

Somatic Aesthetics and aleatory painting practices.

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This thesis is an investigation into artist strategies for rule testing and critical investigation within recent painting practices, primarily within ‘bad painting’ art practices where conscious decisions are made to paint badly. The research concerns the devaluation of the body within aesthetic discourses that tend overall to prioritise category definition. This is both an historical problematic going back to Edmund Burke’s definitions of beauty, and an ongoing source of debate about the valorisation of visual space over haptic space within contemporary painting practices.

Bad Painting is an extension of the transformational field of art outside of demarcational skirmishing and offers a corrective to institutional orthodoxy as well as opening the field out - away from the museum experience of art as society’s sacral experience. Here good and bad operate in co-existence with each other as polarities along the same line by which they exert themselves as a force for rethinking contemporary patterns of artistic behaviour all the while having to accept the contingency of producing art in a social nexus. Incompetences and gaucheness within the making of a bad painting are necessary correctives to the old normalising habits of aesthetic evaluation that have become acceptable disembodied orthodoxies within institutions.

What are the implications for painting practice if an artist deliberately and consciously sets out to paint badly? The essay builds upon Richard Shusterman’s book *Pragmatist Aesthetics* and questions rationalist approaches to aesthetics developed from Immanuel Kant to Theodor Adorno. It points towards a somatic understanding of painting practice that leads away from category bound definitions of the good in art practice.

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Introduction

Painting has been remarked upon to be a way of thinking, it might also be said to be a way of feeling. These splits and divisions between thinking and feeling can be located within Cartesian cogito, 'I think therefore I am'. The problem of what would be certain knowledge stems from this dualism. Is feeling better than thinking or vice versa. How can and how much does feeling make a better painting than thinking? And if so, how does one know it and describe it with explicit certitude? Can one define with reasonable certitude what a good painting is if one is unable to quantify what might constitute a bad painting?

Painters are sometimes engaged in a frustrating process of the making of art. That is, with material that is both pragmatic and symbolic, in the moment and in the object. The process is utterly in the present and also projecting itself into the future. The end result of this struggle is a work of art, one that goes on into social discourse that describes us to ourselves. This process is an embodied one, Renoir once observed late on in life that he painted with his prick, Carolee Schneeman in a retort much later, said she painted with her cunt. 'Pricks' and 'cunts' cut across the boundaries of good taste in the dis-embodied discussions that pass for value judgements and aesthetics in art. Primarily, because the body has been significantly down played and dis-avowed from philosophical discussion since the birth of aesthetics in the Enlightenment era. But the arrival of bad and aleatory strategies in Modernist art such as German Expressionism, or Picasso's great complex brothel painting, *Les demoiselles d'Avignon*, brought with it a visceral re-assertion of the body, beautiful and ugly, warts and all. Reminding us that painting emerges as much from the body as the mind, from the primordial complexity of the body. (See Thesis Photos 1 henceforth TP)

It could be argued that painters always have been installation artists, the Lascaux caves to the chapels of Renaissance art have seen artists manipulate and grasp the complexity of painting in a real ‘lived experience’ of space. The return to the body in aesthetics through the works of Richard Shusterman, David Michael Levin and Jeremy Bentham, for example, is recognition of its claim upon our attention that has lain dormant within late 20th century art theory. This could be seen as the site of contested meaning in art, one that has been idealised by conceptual art’s imagined body, which is asexual and unassertive in its desires. This return offers new promise for any painter engaged with both critical and creative purpose in the field of art. Siri Hustvedt in her recent book *Mysteries of the Rectangle: Essays on Painting* gives an eclectic but gently argued case for an embodied looking at painting.ⁱ

The aim of this research-by-practice thesis is to use some ‘bad painting’ approaches as a model of behaviour in order to test out some of the main tenets of somatic aesthetic theory. Richard Shusterman has been one of the main proponents of a somatic approach to aesthetics for some years first outlining in detail its background and possible uses in *Pragmatist Aesthetics, Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*.ⁱⁱ

Bad painting is of particular interest for me because it would seem to be an ongoing strand of painting practice throughout the modernist period. It appears, however, in different guises and under different criteria in many places and times. To arrive at a global definition of what is ‘bad painting’ seems to be as difficult as making a global definition of what is ‘good painting’. The aleatoric in the title arises from an essay by art historian T.J.Clark, ‘Clement Greenberg’s Theory of Art’.

“ By ‘practice of negation’ I meant some form of decisive innovation, in method or materials or imagery, whereby a previously established set of skills or frame of reference – skills and references which up till then had been taken as essential to art-making of any seriousness – are deliberately avoided or travestied, in such a way as to imply that only by such incompetence or obscurity will genuine picturing get done”.ⁱⁱⁱ

The aleatory being the automatic or chance-led way of doing things in painting, one that leads to a strategic attack on centred or legible approaches to painting. The initial starting point to my thesis was acknowledging that within my own practice as a painter I was drawn to the materiality of making images on canvas. The process of painting the image and what that image might be were to be held in an equal relation to each other. This meant in practice that aspects of the painting like the mark and individual brush stroke on the canvas held possibilities of carrying some kind of meaning within them. The mark however was not to become so fetishised as to become the only referent in the painting. These kinds of thinking processes in the practice had led me on to see that the issue of ‘bad painting’ held out some real critical possibilities and could become a useful tool to thinking-through-practice.

Although initially analytic aesthetics seemed to offer a certain validity to discussing the area of good and bad in art it did not seem to help in acknowledging a wider discussion about the discursivity of art practice. Nicolas Bourriaud in *Relational Aesthetics* gives a fuller account of this discursivity in practice between artists and between artists and the spaces they exhibit in.^{iv} The acceptance of this discursivity as being a necessary part of practice is disputable and still hotly debated today. A dispute, which goes back to the beginnings of aesthetic philosophy and its claim for autonomy from instrumental reasoning. Hegel noted that when art becomes too outward looking it becomes ‘contingent’ and so susceptible to external influences and demands. Art’s autonomy is threatened by the contingency that discursivity would place art under. From Hegel’s point of view, anything that was relational could not describe the real (Absolute Ideal) as it would involve two things, it could not be “about Reality as a whole”.^v

Using Dewey and Shusterman’s somatic approach to experience I wanted to research how their approach might resolve conflicts between thought and practice in painting. This thesis is to see how far and how much can be adapted from aesthetic philosophy that emphasises a continuum from thinking to doing. Most aesthetic philosophy avoids dealing with ‘live’ objects, that is, ones that are contemporary or not yet fully defined institutionally. Arthur Danto is one of the few philosophers in the field of art criticism

who does engage with contemporary art and makes serious claims for art practices that are not institutionally defined.^{vi}

The ‘continuum’ approach as defined by Dewey in *Art as Experience* opens the field of aesthetic discussion wider by making a greater claim to experiences that give deep cognitive rewards even though they might not appear to be considered as art. “The sources of art in human experience will be learned by him who sees how the tense grace of the ball-player infects the onlooking crowd”.^{vii} This is the pleasure principle that underlies the concept of experience that leads away from seeking a definition of art that is only an institutional one. Dewey’s emphasis on experience of the art object rather than the definition of the art object is a valuable one, that comes closest to relating to what artists actually do in their studios and exhibition practices.

Shusterman in *Pragmatist Aesthetics* and the essay ‘Aesthetic Experience; From Analysis to Eros’, gives a valuable account of Dewey’s more holistic approach to practice as well as a pragmatic critique that draws in both analytic philosophy and ‘continental’ theory, most notably Foucault and Nietzsche.^{viii} He also rejects ‘foundationalist’ approaches to aesthetics that would give us an absolute universal view of what is reality and therefore what is art. Citing Nietzsche as one who has been used extensively by post-modernist theorists for justifying a pessimistic understanding of the world, one where there is no reality, only interpretation, Shusterman re-affirms Nietzsche’s and pragmatist philosophy’s point that not only is the world structured by interpretation but also by perception. A perception that is always embodied and not a construction of the mind. “Understanding or perceiving...is not a passive mirroring, but an active structuring of what is encountered”.^{ix}

The area that interested me most arises from Dewey’s critique of the reifications and distortions that contemporary society defines as fine art. His continuum approach to art practice is where art is not separated from life. The emphasis on experience over and above definition is one that is closest to art practice as it evolves through processes and engagement with material that is cognitive as well as empirical. This approach opens up

a wider area of art to discuss that is not as restricted or constrained by views that 'true' art should or can only be a 'sublime' experience. Experience like the problematic of contingency troubles what is a fine art object. The sublime experience of art has been one of art's main defences for its own autonomy outside of institutional definitions. Although this defence has been valuable and given deep spiritual rewards in art practice in the past, for the past thirty years it has been under criticism from both pragmatists and cultural theorists. Post-modernist theorising of the art object has seemed to come full circle to justifying that all reality is interpretation and conceding to a relativist position that, 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder'. Explicit in Lyotard's description in *The Postmodern Condition* is the post-modernist position of interpretation and reflection, a position that is valued over and above experience.^x

Can we accept that the sublime has become an outmoded defining tool for helping us describe artistic practices? Would it be possible to adopt some other concepts like beauty as defined by Burke to give us a new means of describing the field of art experience? It seems on re-reading Burke that the descriptions and definitions of Beauty are given figural embodiment, where interests and descriptions show passion and delight. Some of the more obtuse passages in the *Philosophical Enquiry* seem to wish to relate his discourse on Beauty and the Sublime to Newtonian understanding and knowledge. The term Beauty is also a relational one in that it gains its full meaning from its other term, the Sublime, something that some philosophers have found lacking in logical clarity and a structural weakness.^{xi} Burke put forward that the Sublime provokes feelings of terror and is the more intense feeling than Beauty. This terror evokes strong feelings of self-preservation and relief. That aside, the definitions of Beauty return many times to the passions and power of expression; there is strong element of sensuousness and pleasure in all the definitions of Beauty. It is experienced in the little things, in the smooth and the delicate and not the angular. Beauty is perceived with a provocative ease. If contemporary art practices rarely affirm the beautiful there is in art criticism an awareness that aesthetic experience generally describes a pleasurable experience and sees this as a valuable one. What Beauty as put forward by Burke seems to offer, and which is explored in my research art practice, in relation to many everyday objects, is that the little

things (the beautiful) could be as critically important as the Sublime. The aesthetic experiences that Lyotard would like to retain are the sublime ones because they give the greater space for critical reflection.^{xii} The distinction put forward by Lyotard as a form of neo-Kantian critique in *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, is that the little things of Beauty are compromised by a sensationalist attachment to the world and only an exalted terror taking us to a consciousness of our own thought can lead us to critical reflection as part of his espousal of an avant garde project. It is my contention that the category of beauty and its fixity in the sensuous world of the here and now offers every bit as much critical pleasure as the sublime does.

What this thesis will argue for is a paradigm shift towards an embodied discourse of aesthetics and how that can affect art practice. Whilst I rely upon Shusterman, who argues for an anti-foundationalist view of philosophy, one that is pragmatic and synthesises advances in current aesthetics: the argument should not lose sight of the real problems in art practice. There are other discourses such as art history that are necessary to our understanding of the ‘serious business of painting’ as T.J. Clark puts it.

One such meta-discourse that is absent from Shusterman’s descriptions of aesthetic experience and from much of Dewey’s is that of the spiritual. These problems of aesthetic experience are not just theoretical problems but real problems of life. As David M Levin puts it quoting Marx, in *The body’s recollection of Being*;

“the fully constituted society (which) produces man in all the plenitude of his being, the wealth of man endowed with all the senses as an enduring reality. It is only in a social context that subjectivism and objectivism, spiritualism and materialism, activity and passivity, cease to be antinomies and thus cease to exist as antinomies”.^{xiii}

Embodiment for Levin is not just a theoretical problem but also one that is to be encountered as ‘embodiment-as-it-is-experienced’. An encounter with embodiment that leads Levin via Nietzsche and Merleau-Ponty to Heidegger. The understanding of Nietzsche from a latterly more phenomenological point of view gives a greater

recognition of corporeal intentionality. “All virtues are physiological conditions” and even, “our most sacred convictions...are judgements of our muscles.”^{xiv} “There is a cognitive activity that does not enter consciousness”.^{xv} The retrieval of the body by Nietzsche is sought through his understanding of the Greeks where ‘one would be at home’, but it is one that has come about through a re-spiritualisation of the body rather than its denial.

“The spirit is then as much at home in the senses as the senses are at home in the spirit; and whatever takes place in the spirit must enkindle a subtle, extraordinary happiness and play in the senses. And also the other way around”.^{xvi}

However, the body in its historical incarnation through the Judeo-Christian tradition is a history of aberration, the body kept in exile from itself. It only declares itself in its rituals of mortification and in its objectification as something existing apart from the mind. The history of this dualism is an act of abhorrence for the body in all its afflictions and weaknesses. The mind and body dualism and subject and object dualism are symptoms of a rage beating at the heart of our metaphysical understanding of the world. It is not just Dewey who has noted this. As well as Levin, there is Merleau-Ponty who sought a body that could not simply be grafted onto relationships in the objective world, a joining on that would be doomed to failure. Merleau-Ponty’s body of experience is one that is inhabited as a deepening of our awareness of the world. It becomes for him “a third genus of being, the subject loses its purity and transparency”.^{xvii}

Merleau-Ponty’s radical retrieval of the notion of ‘flesh’ introduces a new existential understanding to embodiment. A notion of the flesh that precedes the socialised and politicised body: a body of capital investment, for instance. The flesh as advanced by Merleau-Ponty is a field of intertwining that announces the corporeality of an ‘initial community’, one that could provide a new ground for critique. The work of retrieval and recollection, one that is important to our critical understanding of the world cannot however be solely performed by the individual. The task of retrieval is a social one and is the task of communication. It is historical in its process of recollection. This task of

recollection is not merely a process of repetition but one that is creative and creates new opportunities for us. Levin states this act of creativity and resistance succinctly.

“I would therefore like to highlight the human body as a locus for the investment of political power and a source of resistance to the politics whose will to power is the annihilation of Being”.^{xviii}

Returning with these thoughts, back to the practice of painting: if art practice, and for this thesis, painting is to be seen an act of restoration with the world, how might the body be re-inscribed back into art practice without it not just being a representation of the body as seen so often in many so-called expressionist paintings? If art is not just about discovering new worlds or realities to be approached but is also to restore an original encounter with the world, between the glance and the things (the little things) that solicit that glance, how might beauty give us a critical understanding? The history that Merleau-Ponty alludes to is the tacit understanding of our world as we embody our experience of the world. The body is shaped by political investments of conformity and specific expectations upon the body. The body carries with it these expectations that affect how the body emerges in the process of painting.

If the body carries with it a tacit knowledge, one that is shaped by the body politic, can we carry that notion further into the acts and processes of painting to give a fuller account of that tacit knowledge? An account that may give new insights into both its potential to be a site and locus for knowledge as well as for a deeper recollection in the creative process of the complete human organism. If this is to be then what kind of body is at work in this new embodied description of aesthetic experience? Both Dewey and Shusterman have espoused and studied body exercises, Dewey practiced Alexander technique, and Shusterman practices Feldenkrais exercise. Is the only body appropriate to this discussion, one that is centred, healthy and fit, bringing to mind some sort of Olympian model, tanned and toned?

Taking on board Dewey's demand for an aesthetics that would start from experience 'in the events and scenes that hold the attentive eye and ear', and not from the 'museum conception of art', a plea that sees a more holistic form of the spiritual in 'bodily scarification, waving feathers, gaudy robes'.^{xix} Can the everyday objects that surround us be the possible carriers of deeper forms of knowledge and awareness of our world? The everyday object has too often been categorised as one of many derivations of pop art and pop culture. Its potential for being both affirmative and critical has often been undercut by a culture that sees critical reflection on its own objects as anathema to its own understanding of itself.

For Merleau-Ponty, this would be, in art, about seeking a truth in painting that would be about a 'truer' relation to things and between things. That is it would not be solely about mimesis: a more faithful depiction of things, its truth, would be one that was of contextual value and would have a restorative value for the human organism. Inside this process of restoration there would be a 'certain contextual value' that is able to recall and recollect - memory and history.^{xx} If the body were to be re-inscribed back into the cognitive pleasures of critique as well as painting practice then a historical underpinning would seem to be a necessity for critical awareness to shape the field of knowledge. One might argue that this is what art and specifically painting does already. Furthermore, it could be said that the articulation of art practice in 'art theory' tends towards an intellectualism that down plays the body and the phenomenological understanding of the world as experienced through art favouring an analytical or cerebral understanding. This is understandable given the cultural backdrop of institutions and business needing a certainty about quality and definition for evaluation purposes. Shusterman comes close to accepting an institutional definition of art. A definition that is albeit open and always contestable. As opposed to attempts to find a value neutral definition which would lead to defining art in only formal ways to make its judgements more objective.^{xxi}

Painters who I have included in the research are artists who have exemplified an approach to painting that incorporates some of these attitudes and approaches to the body, history and a manner of painting that is not mimetic but is attached to some aspects of the

everyday, and a deep connection to things that surround us all the time. I have found myself increasingly interested over a long period of time in the possibilities for a painting practice that could maintain this connection to the everyday object and what possibilities there were for it to reveal something of our culture at the level of lived experience and its social context. Even at the level of touch and such objects that we touch, such as radios and televisions that are constantly being re-designed even though their basic functions rarely change. Our interaction with them as we touch their buttons and dials feeds back inside ourselves what kind of object we want to have near ourselves. Designers will be constantly looking at and reviewing this interaction with things and commodities all the time to gain wider and deeper knowledge about us. The distancing and division between fine art practices such as painting and design seems to be one of the major drawbacks of category-distinction models of aesthetics. The breakdown of these distinctions would be one area where Dewey's approach of a pragmatic and experiential model of aesthetics could make real gains in the field of education and 'art theory'. Ultimately, Dewey's goal is in re-defining art in such a way that we gain better experiences that are aesthetic and deepen and enrich our lives in all ways.

Philip Guston's paintings went through radical transformations in the early sixties, largely by returning to figuration. The initial start to this period was a series of drawings, ink on paper, in the years 1966-67 that produced a clearer less hesitant mark than had previously been apparent in the phase of his abstract colourist period. The drawings and subsequent painting that came out of this phase of his development are not only more coherent and clearer; they borrowed or came from a similar mark making strategy as those of cartoonists like Robert Crumb. There is no ambiguity in the line nor in its relationship to ground colour. One might say that it could be seen as showing a certain kind of adequacy but one that stepped outside the norm of what would be considered good drawing practice. The lack of modulation and description of the object leads to an abrupt break with the ground, leading to a lack of spatial development. The adoption of the image by Guston deepens and enriches his painting paradoxically, even though the image and ground relationship is simpler than previous paintings of both his abstract period and earlier academic realist period with social concerns. As Guston said, "There

is something ridiculous and miserly in the myth we inherit from abstract art...But painting is 'impure'. It is the adjustment of the impurities, which forces painting's continuity".^{xxii} The embrace of the impure that had been expunged by the critical orthodoxy of the Fifties was for Guston the break that he needed from a past painting strategy that was hidebound. "We are image-makers, we are image-ridden". As Hustvedt wrote about Guston's bodily orientation, "Still life in Guston seems to happen as part of a larger project that also includes the human figure and that bears a powerful relation to the body".^{xxiii} A direct rejection of Greenberg's claims for a self-critical art that maintained its boundaries of knowledge and cognition through purifying all that was extraneous to itself. Although as Harold Rosenberg was later to observe "the solitude of the artist is being normalised; it is becoming no less impure than that of the scientist, the company man, the teacher".^{xxiv} At stake for Rosenberg in his conclusions to *The Anxious Object: Art today and its audience*, is what the relationship between art and its audience might be and how would it avoid instrumental reason, "now that the artist's struggle with his (sic) environment must be conducted from inside of society rather than from the catacombs of bohemia".^{xxv}

Neil Jenney's painting process in the 'bad paintings' was more scatological in approach but equally simple and driven by a similar break with the orthodoxy of the late Sixties. Placing his finger or brush in acrylic paint and smearing it onto canvas with hard support, the paint squeezes out from under the finger and leaves a lot of white showing through from the primer underneath. As noted at the time, "Jenney is distanced from his material, satiric and therefore capable of evil manipulation".^{xxvi} As if to say there is any other manner of painting other than one that is without calculation of some sort, "a smug joke and fully intentional". In some ways, the arguments between those who maintain art's autonomy and those who see it as an act embodied in the world go back to earlier arguments between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. Sartre's and de Beauvoir's existentialism was founded upon a bedrock of Cartesian thinking. "We were Cartesians; we thought we were nothing but pure reason and pure will".^{xxvii} Intentionality becomes for Sartre and others the bonding of thought to its object. A bonding that Jenney untangles in painting and titles, and makes explicit in many of the paintings of this period, where thought and

its object are given as much prominence in the painting and the title. By making this relationship explicit he moves them towards a redundancy of language and description, they become emptied-out terms. They no longer hold our attention as means of articulating what the paintings might mean. Instead, what one is left with as a potential plenitude of meaning is the act of painting, the colour, the gesture, and the mark and more importantly the adequacy of mark in describing its object. An adequacy that is always only just good enough. They also point to something useful and critical for a realist painting practice about the depiction of objects that exist with and relate to other objects. The Jenney mark, like the Guston mark, has intimations that it might also be inadequate or nearly incompetent. This is something that Dewey's descriptions of aesthetic experience do not allow for because all aesthetic experience is good. There is therefore little room to allow for aesthetic experiences that might challenge its audience and lead to greater critical awareness of aesthetic experience

Nevertheless, you cannot paint bad if you are stupid, goes Kippenberger's quip. The funny man of early Eighties German art was often sending himself to the naughty corner of the room in his sculptures and paintings. Rule breaking demands that you know and understand what the rules are before you engage. It is a game of strategy not of tactics. Strategy being the understanding of how shall I engage with my enemy (on what terrain), tactics being how to develop that engagement (to my advantage) once I have arrived there. The wit and intelligence apparent in Kippenberger's art that has an understanding of its collective sources widens and enriches our perception of human interaction. In works such as *Kafka's Amerika*, this collectivity is fore-grounded by having some works made or given by other artists. The desire for contrasts and a dialectics as put forward by Kippenberger, that would stop work from just being merely good leading him to later works that were made, thrown away and remade, threatening their existence as art experiences which were the *Heavy Guy* series of paintings. (See TP 2)

The thesis is divided into several sections that start with a philosophical background exploration of themes of embodiment and experience explored with and through philosophers Burke, Dewey, Merleau-Ponty, and Shusterman. There is a paradigm shift

in all of these moving away from what might loosely be called a Cartesian division of the mind and body. The body could be called forth to become a site of knowledge also, suggesting that the mind is not the (only) limit of thought.

In the second section, I discuss various artists and their strategies for engaging with the practice of painting which offer further understanding of the notion of badness in art practice. Not as a means to deliver a global definition of what might be called 'bad painting'. This thesis is 'testing out', through looking at precedents in art and exploration and reflection in my own practice, of what would be an embodied somatic aesthetic as put forward by the philosophers chosen. Leading to some conclusions of what that entails for a painting practice that is both embodied and critically aware of its own production.

The third section is a description of my research through practice in various types of exhibitions. The process of testing out in practice was made through fabricating different types of paintings in different showing venues. Some of the venues were artist organised galleries where there was a high degree of communality and group connection either historically or developing through recent inter-personal connections. This communality led me to further reflections on Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* (1998) because of the very nature of how and why exhibitions come to be by and through artist's conversations with each other. . What is being produced through a group exhibition is a form of tacit knowledge amongst the artists leading to a higher state of consciousness and critical awareness. Through the exploration of relations of consciousness with many, open-ended meanings that are not directed at anything in particular except at the relations themselves. An exhibition whether single or group is a new material to be worked in relation to other individuals and organisations. It is a formation of knowledge at the level of the inter-personal and in the physical material of the space, architecture, and organisation.

In all of the research for this thesis, there is a constant, which is to engage with both the inner world of art making, and the outer world of art showing. It is my contention that one cannot be done without the other, that art is a social discourse, even when we admit

that language is only just adequate to describe its products, there are pre-linguistic experiences of the world and so art. The thesis examines a narrow area of painting practices, which might be called 'bad painting'. Not in order to give a global definition of what that might be, but to foreground, how the processes of chance, disorder, and mistake-making are intrinsic to art's renewal and for our feelings of restoration and unity that we demand from art practices such as painting. There are possible contradictions running across this initial question, which is how does one square the circle between an understanding of aesthetic experience, as put forward principally by Dewey, one that it is a unified, along with art's continual challenges to de-habituate and re-sensitise its audience through making art knowingly "wrong".

The beautiful and the sublime

In Burke's enquiry upon Beauty, *A philosophical enquiry into the origin of our ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, (1757), divided into five parts, almost equal space is devoted to both beauty and the sublime. In his introduction to taste written for the second edition, Burke gives the body some degree of space in the deliberations on what will become a judgment of taste. "It is known that the Taste (whatever it is) is improved exactly as we improve our judgement, by extending our knowledge, by a steady attention to our object, and by frequent exercise."^{xxviii}

The first section of the Enquiry starts off with examinations on Novelty and describes broad themes such as, Pain and Pleasure, the removal of Pain and Pleasure, Delight and Pleasure, Joy and Grief. Until we come to a curious conclusion in the section on Self-Preservation in which all these terms may be reduced "to these two heads, *self-preservation* and *society*", where all passions are answered.^{xxix} The Sublime is then placed between this early conclusive statement and a longer discussion later on, concerning the terror associated with the sublime. However, the sublime carries with it not just dangers, that if they were too close would be unbearable. There is a caesura of thought in what then follows, "but at certain distances" they could be considered "delightful". The sublime at this point in the enquiry seems to be a floating concept, which lies outside some of the major discussions on Beauty. The concept of the sublime seems to operate as an outside term, an external defining term of what is beyond the range of Beauty. Burke returns to his double-headed theme of self-preservation and society, in which society is sub-divided into the society of the sexes and general society. The passions of the individual "turn wholly on pain and danger" and lead us back towards the sublime. Those passions, which are chiefly about propagating the species, are concerned with gratification and pleasure. These pleasures can be as violent and as lively as you like but if one is not having these pleasures, you will merely feel a mild

uneasiness. Furthermore, in performing these acts of self-preservation and reproduction the organism depends upon its health in order to perform them with “vigour and efficacy”.^{xxx} However, in keeping with this moral outlook on propagation, if this engagement with pleasure is continued with for too long, then it will lead to “indolence and inaction”.

“Men are at all times pretty equally disposed to the pleasures of love, because they are guided by reason in the time and manner of indulging them.”^{xxxi}

However the conclusion to this section on the pleasures of the body, states they are merely a lust that those of the lower orders perhaps indulge in too much. The section on Beauty ends in some confusion, both accepting that a person of mixed and refined passions will experience love, and that there “is the beauty of the sex”. It carries on that beauty has a social quality, which the sublime does not have, “it is probable, that providence did not even make this distinction...though we cannot perceive distinctly what it is, as his wisdom is not our wisdom...”^{xxxii}

Burke gives us one of the most compelling accounts of the sublime in relation to matters of taste. A large part of the enquiry rests on definitions of beauty which he points out are of a social nature as opposed to the sublime which is something experienced by the individual.

In Part Four, a clear exposition of the mind and body division emerges, “why certain affections of the body produce such a distinct emotion of the mind, or the mind by the body”. Though the split between mind and body is clearly stated, a tension arises between the two, and the later hints at a possible form of “distinct” knowledge of our passions. Burke concedes that these “great causal chains” leave us with as many difficulties as they explain for us.

“I do not pretend that I shall ever be able to explain, why certain affections of the body produce such distinct emotion of the mind...or why the body is at all affected by the mind, or the mind by the body” .^{xxxiii}

Although he is caught in his own rationalist constructs of cause and effect, this passage in the *Enquiry* is both illuminating as well unclear. What is put forward by Burke in the *Enquiry*, upon the descriptions on beauty, are made with clarity and discernment concerning the pleasures of the body. Nevertheless, the argument towards the end of this section disappears again behind a generalising anecdote on Newton, perhaps wishing the *Enquiry* to have the certitude of empirical science. He returns later to safer ground in again acknowledging that terror is the foundation of the sublime. Yet, this time beauty is “engrafted” onto the sublime. Nevertheless, he returns many times to defining the difference between pain and terror, “that things that cause pain operate on the mind, whereas things that cause terror generally affect the bodily organs by the operation of the mind” .^{xxxiv} There is a sense of Burke grounding our understanding of beauty and the sublime, in the terms of the body, using the language of the body as means to describe the phenomena of beauty.

The word experience is deployed in conflicting ways being both objective and subjective, both noun and verb. Experience seems to be both in and out of the flow of life. In understanding these categories of beauty, the sublime, and how delight and pleasure stay on one side and terror and passion stay on the other side we can appreciate the unusual effort on Burke’s part to establish experience at the heart of aesthetics. At the same time, shifting the terms away from Platonic idealism, where beauty can only be good, and the ugly has no part to play in its description. It might be why there is a curious distortion to the definitions advanced by Burke, a distortion about the nature and category of experience, where some seem admissible and others not. Can we now propose that experience in aesthetics be expanded further, to include sexual experience in a rhetorical sense? It also makes us reconsider what might be *an* aesthetic experience. The positing of experience at the beginnings of Burke’s discourse allows us to acknowledge the site of the body as the primary site of knowledge, aesthetic knowledge, and experiential

knowledge. By widening the discursive field of aesthetics, we can return to some of Burke's definitions of what is knowledge and whether the body is a site of knowledge. It has until recently been a common position for philosophical discourse to render physical experience as uncertain and to always cast doubt on it, where the subjective is seen as an uncertain truth. Consider a category such as unity, one of completeness and consummation, and then reconsider its opposite definitions such as badness, incompleteness and how these opposite definitions help to define the field of enquiry. If the body in its Platonic ideal is symmetrical and unified, what might happen to this ideal when we re-introduce the category of sexual experience into this term of unity? There is completeness and possible consummation. There is also beauty and ugliness, there is difficulty and magnificence, and there is tragedy and uniformity. What for Nietzsche would be a reverence for the figure of the satyr, "the archetype of man, the embodiment of his highest and most intense emotions".^{xxxv}

Hannah Arendt writing in *The Human Condition* (1973) on Descartes, points out "philosophy is haunted by two nightmares which in a sense become the nightmares of the whole modern age, not because this age was so deeply influenced by Cartesian philosophy, but because their emergence was almost inescapable once the true implications of the modern world view were understood. These nightmares are very simple and well known. In the one, reality, the reality of the world as well as human life, is doubted...The other concerned...the impossibility of man to trust his senses and his reason."^{xxxvi}

Burke wrote within a tradition of Platonic-Cartesian philosophical thought. A lineage in which the mind is the most secure locus of knowledge. The self, the autonomous bourgeois subject of Descartes, is the birth of modern philosophy. It represents a withdrawal from the world either as a suspension of involvement with the world or a withdrawal into a silent communion with the soul. The self as a secure site of knowledge, where the Self is pure consciousness or mind. The bodily ethical self is reduced to consciousness. The objects of knowledge are matters of fact or concepts. The task for modern philosophy from this stage is to make an adequate account of these

concepts and the representations given to them. The history of the critiques of the Cartesian model of consciousness as a spectator begins in German Idealism of the 19th Century. These critiques have opposed the spectator model of consciousness in favour of a self-realising, active, producing Self, creating conditions for objectivity through a confrontation with the self's own historical activity. This is necessarily a process of reflection that is neither withdrawal nor formal clarity, but is a means of making manifest the unconscious forces of society, history and the psyche. The goal of reflection being the emancipation of the self from a self-made subjugation to the utilitarian forces that structure power in the world.

