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**Richard Serra as Landscape Architecture: How the Sculpture  
Practice of Serra may Evolve Landscape Architecture in Aōtearoa**

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A dissertation  
submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Landscape Architecture  
at  
Lincoln University  
by  
Alexander Driscoll-Forbes

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Lincoln University  
2023

Abstract of a dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Landscape Architecture

Richard Serra as Landscape Architecture: How the Sculpture Practice of Serra may Evolve Landscape Architecture in Aotearoa

by

Alexander Driscoll-Forbes

This dissertation explores the potential of sculpture and sculptural processes as catalysts for advancing landscape architecture in Aotearoa, with a particular focus on the groundbreaking work of post-modernist American sculptor Richard Serra.

While this approach represents a unique angle within contemporary landscape architecture academia, the research grounds itself by examining historical periods where the connection between sculpture and landscape was inseparable. Examples such as Göbekli Tepe in Turkey and Ginkaku-ji in Japan demonstrate how both practices contributed distinct qualities to the surrounding landscape, reflecting the worldviews of their creators. To contextualize the study in a contemporary setting, the research draws on art critic and theorist Rosalind Krauss's seminal essay '*Sculpture in the Expanded Field*' (1979) to explore the relationship between sculpture and landscape as they evolved beyond modernism.

To investigate Serra's practice within the realm of landscape architecture, a multi-modal research approach is adopted. Drawing from established landscape architectural studies, the research employs various tools and methods to address key questions related to Serra's work in the context of landscape architecture. These approaches include biographic research and design drawing to gain an in-depth understanding of Serra's unique practice. Additionally, interpretive and descriptive design critiques explore how Serra's work relates to landscape architecture. First-hand, experientially based design critiques further examine how Serra's practice extends into the landscape architecture domain. Finally, the research considers the potential attributes Serra's practice may bring to landscape architecture in Aotearoa by analysing two NZILA award-winning projects.

The outcomes of this research are manifold. First, the study reveals how Serra's practice is influenced by the logic of process and materiality, forming the basis for a process-oriented approach

across various mediums. Utilizing Serra's '*Verblis*' (1967), the research delves into an embodied approach, expanding the notion of 'landscape' and drawing parallels with Tim Ingold's concept of 'taskscape.' This perspective contrasts the ocular-centric view prevalent in landscape architecture and emphasizes the idea that "*through living in it, the landscape becomes a part of us, just as we are a part of it*" (Ingold, 1993, p. 154).

Second, the research demonstrates how Serra's sculptural practice consistently extends into the landscape. Through the analysis and design critique of his works, the study uncovers a practice that explores body, space, and time, engaging viewers through site-specificity, context, and materiality. This emphasis on experiential engagement aligns with phenomenological philosophy and an embodied perspective of landscape.

Third, the research establishes that Serra's sculptural ethos and the qualities inherent in his extensive practice—such as body, space, time, process, site-specificity, context, and materiality—have the potential to enrich contemporary landscape architecture practices in Aotearoa. This insight specifically pertains to enhancing the utility and design experience of existing and future landscapes.

And finally, the study provides valuable insights into how landscape architecture, influenced by sculpture or other art disciplines, can evolve into a distinct and recognizable form. The interdisciplinary, multi-modal approach employed in this research can serve as a model for future investigations within landscape architectural academia, offering numerous benefits to the field.

**Keywords:** Sculpture, Landscape Architecture, Richard Serra, Phenomenology, Landscape experience





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# **RICHARD SERRA** **AS** **LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE:**

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**How the Sculpture Practice of Serra may Evolve Landscape  
Architecture in Aotearoa**

**Alexander Driscoll-Forbes**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of  
Landscape Architecture at Lincoln University 2022

# ABSTRACT

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This dissertation explores the potential of sculpture and sculptural processes as catalysts for advancing landscape architecture in Aotearoa, with a particular focus on the groundbreaking work of post-modernist American sculptor Richard Serra.

