happens when a decision emerges that will terminate painting, or it happens when some other factor intervenes to collapse painting's impetus. In none of my works could I account for how such a decision emerged, how a painting arrived at this particular destination. For any work I could describe at least one significant decision that changed the course of painting, although it is also the case that

painting simply unfolded in the way that emergence happened, and that there was no decisive rupture or crisis. When painting, I still have concern for how emergence happens, because I want it to appear coherent, as if aesthetic order is my concern, even though emergence coheres no matter how a painting unfolds.

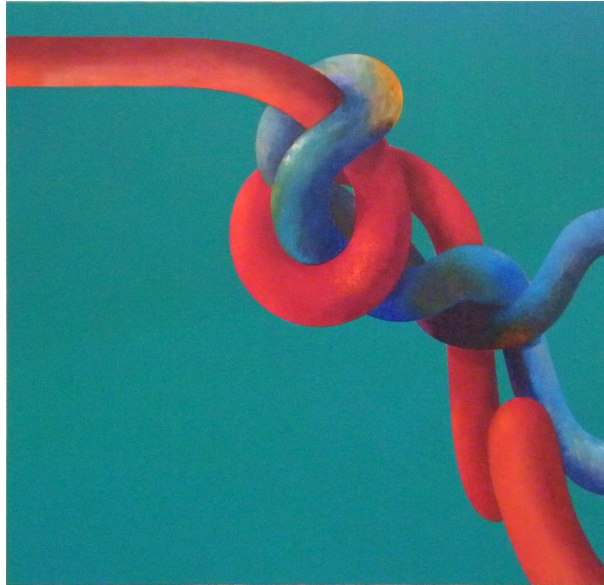


Figure 104 (120x125cm)

As painting progresses in homogeneous reality, for each increment of progression an actual or a deferred decision has the same crisis and the same status. An apparent rupture of trajectory can happen at any time. However, in emergence crisis is not episodic, but is a motility of psychic tensions that permeate painting's processes. There are no decisive events, no deviations, or hesitations, and there is no room for spatial reorientations. Painting emerges in the impetus of change. Any perceived decision is an artefact of spatial thinking, where painting is dislocated from emergence. Even as I continue to 'manage' processes of painting by making conscious decisions, it is the spatial unfolding along a trajectory that I am managing, and not emergence itself. When in this systematic mode of analysing and making decisions, I am less responsive to immediate experience and less sensitive to emerging new qualities. I am then more likely to obliterate emerging new qualities by continuing to paint, and as a consequence, it is more likely that painting will arrive at a destination that is largely preconceived.



Figure 105 (9x12cm)

Finishing

In emergence, painting is a process that “never ceases to reach fulfilment as it proceeds—art as ‘experimentation’.”⁸⁰ In such an approach to painting, Deleuze maintains that art becomes “a process without goal, but that attains completion as such.”⁸¹ In order to become *this* painting (Figure 104 or 105, for example), processes of painting had to unfold along the exact path they took—necessity as completion of process. This process could not have been more efficient, nor more true, nor different. It took *that* time, that duration of painting and of all that preceded painting, for it to emerge in this state, for those forms to sprout and flower in “an unshrinkable duration, which is one with their essence.”⁸² Yet, what we see is a *resultant state* that is not complete, because this painting has no identifiable beginnings and no definitive ends. There is no beginning because each work emerges in a confluence of all the currents, thinking and composing—conducting from my past, an evolutionary continuation of my living. In this respect the nominally ‘finished’ state of its emergence is only so because the action of painting has ceased.

The painted *image* emerges in the context of all that precedes it, and so in conditions that are continually emerging, and so continually folding into the painting process and subsequent emergence: an endless process as long as the impetus for painting is maintained. As new potentialities keep emerging, so painting would seem to have an endless prospect. But with continually changing conditions, the conditions of painting’s crises are also changing constantly, and so painting could cease at any time. The significant methodological dilemma that I face is how and when to decide that painting should cease. The criterion

⁸⁰ Deleuze, G. (1996). *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and schizophrenia* (p.371). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

⁸¹ Ibid. (p.370).