Lyotard in his work, *The Postmodern condition; A Report on Knowledge* (1979), explicitly rejects much of this emancipatory effort. The ending of the search for Ideal knowledge means the end of the 'grand narrative' of the moderns. "I will use the term modern to designate any science which legitimates itself with reference to a meta-discourse of this kind making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative such as the dialectics of the Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth".^{xxxvii} Lyotard's renewal of Kantian logic and his espousal of the avant-garde 'postmodern' as a line of resistance to a totalising Hegelian dialectic, falls victim to its own invocation of Terror.^{xxxviii} It is difficult to locate what 'avant-garde' activity of the last twenty years has made a "line of resistance to the current 'totalitarianism'".^{xxxix} Kant's identification of the subject as being at the heart of the experience of its 'pleasure and displeasure' allows us to consider that aesthetic experience does not all have to be good. This might allow us the possibility for painting to take possession of both goodness and badness in a process that is both evaluative and phenomenologically rich in deepening our understanding of artistic creativity.^{xl}

Pleasure and displeasure both provide strong definitions of cognitive experience. Burke expends a great deal of effort in defining beauty alongside and against other terms such as physiognomy, gracefulness, and ugliness. Beauty is in the end a differential term. "Black and white may soften, may blend, but they are not therefore the same".^{xli} He was

writing from within a philosophical tradition that followed on from Plato's Ideal where beauty can only be a pleasurable experience. However, Burke does expand the field of enquiry to include ugliness and other oppositional terms that in themselves can lead to feelings of pleasure once they have been experienced and survived. Ugliness functions as a negative term against beauty but it does not equally correspond with other positive terms such as 'fitness and proportion' that are strong definitions of beauty. A pig's snout may not be beautiful but its fitness and proportion make it perfect for what it does. Similarly, pain and fear are experienced to a degree in which some experiences might cause suffering. However, a long and difficult climb to the top of a mountain will be arduous but experienced with great relief after the pain of getting there. These immense feelings of pleasure lead on to Burke's concept of the sublime. Smoothness stands in distinction to roughness, that is experienced as unpleasant but is also a 'violent tension and contraction of the muscle fibres'. Whereas the experience of something smooth is encountered as giving feelings of luxuriousness. In general, "pain, anguish, (and) torment, is productive of the sublime", it is "to be made in every body".^{xlii} Difficulty, ugliness, privation all play their part in defining what is beautiful and pleasurable, as well leading to greater ideas of the sublime. In many ways, Burke trusts his senses more than contemporary thinking of the time such as, Hume, who defined such passions by their associations rather than Burke whereas emphasised sensations in relation to that of passions.^{xliii} All the ways in which Burke defines the passions are in a differential relation with each other giving them an experiential quality.

The pain-pleasure axis plays a much less significant part in Kant's *Critique of Judgement*.^{xliv} What seems to be the quality of the sublime for Kant is that of a *movement* from pain towards pleasure. The confrontation with immensity in the Kantian description is one where the feeling of being overwhelmed by the greatness of nature is only a brief pause before "the Ideas of Reason" take over and we realise our superiority to nature. For Kant sublime feelings give the space for reflective judgment leading to a space in which critical thought can operate. Lyotard's new understanding of the sublime in *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, proposes that such reflective thought offers a

support for avant garde art practices as a line of resistance to mechanistic reason leading to critical thought.^{xlv}

It is difficult to argue with Lyotard's own repositioning of the formal logic, in which thought, in order for it to possess itself and make a reflection must start from an a priori in order to think itself to a new point. However, Lyotard's espousal of language games as the new arena in which thought can make itself known to itself as a means of critical enquiry suggests that these language games would be conduits of pure information. The notion that language games do not compete, struggle or overcome other positions, and that they will not be involved in struggles that are a matter of life and death is implausible.

What strikes the reader of Burke's Enquiry is how much appreciation for passion in aesthetic pleasure there is: also how much pleasure there is in the drawing up of ever finer and more refined distinctions in the process. "For it appears very clearly to me...that when the body is disposed...to such emotions as it would acquire by the means of a certain passion: it will excite something very like that passion in the mind."^{xlvi} This passage seems at pains to try to overcome the mind and body division giving both approximate values. Terror affects the bodily organism through the processing of it by the mind. Large objects excite every part of the eye; as if the eye were a taut membrane that is being stimulated by rays of energy emitted from large objects. The eye seems to be only capable of bearing a finite capacity for vibrations from the outside world. The senses are producing something like pain on the part of the beholder that leads to the production of the idea of the sublime. A great tension runs through this particular passage of the body experiencing the world as if it were a piece of music, with vast spaces being traversed by the quickness of the eye, and all undergoing great stresses and strains in this body orientated experience.

Sense experience for Burke was at the heart of the enquiry that was conducted within the rationalist constructs of his time. He wanted to find a universal measure of taste that could behave according to fixed principles in much the same way that laws of motion,

optics and hydraulics did. Although it seems this was to be a two way process of reflection between the rational sciences. “(W)hilst we investigate the springs and trace the courses of our passions, we may not only communicate to the taste a sort of philosophical solidity, but we may reflect back on the severer sciences some of the graces and elegancies of taste, without which the greatest proficiency in those sciences will always have the appearance of something illiberal.”^{xlvii} In all of the efforts that Burke puts into giving us a definition of beauty and the sublime, there are two main points that stand out for me. One is the extraordinary somatic awareness harnessed to our understanding of the terms. The other is the pragmatic approach to facing the problem in the first place. The problem being not just how to define something, and describe in detail the conceptual tools to do that, but also and refreshingly so, the seeming neutrality with which making a category definition is written.

“A definition may be very exact, and yet go very little way towards informing us of the nature of the thing defined...it seems rather to follow than to precede our enquiry, of which it ought to be considered as the result”.^{xlviii}

Some would claim that Burke’s ‘sensationist’ approach led him to make many outlandish claims and it is possible he did elide the difference between life and art, leading to the possible confusion between sense data with perception^{xlix}. Nevertheless, this ‘confusion’ is one that later philosophers would take up, such as Nietzsche or Merleau-Ponty, who would take this as a foundation for our understanding of the world as a fundamentally aesthetic and somatic one.

The body is the centre of my art practice, principally painting, where the kinaesthetic connection between hand, arm, and eye can be remarked upon as the neglected site that has been missing from discussions within aesthetics and art criticism. This thesis is an embodied form of philosophical and artistic enquiry, which will mark out how as an artist and writer, I can engage with transgressive acts of behaviour in art practices that seek to question the usefulness of category-defining aesthetics. As an artist involved in a process of discovery, this enquiry involves both a lengthy engagement with aesthetics as well as a

lengthy confrontation with understanding what makes an artwork of value. Though as an artist I am also confronting the orthodoxy of what is good in art. To re-state Burke's enquiring note on definitions, having a definition at the start of the process does little to advance us any further on the nature of knowledge and it would seem to point to a more pragmatic approach in that definitions will follow the process of enquiry. To which Lyotard would, I think, riposte that for consciousness to gain the space of reflection for critical thought to come into being, it would need the space of the sublime for this to come about? Except, one is then left with something unacknowledged, what then becomes of beauty with all of its constructs and definitions? Could this whole problematic become a site for critical reflection through our somatic understanding of the world we inhabit?

If philosophy is 'a way of life', and not merely the product of the mind, then the health of the body becomes paramount to thinking.¹ Aesthetic experience becomes an experience, which is phenomenological as well as categorical. That is, it is a sensation of the work as well as a critical appreciation of the work. Furthermore, it is the work of the viewer as well as of the object. The viewer completes the work as work one that is experienced and therefore is an experience that is in an imaginative relationship with the art object. A relation to the work of art that is in, contra-distinction to the disinterestedness of Kant; one that is of the bourgeois individual alone in (his) private contemplation with the work. That is not to take away the value of silence and time in delaying the over speedy consumption of the work, the increasingly noisy museum experience and blockbuster exhibitions of modern city museums, that seem to value the shop and entertainment above all else. Nevertheless, if we affirm the social function of art as paramount, then we must affirm the conversation that comes with the experience of art.

Merleau-Ponty: The gaze and distance.

Merleau-Ponty is one of the most interesting philosophers of the twentieth century, establishing a formidable amount of work that would describe human experience aside from either rationalism or empiricism. It was an advance on Husserl's phenomenology and Husserl's concept of the epoché, which is a bracketing off, for consciousness to free itself from subject and object, mind and body splits in order to encounter the world as it appears not as it should appear. He was a contemporary of Sartre's and a fellow editor with Sartre of *Les Temps Moderne*. He put forward in three major essays on art; 'Cézanne's Doubt, The Indirect language and the voices of silence, The Eye and Mind'^{li}, as well as in his major book *The Phenomenology of Perception*, that perception was not a state of the mind in co-existence with the body but that perception was a state of the entire bodily organism.^{lii}

He is also central to many of the themes that run through Richard Shusterman's work. Shusterman has written an essay on Merleau-Ponty, 'The pale limping body of philosophy', where he explores Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of the body in perception and phenomenology, pointing to a silent expressiveness of the body that runs through Merleau-Ponty's work.^{liii} "Why should a brilliant body philosopher like Merleau-Ponty", Shusterman asks, "Use such a metaphor of somatic disempowerment to characterise his philosophical project?"^{liv} Shusterman would go on to propose a more reconstructive, therapeutic approach to the body one that would pay more attention "to explicit or reflective somatic consciousness".^{lv}

Merleau-Ponty's affirmation of art and especially painting drew my attention to his main themes of visibility, touch, and distance. 'Cezanne's Doubt' was made the lead essay in *Sense and Non-sense* by Merleau-Ponty. It was a short note on Cezanne and DaVinci that led towards major themes explored throughout Merleau-Ponty's life raising many interesting questions concerning truth and freedom in art, as well connecting to other disciplines such as psychoanalysis. This short essay is a forthright rejection of inductive logic^{lvi} offering an affirmation of Freud's allusive logic, of repetitions, and echoes that point away from causal relations towards motivational relations. The essay should be seen as an anti-formalist approach to Cézanne: the formalist approach well established by Roger Fry, who concentrated upon his use of line and planes de-emphasising colour and subject-matter. "All art depends upon cutting off the practical responses to sensations of ordinary life, thereby setting free a pure and as it were disembodied functioning of the spirit".^{lvii} The subject of Cézanne's art being a myriad of complex choices, from the landscape as a motif in which to work through new forms of perception and description. It is an art practice that is many layered and made choices of subject with certain types of people from a rural community alongside an 'immobility' of perception that pushed aside perspectival orthodoxy. The paintings are a remarkable body of work that states and re-states shapes and forms of 'lived experience', emphatically in front of the viewer. These statements of trees in landscapes, of men's hands playing cards, or of groups of men and singular farm-workers all suggest or allude to a restraint and certain care in placement in the scene. There is in this work, a view of the world held at a certain distance with passionate restraint.

An interesting aspect, proposed by T.J. Clark in a symposium, concerning the idea that the Cézanne paintings unfold in front of the viewer is this idea of distance.^{lviii} Clark has paid close attention to the spaces in *The Card players* (TP 3) that held a kind of difficulty with location or proximity. Those being the space at the 'back' of the *Card players* that seemed to neither describe something firmly like a wall, or a further anterior space. For Clark, when spaces in paintings become indefinable or unknowable, they represent a crisis or anxiety in the process of picture making. The paintings might be said to be capturing a 'form of life' at the moment of its disintegration (in the face of historical

forces), albeit a sensual, touched reality. The space under the table of the Card players where their knees were close but not touching, holding a certain restraint within their placing right at the forefront of the painting. The unfolding of Cezanne's subject becoming one of proximity, as Clark puts it 'this near but no nearer'.

Cézanne's investigations of perspective and form, leads him to discover that lived perspective is not photographic or geometric. The lines and shapes of the apples in Cezanne's bowl bulges and shifts; as edges emerge and shift, just as in our perception as shapes move while our body moves and breathes contemplating the objects in front of us. This dispensing with shape that instead arrives at a contour, which is an ideal limit of the object, allows for a quality of depth that says as much about the see-er as the seen. It is a lived experience of the world, not the formulaic perspective such as Alberti's description in *On Painting*.^{lix} When we look at simple shapes such as an apple we are not looking at a shape with a continuous line, which would be a photographic description of the object, we are looking at a form where "the contour is...the ideal limit toward which the sides of the apple recede in depth".^{lx} There is none of Fry's disinterestedness of mind when looking at paintings that connects to a lived experience. Cézanne's paintings, for Merleau-Ponty, achieve a world of depth through a dogged and faithful pursuit of reality without giving up any of its sensuous surfaces and with no other path to follow than the immediate apprehension of nature. One small drawing that is held at the Courtauld Institute, London, *Armchair* (TP4), demonstrates his awareness of binocular vision. The leg of one side of the chair does not follow on from the other as though it were drawn front on one side and in perspective on the other leg. Perhaps the drawing is a note to himself about the shifts and bends in binocular vision. Similarly in the Courtauld Cézanne painting *Still life with plaster cupid* (TP5), the floor and ground plane tilt upwards radically and again do not meet in a continuous line from front to back, which has the effect of bringing the back wall into closer proximity as well imposing through tonality and colour a greater depth to the painting. This strangeness in the background of painting makes itself felt in many Cezanne paintings. A feeling of bringing the space of the room at the back of the painting nearer to us, but in a circumspect manner, not too near.

The central conceptualisation by Merleau-Ponty of the body is as the body-schema, sometimes translated as body-image. I prefer to use body-schema because it places the body as an active immanent agent in the scene of perception, whereas body-image gives something of a hard edged silhouette to the notion. An interesting and engaging exposition of this dilemma is to be found in Taylor Cameron's introduction to the main concepts in Merleau-Ponty's aesthetics.^{lxi} "The distinction between schema and image has an important philosophical pedigree that can be traced back as far as Kant's *Critique of Reason*." In the essay, 'The Eye and the Mind', Merleau-Ponty points out that the central paradox for perception is that the body sees and can be seen. "The enigma derives from the fact that my body simultaneously sees and can be seen. That which looks at all things can also look at itself and recognise, in what it sees the "other side" of its power of looking".^{lxii} There is a difference of emphasis here from Sartre, where subject and object are much more strongly delineated, as Subject and Other. This statement re-affirms an earlier idea that arose in a short essay on Hegel, where the Hegelian dialectic put forward by Merleau-Ponty is described within existential terms, as one of recognition of the other as a moment of empathy that overcomes otherness. For instance, if I see the other, then it follows that I recognise that other as a subject like myself, this other is now a subject who recognises me as subject too. "I discover myself in the other, just as I discover consciousness of life in consciousness of death, because I am from the start this mixture of life and death, solitude and communication, which is heading towards its resolution".^{lxiii} His empathetic view of the self as body-schema, one that is aware of itself under the gaze of the other, is where the self is both see-er and seen. Not only is the seer then seen, then touch is also conditioned by the touched and the "inherence of the see-er in the seen". This inherence is both narcissistic and open to confusion according to Merleau-Ponty, unlike thought that is constituting and assimilating, in other words enveloping and conceptualising. The body is a self that "is caught up in things, having a front and a back, a past and a future..."^{lxiv}

The experiential depth that Cezanne creates in his work is one that is a lived experience of a world that is apprehended by the subject not as one described under the general terms of representation or mimesis.

“The painter’s world is a visible world, nothing but visible: a world almost mad, because it is complete though only partial. Painting awakens and carries to its highest pitch a delirium, which is vision itself, for to see *is to have at a distance*.”^{lxv}

This front and back to the body-schema leads to a reflexiveness of consciousness that would be lost without the body-schema. It is the body as described by Merleau-Ponty, which is the ground upon which all experience and therefore meaning is founded. Through seeing and experiencing, the world as both see-er and seen the subjects’ perception gains a reflexive grasp of the world. It is the body that is the core of all our expressive capabilities. The body gives some intimation of a history of the body as a lived experience, one that possesses depth and distance and apprehension. The body in most Western philosophy is always deemed the weakest source of knowledge because of its subjectivity and frailty, it is prone to illness, weakness, pain, and fatigue, and for most Western philosophy bodily weakness leads also to cognitive deficiency. “Regarding the body as at best a mere servant or instrument of the mind, philosophy often portrayed it as a torturous prison of deception, temptation, and pain”.^{lxvi} There are some notable exceptions to this with philosophers such as Nietzsche and Foucault both championing the body as source of knowledge and understanding of the world. Foucault’s advocacy of intense pleasure and S/M sex as well as his championing of the Baudelaireian dandy as his aesthetic ideal figure are not a simple inversion of the mind body dualism, but part of wider project aimed not at de-coding sexuality, but re-ordering it “toward a de-sexualisation, to a general economy of pleasure that would not be sexually normed”.^{lxvii} “We must invent with the body, with its elements, surfaces, volumes and thicknesses, a non-disciplinary eroticism: that of a body in a volatile and diffused state, with its chance encounters and unplanned pleasures”.^{lxviii}

Merleau-Ponty gives an understanding of the primordial perception of the world that precedes language, that it is a spontaneous expression of the body in the world, without the body and object split that has been constructed by science and medicine. “The body as spontaneous expression is like the unknowing marvel of style that is artistic genius.” Recalling some of Nietzsche’s statements about the human organism always being involved in shaping the world and giving style to the environment in order to improve upon it. He goes further than Nietzsche in giving the question of style greater importance than the biological determinism that Nietzsche had inherited from Schopenhauer. Merleau-Ponty prefers to see it “developing in the hollows of the painter’s perception...style is an exigency that has issued from that perception”.^{lxi} That is perception is already stylising.^{lxx} It is the perception of the world that ineluctably expresses a point of view and of knowing of the world. Style shapes perception promising a closure that is only temporal. This leads to a convergence of visual and intellectual equivalences that drives towards the manifestation of meaning in the work. The arrangement, as Merleau-Ponty says of “gaps and fissures...norm and deviation, the inaccessible fullness of things” is at the very beginning of perception, not as a consequence of it”.^{lxxi}

In reading Merleau-Ponty’s account of emergent meaning in painting and the corresponding discussion on style, particularly noteworthy is the description of the field of perception: as being one that is both full as well as offering a certain formal arrangement of elements in the space of perception. As Merleau-Ponty says, “this (*is an*) unsurpassable plenitude which is for us the definition of the real”.^{lxxii} There are arrangements of elements, top and bottom, gaps and fissures, as well as, to use Malraux’s phrase, “coherent deformation(s)”. They all speak of an art practice in which success and competence are not the only criteria for art. The text abounds with equilibriums and unbalances, systems of equivalences for the world that ‘demand this particular upheaval’.^{lxxiii} The matter of truth in painting is described as a striving for a ‘truer’ relation to things and between things. Truth is no longer an absolute question of resemblance of painting and the world. It is the cohesion of painting to itself that gives uniqueness to that experience and gives each mark of expression, be that painterly or an

austere one a ‘certain contextual value’ to it. Painting is an act of restoration with the world. Perception traverses distances and sees into the perceptual future for the organism, constructing a meaning “in the inconceivable flatness of being”.^{lxxiv} Not just discovering new worlds or realities to be approached restoring an original encounter with the world, between the glance and the things that solicit that glance.

On the concept of the glance, I made a group of flower paintings for the exhibition at Jeffrey Charles Gallery. The starting point for them was a chance moment of standing on the train platform at Kings Cross, London and noticing the incongruous petite pink flowers of herb-robert (TP6) in the oily train tracks below the platform. I started making paintings of flowers and collecting more information and data about flowers and slowly it came to me that I did not want to make paintings of flowers that would grow in an English garden. The paintings had to be of weeds. It followed the same logic of the paintings of animals and pets for a previous group exhibition ‘chockafuckingblocked’, which were of cats and dogs that were all mongrels and did not possess any form of pure breed. Similarly the flowers, although all locatable as a type of flower were nevertheless the sort of flowers that are not treated too well by the suburban gardener. Weeds are in the end just a very successful flower that can survive without the paraphernalia of feeding from hoses, in habitats that are brutal or inauspicious, and they return year after year. I made choices at the start of both the processes; of thinking about what I was, looking at that determined in some part what was being perceived in the things chosen. Merleau-Ponty later in ‘The Eye and Mind’, essay discusses the way in which these responses are a means of both re-capturing what was ‘already an opened furrow’ but as importantly and this is where the ‘certain contextual value’ plays its part it. The artist re-captures the world through a response both to what is in the world and its ‘past, along with the demands of the painter for their own completion in their work.

“It is thus that the world as soon as he sees it, his first attempts at painting, and the whole past of painting all deliver up a *tradition* to the painter – *that is*”.^{lxxv}

Tradition in Merleau-Ponty's writing has a more dynamic quality than it is usually given in philosophy or aesthetics. It is the power to forget, not only to recall the past as some object that must survive, but also to recall the past in order to make something new out of it, it is a 'noble form of memory'. The history that Merleau-Ponty is drawn towards is one in which memory is constituted and re-constituted with the past in a constant exchange of renewal. So leading the painter to revive, recapture and re-new painting in each new work. The artists bring with themselves, a historical inscription, a mark that reaches back into history and re-captures the first mark made on a surface, but only in so far as the artist does not pretend to be God and to see each mark as unique. In other words, in the gesture there is already contained within it both the history of painting and its future.

One's sight is connected to reach and to touch, it is a haptic sense of seeing. The world is within my grasp that I map over onto my map of the visible. It is seen as "I can", I reach forward into the world, where the world of the visible and the motor parts of the human organism are both total parts or indivisible from Being. This reaching forward that is perception in action consecrates the world at a distance. For although the world is flesh as Merleau-Ponty says it is a world at a distance, I perceive the world, through my own needs, I stylise the world and shape it towards myself, I am an organism that has binocular sight and can see objects in the round with edges that constantly shift in relation to my body.^{lxxvi} "The body is both the soul's native space, and the matrix of every other existing space. Thus vision doubles".^{lxxvii} This is the primordial expression of the self in the world, I am here, and I go over there without having to make adjustments in the secret of the bodily mechanism.

The glance plays a large part in Merleau-Ponty's epistemology, one that is always grasping an understanding of the world. My glance takes up, inhabits the world with authority, and "conducts itself there as in a conquered country".^{lxxviii} The mind cannot anticipate what the body will do and make all the infinite corrections to bringing the world into focus; only the glance can do this as a synergy. A glance that explores the world and prospects upon the world for knowledge. The glance, the hand, and the body

are a system that inspects, overcomes distance, and reaches towards a future that forms a meaning of the world against the backdrop of the unimaginable 'flatness of being'. In gestures of lines and curves, the artist prolongs and amplifies their somatic grasp of the world.

One's vision that grasps the world is a form of dwelling-upon the world that reaches out to the world and pushes out against an unfathomable space of non-Being to give consciousness of space and distance. It is for Merleau-Ponty, a *primordial expression*, of the body giving a meaning and a shape to that which did not have one before. It brings forth 'an order' that allows for things to be described that will form institutions and histories. Far from merely being an instantaneous gesture that exhausts itself in its moment of occurrence it continues into the future.^{lxxix} The glance then is not something separate from the rest of the organism it is a 'system of systems'. The glance, the hand and the body all converge together to generate a world of distances, potential futures, deviations and hollows within and against the 'flatness of being'.

I was once asked in a seminar by one of my students, 'why the distance in the painting?' The question made me pause slightly. I responded that it is a sign of our culture. We are always at a distance from each other and the cultural objects that we prize most highly, are ones that perform this act of distancing ourselves from our Self, doing it efficiently and regularly. The car has been one of my continuing objects of engagement since I first started making paintings. I drive a car and find the experience both highly satisfying and horrific at the same time. When cars touch each other slowly or fast they make horrid visceral screams of metal on metal, of plastic splintering and glass hitting the tarmac. Let alone what happens to the fragile humanity going through several forces of gravity. Driving down a motorway fast, in traffic that is relentless and remorseless in its compact nature, fills me with dread and horror but that never stops me being fascinated by the act of driving. This, I must contain inside myself for as many hours as it takes, in order that I can achieve some notion of autonomy and self fulfilled decision making to achieve the end of my journey. We sit inside a cocoon of technological wizardry that shields us from weather, speed, and all sensation, including that of the road-user next to me and in front

of me and beside me. I am surrounded by people doing what I am doing, driving at speed. We are all - at a distance from one another. Painting might be the recuperative object that heals those distances between us.

For some time, I have been very interested in the design of objects that inhabit our space. Not just objects, but the points where we touch them. The buttons we press, the knobs we twist and turn the dials to turn the volume up with are around us all the time. These shapes have evolved and changed over the period of my life time, from buttons that clicked and gave a reassuring audible response to your command-touch, to soft little discrete buttons that feel like the end of my finger tips in their firm softness and shape. Buttons used to be silvery and had ferrule-like grips on them, and then they became smooth black onyx-like, with a weight to them. Later on, buttons and dials transmogrified into soft and grey pads against the black fascia, now they are white and soft. All of them are made of plastic of one kind or another.

Plastic is now another current object that I look at. It is like all of these things that my glance has fallen upon, the taken for granted, the almost forgotten, the ubiquitous, and the everyday. When I say my glance falls upon these ubiquitous objects that inhabit our spaces, is that so I can let myself off from my own styling perception as Merleau-Ponty would say? This 'falling upon', of my glance, as if it were not announcing itself too loudly to the objects and things that we live with. My glance falls upon the objects of my choice, I take full responsibility for that, but my glance falls upon in such a way to not put them under too much stress. I now draw the objects very quickly. I want no corrections or errors to be concealed from the viewer, fumbling misjudgements of where to start and where to finish will be left there for all to see. They are nearly all made of plastic or from oil derivatives. Even though these things might be a part of the spectacle of our daily lives, they are also there to be re-discovered not just as a commodity, but also as themselves in the strangeness of things, and the strangeness of vision.

John Dewey: An Experience

Reading John Dewey, one cannot help feeling that every fibre of his being and work was directed against Kant's definition of the role of art to be totally "disinterested" and to have "complete indifference" to reality. A view that constantly re-iterates the notion that art is purely for art's sake and the role of art is to be essentially purposeless. John Dewey writes with clarity, precision, and purpose against this view that has been given to us from the beginning of the modern era of philosophy. "The task is to restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings, and sufferings that are universally recognised to constitute experience".^{lxxx} What is important about this statement is the term continuity, that is, there are distinctions to be made and that they exist as an organic whole within the lived experience of the 'live creature'. The separation of art objects away from both their origin and their means of expression in the social sphere is as if "a wall has been built around them". A wall that re-enforces separations of thought from other human efforts that will ultimately lead to reifications of art as separate activity and as a separate set of objects of human knowledge and endeavour.

Lyotard would maintain that this demand for experience (and therefore implicit unity) negates contemporary art's role as experimentation and risk. The task of philosophy, for Lyotard, is not a search for meaning but to analyse the experimentations of artists by means of a reflexive experimentation in criticism. This experimental analysis would then avoid the traps of representation, and of the pathos of desire for a unity of Being, and

instead lead, “not towards transcendence, but towards multiplicity and the incommensurability of works”.^{lxxx} He invokes Adorno’s sombre words that experimentation in art stands in direct opposition to experience. Yet again, re-affirming the standard philosophical position that experience is not a firm enough ground upon which to make art give a clear enough account of its agency in the world. By Lyotard’s account, Adorno cannot entirely free himself to break completely with Hegelian phenomenology, one that still is a hankering after “the pathos of objectivity”.^{lxxxii}

However, if we acknowledge Adorno’s thinking upon the truth-content in art, that “the work is at once the quintessence of relations of tension and the attempt to dissolve them”, we have to note that Lyotard’s ahistoricism cannot avoid history itself and the work of interpretation to make the truth-content of the work available to us.^{lxxxiii} A philosophical work upon the art object that, he sees as paralogy and aesthetics as paraesthetics.^{lxxxiv} That would, I think, not always lead to a reflection “according to opacity” upon the experimental nature of the work of art.^{lxxxv} The experiments of art for Adorno, following on from Baudelaire and Schoenberg, give us pleasures in art that are of the ugly, the dark and the dissonant. They “mete out, justice eye for eye, to hedonism”.^{lxxxvi} The aesthetic truth content of art that is always waiting be discovered and interpreted can only be disclosed to the philosopher when the original conditions of its truth no longer pertain. “Aesthetic truth content and history are that deeply enmeshed”.^{lxxxvii} The work of art has a date with itself in its future through the historical process. Adorno who called Dewey, ‘a truly emancipated thinker’ of his time and who like Dewey was appalled at the luxuriousness of bourgeois art, bemoaned that the museum had become “the beauty parlour of civilisation”. Adorno must have had Benjamin’s observations in mind when he declares that there is no “document of civilisation which is not at the same time a document of barbarism”.^{lxxxviii}

“There must be historic reasons for the rise of compartmental conception of fine art...an instructive history of fine art could be written in terms of the formation of the distinctively modern institutions of museum and exhibition gallery”.^{lxxxix}

What forms the ground of Dewey's thinking about aesthetics is the demand for continuity in thought and practice, in that it should rest upon experience. It is the experience of the artwork that should be the task of aesthetics for Dewey. The prime task of art, for Dewey, is to restore a continuity of experience that forms a resistance to the dislocations and compartmentalisations of modern life. These compartmentalisations of art and criticism have broken the experience of art and have given rise to separate disciplinary realms of 'intellectualisms'. He recognises that art cannot have escaped the influence of these dislocations and agrees with Adorno that the work of art is to raise our perception of the world to a higher state of consciousness. However, unlike Adorno's theory in his posthumously published book *Aesthetic Theory* that the work of art, betrays the truth of its civilisation, Dewey's work of art is to restore a state of unity.^{xc} To "a thorough going integration of subject and object", whose completeness is a measure of its artistic and imaginative integrity.^{xcii}

Not for Dewey, the drawing of ever more refined distinctions that compartmentalise thought and "spiritualises (art) out of connection with the objects of concrete experience". Therefore, experience can be good or bad, fine or crude, but how you experience art is one that is indivisible from itself. Experience is through something that sets itself apart from everyday life, which is why Dewey goes to great lengths to emphasise the continuity principle that underlies experience. Art of other historical periods, pots, rugs, furnishings of tents or houses and so on, these were enhancements of "the processes of everyday life".^{xcii}

If though, the work of art restores us to ourselves, it must also do this imaginatively, and the work of imagination is an act of 'under-going' and of suffering, where the artist "does not shun moments of resistance and tension".^{xciii} In fact, the artist seeks out the moments that might be alienating, because for the 'live creature', an organism (human) that is alive to its environment, one that will only be alive when this process is under gone, to be in any other way is merely to subsist. The artist processes experience of the environment be that the material of art, the studio or various genres through material in order to give it form, Dewey and Adorno might be in agreement in that "form works like a magnet that

orders elements of the empirical world in such a fashion that they are estranged from their extra-aesthetic experience”.^{xciv} It is discord, dissonance, difficulty that will bring forth reflection, to do otherwise is to give in: to the banal, the conventional, and the docile, “life grows when a temporary falling out is a transition to a more extensive balance of the energies of the organism”.^{xcv} The artist is the one who shows care and attention to these moments of discord or experimentation in order to bring them back into some kind of unity. Unlike Lyotard’s over-emphasis upon experimentation that will confront us with the incommensurability of reason and imagination, Dewey seeks in art a project of restoration and amelioration of life’s barbarities. A restoration within the work of art, that enters into an ordered movement with its materials towards a consummation. For Dewey, art is a celebration of the life of a civilisation. There is a problem with Dewey’s rather over-whelming holistic view of the world, in so far as life is dislocated and compartmentalised, then this can only be responded to by the artist in a similar response using all the imagination necessary. To do otherwise, would be banal, reductive, or merely political.