⁸² Bergson, *Creative evolution*. op. cit., (p.194).

would appear to be evident: as soon as painting meets its objective of creating an encounter with the new, impetus should collapse. However, I am unable to recognise this new, and even though it is continuous virtual emergence, I am uncertain how to actualise painting. This is the *real* crisis of painting, or painting's crisis of the real. Painting continues provisionally, as potential destinations emerge continuously and, potentially, endlessly. Some external conditions or functions, such as exhaustion of materials, or personal exhaustion, may terminate painting. However, my habitual recourse is to turn towards homogeneous reality and utility, in order to *evaluate* whether, for me and in relation to the givens that have constantly been in painting, an image is sufficiently different, surprising, or puzzling. When I sense that this is that case, and deem that further painting would make it less so, I stop painting. However, even when the action of painting has ceased, images continue to unfold and enfold in a work's reception, and so the work of the work of art continues, endlessly. Beyond this, the whole process of emergence continues to in-form, and to e-merge: other painting as endless emergence in endless painting.



Figure 106 (13x15cm)

CONCLUSION

Vitality in Painting

This research project, *Painting of Time*, has explored how, in ‘pursuit’ of the new, a painter’s process may be considered as conducting invention. The new is not simply the difference between spatial-visual (re)arrangement, but the creation of the absolutely new. Resolution, which cannot become a solution—but an absolution—comes with Bergson’s method of intuition. A first stage for me was recognising the problem itself, how to orientate painting towards the new. This revealed the problem to be temporal rather than spatial. Painting’s two tendencies proceed, on the one hand as difference of degree conceived as progression through the homogeneity of a divisible medium like space, and on the other hand proceeding in continuous change that is a differing-from-itself in duration. With the former, a painter conducts painting. With the latter, painting proceeds as emergence that is intensive to a painter and immanent to living experience. Utility requires the former; creativity requires the latter. In all painting, what is essential to it as a work of art can be said to emerge in the latter, in duration. What is new and vital to painting emerges as qualitative change that is a change in kind—an intensive emergence whose image is an image-of-emergence in changing heterogeneous states of a body-image’s perceptions-affectations. What emerges is an *unforeseeable nothing* that Bergson describes as being *everything in the work of art*, but which *creates itself as form* that is *living experience*. This emergence, irreducibly, *takes time*. Importantly, according to Bergson, in the vital impetus (*élan vital*) of duration this unforeseeable nothing *creates itself*, so that, while immanent to the process of emergence, a painter is implicated-in rather than responsible-for invention. What is created *new* is not determined by the past, and so happens irrespective of painting’s intentions. This is *vitality* in painting.

Duration has two movements or tendencies—the one that tends to “congeal in its product” and the other that “rediscovers in the product the movement from which it resulted.”¹ Painting’s movement—its image—happens in the immediacy of an emergent present. It is through this *rediscovering* in the emergent present that possibilities present at the start of painting are revealed, so that painting proceeds according to a logic of retroaction coinciding with or as a logic of sensation. In this process, as structures emerge in painting, they progressively reveal a latency of structure that was always present. The processes of emergence are those of inventing a painting’s unique possibility.

¹ See Deleuze’s essay *Bergson, 1859-1941* (p.24) in Deleuze, G. (2004). *Desert islands and other texts*. op. cit., (pp.22-31).

Consequently, criteria for decision-making emerge according to the same logic. Their application retroactively brings painting to its present. Latency—potentiality—emerges as a present, as a *present continually emerging*, such that a “*nothing which is everything*” is duration’s qualitative multiplicities. Because retroaction is not *retrospective* but is creative, it absolves painting from the teleology of future-orientation, absolving a painter from the dilemma that opened this research. Here painting is not conceived as progressing along a trajectory in the homogeneity of spatialised time, but instead emerging in a continuum of heterogeneous duration with no beginnings, ends, trajectories, nor crises of decision-making.

A Problem Badly Posed

Although absolved of the responsibility for invention, a painter’s *role* remains to compose compounds of sensation through painting. As Deleuze suggests, an artist paints sensation, such that a painting emerges in layering a *faux* plane of technical composition and an *authentic* plane of aesthetic composition, creating an aesthetic aggregate that is a ‘work’ of sensation. An intensive image-of-emergence is this sensation’s affect, in interactions between sensation and memory, during processes of perception. Through the immediacy of changing sensation, the new presents *itself* to intuition, without being inferred from what is already known. In this way, a painter can respond to what is emerging during painting without referring decision-making to the utility of past terms, and thereby *undoing* invention. As Bergson describes, through hesitations of perception, intuition is informed by intellection to some extent, and so painting in this mode of intuition requires practice negotiating between incongruent realities of the heterogeneous and the homogeneous, as a painter constantly re-solves the problem of painting in both time and space.