What develops from Dewey’s continuity theory of the artwork, with the knowledge of the context that the artwork is perceived in, is the importance of the unity that gives us an aesthetic experience. Dewey describes this unity in terms of coherence and completeness against the rupture with everyday experience. It could be said that an artwork insists upon its coherence fetishistically. Only by fulfilling these two requirements of coherence and completeness could we then go on to claim that we are having *an* aesthetic experience.^{xcvi} Although this does raise a question, there is an assumption that aesthetic experience has to be pleasurable and agreeable. If we were to let go of pleasure as the only means of having an aesthetic experience and gave greater value to novelty, or dissonance, in a call for greater complexity in the experience of the artwork. This raises further possibilities for describing contemporary experiences of art, as to whether bad art can give an aesthetic experience. Bad art, for Dewey, is an implausible event, because bad art would not have completeness and coherence in its experience, or it is in the process of working through such new material that it will appear ‘bad’ to the unresponsive critic. So if the standard of art being good or bad is a judgemental

pronouncement on the critic's part, there are nevertheless, criteria; of form to matter, meaning through medium, and the nature of the expression on the part of the artist.^{xcvii}

Experiences of dissonance, fragmentation, and incompleteness have become part of the repertoire of many art forms and many artists' practices; these are experienced in ways that are a certain pleasure. We may experience such difficulties in the experience as a pleasure of its complexity, its disturbance of the field of experience, re-awakening old pathways of perception and cognition. Ehrenzweig, *The Hidden Order of Art*, would see the experience of the artwork as being more like a scanning perception rather than an analytic perception where figure and ground might be held in suspension momentarily 'within a dream-like state'.^{xcviii} The 'shock to the system' and the 'lack of stable focusing' in Modernist art, giving a jolt to the organism that is experienced both refreshing and re-invigorating. As Dewey pleads, the enemy "of the aesthetic...(is the) humdrum; slackness of loose ends; submission to convention".^{xcix} This is what stands in the way of the unity of experience. Furthermore, an aesthetic experience is the process of an, 'undergoing' of great emotional strength, "a taking in, that is vital to experience".^c This experience is not necessarily always pleasant, there is as he says, "few intense experiences that are wholly gleeful".^{ci} Alternatively, another way of putting this within Nietzschean terms is that the Dionysiac 'rauch' will play a part in the act of creation; otherwise, there would be too much Apollonian order in the artwork. Something of the sublime springs to mind, in this part of the discussion that Dewey has, in defining of what is an aesthetic experience. "Emotion is the conscious sign of the break, actual or impending".^{cii} This break, this discord is the moment that provides the space for reflection, and in reflecting upon this object, a desire for restoration allows for the conditions of unity. Shklovsky, a formalist critic of poetry, in his essay *Art as Technique*, says a similar thing when he remarks that "art is to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object: the object is not important."^{ciii} That last thought on the object being unimportant was, one supposes, a resistance to the commodification of the art object not its materiality. It is the artist who because of their peculiar tastes,

cultivates these moments of discord, dissonance and a disruption to the field of phenomenological experience. Artists are the ones who bring forth an experience that steps out of the 'flow of life', to become *an* aesthetic experience. An aesthetic experience that possesses singular qualities, that re-news the organism and returns us back to the everyday refreshed.

In keeping with Dewey's continuity theory, the states of mind that are often the most creative are those that are akin to reverie. Not unlike Ehrenzweig's state of half-conscious stare with eyes wide, open.^{civ} When the 'live creature' is in a relaxed state, it is then that the most creative possibilities arise be that in science, philosophy, or art. Although, Bachelard's account of reverie being the anima that finds the feminine within each of us sounds perhaps essentialist, is a part of the anima-animus dialectic in which the living being is divided and discovers unity momentarily as an illusion.^{cv} This reverie though is not undergone without purpose. It is purpose that fulfils one of the basic requirements for these experiences to have a completeness of integration that gives them aesthetic status. The artist after staring at the canvas for quite some time, she will return to the canvas with a renewed purpose to adjust some seemingly small detail within an over-all-ness of perception of the artwork. I have known artists who could be in that state for more than an hour or more. Many artists I talk to regularly appear to be doing very little for most of the studio time. "Purpose indicates in the most organic way an individual self".^{cvi} Purpose indicates that the individual is taking control of material and incorporating it within the self. Purpose demonstrates that the self is in a relation of identification with the material world: with the ability to act upon that world, utilising materials and overcoming their resistance. It is a total integration of subject and object and one that is the character and the integrity of the work of art. The ordering of the material, the use of a particular material all have their own characteristics that are intrinsic to themselves, be it art, philosophy or science and all will lead to a consummation and a unity of the organism with the environment.

As a painter, Dewey's identification of material as being central to the purpose of art practice has been of immense importance to my practice. The integration of material to

practice is the defining means by which criticism is performed upon the practice. In criticism, the location and distinctions to be drawn from art practice are its defining tools. It does though seem necessary to absorb the advances of critical theory from continental philosophers such as Saussure to Derrida, that language and ensuing critical statements exists in a differential field of displacement in order to be able to make their distinctions. For Saussure, signifier and signified exist relationally and distinguished, they are a distinction that separates each from the other. It is entirely reasonable without being unduly pluralistic that the artist is a critically engaged observer of their work as well as the creator of the work. The audience also, being in an engaged and creative production, through the aesthetic experience of the object. This does question Dewey's unification of the work of art to itself, adding a further tension upon the unity of the artwork within the critical reception of the work. I would prefer a description of a more dynamic conception of the work allowing for greater contingency and engagement with its audience on a discursive plane, and phenomenologically as well as.

Lyotard might be content to let the continuous play of language lead the critique to become a "reflexive experimentation".^{cvii} So, giving us the postmodern paradigm, that there are no meanings, and to search for unities and meanings is a fools paradise and therefore only modern, in its "passion for meaning". All this might be an endless play of satire for Lyotard, of a search for multiplicities and an incommensurable sublime, it runs the risk that has long been the limit for aesthetics of it becoming solipsistic and nihilistic. The role of recollection by Lyotard rather than reflection is denied, where recollection would find and create new historical opportunities both for the work and for us. "How can generalised satire (of the political sphere) and the social bond be made compatible," asks Lyotard.^{cviii}

The role of the critic, for Dewey, is to be sensitive to the signs of flux amidst the continuities of force and structure.^{cix} This carries some notion of a historical awareness of tradition. Tradition, not for its sake, but as a recognition that what was once tradition and orthodoxy, and was once an imminent "future of its past," is now the past of that moment of change.^{cx} Whether this is, as Lyotard puts forward, a demand for

legitimation through a meta-discourse: I seek one that proposes a historical awareness of change and immanence, in the process of art practice. That is, an art practice that takes place within and against, everyday experience. It is not clear what gains are to be had from the new social options that Lyotard demands for from the hetero-morphous speech, one that seeks a “new task for didactic thought: to search out its childhood anywhere and everywhere, even outside childhood”.^{cxii} By combining a philosophy of experience and more concretely for this thesis, that of aesthetic experience with a historical awareness of the flux of creativity affirms social bonds that build community through the promoting of discursivity of art practices in social spaces. The difficulty of communicating meaning that embraces somatic knowledge in art practices, without falling into the traps of representations and legitimations that Lyotard would reprehend us for, is a task that demands urgent re-appraisal. The laissez-faire option of aesthetics heading for reflexivity in multiplicity and the sublime incommensurability of imagination and reason do more to weaken rather than strengthen social bonds. A project in aesthetics and art criticism for a re-appraisal of aesthetic experience alongside greater description of the discursivity of reception would strengthen social bonds of community.

To escape the field of formalist writing about painting that has dominated discussions about art, and yet at the same time to retain some of its rigour in making distinctions about art, we could in a pragmatic manner re-assert the subject as a somatic one and not as an idealised version given by current art theory. Rather than make value judgements about painting that attempts to make standards to hold universally, we can revisit painting with an increased somatic awareness. Through such increased awareness of our experience of what a painting can do we can affirm our somatic understanding of them to be every bit as valid to knowledge. This can still deliver a univocal understanding of what is good in art. That is, an understanding that makes use of Dewey’s criteria such as dissonance, rupture, and unity within an over-arching thematic of continuity and safeguarding against a disintegration of discourse into the babble of ‘beauty is in the eye of the beholder’.

A painting is not the picture of the thing nor is it the thing in-itself. It rests somewhere else like the Saussure sign. The sign is differential, one that exists in relation to other signs by definition. A painting is one that distinguishes itself from others like it, sometimes by estrangement, which forces us to re-encounter that thing or that depiction afresh. A painted thing, which might simply be that; a surface with paint on it, that makes us see all the possibilities of what a colour can do. Barnett Newman's *Vir Heroicus Sublimis*, (TP 7) is such a painting, it could be said to be a very large 'red painting' (242.2 x 541.7cm). However, it is not just a red painting, aside from the variation in colours that lie at the periphery of vision when you are standing in front of it. There is a strange somatic experience to the painting, one that is tragic in the Nietzschean sense, of confronting Apollonian order and unalloyed Dionysiac energy. A tragic view of culture "that has looked into the cruelty of nature...and reaffirms life with the creation of works of art".^{cxii}

Two lighter bands of colour that lie at the outside of your vision bisect the all-over red surface of the painting. These bands or 'zips' start to hold you in their grip. If you stand in front of the painting for a length of time, there starts to become a series of places where the painting moves you to in the room. This vast expanse of red that confronts and grips you are a grandiose gesture of all that is red, and all that it is not. It is an all or nothing experience on the painter's part and how that manifests itself in you the viewer in front of the painting. As you walk nearer to the painting, the vastness of the colour causes a sort of mirth or exhalation that releases energy from the body. It comes as a relief to be up close to all this wonderful colour and see that it is not flat and that there are many modulations and variations in the surface. It is not an encrusted painting in the manner of a large impressionist painting but the surface of this painting does have variation in the density of paint. Like all good artwork, the painting has various distances inscribed within it, distances that place your body in its regard. If paintings can be said to have a regard then it presents a face looking back at you. The left hand lighter 'zip' of bare canvas pushes forward towards you, pulling your body round to the right a little. The two lighter zips contain you and hold your gaze. They are not over-determined or over-emphasised and so do not become framing lines. The direction of every line or zip

goes vertically off the canvas, and so holds you as a perpendicular being, Homo sapiens in its space. The verticals would seem to rest on golden section positions. There are two golden section triangles overlapping each other at the centre of the painting that give an indeterminate but reasonably locatable space of the human body. Those imaginary triangles intersect in the middle of the painting lower down and would approximate to somewhere in your gut or thorax if you are standing in front of the painting. This is not to reduce the painting to geometry because it something you can feel somatically as you walk around the space in front of the painting. There is an Apollonian drama and order to the painting seeking symmetry and placement. Yet, there is an energy to the painting coming from the red as well as from the lines and zips, all of which keeps stasis at bay, delaying it for just a little while longer. Every time you think you have found the centre of the painting, some element of the composition pushes you off centre. Newman explains “ I am involved in about painting is that the painting should give a man a sense of place: that he knows he’s there, so he’s aware of himself”.^{cxiii} Leaving aside the gender of the sentence, she could also have this sublime and hero like experience. The painting sits entombed within the museum, it is artificially lit, and nothing moves, the light stays the same, forever. It is you, that moves back and forth, in front of the painting, and from side to side. You notice other people moving too, in front and against this massive screen of colour, making fleeting shapes and silhouettes against, *Vir Heroicus Sublimis*.

The paintings of Leon Golub also involve us in a drama of masculinity albeit one that is a considerably more realist and absorbing, somatic process of perception. One of the many formal qualities in his large paintings of the seventies and eighties is that there is a strange and estranging quality in the compositions. The figures sometimes of mercenaries, or soldiers, figures of tremendous oppressive power, often loom over you, and are very often truncated at the mid-calf. This gives a feeling of oppression, and of not being on a secure ground. The red and red-oxide ground that was used throughout this period in the making of the *Mercenary* (TP 8) paintings hovers as something like a ground and something like a background. The wiping and brushing of the paint into the canvas that does not give an even flat colour creates an uncertain space that undermines any illusionism. The legs ending at the bottom edge of the paintings are unsettling, as

unsettling as the depictions of violence and brutality depicted in the paintings. One does not move around the painting in the same manner as a Newman. The space that painting projects into the viewers' space is contradictory and complex. You have to confront the physicality of the painting as well as the psychic and symbolic violence in the painting at the same time; one feels trapped and repelled at the same time. The frontality is very abrupt and confrontational; the viewer is forced to negotiate through the painted marks, the brutal gestures, the violence, the beating, and the torture scenes. The canvases are always shown hung from brass ferrules on hooks, without stretcher bars to pull the canvas taught, and have often been severely truncated and excerpted, having corners and parts cut out leaving the wall behind showing. This has a disconcerting effect of making you very aware of the room and the wall on which the painting is hung.

The figure and ground relation is simple, but the manner of painting is complex. First, acrylic paint is applied conventionally filling in basic colours for the shapes that are transcribed by overhead projector from found-images, the colours are derived from the local colour of the found images, modulated down to a tonal range not too far off the tone of the ground colour. They are schematic descriptions at this stage of the painting with shapes filled in, rather than fully formed figurative painting in tone and colour. This first layer of painting is then scraped off with an old steel straight edge leaving the paint behind embedded into the canvas weave. Golub would then go all over the figures again re-applying paint with a higher colour palette with a small brush. This stage of the process of painting would give a lot of attention to the surface forms being depicted. The brush marks shaping and giving direction of muscle or clothing in a strangely sinuous and sensuous manner. Again, this has the disconcerting effect of making the surfaces give a pleasure, which is out of balance with the scenes and actions being shown. There is an inner and outer disharmony deliberately put in place by Golub, one that makes the edges of things, hands, boots, seem rigidly formal and not absolutely anatomically perfect. The edges between body and ground are firmly stated almost too much, but what is happening inside the perimeter of a line that shapes a body part is, against what is happening on the other side of that line or edge. There is a curious staged sort of stiltedness to the anatomies that is in keeping with his understanding of how the body is distorted by

capitalism. The figuration jars against what we know and understand about bodies and how wrists and legs move. Yet, as in early renaissance painting the economy of means to arrive the overall message justifies such odd juxtapositions in the figure and ground dynamic. The estrangement done to the figuration speaks of “distortion, body language. Body theory, the body in society, the body in transformative strategies is a crucial...psyche/gender territory.”^{cxiv} He has said in interview with me, that he never looked for inspiration from renaissance painting, but to earlier Roman and Etruscan painting, painting that was not Christian, that engaged with older pagan themes.^{cxv} These gave rise to the earlier paintings in the fifties and the sixties, of the *Gigantomachies*: great mythic beasts, part human and part myth - part gods.

“Golub’s “psychotic” primitivism is the appropriate style of decadent empire, of an imperialism that necessarily produces crippled monsters as a prelude to the holocaust it will eventually visit on us all.”^{cxvi}

Part hero, part anti-hero, disfigured and haunted by a disconnect between the classical and the modern and bearing all the traces of a Nietzschean tragedy, they reach some sort of resolution in the unstable relations between power and beauty, between image and ground. Men have made war sexy; there is a sexual nature to war. So, there is to the violence depicted in Golub paintings, the sinuous lines and folds of uniforms and musculature. Proximity and closeness by men is cathected through a regression to violence.

Shusterman: Somatic aesthetics considered in relation to art practice.

The final philosopher that I would like to bring into the discussion about a phenomenological approach to painting is Richard Shusterman. The book *Pragmatist Aesthetics, Living Beauty, Re-thinking Art*, is a powerful call to re-establish the body as source of knowledge. It is a challenge to dominant discourses that disconnect the mind from the body both in philosophy and in daily life.

Shusterman begins his account with a description of John Dewey's, *Art as Experience*, where aesthetic experience is embedded within the human organism, as a basic need and activity of the 'live creature'. Shusterman has given a cogent overview of the current state of aesthetics, one that re-enforces and clarifies the various divergent strands of thinking within aesthetics.^{cxvii} He examines the terms of discourse, 'aesthetic', and 'experience'. The aesthetic as described by Baumgarten, the inventor of the term, covers both sensory perception, and a manner of discourse that describes objects of perception. The term experience has a longer history in philosophy one that Han-Georg Gadamer describes it, as "one of the most obscure we have".^{cxviii}

Aesthetic experience for Dewey is one that cannot be divided from the normal processes of living and is a basic vital function of the human organism. This description gives experience a bodily and intellectual dimension.^{cxix} Shusterman reminds us in his essay

that because of experience's lack of precision and uniformity analytic philosophy has not taken aesthetic experience seriously.

Analytic philosophy has long been attracted to Kant's 'disinterested' individual engaged in a private act of aesthetic perception because it allows greater formal definitions to be made between concepts, such as the agreeable and the beautiful. As Kant says, "we are not compelled to give our approval by any interest, whether of sense or of reason".^{cxx} We can remain disinterested. The distinctions that Kant draws out are ones that suggest the essentially reflective nature of aesthetic contemplation. It is worth pointing out the second part of Kant's statement where he states that aesthetic judgment cannot be anything other than subjective. He writes, "Hence a judgment of taste is not a logical judgment but an aesthetic one, by which we mean a judgment whose determining basis cannot be other than subjective".^{cxxi}

The confusion that arises in judgments occurs when words like 'standard' are applied to judgments rather than the more precise term criteria. A standard is a physical measure. A judgment of criteria is an inter-subjective proposition one that is agreed and discussed each time the criteria are used. Kant's disinterestedness that lies at the heart of the judgment of taste is attractive to formal analytic philosophy because it is a disinterested judgment placing the worth of art above the instrumentality of everyday human transactions. This protects art from competing with other utilitarian transactions and knowledges. Taking Kant's explicit identification of the subject as being at the heart of the experience where 'pleasure and displeasure' will be experienced we might see a connection to painting as a possibility that allows for goodness and badness in a philosophical questioning process that is both evaluative, and phenomenological rather than being propelled only by demarcation questions.^{cxxii}

Kant's ideas have been used to justify an 'art for art's sake' defence against the functionality of an industrialised world. Arthur Danto has made great use of this defence of art to resist not only the instrumentality of judgment but also more importantly the institutional definition of art by museum bureaucracies.^{cxxiii} Dewey demonstrates similar

awareness when he states, “An instructive history of fine art could be written in terms of the formation of the distinctively modern institutions of museum and exhibition gallery.”^{cxxiv}

Shusterman has noted that Burke is situated within a long line of Platonic-Cartesian philosophical thought; one in which we can now begin to re-address by re-asserting the body at the centre of cognition.^{cxxv} If, philosophy is to help us lead a better life and is not merely the product of the mind, then the health of the body becomes important to our understanding of the world.^{cxxvi} Shusterman has written on the subject of Feldenkrais body-learning technique and of Dewey’s support for Alexander technique exercise. Aesthetic experience can become an experience, which are both phenomenological description as well as a definitional understanding of the artwork. It is a sensation of the work as well as a critical appreciation of the work. Furthermore, it is the work of the viewer as well as of the object. Pleasure and displeasure of expertise and coherence can provide strong definitions of cognitive experience.

This is not to deny the process of making an evaluative distinction, as this is where aesthetics gains cognitive pleasure from the experience. The experience of the artwork is both a process of learning and a training of thought. Aesthetic experience is one that steps outside of ordinary experience and is a heightened experience that is absorbing and focuses all of our attention on the experience. It demarcates itself out from everyday experience and re-arranges the field of experience. An aesthetic experience is a unique experience that identifies itself, as one belonging wholly to cultural objects, becoming one of its defining dimensions, it has rich psychic rewards for humans. If aesthetic experience were to be widened further, without losing its transformational quality, dispensing with category definition and valorising experience, it would offer a valuable insight and affirmation of everyday life.^{cxxvii}

The body as the centre of art practice, principally painting, with the kinetic connection between hand, arm, and eye, could be viewed as the neglected site in discussions within aesthetics and principally aesthetic experience. Absent is an embodied form of

philosophical enquiry through text work and artwork, whereby artists and writers can engage with transgressive acts of behaviour that question category defining behaviour.

The compartmentalisation of categories into styles forecloses on the serious business of signification. The use of category definition as a means to define the concepts of what art becomes a means of closing off the domain to gain understanding of the definitions. Unfortunately, it is self-fulfilling and ties the defining concepts down to a “rigid immobility”.^{cxxviii} Shusterman does however make clear analytic philosophy’s aims of clarifying concepts and practices gave new knowledge on representation and symbolisation. For Shusterman, the main gain from analytic philosophy would be to aid in the work of making distinctions in art discourses but its detractors would say that by becoming a meta-critique it also sets itself up as a gatekeeper to the discourses of art denying their pluralist features.

“Modernity’s sad irony”, as Shusterman said, “is that art has inherited religion’s spiritual authority, while being compartmentalised from the serious business of life... By thus compartmentalizing art and the aesthetic as something to be enjoyed when we take a break from reality, the most hideous and oppressive institutions and practices of our civilisation get legitimated and more deeply entrenched as inevitably real.”^{cxxix}

The compartmentalisation of culture that commodifies the art product as a self-enclosed style over-rides the immanent nature of art. An immanence in the art object and a process of perception that might restore and give us a sense of re-collection to ourselves. A process of perception that could be re-affirmed meaningfully through use of the gallery and museum as a site of transaction rather than its common form nowadays as space of enclosure of discourse and closure in style. However, for artists it is this very ‘conviviality’ of transactions within complex structures such as museums that makes it such a discursive activity. A discursivity in art practice, that leads on to a conversation with others and with the work. Is that not also part of the work of aesthetic experience?

cxxx

The means by which art becomes visible is a discussion that never takes place in the Shusterman description of aesthetic experience. The field of discursivity and visibility is left to its own devices while he foregrounds the beautiful and the somatic. The task of philosophy is to rescue the good and the bad from the determinism of the market place. This is an important position that Danto has sought to maintain in the critical discussion on art.^{cxxxix} Danto concentrates less on the concepts of beauty than on the philosophical implications of them, through re-visiting the conundrum of Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* (TP 9). To address them further then is the task of the artist in providing an account of the culture we inhabit, good or bad, in the face of a grinding informational technological universe that is encroaching further and deeper into our psyche. Art might begin to start making a wider more public claim for what is good and bad in art practice. In order to do so purposefully might mean to make art badly in order to disrupt the 'normative field' of art experience. This is what Shusterman would call the internal goods of a field of expertise. If we accept that as artists we are working in a transformational field of aesthetics, then the body is the site that can be affirmative and a challenge to the orthodoxy of both philosophy's inherited, mind and body dualism, and to the 'intellectualism' of late twentieth century art criticism. This process as set out is one that the formalist poet and critic Schklovsky described as 'de-habitation'. He argues against automatic response to stimuli so that perception could re-experience the object anew and afresh.^{cxxxii}

The single most polemical point that Shusterman makes in both, *Pragmatist Aesthetics* and the later essay 'From Analysis to Eros', is that sexual or erotic pleasure has been implicitly and explicitly excerpted from aesthetic description. Through searching for reasons for the motivations of erotic pleasure's exclusion from aesthetics, Shusterman seeks a re-embodied aesthetic, which can now shake off the mantle of disinterestedness for good. Although he emphasises that this cannot be reduced to a simple hedonistic approach to pleasure. There are pleasures that we have with art which involve; shock, displeasure or revulsion, that remind us of who we are as human beings. There is though, very little in Shusterman's writings that describes some of the most important writers and artists of the twentieth century who did important work in regaining the symbolic exchange the erotic could give access to. Writers such as Georges Bataille, Pierre

Klossowski, the textual exegesis and working through of an earlier writer such as de Sade, by Bataille^{cxxxiii}, and Barthes amongst others.^{cxxxiv} The fierce battle that took place over de Sade's legacy by Bataille and Breton in the early part of the century with Bataille's bitter denunciation of surrealism for not achieving its stated aim of changing not just art but the consciousness of society in general. Art's social structures and consumption that surrealism would contest vigorously for over thirty years came to no avail as Bataille saw it. All of this plays only a small part in Shusterman's mapping of the terrain of aesthetics and a new somatic paradigm. Although he has made clarifications on his original polemic in *Pragmatist Aesthetics* asserting that experience should be the paradigmatic re-location of aesthetic discourse, little is articulated about what these limit experiences might lead to in artistic production.^{cxxxv} The legacy of subversion and transgression inherited from surrealism is lacking any vibrancy in Shusterman's account of creative production.

To be fair to Shusterman his engagements with culture are proposed elsewhere through rap music, relations of the body to rhythm, and rap lyrics to poetry. He becomes involved in a highly complex argument over the relative valorisations of high and low culture. He makes a positive defence of low culture's ability to achieve aesthetic merit albeit one that is flawed and therefore worthy of improvement rather than an adulatory cultural studies approach or pessimistic denunciation from a Frankfurt-school type of criticism. Shusterman's overall pragmatic outlook on philosophy's many variations on the aesthetic from the analytic, covering a wide array of positions such as pleasure, demarcational, phenomenological, all can and do supply us with a form of knowledge of the art-work. A somatic approach along the lines of Dewey and Shusterman's pragmatism would ameliorate the distortions and compartmentalisations of modern life. Shusterman brings this highly commendable approach to rap music. He sees it as possible to ameliorate the positions and polarisations of discussion on rap music, to bring it into the centre of cultural discourse and engage with both sides of the debate. "This position insists that popular art deserves serious aesthetic attention, since to dismiss it as beneath aesthetic consideration is to consign its evaluation and future to the most mercenary pressures of the market-place".^{cxxxvi} I am not sure what new revelation

Shusterman has made here as this sounds very much like the claim for popular culture that the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, UK made in the late seventies. Nevertheless, it is in keeping with Dewey's continuity thesis, that culture is a continuum across society and that each of us have a stake in it. The maintenance of category definitions of the 'what is art' kind, do more to maintain the gatekeeper and the critic's legitimations for the right to speak, than it does for others to participate in a culture that should belong to all.

It seems that the clear criticism of Shusterman or Dewey could be a useful tool to maintain an ongoing engagement with everyday experience that could be affirmative as well exploring an aesthetic experience that is transformative. If the body is to be re-affirmed at the centre of aesthetic experience then we need to consider what kinds of bodies does aesthetics now propose to discuss. From Shusterman's account, they are not all going to be tanned, fit, and Olympian because to do so would imply that bodies do not bear the traces and distortions that capitalism has inscribed on us. All of us are marked internally and externally by the labours we perform.

The body marked and re-marked

Rodin's sculptures, principally of the male bodies made in bronze, remind you we are not looking at Greek idealised bodies with perfect musculature and ideal proportions. Rodin's sculpture *The Thinker*; in the garden of the museum in Paris, is an imposing male figure, of a body that could only have done hard physical labour all its life. Slumped deep in thought, naked as though in a Greek drama, but no classical statue I have seen has ever depicted the male body in such decline. (TP 10) If you were to put clothes on him, he could almost be sitting down staring at his muddy boots after a weary trudge home from another gruelling day in the mine. The head alone is not a refined noble face pondering the great virtues and difficulties of the day but a face made rugged by hard work and diet, not here, the smooth waxen cheeks of nobility and a good private education. Those hands have been used to picking up heavy implements all their lives. I come from three generations of engineers most of whom started out in the docks of London and Liverpool and raised themselves through hard work and evening classes to a

higher income. Yet, the hands stay the same, large, thick wrested and easy with the saw or the hammer. The history of labour is marked on the body (my body) and its postures, in its repose and its activities.

Nancy Spero's work from the *Artaud Coda* (TP 11) continuing to the end of her life was an ongoing engagement with her tactile response to the medium of print and paint on the paper surface. From the very angry denunciations of the Vietnam war, an event that significantly marked her generation of US artists, through to the extraordinary fragile but powerful rejection of the violence in language done to women in the name of speaking for them. Her work using the medium of print and paint and collage connects you to history, archaeology, and dance, using rhythm of gesture, association, and mutation.^{cxxxvii} Her work exhibited quite often, high up in a gallery space, as if occupying the space of the frieze. It floats in a place in the room that is above the heads of the normal speaking subjects, who occupy the 'important' central space of the room. Her figures have absented themselves from this desire to occupy the central space one where important and 'proper' discourses on art take place. On paper, the work floats almost ephemerally. It is rare to see an artist take up so much space symbolically and physically with an object as unstructured and taken for granted as paper. The large format of the paper scrolls can be anything like eight metres plus in length. The scroll like format of her work betrays her deep interest in ancient Egyptian art. The Egyptian collection, at The Art Institute of Chicago, was large resource as well as a model for her work.

The drawn body in her work becomes a symbol and a mark extending language away from just representation. The *Artaud Coda* was one of the first scrolls that combined imagery and text, where she spoke through Artaud's poetry and writing. *The body without organs* being one of Artaud's most arresting poems that has resonated through Spero's work as well through the writings of Deleuze and Guattari in their book-work *Anti-Oedipus*.^{cxxxviii} The use of text in her work from this point on became more rhythmic almost like a drum beat, never reductive of the imagery, but as a part of the overall look, a more fractured disjunctive aesthetic. This is due in part to her considerable skill in transforming written language into a spoken poetic form on the paper, using repetition,

scale, hand made marks and type written text. She gives the text, shape, and form as something spoken from the mouth, an utterance from the body and not a diktat from the realm of reason. The figures she uses on her collages are as if written rather than creating an illusionist field of space and territorial occupation. They avoid description and take up the space of inscription, a mark, or a marking out of the various possibilities for bodies.

She has also made some of the most scatological themes in her work as a response to the obscenity of war. The phallic bombs defecating down, figured helicopters pointing death rays down at us, death and chaos puking from mutant beings. She has insisted on using imagery of an archetypal nature that affirms histories of women that have been ignored or discarded by the history of art. The sheela-na-gig is one image that crops up often in her work, seen on church walls, they were a 12th Century form of gargoyle carving to ward off evil spirits, sometimes known as the 'witch on the wall'. (TP 12) A woman holds her vagina wide open in a gesture of defiance, as if to say 'what are you scared of? The face of the figure is both horrific and comic, the mouth mirroring the vagina; the image is sexual and empowering of women.

The eroticisation of aesthetics as Shusterman outlines in his essay would start from the here and now, from a contemporary erotics, contemporary bodies, contemporary living beings. It is not an auspicious place to start from. In the light of the physical distortions that contemporary living does to the body, the hours and hours staring at computer screens, the dysfunctional somatic aesthetic of office life, the hope of art to offer some form of amelioration to this appears an unlikely prospect. Even when art does speak of pleasure it is often in a reified manner, one that can readily be commodified as the 'pleasures' of colour. Given the general bodily despair or disrepair that many people seem to carry around with them, the idea of a generalised hedonism that allowed for clubbing, dancing, and various fetish exertions remarked upon by Shusterman does not look possible. Despite the fact that the fetish community whilst being on the side of pleasure is one of the most accepting of differently shaped and differently abled bodies.

Art products that have done the most in this direction, making a practice of hedonistic or somatic pleasures to transform the normative field of art practices have often been art from a gay or feminist perspective. These have largely been made through the means of photography or photo/text media. There has in the last twenty years, been little that has used painting as both material and medium to evince new work on the body, with some notable exceptions such as Nancy Spero, amongst a few others.^{cxxxix} Feminist art of the 80's opened up art to other discourses such as the abject, low art, narratives, autobiography, craft and unconventional materials. Photography and video has become the conventional and orthodox medium of choice for art practices that still engage with such a project. Often, when the call for pleasure does re-assert itself in art discourses against the potential didacticism of representational media it fails to capture the aesthetic high ground.^{cxl}

Before I move on to engage with artists' works that support and contextualise a somatic approach to painting I would like to focus this thesis upon my practice as a form of research into the issues raised.

Exhibitions

Red Snow: History painting and collaborating with artists.

Early in 2002 a discussion took place between colleagues and friends teaching at various art schools about a venue that was available for use later that year. The question in our minds was, is this venue for a possible student exhibition or for something else. The discussion with the others took place over several weeks and messages passed back and forth in their usual sporadic manner. Relations between artists at this point are always full of possibility: the air is charged with potential. The enthusiasm picks up greatly and yet at the same time communication can become fraught as each artist has their own agenda that is slowly and surely coming to bear upon the agenda of the group. There is nothing unkind about this. It is to note how a group exhibition gets off the ground and comes into being. Usually, through my knowledge of being in many group exhibitions, there is a kind of catalytic personality to the process who has their hand upon a kind of cultural instrument such as first person terms with a gallery owner or administrator. It could even be a phone number. (See separate CD Folder 1.Red Snow).

Groups

The conviviality of artists showing together is well known. So, there was a connection, the next step was how did the group constitute itself as a self selected group worthy of exhibiting together in a meaningful manner. This is perhaps the hardest to obtain any articulation on. But here I shall attempt one: there is a kind of grouping activity that takes

place between artists at any stage in their career and for many complicated and seemingly obscure reasons, in many cases it might be because there is a symbiosis of energy amongst a group that cannot be easily replaced by any other type of activity. In this case it happened to be a kind of loose network of interests between artists who taught at different institutions in the South East and shared similar outlooks about art practices and had had many conversations with each other over the years about art practice albeit within an educational framework. The selection process then becomes a kind of selection in reverse as it becomes apparent to each member of the group that they know someone personally who also could participate in the exhibition who might add something to the exhibition. There are other agendas taking place as well in the verbal and always convivial conversations about nominating those others from just outside the group, who might not only be good but also be 'useful'. Here is where a certain utilitarian attitude comes into play about the usefulness of various co-exhibitors. The discussions tend to take on a certain tension at this point as each artist vies for proposing their own candidate of usefulness to the group. Discussions skirt issues of whether the exhibition should be about a topic, a theme or a spatial idea.

Naming names

Groups can begin to fragment at this point if there is not enough goodwill to hold together collectively what is in danger of becoming a competition of interests and needs. At the same time the competitive energy can become a useful drive in pushing forward with the group project. As happens to many, various groups in similar situations a process of self recognition and group role playing takes place where those with certain skills and knowledge take on some of the group tasks and a division of labour is put into effect. This is always useful and yet can mask what was potentially an interesting moment when the discussions might seem at their most fraught, as to what the group project is about. The problems of finding a title for the exhibition quite often become the sub-text for this discussion of meaning, how does the exhibition look to an outsider and what meanings do the group want them to take away with them? It is a moment when the group might be said to begin to grasp the 'relationist' theory of art practice taking place in an environment or heightened field of aesthetic experience.^{cxli} The title for this exhibition

arose from one of the artists asking their son for a title, it is sometimes as banal as that. Artists experience the exhibition as a field of play and therefore as a field of many possibilities and strategies that are as Bourriaud says, ‘a proposal to live in a shared world’ that will possibly, ‘give rise to other relations’. At this state, we can say that the exhibition performs more like a formation of knowledge than a form of knowledge, an event between people that is in a state of immanence. The exhibition besides being a product of a dynamic between various individuals is itself the representation of a formation.^{cxliii} This is important to remember when we regard practice-led research where it is a different formation of knowledge similar but different from others such as text based research practices. It is in relation to other forms around it whether they are artistic or not, the gallery space, the street outside, the habits of the people passing or living in that area. As Bourriaud says there is the danger of the intervention of a style or convention, which circumvents this dynamic process of immanence.

How to occupy a gallery

Bourriaud would say how do ‘relational aesthetics’ take shape in practice? The formation of an exhibition is like a microcosm of the professional business like relations that form productive relations of labour.^{cxliiii} For instance, how individuals self elect certain roles to themselves pertaining to their strengths and weaknesses and ambitions for themselves and or the group. The crucial difference being that what is being produced here by everybody involved, are relations of consciousness and therefore possible open ended meanings that are not directed at anything in particular except at the relations themselves. The exhibition then becomes another form of raw material to be worked and manipulated like any other matter that comes to hand when an artist is contemplating the making of work. It is an open-ended system of negotiation, dialogue and exchange that comes to carry with it a mark of transparency although it becomes clearer and more transparent to observers and spectators than it does to the participants. The exhibition is then, the processing of this material as well as the end result of this processing, which is exchanged with the spectator. How much or how little the artists know they are processing this material and how much they are obeying the conventions and signature of existing form is debatable. The exhibition is ‘forming and informing’ with material to

hand that is available, sometimes invented by the artists as they bring in more and more possibilities to play with, and as they also reject and refine material for purposes not all of which are driven by simple utilitarian needs.

The discussion of the hanging of the Red Snow exhibition took place in the exhibition space with the work stacked against various walls and columns that made up a large curved space with a large window wall along one side of the gallery. It is at this point that problems of proximity and placement first begin to manifest themselves. This is where style circumvents immanence where the assumption of how things are as natural givens undermines an ethic of making the exhibition as a working process of relations. The fact that artists are at work in a relational field of discursivity does not mean that it always takes place with civility. What is not done is as important as to what is done. The work can begin to take its own place and space in the gallery, through the process of unloading the work into the exhibition space. The artists are at this moment in a process of praxis demonstrating their discursive relations to the space and how it imposes itself upon the work.^{cxliv} Subtle shifts in grading of the space as the occupation of the territory, sifted finely across the matrices of importance of areas, and distances traversed, and eye lines from the doorway to the far end of the space, all play a part in determining where an artist wants to place their work. It has to be said that in each and every time that this process is performed in a gallery space with a group of artists, there is a fine line being constantly negotiated between out and out hostility and general enthusiasm and goodwill; what Bourriaud would view as a relational scenario where the artists perform the logic of exchanges and the visibility of the artwork in the space of an institutional architecture. That is, “the space where their works are displayed is altogether the space of interaction, the space of openness that ushers in all dialogue,” as Bourriaud puts it generously.^{cxlv}

As relations go, between producers these are much less alienated ones than those that are formed in other more compartmentalised working relations. They mimic relations of power, influence and obedience but as the prevailing ethos is no longer one of advancing through conflict as in older forms of modernism then relations between aesthetic producers can now map out, other more productive ways of being and relating and

ultimately in producing a different kind of aesthetic experience for the artists and for the spectator. The group exhibition represents one of these formations of inter-human relations that are local, temporary, nomadic in the real Deleuze and Guattari sense of working in the concrete present, in spaces which are occupied momentarily and then discarded and moved on from, leaving behind a residue called the exhibition.^{cxlvi}

Alliances are made and unmade as a part of a working ethos through the present and not for some ill-defined future. It is this quality of immanent relations between participants that is special to group exhibitions from outset to end result. A formation of knowledge that makes them unique and always a learning experience for the participants, these are some of reasons for the persistence and longevity of group shows in art practices throughout Modernism. The continuity of group shows also being for the more everyday reasons, that artists support each other in order to form temporary alliances in the face of market forces that are ready to strip away group solidarity. Of all the potential flows of knowledge and production that arise from group formations and inter-relations occasionally directed into determined career-orientated forms of social production, cynicism would be too easy a response, because relations being made are immanent and productive of new meanings.

Chockafuckingblocked: Domestic animals and giving to a large group show. 2003

Late in 2002, I met two young artists Dave Smith and Kevin Rice, who had formed a partnership since leaving their MA at the Slade School of Art. They had decided to set up an art gallery in the East End of London, to extend their practice outside of normal studio behaviours and as a means of gaining some form of visibility for their ideas and their philosophy about art. (See separate CD Folder 2.Chockafuckingblocked).

This show arose from a phone call with Kevin Rice from Jeffrey Charles Gallery, in a hurried manner he wanted to make a show with every body in it. I agreed with him, having heard the list of the people, the relational formation between artists was calling into being a kind of gigantism. Meetings, drinks, arrangements at a private view, discussions in staff common rooms these are essential for all artistic forms of conviviality, it can at times lead to oppressive forms of gregariousness that coerce all members to see themselves as one group, the art people at the art fair comes to mind. I gave him a further list of useful artists who it would be interesting to show with and also who might have interesting suggestions as to who to show with. Maybe we are performing the ameliorative minimum acts of friendship that ethically bind us together to give us the privilege of saying we are in the 'artworld' too. We belong to some entity that is larger than the heartlessness of an atomised solitary production in the studio, one that is continually reified and valorised as the artists only form of social production.^{cxlvii} This sort of conversation is an example of the incongruity of social interactions that takes place in the formation of an exhibition and how they come into existence and develop

their own momentum. Exhibitions seem to consist of a notion that has barely made it to the concreteness of an idea, it could be considered as form of group fantasy. From this idea it starts to become something like a rumour that gathers pace in discourses, enthusiasms and common or not so common interests.

Mutts in the park

I was at this time interested in painting pictures of people's dogs and had made several research trips to the park to photograph dogs. I was not, in the slightest, interested in painting pictures of dogs that were thoroughbred pedigree dogs, because I wanted to have dogs that were not considered attractive or genetically pure. A mutt in other words, existing within a long historical line to Duchamp's 'R.Mutt' (TP 13) signature on the readymade urinal. The breeding of pure genetic animals has always struck me as a kind of fascism towards the animal world. Those who pursue this activity have mostly exhibited perverse and neurotic forms of production in life. So I actively sought out dogs that were 'mutts', I spoke often and at length to anyone who had such a dog, asking for their permission to photograph their dog. This entailed a lot of chatting and observing the oddness of behaviour of owners with their dogs, some of the behaviour of the owners ranged from the proud through to the fairly dysfunctional. The dogs themselves seemed perfectly normal as far as dogs go. I am no great dog lover but it would have been harder to pursue the same exercise with cats. It was around this time though, that I became increasingly dissatisfied with the camera as a means for making paintings, it seemed to entail an awful lot of transformational work, after the making of the image on camera, to realising it upon a canvas. There were simple technological processes that intervened that made this a more and more lengthy over-weighty procedure, such as the use of slide film, cost of processing the films, use of processing labs in and around central London. They all conspired to make this processing of an original 'real' to another object that I could then re-establish as the 'real', as a more difficult and cumbersome process than I needed at this time. Digital photography and the cost of cameras were in their growth period and did not seem at the time to be any easier regarding making something that could be enlarged as a transparency to almost any size.

Disembodiment

I was not so much dissatisfied with the notion of the lens having a part to play in the production of work, but mostly with the issue of what the image was and its status was in my work. I felt like I had become divorced from the working process in some way, in much the same way I had with earlier practices that I had pursued, where again a disconnection opened up between images and painting, that was not completely covered by the act of painting itself. This seems to be a kind of disembodiment from actual making in the world within practices that are lens or found image based. Maybe this is a revisionist approach to my practice from this vantage point in time, but one that might be borne out by subsequent objects produced after this exhibition.

Nevertheless, I found it extremely invigorating to be out of the confines and solitariness of the studio and talking to people in the park about their dogs and observing their behaviour, which on the whole consisted mostly of pride in their animal companion. It felt liberating and grounded in the world to be talking to strangers in the park on a windy Spring day. I began to consider that this is how one should start all artistic projects with some sort of conversation with others. A formation of the practice in the world rather than in ones idealised world, an act of embodiment of thought in processing the world.

It was definitely a moment that harks back to Bourriaud's ideas of conviviality. The choice of the dog, led on to further thinking about choices of subjects within an Academy formulated hierarchy of genres, as initially outlined by Ruskin, the first President of the Royal Academy of Arts, London. As well as coming to regard the act of painting as even stranger than I had imagined, its strangeness and seeming alienation has fuelled my working process from a very early stage. I was originally trained within a sculpture department at St.Martin's School of Art. I am a self-taught painter, which has always given my work a sceptical dimension. This scepticism has become firmly rooted in a writing practice that attempts to engage with objects that might lie outside of the remit of painting, and therefore brings the painting practice under stress. I wrote for ZG magazine and other art journals during the eighties engaging with subjects as wide ranging as Elvis Presley, Marquis de Sade, and memorial civic sculpture. (TP 14) Recent writing has returned me to earlier themes of urban experience and the nature of our world based upon

the prevalence of plastic. The collapse of critical practices throughout the eighties and the collapse of critical spaces within which to operate alongside the consequent rise of the curator/manager of art has led to there being little division between spaces of mercantile behaviour and spaces of state funded non-mercantile behaviour. Tom Lawson in his essay 'Last Exit: Painting' in *Artforum*, gives a fuller account of the cultural exhaustion in the eighties.

“ The end of the century. If modernist formalism seems finally discredited, hopelessly co-opted by the social structures it purportedly sought to subvert, its bastard progeny continue to fill the galleries...As Antonio Gramsci noted in his *Prison Notebooks*, a period lacking certainty is bedevilled by a plethora of morbid symptoms...a corpse made up to look forever young”.^{cxlviii}

The authoritarian nature of the market came more and more to bear upon the production of art. This brutalising compartmentalisation has been much commented upon by both Dewey and Shusterman. “Lamenting the painful fragmentation of experience that distinction-reification had promoted, Dewey cried out against the unbearable social divisions and cultural contradictions ...”^{cxlix} The reorientation of the state funded galleries in the UK toward a more market led approach during the Eighties to the cultural industries has had a remarkable effect upon what can be produced and be made visible and would be the subject of another thesis. But it is sufficient to say that the social formation of the market in art has considerable bearing upon what is produced and its modes of visibility. Issues of skill, craft, and saleability impinge upon what is considered the good in art.^{cl}

The dogs and cats paintings that resulted from this episode re-engaged with some difficult processes of painting. How to render fur of an animal for instance is an awkward problem, because it is at once a seductive colour and sheen as well being made of individual hairs. It becomes a strange object to place in focus and definition. I didn't think it necessary or appropriate to bring hair into photo-realist definition but nor did I want to merely place it as part of an overall flat cut out type image. That meant inventing

with the painted mark some form of metaphor for what hair looks like on a dog. Philip Guston made a painting called “Painters Forms” which Siri Hustvedt, in her, *Mysteries of the Rectangle*, points to as a re-engagement and renewal of contact with the banal. It is a significant painting for thinking-through-painting about what is the relationship between language and painting. There is great deal of oral pleasure and anxiety in Guston’s paintings, and this painting points to that. The forms seem to be spewing out of the painter’s mouth as part-objects of a syntax that is re-enacted and re-embodied in all of Guston’s later paintings.

Visibility in art spaces

The exhibition at Jeffrey Charles gallery offered a means of exploring issues in my work that I thought were important and potentially humourous, the mutt as a representation of the English class system. R. Mutt carrying the double meaning of the German homophone ‘armut’ meaning poverty. Also, it allowed me to engage with exhibiting in a space that seemed to have a lot of potential, in the midst of the poverty of the area and considering that the two artists running the space (Jeffrey Charles Gallery) were adamant that it wasn’t a commercial operation. Commercial success in the running of a gallery business was to be avoided at all costs. As Kevin Rice said in conversation, in response to what would happen if they got successful, “we have to keep it real”. Not all behave with such rigour and humour as Kev and Dave, the two artists who run Jeffrey Charles gallery. The name of the gallery, itself being derived from their middle names, a form of mimicry of styles and signatures of good ‘business’ behaviour.

The title, ‘Chockafuckingblocked’, summed up the show perfectly both for the quantity of artists who exhibited there and also for the gallerists’ iconoclastic relation to the notion of the gallery as a site of calm, speculative, distanced aesthetic judgement. I think by the end of their tenure in the East end of London, they had found a kind of working rationale for what they did in their space as a laboratory space for artists to explore issues freely outside of commercial pressures. There was though, a constant tension and anxiety underlying all exhibitions at Jeffrey Charles Gallery about the issue of visibility and becoming known by a wider audience. The rules of visibility are not that much different

from the rules of mercantile success in other galleries. This problem has been well documented and commented upon since the late sixties.^{cli} One that is a continual source of comments because of the strictures of visibility itself and those who control the conduits for it to become possible.

Positioning the work, in the context of the Jeffrey Charles exhibition came to mean my hope that the work would not be sited at the bottom of a wall or behind some other object. The rules of the visible have become much cruder and simpler since the sixties, possibly. Giving to a large group exhibition is more akin to sending your work out there into the unknown and never knowing if the message sent will ever resemble the message received. In this particular case the gallerists are curators, designers, managers, advertisers and PR people. A necessary conglomeration of roles that affects all artist run galleries. At this point in the production of social relations, one is no more than a message sender, the aesthetic, social and historical conditions for the production of the work are somewhat abbreviated and potentially denied. This is the 'risk', a quality that is often asked for the work as an internal condition of production, and is also a part of the artworks production in the social sphere. The riskiness of social endeavours with other agencies that risk sending the art object into oblivion never to be seen or heard of again. The message one receives back from exhibitions is rather like that of an echo, sometimes dull sometimes clear, or all too clear. This where artists are required to not only possess good observational skills but something better than tin ears.

Wildflower: A single show.

Kevin Rice and Dave Smith and myself, had met each other fairly regularly for some time, and the idea for the new show grew out of our discussion about art and what I could do to help them with pursuing their ideas and strategies in the art market place of ideas and commodities. The prevailing atmosphere amongst artists at the time was that although there was a reasonably healthy commercial art market going on, there was very little opening in the market of ideas for anything new or potentially critical. There had been other galleries started by artists and recent graduates from art schools around the east end of London at that particular point in time. So the idea of getting a space and calling it a project space or a gallery space in parentheses was nothing absolutely new.^{clii} It was what seemed necessary and pragmatic, that without visibility there was no art practice, and art practice is largely dominated by visibility in the market place. Although a market such as the 'art market' might determine and potentially stifle new formations of social exchange between artists, there is a corresponding nomadic adoption and adaptation to social conditions on the side of the artist as well. (See separate CD folder 3.Wildflower)

The discussions took place socially or in my studio and together we formulated a plan to make a show of the flower paintings that I had been working on for some time. The working idea being that it was slightly absurd to produce such blousy and seemingly flimsy paintings in the East End space given it was a fairly dilapidated, if not to say, grim space, the gallery being a converted solicitor's office above a halal supermarket and behind a derelict hospital. The paintings had arisen from my interest in looking at genres in painting that were deemed worn out. At the time and for lengthy period afterwards most British painting being exhibited and sold that was representational and was of a 'good finish'. I recall a conversation with one ex-gallerist and now educator when he

finally understood what I meant about ‘bad painting’ and my practice, averred that I was definitely out there in the long grass.

In my experiences of travelling around London, and going to and from various teaching jobs in the South East, I noticed plants and flowers, which grew in the most unexpected areas and habitats. One notable moment was standing on the platform early in the morning waiting for the usual over crowded train to Brighton and seeing a tiny pink flower growing amongst all the rubbish that collects on the ballast of the train tracks at Kings Cross station. The flower Herb Robert, a not particularly impressive flower or very big or very wonderful which was why I chose it as the start of the next series of paintings. It also shifted my practice 90 degrees because it led me away from always using the found image as the basis for the practice. It is important to note here that this was some time before Michael Landy had begun his series of watercolours and sculptures of weeds. This was something I have noted before in the previous exhibition but has to be reinforced, as it had been my working methods for nearly twenty years or more. I tried not to think too hard about that shift at the time. I would say this notion of looking at ones practice as one makes ones practice, is a little like peering into a very dark room and discerning shapes and objects with eyes barely seeing and hands only just knowing. A process of the practice being a formation of some knowledge not yet circumscribed by any particular form of knowledge. In other words it is more shifting shadows and knowing what it isn't rather than what it is.

Flower Collecting in London

I started by looking for various flowers on the Internet and researching their habitats, collating various texts from horticultural manuals and newspapers about where flowers grew with a possible plan to use the site of where flowers grew as a conceptual matrix to look at this new subject matter. Some of this activity was useful but later discarded as being too pedantic in outlook. Instead I used the camera to record and photograph flowers wherever they were and use the time and place as a means of recording-device. The use of the camera as recording-device recalled Constable's use of watercolours of Hampstead and environs, where time and place were a part of the titling and labelling of the studies

for future use. In a way, Constable's watercolours have that literalism that could be seen as a portent to British conceptual art practices of the sixties and early seventies, where a studied neutrality to documenting is used in the imagery alongside texts, which are more inquisitive or critical.

The poppy became a significant one, because I had planted an opium poppy that year. I then found out about its cultivation in Afghanistan and how central it was to the economy and the warlords ruling the region. It continues to be central to the economy with Afghanistan teetering on the edge of becoming a narco-state, and each year I read in the newspaper and reports from the UN that it is going to be an even bigger crop of opium each year, meaning ever cheaper heroin in the UK each year. Every year with depressing regularity the United States declares it is going to war against the opium farmers and the war lords who traffic the opium with little or no effect, except to alienate yet further the peasant population of the region. Each year, the effects of the cheapness of heroin on the streets of UK cities become more acute leading to rising drug crimes and so it goes on. Somehow, in a moment of grandiosity or blinding faith I thought an incredibly kitsch blousy painting of an opium poppy would twist the thought processes around as to what are we supposed to do about its cultivation and harvesting.^{ciii} The painting would be beautiful and ugly at the same time, exposing in beautiful form the political outcomes of an ugly trade. If one wants to make political art then one must make art politically and avoid making art about politics. My fundamental reasons for making a painting badly to question the regimes of competence and finish.

The Mark

The work progressed in the usual fits and starts; a painting would start off in a promising direction then become too opaque and unrevealing of the ground underneath and the paint strokes on top. I deployed a process of using a veil or screen which was a pattern of oval shapes made in curved grids, under the painting on the white ground to disrupt the picture plane, creating a broken ground and interrupt the genre of the flower as a normative object of natural beauty. Other means of working were being developed alongside this, such as using wood as the support instead of canvas, which led to different thoughts about how wood took up the painted mark in a new and much more interesting way.

Using MDF (medium density fibreboard) as the support with many layers of white sanded primer as ground meant that the paint lay on the top surface much more, rather than it being caught in the weave of the canvas. An obvious point perhaps but it allowed the paint to spread from the side of the brush in a different way, which increased density at the edges and translucency in the middle of the mark due to pressure of the brush. I also added a lot more translucent gel medium to the paint, which gave it body and stiffness without losing the clarity of the broken ground showing the marks and brush strokes.

This mark, allowed me to pursue that state in painting which has been noted many times by T.J.Clark, which could loosely be named the ‘revealing – device’ of painting, something akin to the Brechtian notion of using the ‘break’ to reveal the conditions of narrative drama. It is the device of the break, to allow another voice and action from external spaces to take place within the dramatic flow. The break-device allows for a disruptive and transgressive force, a quality of being able to see and feel the paint in its thickness, opacity and liquidity in one go, so that it feels as if one is capable of experiencing it in space and time. This device, stands against the Beaux Arts tradition, one of not revealing the mark, ‘as if the artist were ashamed to admit that he had actually painted his picture instead of dreaming it forth’ as Greenberg remarked.^{cliv} There have been many, many other artists who have made the same thought processes into marking in paint. A combination of paint with thick translucent medium that slid across the smooth surface of the painting allowing you to see the mark, its direction, its viscosity, its speed, its flow, in all its facticity, one might say.

The mark is not being used in the painting as the only referent to the artist, his hand, his eye, and his body. It is there to allow the spectator to follow its path in their minds eye; to make space for that part of the brain that can track sensation as both substance and space. The most common articulation of this moment, ‘ I could do that’, often occurs when standing in front of Van Gogh’s *Sunflowers* in the National Gallery. (TP 15) Sometimes said in a dismissive tone of voice. The Van Gogh painting is a painting that foregrounds what is common in many types of painting, which is haptic space, a space of sensation

alongside visual space: (in the sense that a painting is a touched object and it is that process of touching which fascinates and sustains most artists painting practice.) At the same time it is not common to describe painting as having a haptic space, because most art criticism prioritises visual space; the ideal of distance and discernment above contact and observation. I do not mean these to be polar opposites but are to be seen as a continuous field of experience. I am indebted here to an article by Laura Marks for laying out this field of experience in her essay 'Haptic Visuality, Touching with the eyes'.^{clv} If haptic visuality were to have a greater connection to the object than the optical then the sensation of space would be of a different order than that of the optical which is going to valorise the relation of distance to aesthetic judgement. In order to make judgements of value it is important to be able to define the boundary of the object and enclose it. That judgement itself is predicated on the Socratic ideal of debate and weighing of each set of judgements against others, which might be equally pressing. It is easy to see how the optical and the haptic slide from one to the other even as we try to describe them. Metaphors of discernment and of gazing slowly clash into others states, of weighing, feeling, and savouring the texture of painting. The predominance of Greenberg's and later Fried's essentialism favouring the 'real' over the illusionistic can in part be seen as the shift away from spatial organisation towards a reduction of the work to a wholeness and unitary object.^{clvi} Merleau-Ponty grounded perception still closer to the body without distorting dualisms "it is the expressive operation of the body, begun by the smallest perception, which is amplified into painting and art."^{clvii} The experience of the world through the body leading to a heightened experience that can then be described as an aesthetic experience.

Frontality

The decision to paint on wood also came about from an awareness of the rough quality of the architecture of Jeffrey Charles Gallery; a run down solicitor's office, which the two artists/gallerists exploited to full advantage in every show they curated. One way in which this was developed in their practice as artist/curator was to make walls that were absolutely flat, perpendicular and pristine that hung off the walls on large studding timber. This led to the floor being seen as out of true to the walls, which were perfectly

straight. The ceiling was left in a kind of limbo, with its original polystyrene cladding and fluorescent light fitting, all yellowed by years of cigarette smoke and sweat. A Dickensian decor with its greasy schmeer on the staircase wall leading up from the street to the gloomy office that is now a gallery. This contrast between a past that was held in abeyance behind the cladding that was all around the interior walls. The wall surfaces pristine glowing titanium white emulsion paint. The original walls still visible over the top edges of this new gallery wall, led to thinking about the contingent nature of art practice compared with the contingency of a gallery space and the category 'gallery'. The knowledge that the paintings of wild flowers were to be put in a space that was both heterogeneous and contingent led me to make the work have a kind of hard architectural quality that would withstand the architecture of the Jeffrey Charles Gallery. I made the work stand off the walls on deep rebates which gave a shadow line around the paintings, and given the hardness of the overhead light and the dullness of November light this would be the best form of framing to the work. The rebate behind the painting pushed it out into the space off the wall, foregrounding its frontality and object qualities such as its trueness in regards to the architecture.

Mural

The gallery had already established a working momentum where artists used the space in an engaged and active manner. Sometimes this consisted of the gallerists dramatically altering the space physically in accordance to; or sometimes disruption with, what the exhibiting artist might be doing. This time I chose to make an over-large piece of work on hardboard that would make it nearly impossible to step back from and survey from a distance, and so discarding the distance so necessary to a Kantian discernment of value. This would force the viewer to have to look at the surface and the marking of the painting and not gain an over all look at it as a totality, except possibly from the side as one walked towards it. I worked with the gallery discussing various options about how to site this work. The large work called *Opium Poppy I*, was eight feet by eight feet and painted on hardboard, after some discussion we had a wall made from a two sheets of MDF which jutted out from a corner and came across the room at an angle this was supported by a ten foot piece of three by two that allowed you to see behind the wall and therefore

see how the wall was made and supported. This was an element of ‘revealing the device’.^{clviii} The overall look of the exhibition was of a hybrid between paintings that asserted themselves as objects more akin to plaques or nameplates that might be seen in an external environment, and a larger mural sized painting that appeared to be an extra wall to the gallery space. A general all round badly mannered show just as wildflowers can be in their own habitat. There is an element here of trying out how far the painting can be made to be contingent within the architecture of the gallery space. The gallery was itself a thin skin upon another pre existing office type environment. Layers upon layers of functions took place in the gallery space that suggested something of a palimpsest was taking place, especially as many artists who exhibited there used the gallery in a more experimental workshop manner. The gallery space as a document was continually being written on again and again. The siting of *Opium Poppy I* tilted the wall towards the window, which made the work in the gallery visible from the street. The notion of a painting of an opium poppy visible from the street seemed the appropriate procedure at the time. The exhibition was well received and reviewed in the Time Out arts pages.^{clix}

The Catalogue

A catalogue was to be produced because it is commonly thought that it will prolong the exhibition beyond the normal time and space frame of the physical exhibition and in the case of an essay help contextualise the work. Planning started for a small publication that would have some representations of the work visually, and an essay by a sympathetic critic and writer. Catalogue essays are nevertheless curious pieces of writing that sit mid-way between being something like a self written publication and a properly critical analysis of the work exhibited. There is no peer review. The catalogue essay therefore has to fulfil many functions at once. The artist and the writer both sit in the studio in front of the work making various conversational gambits into the meaning of the work. The conviviality of the relationship is both friendly and yet remote, as each attempts a distant and critical position in relation to the work in front of them. The artist is of course very protective of what is on show. The writer also feels some discomfort as to where they really are with the work on show in the studio in its fairly raw state. I had asked

Andrew Wilson, to write the essay because I had met him several times both socially and in my studio, he had a wit and intelligence, and a genuine honesty to his writing. (TP 16)

But the idea of the catalogue is still one that has never been fully discussed as a trace of the relationship between art and writing. The question arises, what exactly is the nature of the written essay that accompanies the exhibition? Is it there to supply an imprimatur of professional good conduct? Is it to help explain the art to an audience that is unfamiliar with that particular practice or that particular genre or manner of working? The work displayed in the gallery is unequivocal as to what it is, but the essay is somehow not as direct about its own devices. The essay in the catalogue participates in the network of social formations of discursivity within art production. It might be that the essay's awkward status is because of the difficult position that it occupies in stretching itself across the discourses of the social, the historical and the aesthetic.^{clx} A discomfort that arises from the catalogue and the writer being stretched across many sites of production, distribution and exchange, there are more than one set of good manners being negotiated in the catalogue production.