The first stage of Bergson’s method of intuition conducts a critical evaluation of the problem itself, to ascertain the validity of its terms. When applied to the methodological problem identified in this study, this revealed a confusion between time and space, a problem badly posed in the terms given to the original question for the study: *Where is the image?* The confusion comes out of a cultural habit of *measuring* time; time conceived as flowing through a divisible homogeneous medium, such as space. Chronological time brings with it the problem of extensity, and Bergson shows how, when temporal succession is translated into serial movement in space, the continuum is disrupted by introducing extensity, which is the basis of the painter’s methodological conundrum.² Bergson instead proposes a more essential or primordial disclosure to existence, where continuous change driven by a vital impetus (*élan vital*) provides the basis for a continuance of living and creative evolution, and

² The problem of extensity is exemplified by Zeno’s dichotomy paradox.

for the production of the new. Here time is duration, experienced as qualitative change in the intensive psychic states of an individual. It is in Bergson's conception of duration that the study found a means to mitigate the problem of extensity, and so ameliorate painting's methodological dilemma. However, this theoretical understanding of time as duration, which is shared by Deleuze, necessarily relies on a pre-theoretical disclosure that, for the most part, is difficult to glimpse, because it is immanent to living experience. While everything that does happen necessarily happens along lines that Bergson discloses, we generally don't quite see it in that way, but instead discern a causally driven and intentionally derived world of our making. All painting emerges in duration, but just as in our everyday dealings we necessarily treat time as measurable, and movement as spatial displacement, so in painting we discern it advancing in the homogeneity of a spatialised time that allows planning and the measuring of progress.

Bergson & Deleuze

The study did not attempt to resolve this temporal duality, nor to choose between a 'correct' Bergsonian way of seeing the world and, for example, an 'incorrect' Kantian way. Painting is conducted within everyday and art-institutional realities that require planning and dealing with practicalities, and so requires quantifiable time. For painting, Bergson and Deleuze's philosophies help to clear givens that obscure what happens in painting, which always involves processes of emergence. The ontology of becoming that Bergson and Deleuze develop provides for approaches to painting that accommodate inherently dynamic contingencies, and so are more responsive to *happening*, as such. Bergsonian conceptions of time, movement, and the image have been investigated for their capacity to absolve painting from paradoxes and incongruencies that shadow its enterprise, and so liberate painting from demands for historical utility. Here Deleuze's discussion about *painting with sensation*, in referencing Francis Bacon, has been brought into an analysis of how a painter addresses what is essential to the work of art, and how decisions are accordingly made in conducting painting. In particular, the research examined how Bergson asserts that what is essential is an "*unforeseeable nothing which is everything in the work of art*," and that this nothing "*creates itself* as form."³ By discounting the material aspects of painting and suggesting that painting has an autonomous, creative vitality, he further absolves a painter from responsibility for invention. However, 'form' so created is not material painting, but is an intensive image-of-emergence, an image in continuous change. The basis of this 'form' is sensation itself, as it interacts with memory in processes of perception, and as a painter's living experience that is indivisible, irreducible, and endless. In this situation where

³ Bergson, *Creative evolution*. op.cit., (p.194).

emergence is an intensive experience immanent to living, the question becomes: *Does painting happen?*

In the final stages of the study, Bergson's analysis of sensation, perception, image, and the interaction between matter and memory, along with Deleuze's discussion of preparation for painting and the givens that need clearing before painting starts, were brought to bear on Verwoert's discussion concerning painting's emergence. Here theoretical underpinnings are brought into confluence with method in my own practice, as Verwoert developed a logic of retroaction that explains how emergence can be accounted for in terms of latency, in a way that avoids teleology or retrospection, acknowledging creative potential that is duration, and so acknowledging the centrality of time to painting.

Image-of-Emergence

The work of art emerges in the flow of movement between an actual image that is the body's response to external stimuli, and a virtual image that is the body's response to its own internal movements. That is, the work of art emerges as a dynamic image-of-emergence, so that time and movement inhere in the work of art. In this continuum of emergence, there is no point of beginning, and no end point, even after the action of painting has stopped. For each work undertaken in this study, 'beginnings' in an indeterminate past emerge and multiply as painting proceeds in a retroactive 'awakening' as they are brought into the process of emergence happening in the present. Each painting 'produced' during this study, therefore, embodies its own beginnings that are not concrete form, but the form of movements intensive within painting's act.