Inappropriate Behaviour: Still Life painting.

The exhibition took place in the Brighton Parade Gallery November 2006. Eight paintings with text on walls plus two DV interviews on monitors were exhibited. (See separate CD folder 4. Inappropriate Behaviour)

The initial discussion began with Barry Barker the gallery curator at Brighton University, who made a visit to the studio, it was a promising start and a line of questioning developed about the nature of the objects to be exhibited. It was early Spring 2006, not all of the work was finished for the exhibition. I showed the curator, Barry Barker five or six pieces as examples of the type of things that would be in the show.

Using drawing

These pieces consisted of paintings on MDF board of everyday objects that had been worked up from sketchbook drawings. These drawings had a rigorous set of rules to them; they could not be bigger than the A5 sketchbook page, they could not take more than 5-10 minutes to draw and they would be drawn with a gel ink pen that I used regularly. This particular pen with its oily ink allowing for a solid continuous line, being a device, just as Jasper Johns might describe it and go on to use in a painting. The working up process into a larger painting sometimes went through intermediary stages using large paper painting to test colours out or test paint quality and tone out, and sometimes they went straight on to wooded support. The resulting drawing up and enlarging using an overhead projector contained all of the initial sketchbook drawings frailty and mistakes. The paintings had been cut out and painted afterwards and so giving an inaccurate outline to what became the finished painting. This play between one outline of the object against the wall and a second outline of the drawing that is painted onto the

wooden board was a critical element to the work. This is where the work and the practice begins to embrace what appears ugly or a 'mistake'. It takes on board some of the conclusions that arose out of the interview with Sturtevant, where embracing the opposite would become a redemptive action. The marginal space that opens up between the two sets of drawings, the one that makes the outline for the cutting of the wood and the other that marks out the edge of the object to be painted. This reserve space was usually left white from the priming and occasionally painted over if there had been painting on the ground, which was made by using a roller to put the paint on. The white gap held the firmness of the outline in some form of abeyance, allowing for a kind of doubt to open as to where the edge of the painting might actually be. This decision to open up the space between the outline and the edge was taken early on in the making of the work, through a process of empirical observation in the studio, and of noting that the initial drawing using the overhead projector inevitably led to an inaccuracy because of surfaces not being absolutely perpendicular to each other or some such physical discrepancy. Though, this might appear deliberative and pedantic this description captures the studio process of how a new idea emerges from small seemingly insignificant acts. One thought process I never consciously took on board and deliberately so was the notion that I should consciously make a bad painting. I decided to invent a series of rules and games that would possibly result in more or less a bad painting. By following procedures that would have mistakes and irritating clumsy manners at the heart of them, I would then resist any procedures of improvement and adjustment that would result in a better painting. So by using proper observational drawing as a standard operating procedure that would give less time to dwell too long upon the object. It could be said that this 'dwelling upon act' was delayed for later, during the titling of the work. By curtailing this 'dwelling upon' time at the beginning I would have to take as given and true, the drawings for all their slap dash qualities and potentially risky procedures. The process of painting them has been described in more detail earlier regarding the paint quality I wanted. A quality that would be fully visible and obvious as well as giving the paint and the spectator a joyful engagement with the pleasure of paint by announcing the manipulation of the paint itself and the act of describing things at the same time. This is the haptic space and tacit knowledge that painting inscribes into itself as a mark that carries connotations and

history with it and those who paint spend long periods discovering for themselves that knowledge. There is an aesthetic experience that was necessary for the work to carry and that is to turn on its head that old put down 'I could do that', which is a space that a painting should make available to the spectator even if the spectator had not the time or inclination to do it, it would admit the spectator to existing in the work as both able to follow the paint and follow the descriptions in all its ramifications.

The Gap

The gap then, that opened up between two outlines one physical and one drawn became the start of an intriguing series of dilemmas that the work continued to deploy subsequently. At this stage I saw it as opening up the work perhaps in a more quizzical manner. The possibility of a 'doubt' about the nature of the object as an object or as a painting brought to mind the notion of Cezanne's doubt. Were the gaps and ground colour that are left within Cezanne's paintings not so much hesitancy in the painting process but more of a kind of indeterminacy about what might be a positive or negative mark.^{clxi} It became possible to regard these cut out paintings of mine as potential hybrid objects though physically clumsy in manner but conceptually complex they could become both painting and object. This gap between the two was rich with potential through the introduction of a gap in the work, a space where something didn't quite fit, a gap where the eye and the mind would possibly trip up. It is what T J Clark has noted time and again in Cezanne, Courbet and Pollock of the painting carrying a factual restatement of the ground as both an object and an image. Perhaps it is a quality of over determination that is at work, or a final disengagement of figure from ground.^{clxii} Clark has discussed this fascination and obsession amongst painters extensively and has not come to any single conclusion about this seeming continuum across modernism; perhaps for him it has different shifting meanings and resonances across history.

Where is it...?

In a discussion with Barker, the curator of the gallery, he articulated something in conversation that rang an odd chord at the time. Initially it sounded critical or dismissive, but later upon reflection it became very significant with the production of the work for

the show. “Where does the work start and end”, he said, in the manner of the well-intentioned critic. It struck me as curious and I preferred to think about it at some other time. The objects claim the space around them as the ground for the image which is what precisely? Is the ground the edge of the board or the edge of the painted image? So if the wall surrounding the cut out edge is to become the ground for the painting if only in a nominal sense where might the painting be? Is it only being in a gallery, or is it possibly only being a painting, with image and ground certitude, only when it is exhibited. What at first seemed an interesting and potentially critical line of questioning about the fact of edge and the internal coherence of the image opened up further possibilities and ‘doubts’ about the coherence or not of the object as art-object when it is displayed on the wall. In other words, had the edge of the object dissolved the boundary between art-object and gallery wall by claiming the wall as its ground and incorporating the gallery wall as a part of its fundamental structure and if so had it become a part of the narrative structure its architecture.^{clxiii} When looked at from behind these object/paintings should just be a sign of the object but this wasn’t so, leading one to speculate that the shadow plays an important role in the identity of the work. These questions started to become more concrete in reality as the show was being planned and finalized. It became apparent early on from walking through the gallery space that only one art object could be placed between the repeating rows of pillars down the gallery wall. These pillars set up a kind of narrative rhythm in the space that keeps time to your feet as you walk from one end of the gallery to the other, they beat the time of your body as you pace your way through the space. An instance where the physicality of architecture imposes itself upon the body and begins to react with the subject and how one physically engages with the exhibition space. The space of the gallery at Brighton is not one that is particularly forgiving possessing long vistas of space to traverse, with the gallery wall feeling closer to one side of you as the opposite wall is a large window wall looking out onto a busy city thoroughfare.

The nature of the space was starting to influence not just the overall design and layout of the exhibition as I talked and discussed the nature of the space with others. These discussions are part of normal practice when curating and designing exhibitions. I raise

the term design, in relation to exhibition because I think it raises interesting areas of debate about the relation between fine art practices and design practices both externally regarding the boundary definition of these ‘disciplines’ especially within an art college gallery space where academic definitions are governed by many factors apart from defining factors from industry. It would seem to be inappropriate behaviour within the common sense understanding of exhibiting and display to fully acknowledge that an exhibition has to be a designed object as well as a fine art object. Internally to the practice, there are also reasons to mobilise the term design within the discussions about exhibition layout, in that the works themselves were of everyday objects that had been designed. The term layout, for organising and visualising exhibition design arose from magazine design, it being the last stages of mechanical page designs. This continually evolving situation of responding to new demands that the work marked out was allowing for greater and greater expansiveness in the reach that the work was making into gallery practice and raising interesting uncertainties about the nature of the work itself. A state of uncertainty that was not only exciting, it was creating problems and responses to problems that were novel and bound to lead further on than I had initially thought.

So, where did the object begin and end? The engagement with its environment immediately called into question its own autonomy as a coherent object, the question of autonomy of the modernist object is one that has been well discussed by Greenberg and others.^{clxiv} If the work then was not autonomous in other words it needed the gallery wall as more than just support but also as part of its picturing process might not that then open out on to the issue of contingency. The art object being contingent upon the architecture of the space it is exhibited in, so that it could claim the space of an art object.^{clxv} This is the nature of the porosity of fine art practices, which embrace other areas of the world for its own devices and uses. This reaching out might itself be recognition that the autonomous art object disclaims any notion of audience or spectatorship. At the very moment that the work starts to become possibly unsupported and risk a lack of coherence and boundedness, as an object it adheres itself to the wall like a limpet on a rock. This wall is a gallery wall, a piece of architecture imbued with institutional authority and rectitude.^{clxvi} And so it must project its moral authority with a timelessness and an

eternity of display as O'Doherty notes in his book *Inside the white cube*, "this eternity gives the gallery a limbo-like status; one has to have died already to be there".^{clxvii}

Whiteness

The attention paid to gallery walls by curators, assistants and artists needs more discussion. The quality of whiteness is one that is discussed and touched upon constantly in conversations with curators and gallery assistants. For instance, when the redesign of MOMA New York was complete, the committee's and curators discussed and viewed twenty different types of white paint before one was agreed upon. The colour of the walls for the 'Inappropriate Behaviour' exhibition in Brighton had previously been painted a mushroom grey, one that would take several coats of emulsion to cover. The walls had to be white because the work was mounted away from the walls on battens to give a shadow line. At one point in the studio discussions with the curator there had been talk of painting the walls different colours behind each painting, this was not really practical and would have raised to many design decisions to be made alongside the colours and tones of the paintings themselves. The single most important historical precedent for art gallery design and intervention is the El Lissitzky: Soviet Pavilion of the International Press Exhibition, Cologne, 1928. (TP 17) As Clark has pointed out in *Farewell to an Idea*, it is one of the most important works in Modernist art history. An exhibition unlike any other noted in the history of modernism, where words and objects collide incessantly across every available surface, a concatenation of meanings and forces at play. It is also an exhibition that has rarely been revisited by many artists, although Leon Golub did in the early nineties make an exhibition that came off the walls and consisted of paintings on translucent Perspex against a characteristically deep red ground on the museum walls.^{clxviii}

Rebate

The battening behind the paintings was a solution that had arisen from the previous exhibition 'Wildflower' at Jeffrey Charles gallery. Allowing for a shadow to appear

around the paintings, which had the effect of making the viewers eye mis-register the relation between the painting and the wall, called into question the autonomy of the object because of an unstable register between the object and the wall. This manner of mounting heightened the object nature of the painting making the viewer continuously aware that this was a painted object. The shadow became another part of the 'doubt' affect to unsettle and question what was the work. Ordinarily, one might assume that this shadow would push the object away from the wall and increase its autonomy. Yet, because of the perspectival dynamics from the original drawings this shadow seemed to hover, as both part of the spectacle of looking and as if it were part of the image. This had the unintended consequence of making the wall become a support and ground for the image. Thus, bringing into doubt and question, where did the artwork begin and end as the curator quite rightly pointed out. It also re-affirms a doubt that Hegel had of an art that looks outwards towards its audience, he thought it would become contingent and therefore dubious about its own intentions towards what he considered would be the good.

Titles

One of the most significant factors in the working of this space as a dynamic for creating and unsettling meaning was the use of titling for the work. In most cases with many artists, this takes place almost at the last minute and in a fairly cursory manner, because of the unwritten ideology that words are an unwelcome incursion into the gallery space as they sully the purity of modernist viewing practices. The titles that I was to use were always going to become a significant part of the work. I wanted to employ titling in such way that they over determined meaning to such an extent that meaning started to tip over the edge away from the singular viewing experience, of calm disinterestedness and further afield to events and places that lay beyond the gallery walls. The titles were going to make mute dumb objects speak whether they liked it or not. Take for example the work titled.

*'plastic and paper and water and polymers and phthalates
conference water'*

The plastic bottle of water always struck me as one of the most absurd objects to carry around. Its plastic contributing to vast landfill, a thought that occurred to me when I was at the local council tip and looking at a house sized mountain of pale blue plastic. I discovered the problem of phthalates from reading the Herald Tribune report of research done into the problem of their use within plastics to make them more flexible and how they mimicked oestrogen like hormones with their potential effect on humans. The main purpose of the titling was to reach an equilibrium between text as information about the objects depicted, and the text as sign and as a sign of redundancy, of an over determination that would be almost alienating for the spectator. The text was to be a bridge over the gap between denotation and connotation. One of the lines would allude to a more poetic approach to the language commonly used by artists and the second line would state as obviously as possible and almost exhaustively as possible the ingredients that went into the make up of the object depicted in the painting. The painted object itself was left outside of this description in order to create a doubt as to what was the real, the object depicted or the object as depicted. I wanted to make use of Barthes, whereby, 'large fragments of the denoted discourse can constitute a single unit of the connoted system', and this brings us back to the possibility of an exhaustion of the sign as means of using up all the space of representation.^{clxix}

A strategy to make reading a part of the act of looking at art objects where looking is an engagement with language, be that text or visual object (a painting). The use of text in this case was to escape the use of text as a title, where the title is both a category and cataloguing exercise. For instance, the difficulty experienced by audiences with countless artists to use the most redundant title of them all 'Untitled'. This is a strategy to prioritise the purely visual in the gallery space. Little thought is given to the architectural space as a part text in its own right: a text that is laden with power and history. What is at stake here is a possibility of exhausting some of the well-worn strategies by artists to communicate with the audience, to de-habituate the audience. I want the audience to have a meaningful aesthetic experience, one that involves working with the space physically and through language. In a space that is a university site in a busy city space,

a space that invites what Bourriaud calls the space of conviviality, a gallery space where conversation and debate frequently take place.^{clxx} One event that did take place was a lengthy seminar with a group of Fine Art students. Various thoughts were tested out in front of the work. One conclusion arrived at was that the meanings and interpretations of the work became richer as the discussion carried on, as resistances to having to read while in a gallery space were being negotiated or dropped.

The Interviews on DVD

At the rear of the gallery space there was a large black space that stood alone from the gallery walls. Inside I placed two TV monitors and DV playback machines. These played the two interviews with Leon Golub and Elaine Sturtevant. The interview with Golub was made in his studio in common with many interviews by using a static camera and myself interviewing off screen. The interview with Elaine Sturtevant was made in her office at M.I.T. the DV camera screen was blocked off according to her instructions for no images to be taken. The sound in the installation box was at a sound level that made each of the voices cross each other over, making it fairly difficult to hear all of the interviews in their entirety. This was a deliberate ploy to create a cacophony of sound, a mixing of voices that clamoured for attention. It made it only possible to catch a limited amount of each one or stand much closer to the monitor. The point was to create a system of expectations that was going to be delayed or restricted, the expectations being the need for information. What was being tested out here, was whether it was possible to exhibit material that purported to provide factual reportage of other artists and their own accounts of their labours in their own words, and to do so in a manner that resisted any notion that this idea of the artist's voice was on its own a truth.

Philip Guston: Night Studio

Philip Guston returned to representational painting in 1968, after nearly eighteen years of working through the expressionist house style of Manhattan. The painting that draws me in more than any of the others is one of the earliest of his 'breakthrough' period. The painting call *Shoe*, it is of a shoe lying on its side directed at the audience. (TP 18)

Painted in Guston's new style, the paint kept wet on top of an underpainting of modulated white, wet black oil paint doing the work of signification and the pink ground colour showing through some of the drawing and marking, and consequently becoming a greyish white, with one colour bleeding from through to another. A white edge would occur from a grey mark not fully mixed on the palette, the white squeezing out from the brush pressed hard onto the canvas stretched onto panel. The panel underneath was important at this time; Guston was painting fast and furiously as if time was running out. There was no time to let paint dry and return to it later for a more polished succinct finish. These paintings seem to start and finish in front of you, in an at-once-ness, a painting that you get 'all at once'. The painting is imbued with a nervous energy not a frenetic energy of speed and flights of the mind. *Shoe* has a terrific pathos to it. In its ability convey everything about the 'thinginess' of objects, their traces of the human and yet the anxiety of forever being separated from fellow human warmth.^{clxxi} This time of the late sixties was a time of great anxiety, a kind of anguish and soul-searching anxiety. Guston's dramatising of this anxiety into seeing painting as a courtroom where the jury never left and you couldn't settle out of court. The questioning of the prosecution for ever posing this new barely formed modernity with the awful line of thought, how great is it really compared to the great art of the history of western art. As Guston put it in ever more sombre tones, "you begin to feel, as you go on working, that unless painting proves its right to exist by being critical and self-judging, it has no reason to exist at all – or is not even possible".^{clxxii}

Paw painted at the same time in that same summer of furious activity becomes a portent of things to come. (TP 19) The summer of '68 was hot for a lot of people that year; the Olympics had witnessed the rise of black power with the black-gloved hands of athletes Smith and Carlos raised up to the world on that Olympian podium. It was as if Guston was spewing out all these stored and repressed images that had been squashed inside him throughout his long convoluted years toiling within the Abstract Expressionist orthodoxy of negating all representation, denying his own 'golems'. Each one energising the bare paper surface with its own tensions and dilemmas. Maybe he had finally become whole again, "between what I thought and what I felt". A negation of that 'miserliness' that Guston had come to loathe in the modernist expressionist orthodoxy, the twin headed dogmas of the autonomy of the art object and flatness.^{clxxiii}

The *Paw* painting re-states that moment in nearly all painters' work, the need to state that this is a painting; and this is the hand painting the painting, a moment of facticity. How is it possible to paint a painting of the act of painting, without it becoming a tremendous act of pathos hinting at the finitude of the act and the mortality of the artist? Even though T.J. Clark has returned to this point many times. It is an inexhaustible moment that no painters seem able to avoid, as T.J. Clark has noted when discussing Cezanne.^{clxxiv} A series of reflections and refractions on the act and the moment of painting that becomes absurdist in its attempts to describe to another, what it is like to just be, as an artist in the world, whilst at the same time having to be an artist not of this world. As Guston, put it, '...first, you have to forget your family, then you forget your friends and finally you forget yourself...' and when you have done that you are free to paint. What happens, when you the audience realise that the line in *Paw* is the description of a line in another painting or drawing.^{clxxv} Is *Paw*, painting the painting, but what then is painting *Paw*, other than that great clumsy Guston, possessing a clumsiness that is more akin to the yiddishness of klezmer; who is figure of fun, a great glorious cacophony of infectious jazz rather than a klutz who is stupid.

The hard wooden surface under the canvas for the painting of *Paw* allowed for this skittish of swirling paint across its surface. It needs saying, that painting in this method of

wet on wet is fraught with difficulties, such as keeping colours clean so that they don't all blend into one another, using separate brushes and possibly separate pots for cleaning them helps to keep colours separate. Mistakes when made, are not easily rectified, such as when a line or colour is wrong the ground might have to be re-painted completely which then changes how edges of paint come up against each other as one layer of paint is then likely to be drier. There are quick forays into the surface of the painting, as if the painting will disappear unless it is done as soon as possible. Then almost immediately there is a retraction, a step back or sideways, a lurching dive scrubbing out what went before in such a way that the colour shifts with the under painting mixing into the colour. A line left behind possibly by some black under painting echoes the hands gesture emphasising its movement like the cartoon lines indicating movement and energy. Just when it seems to look hopeless, something happens and this image of a great big mitt holding a short stubby stick, a pencil cut short arrives onto the painting. A stick, this basic tool of mark making, a piece of charcoal perhaps like the ones used for earlier drawings might be the hard edged shadow of a paint brush, but then why so short, it would seem better to say it's a piece of burnt wood or charcoal. This clumsy mitt of a hand could be from a Shelton cartoon, it could be Guston's great galumphing hand, describing a line on a page or should that be inscribing a line on the page. A line that is shifted changed and over painted and finally left to its own devices, left in abeyance somewhere between our world and the world of the painting. There is little attempt to fix the hand up, to make it look better, in fact it would seem that various additions to the image, such as shadow description, hair on the arm have been made with a similar sized brush as the ground painting, so increasing the air of cack-handedness and general wrongness. A wrongness that only comes from knowing full well what to make the right mark or painted gesture is. There are the beginnings in these early paintings of that wilful wrongness that Clark has noted as the practice of negation.^{clxxvi} What comes across from the painting to us is a feeling of Guston playing a high wire act of balancing on that moment in time and space, between good and a total disaster. "Nothing resembles a bad painting more than a masterpiece" as Gauguin put it.^{clxxvii}

The more one looks at this painting of the anxious moment one sees a painting that might come into being or simply fall apart under the weight of its own contradictions. A dilemma that Guston puts in front of us, what must it be like to paint a painting not knowing what it is. To forget the act of painting, in order to paint the painting without the act. To paint the mark not knowing that it was neither great nor a failure, because to paint in any other way would judge the painting before the painting had painted itself. After David painting was condemned and judged by how much it took on board its responsibilities as an act and depiction of its time.

In later conversations, Guston spoke of the 'pain' and 'anguish' as being a redemptive characteristic of the painting, in which the spectator would feel a positive charge from the work. These still lifes by Guston return us to the objects that surround us in our everyday lives. For Guston, "it was a feeling of relief and a strong need to cope with tangible things." Although in later painting it certainly doesn't feel like that calmness is apparent under the relentless glare of the sixty-watt light bulb in Guston's studio, with the clock ticking away and it's always ten past one in the morning. Maybe, after the storm of those turbulent sixties years when something had to be given up, when he 'was free' finally, as de Kooning put it to him once. After the storms, the rages, the broken dreams, the tug of war between making work that looked too much like art, and the substance of paint, it was the objects that won. Maybe the objects allowed him to have his moment of reflective calm as the paintings kept appearing before him less forced and less hesitant than the so called 'abstract impressionist' years. The paw that attended upon every movement in the paintings, to see what happens as events unfold across the surface of the drawing.

Two years previously he had been instrumental in the setting up of the New York Studio School for Painting and Drawing. It is notable that drawing is mentioned in its title, considering the recent accepted normative practice of surrounding the category of art making with an institutional definition and not a medium specific definition. So that the educational institution is erecting a boundary around the entire area of Fine Art as opposed to the Applied Arts.

Guston was later to fall out with critics who accused him of 'clumsiness' in his figuration. There is no clumsiness in a Guston painting, the interplay between the ground and the imagery, the placing of objects across the implied space, that objects open up is of a level of intuitive dexterity far beyond clumsiness. There is a however, a quality of good enoughness, a term first put forward by Jasper Johns to describe something inherently different about art practices from design practices. Good-enoughness being the quality of sufficiency without redundancy or over determination does allow for gaucheness and possible cack-handedness. In the manner of Jasper Johns, *Flag*, painting which as Johns drily noted is a rotten painting, physically rotten because it is encaustic painted over enamel house paint. (TP 20) So, inside the space of competency there lies the trope of painting being only just good enough.

Neil Jenney, the rise of the term ‘bad painting’.

In New York Neil Jenney's bad paintings made in the years prior to 1978 using his finger very much like children's paintings on walls, have something very scatological about them, and yet they retain an austerity borrowed from conceptual art: a definition of a category and then stating it literally as a language act, what might be called a metonymic act? An artist stands in front of a piece of prepared MDF and painting with his finger fills in various shapes that become a depiction of a girl and a vase. The somatic connection to the body of the artist is established and sustained for a series of paintings lasting three years. These paintings were the progenitors of the term ‘bad painting’ which first came into being through a review in *Artforum* magazine. The uses of the quotes around the words are resonant of the time when everything ironic had to be given a large indication of its wit because not everyone was in on the mordant joke.^{clxxviii} *Girl and vase*, is a painting on board with a paint quality closer to that of ink than usual thick opaque paint.^{clxxix}

(TP 21) The white ground showing through emphasising both the support and structural marking of the painting. This could be the first time where one could begin to discuss the use of haptic space rather than perspectival space where the ground has a more uncertain arbitrariness unlike Guston's that possesses a stylistic continuum and certitude.

The reviewer of the exhibition, ‘Bad Painting’ curated by Marcia Tucker at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, NYC, noted that these wiped brushstrokes around such crude outlines were ‘full of dishonest intention’.^{clxxx} It was Marcia Tucker who gave the name to the exhibition. It's hard to see how they could be construed as dishonest; nothing strikes us as more honest than the scatology of a finger dipped in paint. The marks are a sort of restating of the artist's physicality that interrupts the representational stability the image. This ultimately could open up the possibility of discussing the de-centred unity of art object/artist/viewer. These exist in greater contingency to each other and are therefore

highly unstable as fixed entities. This exhibition inaugurated 'bad painting' upon an unsuspecting public with the call to liberation from old structures and furthermore from old habits of 'progress'. Even though, there is a desperate over-stated quality to everything in paintings by Jenney, at the time Jenney is noted as saying that 'art is a social science' as if yearning for an audience who could start to understand, putting forward the possibility in art that it can re-adjust culture.^{clxxxii} In 1975, Jenney had been more explicit about the problems confronting painting then, "I think every realist painting that's ever been successful has resolved all the problems that every abstract artist must resolve in order to make a successful work."^{clxxxii} I think it has more expressive potential because after you have resolved the essential harmonies that you're dealing with, then you have precise relationships identity-wise rather than spatially...I think you have to resolve all abstract difficulties in every realist painting, and then you have to deal on another level...meaning the significance of the items." Deborah Perlberg's review of The Bad Painting show, tells it in her own words from *Artforum* 1978.^{clxxxiii}

"Luckiest of all are those who walked into the show, saw a lot of bad paintings and left. They escaped the labyrinth of contradictory definitions now plaguing more obsessive viewers. Most likely there's no pat answer to any of the ...questions, but there remains the question of whether or not the question itself is worth asking...At some point a decision has to be made, and if it is made on the basis of academic competence then works by true 'primitives' will be lost."

The reviewer of *Artforum* (1978) went on with some relish to point out that Jenney's painting were 'a smug joke', capable of 'evil manipulation'. Jenney has always appeared to this viewer as a highly moral artist, behaving with a degree of rectitude not commensurable with word evil. However, there was some accuracy in the observation that the painting was 'distanced and satiric'. The problem that occurred with the exhibition is one that runs through discourses upon badness in art. Should it be about a kind of category testing debate that understands academic good taste or should it be about making psychological responses to urban realities that might or might not be 'primitive'? The reviewer seems unable to help further the debate or understand what might be at

stake if one embraced both positions. There are other issues of style raised in the review which again point to a real difficulty in locating the argument of the exhibition, although the New Museum is given faint praise from the reviewer for doing what an alternative museum should be doing which is questioning accepted and commonsensical practices in culture.

Judging by the rest of the reviews written by the reviewer, she seems inclined to only value clear academic definitions of territories, anything else that is equivocal, comes in for a dry dismissal. Nevertheless, the review does signal some difficulties with both the term and what one puts into the category. What seems notable is how much it is deemed necessary to place quotes around words that are contestable or ironic but need to be placed just beyond contest. Such as 'good taste' or 'primitive'.

At this point in time in 1978, the overused term of irony in art practice had yet to make itself so insistent, so the term 'bad painting' in quotes seems to sit curiously within the language. One remembers with embarrassment the amount of hand gestures that were deemed necessary to indicate within everyday conversation that one was being ironic. That same year Jenney was to be in another more critically well-received exhibition at the Whitney Museum, titled 'New Image Painting'. Although the term, bad painting, now has a currency of minor repute and interest and has continuously surfaced throughout the past thirty years. It seems to occur whenever there are issues of skill in relation to painting that casts doubt about its status as a transactional object within the market place. At the present time, where the work place is continuously being de-skilled it seems apposite to see that skill is continuously being reified in the critical reception and consumption of painting. Of course, in many respects Jenney's later paintings bear witness to this in the their use of smooth realist strategies of high gloss finish and eradication of brushstroke, and could mistakenly be seen as a justification of the criticism of the paintings of 1978.^{clxxxiv} Jenney, terms these paintings "as the pinnacle of realist expressionism...the signs and symbols in my work are meant as a reminder for us to appreciate life and the beauty of the world". In a later interview in *ZG* magazine of 1981, the unnamed interviewer tries to press Jenney on what his notions of realism might be, and enquires

into his reputation for being difficult and so acquiring the misnomer of eccentricity.^{clxxxv} Jenney's notions of Eighties 'wholesomeness' were betrayed by that decade's political nastiness and the rise of neo-conservatism. Painting at that time was not as life enhancing as Jenney wished it to be. His embrace of popular culture is well known as well as his espousal of Pop art as the most significant art of the era. The *Gold Marilyn Monroe* by Warhol exposes the vulgarity of US culture at its best, one that reflects society. In the same *ZG* interview Jenney reveals that he edited a baseball magazine that doesn't make money, therefore art could be seen as supporting popular culture. His ideas of breathing and posture both adapted from sport technique and Japanese children's educational reading material would in some part correspond to the processes of touch and control that are present in both his early and later paintings. This again might be an early sighting of a somatic aesthetics at play in a painting practice - there is an ethics of health unexplored in his work.^{clxxxvi}

Bad boy, Kippenberger

Martin go stand in the corner, shame on you is the title of one of the more potent sculptures by Kippenberger. (TP 22) Originally this admonishment took place in a review of Kippenberger, accusing him of potential neo-Nazi sympathies in his work. He made numerous versions of this sculpture in 1989, the ones exhibited at the Tate Modern exhibition of 2006, numbers 30,33,37 each identically posed, presumably cast from the same model but each one clothed slightly differently and the figure painted in a different colour. All of them placed deep into the corner of the room making it near impossible to see any expression on their visage.^{clxxxvii} All have the same gesture of contrition and submission.

Friends and colleagues

Kippenberger's prolific output in the space of just over twenty odd years is belied by the fact that a high proportion of the works were made by others, who Kippenberger preferred to nominate as colleagues rather than as friends. A sharp delineation is drawn between the open ended allusive approach to making art that opens out onto social space, looking for instance at *The Happy End of Franz Kafka's 'Amerika'*: a grouping and cataloguing of objects of a different order to most installations of museum like qualities that betray a sustained dwelling upon their nature. (TP 23) Kippenberger's *The Happy End of Kafka's 'Amerika'* set out on a green five a side football grid, a series of tables chairs and desks as if for the infamous job interview that takes place in the book by Kafka. The tables and chairs coming from various sources and residues of earlier installations all placed in a large grid like some vast social security or immigration hall where prospective clients are interviewed to ascertain status and viability. Kippenberger

had never read the book himself, being content to allow others to read it for him and supply the narrative, the main part of which is the surreal scene of the circus, Theatre of Oklahoma, where “everyone is welcome”, the cry that rings out. It is this call towards basic acts of human friendship that Kippenberger points towards. These basic minimums of social interaction were for Kippenberger a sign of happy outcomes, of futures that are neither abject nor tawdry. There is in the installation a cast of many characters and artists participating, from Tony Oursler to Franz West, with references to Kiefer amongst others. A book exhibited written with all the mock seriousness of Kiefer tells the story of Kippenberger’s ‘job interview’ which was for the position of ‘job interviewer’ which of course he gets, as do all the other interviewees obtain their ‘jobs’ too, at all the other desks and chairs.

You can’t play stupid if you are stupid

The observation of objects, the range of objects in their stylistic variety, some made especially for Kippenberger by other artists such as Franz West amongst others, and suggests a more hopeful commitment to human interaction and engagement. In ‘The Happy End of Kafka’s Amerika’, his later large-scale work, there are many propositions lying within it of considerations of social interaction and conversation as a form of art practice.^{clxxxviii} All of his work is an engagement with ‘feel good’ moments, even though there are in many parts of the Kippenberger practice, a trace of carelessness that could be seen as contrived. If it were just that, it might be called ‘bad’ art of the sort that the expressionisms of Baselitz and the other Berlin artists worked at more studiously. In a 1991 interview with Kippenberger, his definitions of good and bad become more clearly stated, “An artist has to be good. Lupertz and Knoebel are always perfect. That’s what’s so awful. When everything is good, none of it counts. God, in the beginning, wanted that a bit differently. Both good and bad were supposed to exist. But contrasts and dialectics have disappeared in art.” But tellingly, there lies in there a kernel of truth which is as Kippenberger said, that you can’t do kitsch without getting your hands dirty, and more importantly you get stuck in it, entranced by it, and so lose that all important ‘critical distance’ that so many artists of Kippenberger’s background, such as Albert Oehlen and Georg Herold need so much.^{clxxxix}

Bad boy K

The naming and shaming of Kippenberger by the art critic, the delinquent behaviour of his youth, the being sent away, the never finishing school... and on it went. The Kippenberger anecdote is all of a part of the self mythologizing that Kippenberger adopted early on partly as a response and riposte to Beuys and partly to self ironise his own working project through the world.^{cxv} Indeed there are those who have seen his practice as if it were a form of 'bad-joke'. The oblique humour, the riffing with various art forms, the rapping with common sense statements of the everyday, the self-glorifying grandiosity that often takes the place of serious business in art discourse, all this combines to destabilise the viewer around how they are meant to respond.^{cxvi} Looking at the various themes and groups of paintings is not going to tell one a huge amount of what the work is about because, large parts of it were done collectively, consequently what is being looked at is sometimes the residue of what must have seemed like a funny idea at the time. Paintings that start out with an air of promise and humour, such as the Economic paintings tend to die out quite quickly. *'Profit Peaks with Economic Values by Joseph Beuys I'*, has a jaunty carelessness about it. (TP 24) One has a feeling it might even be about the size of one of Beuys' early blackboards. The colours are bit sad and abject. On most of them, there is feeling of hope masking an underlying despairing quality. Various lines rise from left to right or not as the case maybe, some official drafts and documents are attached to some of the paintings they hint at the absurd pomposity granted to the Beuys' blackboards, but not much more.^{cxvii} There is a television type frame painted or rollered around the paintings giving it the look of something drearily educative from daytime TV. The ground is split at an angle from top to bottom. Various documents and products adhere to the surface as if clinging to the last vestiges of reality, before being subsumed into the painted surface and the overall compositional devices that strive for a moment of artlessness that might escape 'always-doing-the-same-thing'. They are paintings with a joke, a one liner almost, except the punch line doesn't arrive on time.^{cxviii} Witz, was Kippenberger's device for making a painting, if every art object has to some degree a device, a technological tool, such as a brush, a room, or a surface, then the Kippenberger device is the witz, the joke. Conveying a sense of communality and

connection, transference of meanings across the gap between object and audience. The painting acts as ‘partial enunciator’ across the surface, a recycling of data, a borrowing of old tired forms of expressionism, a claim to edify - a claim that is never sustained.

Leon Golub, the interview

Manhattan, NYC, 2002. (See Appendix 1)

The interview with Leon Golub was conducted in his studio as I had requested, the reason being a desire to conduct discussions with artists at the site of production, in the workplace. I had first encountered Golub’s work in the eighties either by seeing it at the Saatchi Gallery or another exhibition in London. A mutual friend, the editor of the then highly influential magazine *ZG* (*zeitgeist*) had given me an introduction to Leon Golub. I had met Leon Golub on each subsequent visit I made to Manhattan in the Eighties. The sales to Saatchi had boosted his visibility a lot and he was in those days always working in his studio, usually in his shorts because of the Manhattan summer heat. Nancy Spero, Golub’s partner was also always in the studio, one rarely saw them apart. The conversations they had tended to sprawl across each other and across the loft apartment which was itself a very porous kind of space where voices carried across it. I had prepared a list of about twenty questions to ask, this was to be my first recorded interview. I tried to do as little talking or interjecting as possible. Whether I could allow for silence to become useful in such a way in this interview I did not know. (TP 25)

What I most wanted to capture was the artist speaking from the site of production, as an embodied cultural producer. I was not interested in the interview as some form of biographical story telling. Though, this would inevitably play a part in the interview, and would be something I knew I would want to steer away from. It was interesting to note in re-reading the interview afterwards how at a certain point there comes a moment of story telling on Leon’s part that was difficult to pull away from, when I had probed him about

his use of male violence in his paintings. It was hard to tell whether the act of story telling was a ruse or guise on his part, learnt over many years of talking to artists and interviewers as well as years of teaching. The interview went off at a tangent, maybe because I was trying too hard to get something of an internal voice from him.

One mistake I had made was that the camera was set up as the base of a triangle with Leon Golub at the apex with a painting of his on the wall behind him although the framing was slightly out as he spoke out of frame rather than across the picture space. The painting behind him on the wall being based on the Prometheus myth whose entrails are continuously being eaten out by a large eagle every day, as punishment for some terrible misdemeanour against Zeus. Don Kuspit in his book *'Leon Golub, existentialist/activist painter'* has written at length about the lack of harmony in Golub's painting as carrying psychological weight as well just formal signification.^{cxciv} The painting behind Leon Golub making clear reference the present conditions of the Iraq war, which had just started, and the daily newspapers were full of US government rhetoric about the justifications for the war. What was uppermost in my mind at the time was the use of language by state formations and bureaucratic apparatus, which was distorting out of all shape any condition of truth especially in the reporting of the Iraq war in the media. This, it seemed to me was one of the most pernicious effects of the war alongside the daily suffering of innocent individuals. It has done nothing except increase the general effect of cynicism in public speech by politicians and all those from the political nomenclature. I asked at the end of the interview my fundamental question, that I wanted to put to all interviewees, which was, 'what was the art practice testing out'. Leon's answer was poignant and resonant with a certain air of despair, "it's testing out who we are as species, where are we heading to..."^{cxcv}

Central Reservation.

(See Appendix 2).

Alongside the production of the visual work and the texts for the walls there was a short story, *Central Reservation*, produced during my research into hybrid forms of artist's activity. It was originally conceived as an essay for a group exhibition to be made with three or four other artists, as a continuation of the Red Snow exhibition. It is a hybrid form lying somewhere between a short story and a polemic. An essay that attempts to combine differing and conflicting voices that surrounds us. The story is constructed as a journey narrated in a kind of French nouvelle vague manner, as an interior monologue journeying through time and space down a motorway towards a future that becomes increasingly unstable. The trajectory of the journey takes the narrator closer to trades and transactions that are risky and deadly such heroin trading and prostitution. The text is interspersed with quotes from newspaper journals connecting to oil trades and heroin production. What is being put into practice in the essay *Central Reservation* is the possibility for making an art that can utter some kind of ongoing truth about the world and events both ecological and political that are taking place daily. The issue at stake as in many art practices that make manifest thought and action simultaneously, is what is the 'real'? The objects mentioned and dwelt upon in the narrative also figure prominently in much of my visual practice, for example, a plastic bottle of water, a cigarette butt, poppy flowers and the trade in heroin.

Though category definition is no longer sufficient for understanding art practice the paradox still exists that to have differing and hybrid practices brought together, an

awareness of category is necessary. The question still stands if the work of art is a work of a contingent nature, one that is attendant upon many forms of experience, to engage with the world, would it not need the qualities of category definition in order for it to separate itself off, and become a heightened experience? One earlier precedent for making the written piece was an account of Robert Smithson's 'The Monuments of Passaic'.^{cxcvi} The underlying animus that inspired the writing of my essay was the deathly quietness of many artists exhibiting in London from the nineties onwards with an aversion to present-day issues and seeming to prefer an involvement with the fantastical and the faerie-like in art practices. It was a silence that reminded me of Golub's phrase from one of his late paintings 'We can't hear you'.^{cxcvii} The answer echoing across the wasteland of art reviewing, being - it's because we don't want to listen to you. An act of revenge against the artist that has been taking place since the sixties, when artists had the temerity and audacity to start taking control of the discussion and formation of art for themselves. Such artists as Leon Golub and Nancy Spero were doughty opponents of the silencing of artists.

Desertflower

The final part of my dissertation and submission is the piece *Desertflower*. The title originates from a story that came about in South Africa. When rubbish bags blew off the rubbish dumps at the edge of cities and flew away into the desert they were caught in tree branches and so were called ‘desert flowers’. They do, however, have a terrible effect upon large mammals in the UAE desert that eat them and then suffer starvation and death. Those were not the only the reasons why I chose the plastic bag, there were other reasons such as it is ubiquitous all across the UK. The plastic bag is given away with each purchase every day at most corner shops. I have to insist that I have my bag to take shopping away with me. It comes in a variety of weights and designs the most common being the pink or blue striped, but there are the black and the blue sort as well. The black bag is the same weight as the other and favoured by those buying alcohol from small shops after closing time. i.e. ‘Black bag it mate’. (See CD folder 5.Desertflower)

I drew the bag from observation in my studio and have produced it in a variety of media and ways. It is currently part in a curated exhibition at Ruskin Gallery, Cambridge School of Art, in October 2011.^{cxviii} The *Desertflower* piece arose out of making some woodcut prints on a small scale. These were not particularly successful as I was new to the medium and the drawing and linear work was not to my liking. The drawn and cut lines being too crude and not making use enough of the original drawing. The drawings were made fast and sketchy with plenty of opportunity for not getting things absolutely right and perfect. They were the glance at the object not the over bearing studied stare at the object. Bryson in *Vision and Painting*, points out that the glance, “takes on the role of saboteur, trickster...The flickering, ungovernable mobility of the Glance strikes at the

very roots of rationalism for what it can never apprehend is the geometric order which is rationalism's true ensign... since all it can take in is the fragment."^{cxcix} There are echoes of Baudelaire's poetic vision for modernism that would capture the eternal amidst the transient everyday life of the city. The show that the work is being exhibited in is called *Everyday* and is curated by myself. It includes a number of artists who are dealing with or explicitly or implicitly with the ordinary, the everyday and the banal.

The piece *Desertflower*, is arranged in the form of six petals, looking like a flower, with each wooden painting being bolted to the other one in alternate layers. The under-painting is in the same colour blue of the bag, and is made from observation of the bag, but only using one colour plus the effect of show through from the bright white priming ground underneath. There are differences with each painting and differences between the over drawing/painting as to how faithfully the painted lines copy the original drawing. It is as well as being a composite painting made up of six parts. The parts of the painting are cut out from their original ground and it floats on the wall, using the wall as part of its support and ground. It is very contingent upon the colour and texture of the ground that pre-exists the painting, as well as, the structure and architecture that it will sit within. It goes some way to embracing those parts of Neil Jenney's 'bad painting' works where the paint slipped across the hard surface betraying its role and existence. But, what the painting does not do is batten down the relation of title to painting, or make the use of language redundant or as linguistic irritant in the manner which Jenney does, purposefully so. The use of language with my work has always been to make it more allusive or at least to make it become another 'signifier in the chain of signifiers'.

What is gained by looking closely at this seemingly banal painting is an awareness and experience of the paint slipping across the smooth surface of the wood. The materiality of the paint is of paramount importance; the facts of the painting, a painting of a plastic bag are made absolutely abundant and clear. What is made as clear as possible for the viewer is the evidence of the paint. The act of painting is left available for the viewer to enjoin with through their perception of paint moving across the surface. The perception of paint held in its mark and gesture is a physical somatic memory of what it would have been like for the viewer to have made that mark. A memory that stretches back not just into the recent past of the painting in front of the viewer but also back into the history of painting

and the history of our culture. A historical awareness that opens out onto reflection and recollection, an 'explicit or reflective somatic consciousness' that Merleau-Ponty pointed to.

If somatic aesthetics is to be a critical use of experience and its engagement with the body, then the dysfunctional which has been part of modernism's major understandings about itself must be admissible to this field, in order for pragmatism to have a critical purchase upon the objects it chooses to discuss. Day in day out we are continually being burdened with yet more instrumentalist and brutalising strictures about our imperfect, obese, anorexic, bulimic, 'neuroticised' bodies. In short, we are just not perfect enough, not symmetrical enough, and not beautiful enough.

An 'aesthetics of negativity' would be the corrective to negatively learnt habits about the perfect body. What could be called de-habituating. T.J.Clark's list that spells out modernism's processes of progress, illuminates this 'aesthetics of negativity', giving us a series of resistances and retractions in the history of art to what would appear to be the normative and prevailing orthodoxies of art.^{cc} At the limit of painting, at the liminal edges of its practices, ways of behaving and proceeding would become unlearnt in order for new discoveries to be made or old habits to become unlearnt. Art like philosophy performs a reflective and ameliorative function upon its culture. In much the same way, we need to have representations of the body given back to ourselves in order for us to correct bad habits formed deep in our somatic selves. One of the wider aims of Shusterman is to open out the field of aesthetics through the philosophy of pragmatism, which allows for the foundation of aesthetics based upon experience and a recovery 'of the continuity of aesthetic experience with the normal processes of living.'^{cci} This continuity theory of Dewey's has certain problems such as how do we identify with certainty and expertise what is an art experience that steps outside of or separates itself off from the flux of everyday life? And is that experience good enough to give the quality and deep cognitive pleasures of evaluation that analytical aesthetics can lay great claim for? What cannot be denied is that it has tremendous possibilities regarding the institutionalised separation of knowledge between the arts and the crafts, which for the

large part are separated through institutionalised behaviours in academia. There are wide ranging and democratising possibilities of the pragmatist and somatic aesthetics claim for re-gaining the everyday as a part of its field of discourse.

Bad painting, aleatory art practices, have this vitality at its heart. It is a tacit knowledge working at its most provocative in painting, where it is neither representation that is the art product, nor faithful mimesis, but the experience of working and manipulating paint, what Clark calls 'the serious business of picture making'. A cultural process that stretches from the studio as the site of production to the public site of display and consumption that is the gallery or any other such site. One could, like Kippenberger, dream it all up in the bar with colleagues, or like Jenney you smear it on the board with your finger, or like Guston you drink and paint, or like Golub you keep witness to the continuing ongoing cruelties of late capitalism, what is not being performed by bad painting is a faithful and reverent reflection of culture back to itself. What is important to acts of bad painting is the physical act of making the painting as a somatic act of thinking taking place upon the surface of the painting. One that is an ongoing reflection upon the culture we inhabit. A reflection upon its object that is a formation of knowledge. There is a body making a painting, not merely a disembodied and disinterested mind. There is a body that is at the centre of the working process. Neil Jenney in a 1981 interview said very pertinently. "Baseball has the same principle - learn to stand right, breath right and sure it's life-enhancing."^{ccii} If, the work of art, being the synthesis of the artist's cognitive and somatic processes with the painting, then the resulting object and its relationship to the viewer forms an asymmetrical and dynamic space of communication and communion with the viewer. It is the body that locates the 'work of art' in painting as an immediate and deep phenomenological experience. It is within the body that locates the work of art that the deep rewards of recollection and reflection begin to resonate and give a radical understanding of the work of art. There is the work of art and there is the art product. The work of art is the art product acting in its open space of exhibition and display. A body, a being, has to experience that art product in order to transform it into a work of art.

In the process of painting *Desertflower* I found that body posture and alignment were difficult and problematic. The ground colour for the plastic bag was made from direct observation of the bag in my studio, and was made using acrylic paint with gel mediums to retain body and translucency at the same time. The paint was applied following both the drawing and a plastic bag to study at the same time. I also painted each one without reference to the previous one so that no improvement or learnt experience would oversophisticate the process of painting and that each one would retain the same level of spontaneity. The cross-hatching, which comes from the original drawing, would all be painted the same but again not in an identical manner as if from a print. The process of painting from a drawing is such that it allows, what was once a drawn mark to be re-inhabited by the material of paint. It also introduces a level of difficulty and incompetence to the mark because paint does not move and flow in the same way that the drawn mark does. Standing in front of the painting with the overhead projector shining the drawing onto the painting means that I have to stand to one side of the projection and also work from top left to bottom right due to right handed-ness and not wishing to smudge paint under my hand. There is a further level of difficulty in that the projection is shining onto a blue textured ground surface that absorbs a fair amount of light making the perception of the drawn mark problematic. Other difficulties include maintaining a consistent fluidity to the paint, moving from side to side to see projected mark in relation to ground. After several hours the body stiffens against unnatural or unfamiliar postures. I have occasionally attended Feldenkrais lessons and found that the teaching is directed towards areas of the middle back where tension is locked and breathing becomes more laboured or shallower. The exercises that Shusterman an ardent follower of Feldenkrais exercises would say are ameliorative and aim to restore the body to a better relationship to itself. Through learning by movement but not vigorous exercise where in the body lies tension this cognitive awareness allows tensions and distortions to become unlocked through movement and reflective thought.

If we are to fully recognise these dynamics, it would seem perfectly clear and logical to say that the experiential approach to art and aesthetics should embody and describe the

distorting forces of our culture that are inflicted upon the human organism and that would have to play a part in its potential critique as well as its own organic unity.

I have demonstrated within my own research how the mark could be the embodiment of the mind and the body acting to dis-habituate the viewer in their perceptions of the ordinary and every day things that surround us. The painted mark also carries with it a history of our culture of making marks similar to other marks like them such that we can confidently describe them as being an artwork. In that history lies the kernel of a historical awareness, one that can be the space of reflection and re-capture of radical thought, without the need for Kantian formulations of the sublime.

This thesis is a diversely layered contribution to the developing field of somatic aesthetics, through a combination of differing writings that give an account of embodied philosophies, a research through my own practice of painting and exhibiting, the exploration of chance-led painting practices by other artists, and a piece of creative writing. The thesis has tried to suggest the multivalent qualities available to a provocatively conceived painting practice today. My thesis suggests a greater meaning and depth to the various modalities of writing. It offers a complementary and wider recognition to the value of reflective processes within painting practices today.

Whereas Shusterman makes a large claim for pragmatism and somatic philosophy to offer a third way between European philosophy and analytical aesthetics, but the body is spoken of as neutral, non gendered, a body that seeks harmony with itself, pragmatist somatic philosophy perhaps does not go far enough in tackling particular problems of institutional definitions because it still relies upon normative means of display and institutional structures to allow them to appear in our culture. One argument that could be put to pragmatist and somatic aesthetics is that its affirmative attitude to what is produced plays down the production of critical awareness of what is being produced and where it is seen. The 'artworld' is largely left to its own self-definitions of what is good and therefore by definition what is visible. We could learn further from negative sensations of disaffirmation, as much about painting and also about our own culture.

To summarise: incompetence and gaucheness within the conscious act of making a painting badly can be seen as a necessary, provocative corrective to the old normalising habits of aesthetic evaluation that have become acceptable disembodied orthodoxies within institutions.

Endnotes

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- ⁱⁱ Shusterman, Richard, *Pragmatist Aesthetics, Living Beauty, Re-thinking art*, Blackwell Publishers, 1992.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Francis Francina, Ed., *Pollock and After*, Harper and Row, 1985, T. J. Clark: Clement Greenberg's Theory of Art. P55
- ^{iv} Bourriaud, Nicolas, *Relational Aesthetics*, les presses de reel, 2002.
- ^v Russell, Bertrand, *History of Western Philosophy*, 1975, Allen & Unwin. P703
- ^{vi} Danto, Arthur, *The Abuse of Beauty*, Open Court publishers, 2003.
- ^{vii} Dewey, John, *Art as Experience*, Perigree publishers, 2005 (1934). P 3
- ^{viii} Shusterman, Richard, *Aesthetic Experience: From Analysis to Eros*, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 64:2 Spring 2006. P217 – 229.
- ^{ix} Shusterman, Richard, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, Blackwell Publishers, 1992. P 124.
- ^x Lyotard, Jean-Francois, *The Postmodern Condition*, Manchester University Press, 1984. P75
- ^{xi} Boulton. J.T, *Introduction to A philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. Edmund Burke, RKP, 1958.
- ^{xii} Lyotard, J-F. *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg, Stanford University Press, 1994.
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- ^{xiv} Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Will to Power*, Book II, note 314, p.173, as quoted by David M Levin, *The body's recollection of Being*, RKP, 1985.
- ^{xv} Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Will to Power*, Book III, note 532, p.289, as quoted by David M Levin.
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- ^{xvii} Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, *Phenomenology of perception*, Routledge Keegan Paul, 1962. P 351
- ^{xviii} Levin, David Michael, *The body's recollection of Being*, RKP, 1985. P 255
- ^{xix} Dewey, John, *Art as experience*, Perigree, (1934), 2005. P 5
- ^{xx} Johnson, Galen, *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, Northwestern University Press, 1993. *Indirect language and the voices of silence*, Merleau-Ponty. P104
- ^{xxi} Shusterman, Richard, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, Blackwell Publishers, 1992. P 17. "A work of art is simply any artifact conferred the status of art by an institution dubbed "the artworld", whether or not that artifact is worthy of being so treated".
- ^{xxii} Mayer, Musa. *Night Studio*, Da Capo, 1997. P141.
- ^{xxiii} Hustvedt, Siri, *Mysteries of the rectangle*, Princeton Architectural Press 2005. P57
- ^{xxiv} Rosenberg, Harold, *The Anxious Object*, Horizon Press, 1964. P 263.
- ^{xxv} Rosenberg, Harold, *The Anxious Object*, Horizon Press, 1964. P 263.
- ^{xxvi} Perlberg, Deborah, *Bad Painting*, review *Artforum*, v16, April 1978. P68.
- ^{xxvii} Johnson Galen, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, Northwestern University Press, as quoted by Marjorie Grene. P216
- ^{xxviii} Burke, Edmund, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the origin of our ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, RKP, 1985, p 26.

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- xxix Ibid, p38.
- xxx Ibid, p40-41.
- xxxI Ibid, p 41.
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- xxxvii Lyotard, J-F, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, University Of Minnesota Press, 1984. Introduction.
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- lxi Ibid, see Editors introduction, p.lxxv.
- l Shusterman, R, *ibid*.
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- liii Shusterman, Richard. *The Silent, Limping Body of Philosophy*. *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty*. Eds. Taylor Carman and Mark B. N. Hansen. Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- liv Shusterman, Richard, *Ibid*. P 152.
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- lvi Johnson, Galen, *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, Northwestern University Press, 1993. P75
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- lx Johnson, Galen, *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, Northwestern University Press, 1993. P 65.
- lxi Carman, Taylor, *Merleau-Ponty*, Routledge, 2008, p105.
- lxii Johnson, Galen, *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, Northwestern University Press, 1993. P 124
- lxiii Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, *Sense and Non-Sense*, Northwestern University Press, 1991, P68.
- lxiv Johnson, Galen, *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, Northwestern University Press, 1993. P 124
- lxv Johnson, Galen, *Ibid*. P 127
- lxvi Shusterman, Richard, *The Silent limping body of Philosophy*, *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty*. Eds. Taylor Carman and Mark B. N. Hansen. Cambridge University Press, 2004. P154
- lxvii Foucault, Michel, *Foucault Live*, Ed, Sylvere Lotringer, *Semiotext(e)*, 1996, P212
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- lxix Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, *Phenomenology of perception*, Routledge classics, 2002. P 91.
- lxx Johnson, Galen, *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, Northwestern University Press, 1993. *Indirect language and the voices of silence*, Merleau-Ponty. P 91
- lxxi Johnson, Galen, *Ibid*. P 91
- lxxii Ibid, P65
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- ^{lxxiv} Ibid, P104
- ^{lxxv} Ibid, P96
- ^{lxxvi} Ibid, P124
- ^{lxxvii} Ibid, P136
- ^{lxxviii} Ibid, P103
- ^{lxxix} Ibid, P104
- ^{lxxx} Dewey, John, *Art as experience*, Perigree, USA, first pub.1938, reprinted 2005. P 2.
- ^{lxxxI} Johnson, Galen, Ed., *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, Northwestern University Press, USA, 1993.
- P 334. The essay cited by Lyotard ‘Philosophy and Painting in the Age of their Experimentation: Contribution to an Idea of Postmodernity’, p323 – 335 is used throughout this chapter.
- ^{lxxxii} Adorno, Theodor, *Aesthetic Theory*, Klinksiek, Paris, 1970. Cited by Lyotard in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, Northwestern University Press, 1993. P 334. It is extremely difficult to quote and lift from Adorno, in that *Aesthetic Theory*, is directed away from the reader to the thing-in-itself as the translator Hullot-Kentor notes, “just opening to any page...one sees that the book is visibly antagonistic...(to its reader). My italics.
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- ^{lxxxiv} Johnson, Galen, Ed, *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, Northwestern University Press, USA, 1993.
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- ^{lxxxv} Johnson, Galen, Ibid. P335.
- ^{lxxxvi} Adorno, Theodor, *Aesthetic Theory*, Continuum, UK, 2004. P54.
- ^{lxxxvii} Ibid. P 51
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- ^{lxxxix} Dewey, John, *Art as Experience*, Perigee, USA, 2005. P6
- ^{xc} Adorno, Theodor, *Aesthetic experience*, Continuum, UK, 2004. PP 296-7. It is extremely difficult to quote Adorno not just, because the style of language is so complex but also because the argument and line of thought is written in such a self-reflexive manner that only a long passage will do.
- ^{xci} Dewey, John, *Art as Experience*, Perigee, USA, 2005. P288
- ^{xcii} Dewey, John, Ibid. P5
- ^{xciii} Dewey, John, Ibid. P14
- ^{xciv} Adorno, Theodor, *Aesthetic Theory*, Continuum, UK, 2004. P297
- ^{xcv} Dewey, John, *Art as Experience*, Perigee, USA, 2005. P13
- ^{xcvi} Dewey, John, Ibid. P36
- ^{xcvii} Dewey, John, Ibid. P322
- ^{xcviii} Ehrenzweig, Anton, *The Hidden Order of Art*, *British Journal of Aesthetics*, June 1961. Pp121- 133.
- ^{xcix} Dewey, John, *Art as Experience*, Perigee, USA, 2005. P42
- ^c Dewey, John, Ibid. P42
- ^{ci} Dewey, John, Ibid. P42
- ^{cii} Dewey, John, Ibid. P14
- ^{ciii} Shklovsky Victor, *Art as Technique*, reproduced in David Lodge, ed., *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader* (London: Longmans, 1988), PP 16-30
- ^{civ} Ehrenzweig, Anton, *The Hidden Order of Art*, *British Journal of Aesthetics*, June 1961. Pp122. “It is not an unusual sight to see an artist step back from his canvas and gaze at it with curiously empty, wide-open eyes. Nothing seems to happen in his mind; yet after a while some hidden small detail will; obtrude itself on his attention”.
- ^{cv} Bachelard, Gaston, *The Poetics of Reverie*, Beacon Press, 1971. P90
- ^{cvi} Dewey, John, *Art as Experience*, Perigee, USA, 2005. P288
- ^{cvi} Johnson, Galen, Ed, *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, Northwestern University Press, USA, 1993. P335.
- ^{cviii} Johnson, Galen, Ibid. P335.
- ^{cix} Dewey, John, *Art as Experience*, Perigee, USA, 2005. P337. “Nature and life manifest not flux but continuity, and continuity involves forces and structures that endure through change...changes are not all gradual; they culminate in sudden mutations, in transformations that at the time seem revolutionary...”
- ^{cx} Dewey, John, *Art as Experience*, Perigee, USA, 2005. P337

- ^{cxix} Lyotard, Jean-François, *The Postmodern Explained to Children*. Turnaround, 1992, P123.
- ^{cxii} Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Birth of Tragedy*, Penguin Classics, 1994, section 7. For a succinct summary of Nietzsche's concept of Greek tragedy see Walter Kaufman, *Nietzsche*, Princeton University Press, 1974
- ^{cxiii} Cited by Danto, Arthur, *The Abuse of Beauty*, Open Court, 2003, P158. "Standing in front of my paintings you had a sense of your own scale."
- ^{cxiv} Golub, Leon, *Do Paintings Bite*, "On the day Clement Greenberg died", *Cantz*, 1997. P24
- ^{cxv} Benn, Tony, Interview Leon Golub, *Turps Banana*, Issue 6. P12-19.
- ^{cxvi} Kuspit, Don, *Leon Golub: Existential/Activist Painter*, Rutgers University Press, 1985. P43-44.
- ^{cxvii} Shusterman, Richard, *Aesthetic Experience: From Analysis to Eros*, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 64, No. 2, Spring 2006, Blackwell. PP 217-229
- ^{cxviii} Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *Truth and Method*, New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1982, p. 310. As cited in the essay *From Analysis to Eros*, by Richard Shusterman, 2006
- ^{cxix} Shusterman, Richard, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, Blackwell, 1992. P7
- ^{cxx} Kant, Immanuel, *The Critique of Judgment* (1790), Hackett, 1987. P203. "If we wish to decide whether something is beautiful or not, we do not use understanding to refer the presentation to the object so as to give rise to cognition; rather, we use imagination (perhaps in conjunction with understanding) to refer the presentation to the subject and his feeling of pleasure or displeasure. Hence a judgment of taste is not a logical judgment but an aesthetic one, by which we mean a judgment whose determining basis cannot be other than subjective."
- ^{cxxi} Kant, Immanuel, *The Critique of Judgment*. OUP 1957, PP41-42
- ^{cxxii} Kant, Immanuel, *The Critique of Judgment*. OUP 1957, PP41-42
- ^{cxxiii} Danto, Arthur, *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 61, No. 19, P581-584
- ^{cxxiv} Dewey, John, *Art as Experience*, Perigee Press. P6.
- ^{cxxv} Shusterman, R, *Somaesthetics and the care of the self*, *The Monist*, Vol 83, no 4, 2000. PP530-551. Shusterman's essay is mainly concerned with Foucault and the 'basic nature of bodily perceptions and practices and of their function in our knowledge and construction of reality'. The point is, if the body becomes a part of the discussion of aesthetic experience (which seems obvious to most practitioners of what we loosely term the 'plastic arts'), then we have to begin to place the body at the heart of discussions upon aesthetics. Therefore, not eradicate its presence through claiming just the one part of the thinking process, which is only the evaluative dimension present in most discussions on aesthetic judgement.
- ^{cxxvi} Shusterman, R, *ibid*.
- ^{cxxvii} Dewey, John, *Art as Experience*, Southern Illinois University Press, cited Shusterman, R, in *The End of Aesthetic Experience*, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, No.55, PP29-41.
- ^{cxxviii} Shusterman, Richard, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, Blackwell, 1992, P16
- ^{cxxix} Shusterman, Richard, *ibid*. P20. "By thus compartmentalizing art and the aesthetic as something to be enjoyed when we take a break from reality, the most hideous and oppressive institutions and practices of our civilisation get legitimated and more deeply entrenched as inevitably real; Art becomes, in Dewey's mordant phrase, "the beauty parlour of civilisation," covering with an opulent aesthetic surface its ugly horrors and brutalities."
- ^{cxx} Bourriaud Nicolas, *Relational Aesthetics*, Les Presses du Reel, 2002. P43 "They (artists) all root their artistic praxis within a *proximity* which relativises the place of visuality in the exhibition protocol, without belittling it. The artwork of the 1990's turns the beholder into a neighbour, a direct interlocutor."
- ^{cxxxi} Danto, Arthur, *The Abuse of Beauty*, Open Court, 2003.
- ^{xxxii} Lodge, David, Ed., *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader* (London: Longmans, 1988). PP16-30
- ^{xxxiii} Bataille, Georges, *Visions of Excess*, Selected Writings, The Use Value of D.A.F de Sade. University of Minnesota Press, 1985
- ^{xxxiv} Barthes, Roland, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, John Hopkins University Press, 1997.
- ^{xxxv} Shusterman, Richard, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Spring 2006, PP217-229.
- ^{xxxvi} Shusterman, Richard, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, Blackwell, 1992, P177
- ^{xxxvii} Neumann, Erich, *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype*, Pantheon Books, 1955. P15. "The archetype is not only a dynamis, a directing force, which influences the human psyche, as in religion, for example, but corresponds to an unconscious 'conception,' a content."
- ^{xxxviii} Artaud, Antonin, Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1976, PP570-571.
"The theatre of cruelty wants a dance"

of eyelids coupled with elbows and kneecaps
and femurs and toes,
and wills it seen”

^{cxviii} The exhibition ‘Global Feminisms’ curated by Linda Nochlin and Maura Reilly was criticised by some for being too didactic, heavy on video and new media and lacking in aesthetic pleasure. *Art in America*, Jun 2007. P163

^{cxl} *Art in America*, Jun 2007. P163. See the review of the exhibition. PP154-165

Red Snow: History painting and collaborating with artists

^{cxli} Bourriaud, Nicolas, *Relational Aesthetics*, 2002, le presse de real. P22 “The artistic practice thus resides in the invention of relations of consciousness.”