The creative potential of emergence is in the indeterminacy of its irreducible and unquantifiable movement, such that "emergence is its own reason and its consequence in itself."⁴ We may fruitfully here juxtapose or recognise a resonance between Bergson on movement's *nuance* and Verwoert's discussion on *emergence*. As Verwoert explains:

The reason for the quality of a thing emerges at the moment when the thing appears as what it is. And that it appears as what it is, happens because a quality becomes visible in it which is irreducible and unpredictable, precisely because it is what makes the thing into what it actually is. ...These paradoxical formulations have little to do with irrationality, but have a specific form of rationality, the rationality of emergence, which is the rationality of painting.⁵

⁴ As cited in Verwoert, *Emergence: On the painting of Tomma Abts*. op. cit., (p.2).

⁵ Ibid. (p.4).

Here there is a “retroactive effect of emergent properties on the single parts.”⁶ Such retroaction happens during the hesitation between sensation and the perception of that sensation, as the immediate experience of emergence becomes retroactively informed by an act of thought that refers the emergent property back to the past.

Verwoert describes what we see becoming visible as painting proceeds as being “the total contingency that was present at the very beginning when there was no structure given,” so that the emergence of a structure then “testifies to the fact that at the beginning there was none.”⁷ In this situation the actions or gestures made during painting have a latency, that only reveals itself when the painting begins to form itself, so that “the beginning of a painting, paradoxically would only become visible at its very end ...every painting might be an invention of its own beginning.”⁸ In this “reverse logic of painting,” the very possibility of a painting emerges as its outcome. This leads Verwoert to suggest that there is perhaps a need to revise the customary logic of linear temporal development in a painting from idea-to-execution to the “logic of postponement of the end.”⁹ When a provisional ‘destination’ for painting is continually emerging because decision-making defers to what is still emerging, the problem becomes how to determine when painting should cease. In order to address this question of how decisions can be made during the course of emergence, and how to decide when painting should stop, the study turned to Bergson’s method of intuition.

Verwoert allows for the gesture of a latency that is relieved of historical self-consciousness. However, retroaction is not innocent of trajectory, and although the latency of meaning in a gesture cannot be taken directly from the gesture itself, it *is* dependent upon the historical context that it both actively construed and is retroactively perceived.¹⁰ Even so, by emerging retroactively, the historical context is not given by history *per se*, nor does the gesture have a single meaning. As Walter Benjamin argues, “no picture [is intended] for the beholder.”¹¹

Does Painting Happen?

The question, “*Does painting happen?*” that comes out of this study, relates to the *nothing which is everything*, and which emerges fleetingly as intensive form immanent to duration that is permeated by past, present, and future. As such, painting cannot be differentiated from living experience, and what is created new comes out of the totality of all images. To locate

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Verwoert, *Why are conceptual artists painting again?* op. cit.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Benjamin, W. (1992). The task of the translator (p.70) In *Illuminations* (H. Zohn, Trans.). London, England: Fontana Books.

'*happening*' in painting would necessitate fragmenting duration, so causing time's translation from heterogeneous succession to homogeneous simultaneity. Such translation reactivates the very problem that led to this study, from which I now see a painter being absolved. We can only *speak of* painting happening in measured time, progressing by degree, through repeated crises of decision-making, and where the question constantly reiterated becomes Lyotard's sublime crisis of: *Is it happening?* Whereas, in duration there is no beginning or end to painting, no crisis of orientation, but instead *happening* that is the *continuous creative becoming* of duration. In homogeneous (measured) time discussion is limited to what is *inessential* to painting, whereas in heterogeneous time there is only a living experience of emergence, with nothing to be said about the *no-thing*, which is *everything* in the work of art. In this situation a suitable response to the question "*Does painting happen?*" is, perhaps, that painting is *in and of itself* and happens in its own unaccountable terms.

The overarching 'finding' of this study is to link Bergson's conception of time, as an ontology of becoming, to the concept of emergence as a conceptual and processual basis for painting that, while not resolving the problem of having to paint in dual and incongruent realities, does absolve painting from the conundrum of future-orientation that was its legacy after Modernism. It is in these ecologies of concepts, practices and approaches that my own painting now proceeds, as I work to clear givens, practice a relaxation of memory, and practice accessing intuition's encounter with sensation, in its own newly emerging terms. That is, I practice painting-with-sensation. The evolution in my approach to painting has been from representation of emergence to painting-as-emergence, with its own 'littoral' ecologies of interacting dynamics that are the vitality of both life and art.



Figure 107 (12x12.5cm)

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