^{cxlii} Atkinson, Terry. *Fragments of a Career*, Catalogue essay, Silkeborg Kunstmuseum, Denmark, 2000. P88. I have taken a certain liberty with TA’s use of the term to give it its full flavour here is a fragment. “The notion of the body of the producer of the system as part of the system – the logic being, although as not yet anywhere near reached, that a system (a representer) might be produced itself including the body of the original producer.”

^{cxliii} Bourriaud Nicolas, *Relational Aesthetics*, 2002, le presse de real. P37 “The exchanges that take place between people, in the gallery or museum space, turn out to be as likely to act as the raw matter for an artistic work.”

^{cxliv} Praxis, a doing of intellectual import and behaviour.

^{cxlv} Bourriaud Nicolas, *Relational Aesthetics*, 2002, le presse de real. P44.

^{cxlvi} Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, University of Minnesota Press, P35, 1992. “Desiring-production, and its difference in regime as compared to social production, are thus end points not points of departure. Between the two there is nothing but an ongoing process of becoming that is the becoming of reality.” To summarise their writing is invidious, except to use their own summary in the chapter headings of their book, where desiring machines are not metaphor: The first mode of breaks and selections, the second mode of chains and codes and the third mode of the subject and the residue. This seems to cover all states of life as production, as opposed to work, as a state of becoming.

Chockafuckingblocked: Domestic animals and giving to a large group show.

^{cxlvii} Bourriaud Nicolas, *Relational Aesthetics*, 2002, le presse de real. P36. “...driven by the anxiety of feeling of uselessness. So through little gestures art is like an angelic programme, a set of tasks carried out beside or beneath the real economic system, so as to patiently re-stitch the relational fabric.”

^{cxlviii} Lawson, Tom, *Artforum*, 20, no. 2 (October 1981), PP40-47.

^{cxlix} Shusterman, Richard, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, Blackwell, 1992, PP12-14.

^{cl} *Art incorporated*, Julian Stallabrass, OUP, 2004. P138.

“Recent state demands on art complement those of the corporations, for both have similar interests on fostering social quietude, cohesion, and deference in the face of the gale of destruction that the economic system they are committed to propagating continually gives rise.”

^{cli} *Re-writing Conceptual art*, Ed Michael Newman and Jon Bird, P68. Still you ask for more, essay by Wood, William.

“It also depended on the artists being perceived as producers of specific things too to be seen, exceptional and especially visible things worthy of a gallery setting, a dependence often at odds with certain concerns of Conceptual art. “There follows an analysis of various positions taken up by artists as varied as Burgin and Gilbert and George in regards to an exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, *The New Art*, 1972. Some of the issues of being ‘dealt with’ as in a having an ongoing commercial relationship with a commercial gallery stray into the area of morality

Wildflower. A single show

^{cliii} The opium crop for year 2005 was noted in The International Herald Tribune was for 800 tonnes ‘a bumper crop’.

^{cliv} Francis Frascina (Ed). Pollock and after, Harper and Row, 1985. P39-40

“This state of affairs could not be overcome at one stroke.” He goes on to say regarding Manet. “His insolent indifference to his subject, which in itself was striking, and his flat colour-modelling were as *revolutionary* as Impressionist technique proper.” My italics.

^{clv} Marks, Laura, Haptic Visuality; touching with the eyes, Framework, The Finnish Art Review 2/2004.

“Haptic visuality sees the world as though it were touching it: close, unknowable, appearing to exist on the surface of the image. Haptic images disturb the figure-ground relationship.”

^{clvi} Harrison, Charles & Wood, Paul, Art in Theory, Blackwell, 1992. P797. This introduction doesn’t make claims for major differences in the underlying logic of Modernism, be that Greenberg or Fried. “There is a sense in which the reductionism underpinning the promulgation of the art object, as well as subsequent moves to ‘dematerialize’ the object, can all be read as a continuation of, rather than a movement beyond, Modernist essentialism.”

^{clvii} Merleau-Ponty, Maurice; Signs, Northwestern University Press, 1964, P70.

^{clviii} Bertolt Brecht, famous for the use of stopping the narrative flow in drama in order to allow the actor to speak directly to the audience about a particular issue taking place. This had the effect of dispelling the suspension of disbelief in the audience.

^{clix} O’Reilly, Sally, Time Out No.1983, Arts review, P62.

^{clx} These three parts are well mapped out by Bourriaud. Bourriaud Nicolas, Relational Aesthetics, 2002, le presse de real. P46

Inappropriate behaviour: Still life painting.

^{clxi} Reissner, Elisabeth, National Gallery Technical Bulletin, Vol.29, Ways of making: Practice and innovation in Cezanne’s Paintings in the National Gallery, PP4-30.

In an excellent and precise study of his paintings, Reissner places the processes of applying paint at the heart of an intellectual process.

“Part of Cezanne’s legacy in common with the Impressionists, was the realisation that an artist could problematise, through the practice of painting, the nature of picture making and its relationship to reality.”

^{clxii} Clark, T. J., Farewell to an Idea, Yale University Press, P141

Disengagement – The discontinuity between ground and image puts in an appearance throughout the history of western painting. One could put forward Titian’s ‘The Flaying of Marsyas’. T. J. Clark’s account of it in Cezanne is though the most succinct account of this occurrence.

^{clxiii} Golub, Leon, Do paintings bite? Cantz Verlag, 1997, P17.

“The relative near possibility of occurrence, to become “real”. One can’t walk into a subjunctive future. One functions in the here and now. Is it so startling that the here and now can be narrative space? We can’t be naïve, that there exist isolated pure worlds of art, uncontaminated. That’s a belief that has been imposed, but we don’t have to believe it.”

^{clxiv} Clark, T.J., Clement Greenberg’s Theory of Art, P55, Pollock and After, ed Francis Frascina, Harper and Row, 1985

Practices of negation - ‘By “practice of negation” I meant some form of decisive innovation, in method or materials or imagery, whereby a previously established set of skills or frame of reference – skills and references which up till then had been taken as essential to art making of any seriousness – are deliberately avoided or travestied, in such a way as to imply that only by such incompetence or obscurity will genuine picturing get done.

For example: - The various attacks on centred and legible composition, from the ‘Burial at Ornans’ onwards. The distortion or reversal of perspective space. The refusal of simple equivalences between particular aspects of a representation and aspects of the thing represented: the Impressionists broken handling, Cezanne’s discarding of the usual indicators of different surface textures, the Fauves mismatching of colour on canvas with colour in the world out there. *Deliberate displays of painterly awkwardness, or facility in kinds of painting that were not supposed to be worth perfecting...the use of degenerate or trivial or “inartistic: materials...the rejection or parody of paintings narrative conventions. The false reproduction of paintings established genres...The parody of previous powerful styles....* my italics.

^{clxv} Bourriaud, Nicolas, Relational Aesthetics, Le presses de reel, 1998 P37.

Contingency - Nicolas Bourriaud's work is an instance of noting what has been happening in artists activities for the past 20 years.' The exchanges that take place between people, in the gallery or museum space, turn out to be as likely as raw matter for an artistic work.'

^{clxvi} O'Doherty, Brian, *Inside the white cube*, University of California, 1986, P15.

"A gallery is constructed along laws as rigorous as those for building a medieval church. The outside world must not come in, so windows are usually sealed off. Walls are painted white. The ceiling becomes the source of light...In this context a standing ashtray becomes almost a sacred object, just as the firehose in a modern museum looks not like a firehose but an aesthetic conundrum."

^{clxvii} *Ibid.* P15

^{clxviii} Golub, Leon, *World Wide*, Brooklyn Museum, April 1991.

^{clxix} Barthes Roland, *Elements of Semiology*, Cape editions, 1972. P91

'there always remains 'something denoted' (otherwise the discourse would not be possible) and the connotators are always in the last analysis discontinuous and scattered signs, naturalized by the denoted language which carries them.'

^{clxx} Bourriaud, Nicolas, *Relational Aesthetics*, Le presses de reel, 1998. P16.

^{clxxi} "The drawing of an untied boot from 1967 is infused with a comic sadness...But the shoe is a labile entity, a truly poetic form." Siri Hustvedt, *Mysteries of the rectangle*, Princeton Architectural Press, 2005

^{clxxii} Mayer, Musa. *Night Studio, Da Capo*, 1997. P71. "What kind of a man am I, sitting at home, reading magazines, going into frustrated fury about everything – and then going into my studio to adjust a red to a blue. I thought there must be some way I could do something about it. I knew ahead of me a road was laying. A very crude, inchoate road."

^{clxxiii} Mayer, Musa. *Night Studio, Da Capo*, 1997. P142. "They are so simple these drawings - I don't know truly if they any good or not...yet to learn all over again is the only joy left to me."

^{clxxiv} Clark, T.J., *Farewell to an idea*, Yale University Press, 1999. P140. "Never, for a start, has a picture declared itself so openly –so awkwardly- as made out of separate, over determined parts coexisting only on sufferance."

^{clxxv} Mayer, Musa. *Night Studio, Da Capo*, 1997. P141. "There is something ridiculous and miserly in the myth we inherit from abstract art...But painting is 'impure'. It is the adjustment of the impurities, which forces painting's continuity. We are image-makers and image-ridden." Undated letter to Bill Berkson.

^{clxxvi} Clark, T.J., *Clement Greenberg's Theory of Art*, essay *Pollock and After*, Harper and Row, Ed Francis Frascina, 1985. P55. "practices of negation" in Clark's note; "This phrase seems to have given rise to some misunderstanding...By "practice of negation" I meant some form of decisive innovation, in method or materials or imagery, whereby a previously established set of skills or frame of reference – skills and references which up till then had been taken as essential to art-making of any seriousness – are deliberately avoided or travestied, in such a way as to imply that only *by* such incompetence or obscurity will genuine picturing get done." He then goes on to give a fulsome list of the various artists who have done just that, including Cezanne, the Fauves, Primitivist's Manet, Johns, and more.

^{clxxvii} Bernard, Emile, 1908, *Mercure de France*, P604, Gauguin on Cezanne, in conversation with Pere Tanguy.

^{clxxviii} Mark Rosenthal who has written on Jenney, puts the case more seriously, and makes a cogent argument for subject matter and politics in art practices in an article in *Arts Magazine*, June 1982. Philip Henscher writing in *Modern Painters of Winter 1996* asks when is bad art bad, and becoming discomforted to be required 'to look at paintings which so forcefully inform him that there is no appropriate critical vocabulary for dealing with (such) works that the criteria on which he has based his judgements of paintings no longer applies.'" Then there is Martin Maloney's encomium to himself in *Flash Art* Jan 1998, finishing with 'the trouble is that my own art work could be classified according to the same principals'.

^{clxxix} *Bad Painting*, review *Artforum*, v16, April 1978, P68. Review by Deborah Perlberg. "Neil Jenney...presenting people and objects with calculated anti-sophistication. Including block-lettered titles like *Girl and Vase* on the canvas with a picture of a girl and vase is a smug joke, fully intentional."

^{clxxx} An act of painting that TJ Clark has returned to time and again, concerning the fascination that painters have for re-stating the realist factor in the act of painting.

^{clxxx1} Jenney, Neill, Ed. *Jessie Washburne-Harris, The Bad Years*, Gagosian Gallery catalogue, 2001 "I'm simply saying that I don't think the artist should deal with space or think about dealing with space. He should think about adjusting culture." 1978.

^{clxxxii} Symposium at Brooklyn Museum, 1974

^{clxxxiii} Artforum v16, April 1978, P68 review of Bad Painting at New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York.

^{clxxxiv} See the interview and article on his later works, Artforum, October 1992.

“I realised that the whole ‘Bad Painting’ thing was holding me back. I wanted to make good paintings...I was thinking of ancient art and how it was the hi-tech of its time ...I thought it was time for some refinement.”

^{clxxxv} ZG, No.3, 1981. P23. “Reality is dualistic. Things are always in relation to other things. The reality of objects is relativistic...I don’t want my work to be negative. I agree with Berenson that art should be life-enhancing, that it should make people social.”

^{clxxxvi} Shusterman, Richard, *The Monist*, Vol83, PP530-551, 2000. “Somaesthetics can be provisionally defined as the critical, meliorative study of experience and the use of one’s own body as a locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation (aesthesis) and creative self-fashioning... Pleasure cannot be simply identified with sensation because every enjoyment of sensation depends on the context or activity which shapes it’s meaning.”

Bad boy, Kippenberger.

^{clxxxvii} Kippenberger, Martin, Tate publishing, 2006, essay Jessica Morgan, P20

^{clxxxviii} Kippenberger, Taschen, 2003, Ed. Angelika Taschen, essay by Roberto Ohrto. P28 ‘From his ‘Psychobuildings’ to his salvaging of tables and chairs, he observed in a things a physiognomic or bodily presence, a presentation of handicaps or defects, that he by no means dismissed as a bad example. On the contrary, his fondness, even if it included a destructive process, was guided by his empathetic curiosity, whereby he never lost sight of the formulation of things as objects of artistic contemplation, not least because art maps out the history of things.’

^{clxxxix} Kippenberger, Martin, Tate publishing, 2006, essay Susanne Kippenberger, P57

^{cx} Interview with Martin Kippenberger. An artist doesn’t have to be new. An artist has to be good. *Flash Art*, no.247 March 2006. P92-96. It is safe to say I think, that most interviews with Kippenberger were not especially revealing, being mostly a large mixture of bluff and double bluff. The interview in *Artscribe* 90 February 1992 being a special example of bad tempered table banging on all concerned concerning his morals, politics and friends he keeps.

^{cxci} Kippenberger, Martin, Tate publishing, 2006, essay Gregory Williams, *Jokes Interrupted*.

^{cxcii} Kippenberger, Ed Angelika Taschen, Taschen, 2003, essay by Roberto Ohrto. P25 ‘He adhered stubbornly to their banality, resolutely retaining the matter’s absurdity, stupidity, impossibility, at its lowest level, only building up complexity when room had been made for its paltriness.’

^{cxciiii} Kippenberger, Martin, Tate publishing, 2006, Interview with Daniel Baumann, P62. “Perhaps it’s ...that you – an artist- ...have a hankering for edification or moral issues. That fades away again at some point, maybe because of ‘always-doing-the-same’ thing, known as style, so that you bore people. People want to be bored, they want to see the same picture again and again...”

Interview Leon Golub

^{cxciiv} Kuspit, Donald, Leon Golub, existentialist/activist painter, Rutgers University Press, 1985. P4. “Golub’s pictures offer no sense of physical, social, or psychological harmony, no sense of harmony of any sort, and this they violate every conventional expectation of a work of art.”

^{cxciiv} See Appendix 2. *Central Reservation*, seconds, 2007. Tony Benn

Central Reservation

^{cxciiv} Smithson, Robert, *The Collected writings*, ed. Jack Flam, University of California Press, 1996 ‘The Monuments of the Passaic.’

^{cxciiv} See appendix 1 Interview with Leon Golub, 2004 by Tony Benn

Desertflower

^{cxviii} *Everyday* exhibition, curated Tony Benn, Ruskin Gallery, Cambridge School of Art, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, UK. Artists included are Amikam Toren, Chris Stevens, Jo Stockham, John Wilkins, Luke Jackson, Paul Butler, Sam Jackson, Suzanne Treister, Tony Benn.

^{cxci} Bryson, Norman, *Vision and Painting*, Macmillan Press, 1983. P121.

^{cc} Pollock and After, *The Critical debate*, Ed Francis Francina, Harper and Row, 1985, P55.

“ I meant some form of decisive innovation, in method or materials or imagery, whereby a previously established set of skills or frame of reference...are deliberately avoided or travestied, in such a way as to imply that only by such incompetence or obscurity will genuine picturing get done.”

^{cci} Dewey, John, *Aesthetic Experience*, cited by Shusterman, Richard, *The End of Aesthetic Experience*, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, PP29-41

^{ccii} ZG, No.3, 1981. P23. Interview with Neil Jenney.

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Appendix 1

INTERVIEW IN NYC, conducted in Leon Golub's studio. La Guardia Place.

TB. I'd like to start in the middle period of your work and talk first about the level of politicisation in the *Hostage* and *Mercenary* paintings in relation what came before and after.

LG. My first politically overt paintings happened at the end of the sixties where I worked on paintings, very large scale paintings called *Gigantomachies* originally a Greek term for *Velogods* and *Titans*. Like the painting here behind me, of *Prometheus*, this is a painting of 10-12 years ago. *Prometheus* was a Titan and after the Titans were defeated against *Zeus'* direct orders, he gave fire to mankind, and *Prometheus* was punished and the eagle ate his vitals - so - I'm using a theme here where those who do not hear, here is *Prometheus* calling out to you he is in anguish isn't he? The eagle is at his liver, at night it will regenerate and grow back again and the eagle will go back each day to eat his organs. And this man is *Modern Man* and the figure is wearing a shirt that says...

TB. "I DON'T HEAR A THING".

Do you feel that silence, a certain kind of silence in what's happening now?

LG. Of course, we never hear the victims, we don't want to hear them, and we don't want to know what is going on, we hear about it of course, but we don't pay any

attention, and the US doesn't want to hear about it. So we don't pay much attention, just like the US is very anxious about any soldiers that are wounded, but it pays little attention, the Defence Department or the newspapers, to the victims. Soma! Whereas, the Arab TV stations show lots of it, they have a point to make.

TB. It's a propaganda war.

LG. Sure. We are winning without much in the way of casualties, that's collateral damage. So, 'I DON'T HEAR A THING' that has to refer to political aspects of reality. In that sense my work has changed from the Mercenary series, which simply showed these figures that stoop to this kind of work. In other words it will carry on the acts that governments sponsor but covertly because mercenaries are not soldiers.

TB. Those paintings were of a different order of representation weren't they - the frontality of them, the scale is similar, but the big difference now is the spatial organisation, recessional space?

LG. Well, the biggest difference from my point of view is a certain kind of irregularity. In other words the Mercenary paintings operate on the edge, right - the edge of control. Paradoxically, I'm trying to work on the edge of my own work. I'm implying something about the level of understanding and misunderstanding and the deliberate omission which goes on today. So that's more edgy stuff. It's dealing with paradoxes. There's not much of a paradox about a mercenary, he's got a gun and he'll kill whoever he's told to kill.

They're psychically more paradoxical most of my work in recent years is dispersed.

TB. Going back to the early work of the Mercenary series. They seem more particular, more particular to their time in history.

LG. The mercenaries involvement in Vietnam, so we get American soldiers in uniform, you get the Vietnamese as the victims and therefore an attempt in a direct way to visualise American involvement in this conflict. That is, it's very direct pretty much one on one. You can miss some things in my more recent paintings, depending on what you bring to it. I desire an ambiguity. So the later paintings show ambiguity in these ways and that ambiguity is the flux of information, the flux of subjectivity, the lack of understanding of each other both deliberate and just by hit and miss - it's an attempt to get a more intimate, more casual and maybe less direct confrontation.

TB. How much does that notion of ambiguity stand for post modernist eclecticism? How much is your work now an acknowledgment of that eclecticism?

LG. It probably is you see in various ways. I probably picked up attitudes and so on. A lot of it comes from not just the 80's the earlier paintings were more or less ambiguous and so on in these respects. Take Rauschenberg, a lot of ambiguous stuff in Rauschenberg, in fact it's mostly ambiguous, it's an image against another. The difference between Rauschenberg and myself would be that maybe I become aware of some of this through him. But, that I drive it somewhere. He's not interested in driving it anywhere. He's interested in moving it around. I'm interested in driving it in certain location, whipping it into shape, so to speak. Very irregular. So all of this post modernist stuff would play a part, but also Nancy Spero's work plays a part too because she was post modernist before many of the post modernists were post modernist. Her use of language in art goes back to the 50's and her bringing in at times very ambiguous imagery was certainly so. She was not influenced by Rauschenberg at all! I would say there is as much influence from her as there is from others. More from her because she's with me in the house doing this stuff, hard to avoid it! She always had it right back in art school. She had a collage temperament in a certain kind of way. Her sketchbooks were full of photo plates placed against each other, pasted on, which are quite often done by young artists as part of their general thinking process. An equal influence has to be the way we perceive information today because through TV and

computers and everything else we are being attacked by or infused with, depending on how you look at it, an almost infinite number of images and they're always bouncing in our heads. I use a word; I was going to do a book on it, called Jittering. You see jitters, so this flux of information, which I've been aware and wasn't sure how to bring it into my work. So sure post modernism had an effect, Nancy's work had an effect and the onslaught of media had an effect. So that, you're a product of a lot of different kind of things.

TB. The real and crucial differences of your practice with post modernism is that you are one of the few who takes on board subject matter and manipulates the subject matter to your own ends. Given the history of American art and what happened in 50's American modernism, it's troubled relationship with representation that must have been a tough attitude to maintain?

LG. It was. Certainly it was not an easy situation for me. For example, they use a phrase, which I like, a combination of words, rather, from astro-physics. 'The Event Horizon'. I like that. I would like to be able to, not the absolute limit, I'm not that proud. But the event horizon of our world, our civilisation, one of it was Vietnam. There are a lot of other things I don't cope with, I don't even think of coping with. I don't do anything about child murder, for example, that is part of what is going on. Disappearing children, it is a great anxiety in our society. I don't do anything about financial shenanigans that go on all the time, which is an awful big part of our world. I could list 25 things that I don't touch on but there are certainly event horizons that I am interested in. For example, the US intervention in countries in South East Asia.

TB. Yes, what does it mean to be liberated by the US?

LG. Exactly, I'm interested in that. I read on it, I think about it and I try to put some of it in my work. I have small canvases done in ink on linen, I've done 40 of them by now, they show somebody striking another man, somebody fallen, they all deal with brutality

and civil conflict or war conflict. They're sketchy, they're quick, and to my mind they're to the point. Now a certain number of them carry messages on them. The two primary messages are "THIS CAN BE YOU" or "WE CAN DISSAPPEAR YOU".

TB. Sometimes that can be an economic disappearance...

LG. I'm thinking more brutal than that. Let's say in UK today and US this is not a common way of treating dissidents. It might happen but it's not very common, it's more common in many European countries including China, African countries, Latin American countries etc. The US is not totally against this, you see. I DON'T HEAR A THING applies to our government WE DON'T HEAR YOU. You are not saying anything. You can yell at the top of your voice, we still won't hear you.

TB. Does that go back to Greek ideal of space, when you belong to the city space you are allowed to talk and be heard?

LG. Good point, so the painting, I am talking about, in big letters painted on it and below it are a few shapes, like that one up there. Those white shapes, which need some imagery just painted on the canvas, like signs.... and a dog and then there's these letters printed on in an almost empty space that says DO YOU GET IT. And that interests me, to paint like that. This painting here will go that way eventually, it'll take a little while though.

TB. There has been a lot of discussion of your work, about how it represents itself as work, as surface and how it works at the level of representation. The interesting thing about the way you talk about work is more of the level of making a piece of work, like a presenter, like a message sender, rather than being a representer of information.

LG. OK. Yeah I'm trying to get into, this sounds like I'm a bigmouth, the psychic life of our society, as it organises itself and carries on its dynamic for power... I'm in this

society of ours! Maybe though, if I had the power, I'd be as bad as anybody else. To understand it, everybody understands it, in your skin, through it, you understand it, and you walk down the street. You see a policeman, for some reason he'll give you the look. You recognise how this guy has the authority to interrupt your life. Less without reason, than say in Chile, he still has a certain kind of authority. We recognise in him, as partial protector or a total protector depending on how you look at it. I knew someone who came from Brazil, who said if ever you're robbed in your home, you do not call the police. The reason you do not call the police is they'll rob you even more!

But, even in this society they can't be trusted, because sometimes if you're black they'll kill you. The fact that sometimes they'll kill because they're frightened, which is often the case when they are in so called dangerous areas, - the whole thing is shoot the other guy before they shoot you, you shoot first to be sure. So I'm trying to get at some of this stuff, the Mercenaries are a more blatant work, in how the function.

TB. Going back to this question of psychic space...how violent are you? After all, you have access to violence through images...

LG. Really! I can be violent verbally. I'm not violent physically.

TB. I'm talking about how do you inhabit the violence...

LG. Because I feel it's in everything. It's all over the place, you know. There's verbal violence, there's psychic violence, there's physical violence, you know.

Yes, I'm interested in it.... Did the violence come first or did society come first, is a neat little question. People come in to this world and they occupy themselves doing something at a specific point in time that they cannot exactly analyse, you see. Somebody wants to paint flowers, you know, that's what he wants to paint. There's nothing wrong with that! I paint violence. I want to paint violence. You see, I can rationalise it by saying that it's in our society but every artist doesn't paint violence. I come predisposed to it.

TB. Did the analysis you had when you were starting out as a young artist give you access to subjects like that?

LG. To some extent, not enough to really explain it I think. It made me more at ease with it in every day life. Depending whether you're conflicted with one should do this or not. Ultimately, the problem with psychoanalysis might be you can't necessarily blame us for everything. Just like you can't blame your parents for everything. You can't say I am what I am because of them, therefore refusing responsibility - free will! And so on. Ultimately, you have to take responsibility for your actions, in the sense that, there is an irony of the situation and your coping with it one way or another and you're responsible, you can't put it back onto someone else.

TB. Which is also the responsibility we have as artists isn't it, such as what responsibility do they take for the work and what does it do.

LG. That's true. And artists may have very ambiguous responses to that. Sometimes, they don't want to question too much, you know, where they come from and why. Most of them aren't prepared to do this. Art doesn't have that kind of function in our society. Art is a product for the enhancement of our spiritual selves, our aesthetic sense; it's something that's supposed to allow us to spread our wings. It can be a provocation, which can be very exciting. It can even have pleasurable, threatening aspects to it. It can be a million different things, but it is not something that's usually thought of as in terms I'm trying to think about.

TB. Is that the Modernist break with its audience?

LG. I think so...Modernism doesn't mean that you can't critique society. There are many critics operating in Modernism, Walter Benjamin, for example, who made very strong critiques of the world we're living. I think it comes from the function of art today,

which is part of the great pleasure giving activity, great leisure type activity it enhances your life. In every society you can name, art was thought of, not consciously always, as giving a picture of the world, which it inhabited. In the Renaissance art shows the power and authority...

TB. The world as it exists.

LG. ...and in feudal times, it showed the world, as it will be, Christ enthroned, angels in place. And this is the world to which you aspired.

TB. Then, isn't Modernism the world as it should be?

LG. That's true, it's utopia - very utopian. It's so abstract to see the world that way; I can't say finally what that signifies. The world as it should be isn't necessarily the world of abstract form. What does that imply? The early Russian artists like Malevich and El Lissitzky, people like that, implied a transforming power to these images. It did imply a Utopia, but the contemporary abstraction, as we know it implies a utopia too. I'm not sure it implies a sensuous moment in time too. That's not so bad either.

TB. Tell me about Dubuffet, to go right back to the beginning for a moment, to the Chicago Arts Institute. What did the effect Anti Cultural Positions speech he gave have on you?

LG. I don't know if I was there or not. I get it all mixed up. I've been asked so often about it. I don't know if it was in French or English. I knew his writings before that, not from Greenberg but from Dubuffet himself. Dubuffet published 25 books on himself. He was a well-to-do man and he could afford to put out very interesting publications. I was very aware of him back in 1946-48. I was given a very early book of his Macadena Mirrablis, whatever it's called, which unfortunately I can't find. In which there are very early images of figures like a child with hands coming out of the stomach. I liked them a

lot. However, they were not deeply influential on my work. Maybe superficially influential, because I was coming from so called primitive art and in the time I started at art school in 1946 I was absolutely after primitive art, pre-Columbian, the art of New Guinea, all that entered my work in a very derived sense. I could end up like the damaged man or the burnt man that came from the West Coast Indian art, where they used to have these hand extensions coming out of their sculptures. I put that into my own version of the burnt man. I'm using that as an example.

TB. Was that to circumvent or go round Christian art?

LG. Depends what you mean by Christian art, are we talking about medieval art? I wasn't interested in it. I was interested in German expressionism and late German gothic sculpture; it was very extreme in its emotionality; mourning women, Christ on the cross, very distended bodies. That entered my work, but it didn't enter my work to the power that late roman art did. At the same time, I was interested in primitive art, by the drawing Hellenistic Memories that tried to deal with this in a certain sense. But it was primarily, primitive art that I was interested in, and I was looking for certain kinds of elemental aspects of self that could be more intense than the guise of realism or expressionism. I was influenced by Picasso's Guernica, by Demoiselles D'Avignon; I've said it many times now because it's come up lately. I saw Guernica when I was 15 years old in Chicago; they travelled it around the world to raise funds for the Spanish Republic. I saw it in the Chicago Arts Club it was an overwhelming experience. I saw Rothko's Prometheus, which is a huge painting, now out in California, I saw that in about 1966 or '67, that was huge influence too.

TB. Did these experiences spur you on to become a mural sized painter?

LG. Probably, what I admired, I liked the regard, the pediment, I liked the idea of somehow the figures in these sculptures being larger than life size, like a burgher man, and maybe it refers to civil architecture. A sense of monumental incursion into your

space. There's a certain sense of awe I have about these items, out-of-scale items, or the rawness of materials and the appearance of art I was awed by it. It seems so elemental. The elemental seems to be the source of things to me. I have probably a routine notion of it, but nevertheless it's what I carried at the time, so in that sense I respected Dubuffet but I thought he was more caricature-like you see. What he did, he did not have the elementalism I found in primitive art, at all.

TB. He is much more laconic...

LG. It's witty, he's presenting it with a bit of monkeying around too. I respect Dubuffet although I think his work is cleverer, which is a bad thing. Maybe, I'm getting too clever.

TB. Clever, is a bad thing?

LG. Yeah, because it makes you glib. You float through things, on a crucial issue you make some clever remarks and walk away from it. You don't necessarily have a deep commitment to things. Cleverness is an escape route.

If you're making an object and you're trying to deal with what I dare to call an Event Horizon, then you'd better use all your resources that you can call upon. The mind is one of them, one of the most significant resources that you have. It's the most significant in terms of setting it up; visualising it, determining it, and criticising yourself, it's crucial...

TB. What do you think your work could be the test case of now, what is the work testing out?

LG. It's testing out, how the hell we're functioning as a society, in the world, at this particular moment. How we are getting along, you know. Who are we? If I paint a painting "WE LOVE OUR LEADER". I'm saying that these regimes are corrupt, you see, and they're twisting and distorting the reality that people actually experience, forcing

it into another direction and they are in a sense destroying people's lives. It is very angry critique at a certain level.

TB. Does the level of support for the Iraq War trouble you?

LG. Sure I'm troubled by it. I'm troubled by our government. I don't trust our government. I don't trust their international actions. I think they're mean and vicious.

Appendix 2

CENTRAL RESERVATION

Looking out of the curved window, your head turning to the right, eyes drifting down past the steel barriers dividing incoming and outgoing traffic. The plastic bottles are slowly degrading in the ultra violet light. Polymers gradually breaking down, their long molecular bonds snapping off from each other soundlessly, endlessly, forever. The plastic becoming more and more brittle making it easier to crack and break like dry vegetable matter. The oil that was once under the ground has now been forced, sucked and routed to huge industrial complexes on the coast, overlooking grey blue seas near estuaries calm and fenced off. This liquid sludge, a product of dead marine life, with its gases already burnt off out on the grey North Sea. The glutinous matter has been refined and processed to make the essence of life. Your motor, calmly turning over, exploding twenty five thousand revolutions a minute, piston, pump and chamber, squirting and moving in sexual unison. Another litre of essence sucked and burnt and spurted out into the engine intake of the car beneath your legs.

In the spaces between major traffic zones we find certain clues to the dilemmas confronting today's artists.

The blue plastic bottle started life in a stainless steel tank, as an organic molecule that was polymerised and given long, long beautiful chains of carbon, hydrogen and oxygen molecules making it slinky, sexy and feline, like a fetishists wet day dream. Pushed,

pulled and extruded through pipes and tubes of exact calibration with tolerances much less than a millimetre, released from a spinneret, the fetishist's arachnid scene, round and round inside the mould. A blue plastic bottle appears, a virgin vessel, pristine unscratched and untouched by human hand. Ridged and ribbed and safe to hold, rewarding and tactile to hold and with a warmth responsive to human touch and body warmth. Filled with water pumped from underground aquifers, filtered and gassed according to your taste, tickling the back of your throat, pleasingly. Throats parched, red interior flesh, moist and mucoudal, dry from the heat pumping out of the dull grey plastic dashboard vent. The cool fizzy liquid gushing down the oesophagus taking with it a white tablet, lozenge shaped. Synthesised painkiller. Nearly like the plant. Salicylate acid. Easing a headache resulting from water loss to the system.

The weather in North Europe is getting darker due to cloud cover but paradoxically not getting wetter. A curious counter-intuitive state of affairs, the sky gets gloomier each year with less sunlight getting through to the ground level.

Tossed out from the car moving at a funereal pace through the landscape onto the strip of no-mans land that persists in the space between steel barriers there lies your pale translucent empty bottle. A green of grey hues evenly covered in PCB's from the red, green brightly painted HGV's that move apples from the farm to central distribution apex to retail outlet. It is all on the just-in-time basis like your life. At the retail outlet shed, a pantheon of all desires, a nice clean man with a blue plastic badge informing you his name is Timothy. He will smile at you in an open confident manner and direct you to the fruit produce section. His confidence is comforting. The weeds continue to persist out there in the zone between, now static cars caught in a traffic jam that has backed up from an accident five miles ahead. People in high visibility jackets, some green and crouching on the ground, some yellow moving briskly shouting into radios, adjusting red heavy rubber based cones out into the slow moving traffic filing dutifully past, every eye and sinew in the neck straining to catch the sight of blood and the last fugue of mortality. The smell of death, transmission fluid, hard edged plastic with rusty iron undertones merging with the smell of diesel engines, steam and hot cooker gas aromas.^{ccii}

Artists for the most part are content to act out the position of entertainer in a dumb parody of their more famous city cousins. The New Celebrity with their strange tans and strange xenophobic lusts for sameness and fear of difference. Herd instinct is taking over.

Herb Robert is a delicate pink four petalled flower clinging to the ground amidst the short stunted grass and groundsel. A weed common to most of Europe. Petals covered with a gentle dust of carbon, lead, and sulphur compounds, some larger pieces of rubber vulcanised and pliable. Black flowers in a hard gritty desert. Occasionally, the odd brown and yellow, a picture of a piece of cork wrapped around a cylinder of cellulose, stained brown, a forgotten skid mark, squashed at one end by dirty fingers angular yet firm. The plastic bottle chucked lands, bounces once and rests next to a steel bolt sheared off from a forty-eight tonner thundering towards the seaport miles down the road. Black brown, greasy, the raw sheared metal shining in the late afternoon light, its shimmering glint passing through the blue plastic. A weak blue sparkle as you pass slowly on the outside lane, hands holding the wheel between palm and the bony inner thumb. Traffic backed up for miles ahead and behind.

**Caught between barriers in a landscape, nearly empty of moving life, where hardly a human being walks, only matter, vegetable or mineral survives out here
21st April 2005, between three to eight years remain before peak oil reserves point is reached on the planet.**

The mild steel posts holding flexible, elastic steel, restraining barriers, gently susurrating the reflected engine hum against the side of the pressed steel opalescent blue carapace of the car. You thought it looked like a soap bubble when you saw it, a fleck of spittle at the corner of your mouth as you signed the monthly repayment contracts. How much soap, detergent, non ionic cleansers, fragrances, dispersible waxes, plastic foam sponges, yellow rubber gloves with fleece lining, will it take to clean the automobile coated in grey dust, a light brown emulsion of water and clay substrates, blue black oil sprayed up from the tar macadam road. All those colours, dull and earthy, combining with the dust from

metal, PCB's, grit from the rock salt. The ground hard and unwilling to accept much in the way of plant life, except for odd patches of brilliant groundsel, white and frothy, the lacy filigree on the glass of European lager drunk and hour ago. The grassy hops still belching up from regions of the gut trapped behind the nylon webbing of the seat belt. The open window allows in some cold afternoon air as the day turns to dusk. Outside a patch of yellow flowers swaying in the wind whipped up by the cars speeding by on the other side of the reservation.

26th April 2005; International Herald Tribune, reports a meeting between President Bush and Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, "The Crown Prince understands that it's very important for there to be, to make sure that the price is reasonable. A high oil price will damage markets. It's an important subject". Bush hoped that Saudi Arabia would raise production levels from 9.5 million barrels a day to 12.5 million barrels a day.

Spit flying through the air in a graceful parabola towards the empty space at the side of the road. A flying arrow of DNA, saliva and pathogens hits the other metal barrier and begins its slow slide down the grey galvanised metal stain it a darker hue. The only moisture to hit this part of the world for a while has been numerous gobs of spit flung out of phlegmy mouths by drivers too hot to speak. You would notice that newish car, white like a coke dealer, driving along on the opposite lane on the outside edge. The man, hard and lean, smelling of old sweat and sour adrenaline, gone in a second.^{ccii}

The crop for this year (2007) opium is going to be a bumper crop, a 49 per cent rise in production. Afghanistan accounts for 92 per cent of world heroin production. The ousted Taliban are using the trade in heroin production to fund resistance to US/Nato forces. The connection between insurgency and opium production in the Helmand province has become a vicious circle.

Pulling into the back street round the back of the station, where the snotty prostitutes click clack down the cold streets yellow sodium glare bouncing off the wet tarmac. The

spotty pustulated youths, caps backwards, slipping into the telephone kiosks to stick up new cards in the windows. Full colour pictures offering O 'n A and many, many other services to the commodified body. Recently arrived here from small towns at the edges of the European Economic Zone. Caged in small grimy rooms, with thin floral curtains barely keeping out the orange light from the street, outside shadows passing across the curtains. Anna's emaciated arms pinpricked in wriggly lines up the veins. Another fix is on it's the way as the last one wears off. Returning out of numbness to see the glare of a 60-watt light bulb burning a yellow hole against the dirty white ceiling. A packet, dirty brown drops through the letterbox. It's not the drug that harms; it's the people you hang out with it that does the damage. These people don't fuck about, if you're a slow producer and don't turn clients over fast enough, then your face meets wall pretty damn fast. Snot, teeth and saliva smearing hard against the floral decorative wallpaper bubbling under the surface. The brain macerating against the hard bony points inside your skull. Maybe, one day Anna will get out of here. Only when the clients stop turning up for trade. It's business at the sharp end. The oleaginous smear of a cars red light sliding down the shiny road back to another meet. You are the next deal whether you like it or not.

International Herald Tribune, 26th April 2005; reports the arrest of Haji Bashir Noorzai in Afghanistan, accused of building a multi million dollar drugs trades through an 'unholy alliance' with the Taliban.

Jack got out of the force 2 years ago after the war. He had to, otherwise he would have gone mad doing grunt for another five years, his C.O. was making life hell for him and the redtops were closing in on his deals. Out here life was worse but better, you never know where you're going to get hit, at least inside the force you knew who your enemies were, usually the ones staying close to you, watching you, and your every fucking move. Out here all you could see were shadows in the shadows. Even the shadows were safer places than the daylight spaces, the bright-lit rooms, the overhead fluorescents humming and flickering, and the blue green light breaking your eyeballs. Speaking with corpses in our mouths, before the deal is done, and then get the fuck out of there afterwards in case any body gets jumpy. Business is divided into sectors, you don't buy an alliance in this

business, and you make it with your hands, muscle and grease. Some of his other mates who left the force weren't so lucky as J, ending up staring into space after a bottle of Ice White, shuffling down windy streets to the next pissy doorway.

Down the narrow street that leads to the Pattaya beachfront, past the cafes offering full English breakfast and the masseuses offering full everything else, every middle aged British male seems to be accompanied by a Thai woman half his age, half his size and seven times as attractive. The Guardian, April 11, 2005

The Dogs Bollocks pub is a warm and inviting smell. Old beer and sweat on a cold September night. The girls on stage move aimlessly to a dull pounding beat and then sit down with the punters. It's a good idea to keep them in the pub, before they get maudlin drunk and wander off into the orange night crying tears over lost years. The longer they stay there, the more coins and notes drop into the girls' pint pots. Money to be divided up later by the Fat Cow who runs this stinking joint that reeks of disinfectant, spunk and beer. The man comes by later demanding the fee and slipping the gear in the palm of your hand. You cough up quick otherwise you'll be throwing up your teeth on a wet stained mattress.

Summer Lilac. Profit margins are moving up on the heroin fields. You can take a hit and still be making sixty per cent across the distribution chain.

In black and white, on the surveillance camera you are another piece of white trash relieving your dick against the wall. The security camera can see nothing more than a leather jacket, pale shirt and shaved head. A large hairy dark dog slowly lays a turd at the corner of the flickering image, the animal slowly wandering off, flicking its back legs involuntarily. The street lamp at the top of the image burning an after-image into the lens. A hole in the sea of things called observation and security. Rubbish bins against the drain pipe. Four pints of lager and a packet of crisps. Please. The wire fence rustling with the brush of buddleia against the galvanised metal and crumbling concrete posts. The derelict ground covered in mounds of rubble, rank weeds, low bushes, thin grasses, condoms and

thin crushed beer cans. The colour mags rustling in the grass, a face tanned and orange smiling up at you with great success and fame. Her lips peeled back in a rictus grin without any trace of crinkling lines. In the purple distance a police siren screams down another sodium-orange road.

Buddleia, originally imported from China by 19th century explorers, now considered an invasive weed in many parts of US. Not easily killed, grows in most soil, especially that which has been disturbed. Often to be seen growing on tops of disused buildings, crumbling masonry, and derelict ground sites left undisturbed.

Arriving at the airport, sleek and glass, the car stereo playing a reassuring adagio. Drifting the car into the long-term car park, slipping the clutch into first and arcing wide into a far part of the space. The jet drones overhead a high-pitched whine with undertones deep and bass alluding to great commercial and industrial power. Pale grey trails bursting out of its engines, the smell of aviation fuel drifting across the car park, as the mighty great tube of lightweight metal weighing more tonnes than you can think about comes down onto the tarmac, wheels angled jerking back to face the ground plane with a puff of white smoke, black rubber burning. Engines screaming into reverse. Observing this spectacle of commerce and power you wonder how to compute fuel in tonnes rather than litres, and how a fuel tank looks like a room-sized container tucked inside each of its wings. What is it like to know in an intimate but rational way that underneath your feet there is 30,000 feet of air? Out the tail of this monster spurt all the shit, piss and bodily fluids of your flight into the atmosphere breaking up, dispersing into many tiny fragments permeating the clouds with frozen E.Coli like some giant fat slug smearing mucous white across the blue sky. The pilot flies across the curve of the earth in a great slow parabola easing controls onto automatic and calculating the fuel remaining.^{ccii} The grey breeze across the open countryside blurring your eyes behind dark holiday shades, the mind not running fast enough to make all these calculations.

Aviation is believed to be responsible for at least 5-6% of the total warming effect caused by greenhouse gases. Nitrogen oxide having the most disproportionate effect due to the emissions in the upper atmosphere.

UK Royal commission on Environmental Pollution

Stepping into the cool air-conditioned hum of the terminal through wide sweeping doors that gather you into their embrace like the giant arms of mother. Swallowed in whole, the terminal will spit you out at the other end re-born, your senses working at fever pitch attempting to assimilate information from your new wholesome risk free environment. Check in your bag, the leather one last, on top, smile at the attendant, you might need their help. You are being reduced to state of a child slowly over the next few minutes you will have given up every responsibility as the corporation takes charge of events from now until you next walk out of those big wide sweeping arms at the other end. The first gin and tonic, in the bar on airside, tasting like the purest bittersweet water ever tasted, juniper and metal. A sterile environment where your every bodily function is weighed monitored and calculated according gains and losses on some imaginary Stock Exchange of the Visceral. How many socks and underwear and irrelevant tubes of toothpaste are carried across vast distances, in fast moving vectors of fuel and metal? The finely ground mineral and mint mixture with added synthetic sweeteners in a plastic tube made pliable by phthalates that will eradicate your male chromosomes, squeezed between thumb and finger onto the plastic brush hairs to scrape away last nights bacterial scum. There will be toothpaste in the next country you go to. But when you go to meet the man, you want your face on. Not the one borrowed from the airline free vanity packet with disposable brush.

Bisphenol-A compound found in plastic food containers and cans has been show to be a contributing factor in women developing breast cancer. Researched at Nagoya City University Medical School. Those women with three times higher levels of BPA were more likely to miscarry.

Opening the soft translucent package, releasing the steam from the brown meat and gravy and removing the white plastic knife and fork from its sheath of plastic and paper, he realised that he hadn't eaten for nearly a day since the last meeting. Hunger returned like a memory, adrenaline had been his fuel for the past twenty-four hours, making him smell like a hunted animal. Eating returned him to something like a human again. He felt warmth and compassion for his fellow human beings, running around inside their fantasies of travel and new horizons. Didn't they know the finitude of the objects surrounding them; the future is running out fast. He felt somehow sad for them, poor little buttons. Contentment is going to be the ultimate human condition not self-realisation, a contentment, he was happy to participate in momentarily, for now. A calm smothering contentment that will allow us all to talk about our selves endlessly to whoever is within ear shot, or who will listen.

Evidence presented at the Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals Forum, San Diego, have found that chemicals used in plastics called phthalates which makes plastics pliable, were likely to lead to feminisation of boys similar to studies demonstrated in animals. Leading to all aspects of male identity being altered as well as measurable physiognomic alterations; including levels of aggression, parenting behaviour and learning speeds being altered.

The traffic started to move quicker again after a long delay. The cars shifting up the gears, spreading out across the tarmac, the airport extension work was taking place on both sides of the motorway. The bridges across the motorway still in their growth period, stumps and fingers reaching blindly across a new eight-lane motorway. Motorway maintenance workers moved around the outsized construction gear like so many small animals, human, vulnerable, yellow clad. They looked like new born offspring, gestated from the machines they tended with loving care, young insects in yellow yet to gain their hard exoskeleton, contrasting with their worn skin from so many years out in the open with cars whipping the wind past them at deathly speeds. Skin and glass sliding by each other, smooth carapaces concealing conditions of hard industrial and commercial power that was slowly tearing the planet apart. His mind was working faster and faster, to translate minute movements in the market, according to patterns and tracking

mechanisms that could detect flows and the counter flows of market movement. Pension funds were moving money in and out of the markets so fast, would the capital funding for the airport extensions be secure for the next week or the next year? People moved large bound documents around on large mahogany tables underneath soft diffused fluorescent lights discussing leverage, hedging and holding companies, and how to defray risk. Ties of military stripes maroon, beige and duck egg blue, grey charcoal skirt suits of sober intention rustle with the tension of decisions taken, others delayed, and side operators were being frozen out of the loop. Notes were taken in abbreviated terse language of a military nature, committing as little as possible to the record. Groups were moving forward on this one in a proactive way, while other lone operators held back in the shadows waiting for mistakes to occur, for an opportunity for advancement to come their way, like crumbs off the table.^{ccii}

They all meet in an international hotel of their choice, walking purposefully towards green glass doors in order to decide how to stop or arrest or slow or ameliorate the advance of climate change. Outside the avant-gardists protest. Policemen advance in carefully organised and choreographed phalanxes, blue black against the swaying green of early summer oat fields

The car was smooth on the inside, synthetic surfaces of reassuring neutrality. Grey charcoal plastic gave the car a slightly clinical smell above the other smells of cologne purchased on holiday and synthetic upholstery coated in fire retardant slowly warming up in the sun filtering through the tinted glass. Over the radio, in restrained tones of carefully modulated delivery, a voice intoned softly into the car, “the future of technological advancement rests on the future of plastic”. A light sweat from the palms of his hands coated the plastic steering wheel as he drove faster into the certain future. Out there at the apex of the perspective where parallel lines never meet that’s where the future lay.

Appendix 3. Thesis Photos





2. Martin Kippenberger, Heavy Guy, 1989/90



3. Paul Cezanne; The Card players, 1893



4. Paul Cezanne; Armchair 1885



5. Paul Cezanne; Still life with plaster cupid, 1894



6. Herb-robot



7. Barnett Newman; *Vir Heroicus Sublimis*, 1950



8. Leon Golub; Mercenaries II, 1979



9. Warhol, Brillo Boxes, 1964



10. Auguste Rodin, The thinker, 1881



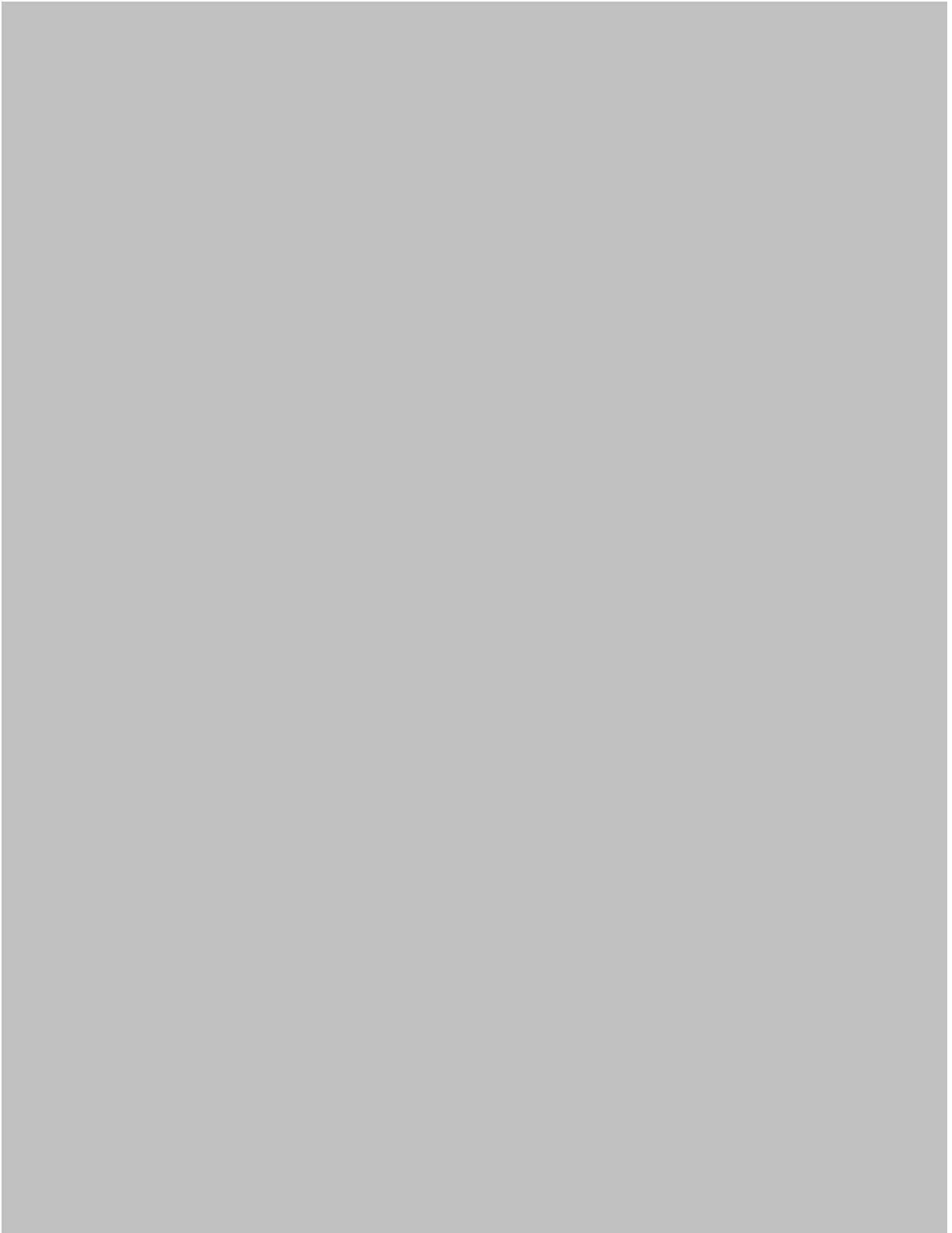
11. Nancy Spero, *Artaud Coda*, 1970



12. Sheela na gig



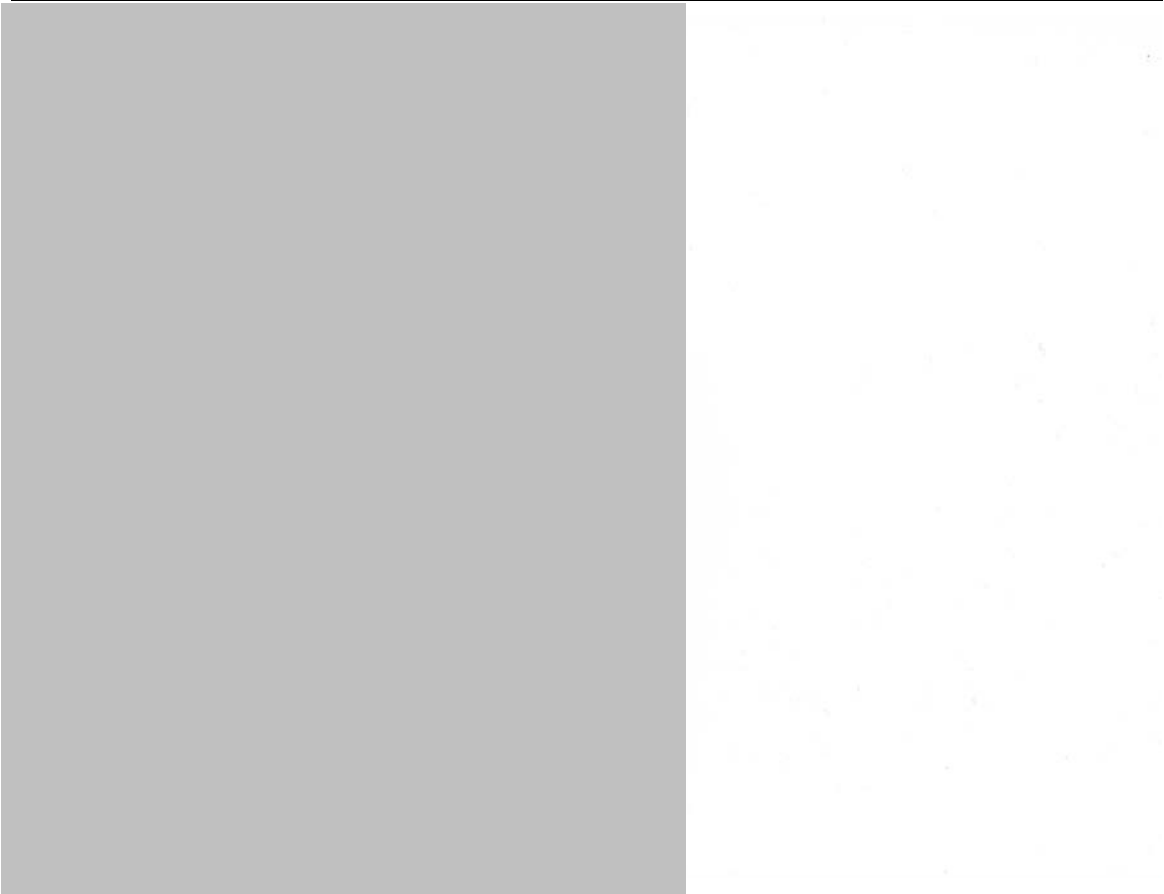
13. Duchamp, Fountain, 1917



14. ZG Magazine, 1983



15. Van Gogh, Sunflowers, 1889



16. Catalogue; *Wildflower* exhibition, 2002, Jeffreycharles gallery



17. El Lissitzky, Press Pavilion, 1928.



18. Philip Guston, Shoe, 1968



19. Philip Guston, 1968, Paw



20. Jasper Johns, Flag, 1955



21. Neil Jenny, *Girl and vase*, 1969.



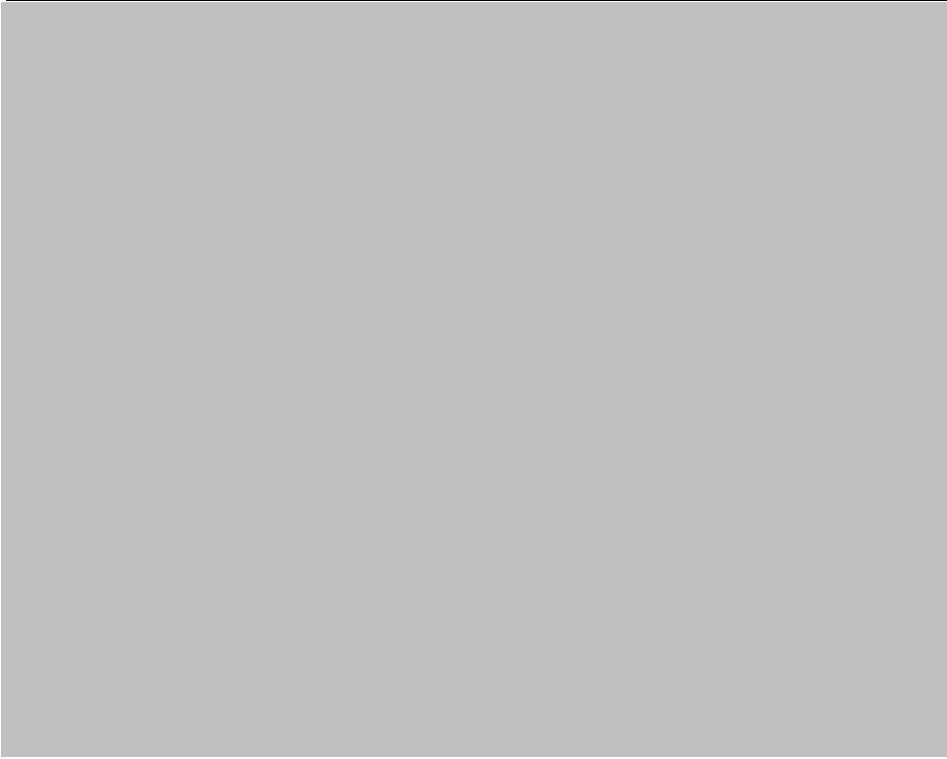
22. Martin Kippenberger; Bad Boy Martin, 1989



23. Martin Kippenberger, The happy end of Kafka's 'Amerika', 1997.



24. Martin Kippenberger, Profit peaks with Economic Values by Joseph Beuys, 1985



25 Leon Golub: Interview by Tony Benn 2002.