While this approach represents a unique angle within contemporary landscape architecture academia, the research grounds itself by examining historical periods where the connection between sculpture and landscape was inseparable. Examples such as Göbekli Tepe in Turkey and Ginkaku-ji in Japan demonstrate how both practices contributed distinct qualities to the surrounding landscape, reflecting the worldviews of their creators. To contextualize the study in a contemporary setting, the research draws on art critic and theorist Rosalind Krauss's seminal essay 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field' (1979) to explore the relationship between sculpture and landscape as they evolved beyond modernism.

To investigate Serra's practice within the realm of landscape architecture, a multi-modal research approach is adopted. Drawing from established landscape architectural studies, the research employs various tools and methods to address key questions related to Serra's work in the context of landscape architecture. These approaches include biographic research and design drawing to gain an in-depth understanding of Serra's unique practice. Additionally, interpretive and descriptive design critiques explore how Serra's work relates to landscape architecture. First-hand, experientially based design critiques further examine how Serra's practice extends into the landscape architecture domain. Finally, the research considers the potential attributes Serra's practice may bring to landscape architecture in Aotearoa by analysing two NZILA award-winning projects.

The outcomes of this research are manifold. First, the study reveals how Serra's practice is influenced by the logic of process and materiality, forming the basis for a process-oriented approach across various mediums. Utilizing Serra's 'Verblast' (1967), the research delves into an embodied approach, expanding the notion of 'landscape' and drawing parallels with Tim Ingold's concept of 'taskscape.' This perspective contrasts the ocular-centric view prevalent in landscape architecture and emphasizes the idea that "through living in it, the landscape becomes a part of us, just as we are a part of it" (Ingold, 1993, p. 154).

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# RESEARCH CONTEXT

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What does it feel like to be a human-being?

I ask this question it underlines fundamental questions of experience explored throughout this dissertation. Though seemingly a vast and expansive topic, these existential triggers offer an insight, a prompt, into how we, as human-beings, explore the world we live within. Our epistemology, at its core, derived from our senses, and how we interact, and be with, be in, our landscape: our world.

I first engaged with these questions whilst undertaking an undergraduate degree in Fine Arts, majoring in Sculpture, at the University of Canterbury in 2017. During my explorative time as a malleable undergraduate artist, many of my significant works, though often different in form, scale, or material, sought to engage a larger aspect of existence, a journey from one place to another, often prompting physical and mental participation of audience. A few notable artists come to mind when I reflect upon this developing theme, particularly the practices of Dan Graham, Richard Serra, and Robert Smithson, amongst others. The works of these artists are notable as, though again variable in form, scale, or material, each shares a common theme of spatial design, using the medium of sculpture to intervene with the surrounding space, subsequently both directing engagement and creating experiences which alter the perception of viewers.

The exploration between the relationship of audience, work, and site, was to become a theme embedded within my own

practice. As displayed in Figure 1, one work completed within my intermediate year took the form of a Labyrinth, with walls constructed from polypropylene sheets hanging from an overhead timber frame and nylon string grid. This labyrinth was designed to reject external visual stimuli, creating an intimate, vaguely confrontational experience with oneself through physically immersing viewers journeying within the sculpture, suspended beneath a large oak tree located at the University of Canterbury. In reflection this was my first engagement with what I consider a primitive form of landscape architecture, using sculpture to design a spatial experience within a landscape, influencing a direct physical and sensory experience within the space, a connection between body, mind, and location.

In continuation of this developing theme, another important work from this time, *Eternals*, took the form of a large-scale, three-dimensional representation of the Greek key meandering symbol. This work was a site-specific design for an exhibition within the courtyards of the Benjamin Mounfort gothic-revival architecture of the Canterbury Arts Centre, previously Canterbury College, the first purpose-built University of New Zealand. Shown in Figure 2, my exploration of the Greek key pattern in this sculpture was an introduction to the ancient world of symbology, the ancient symbol a representation of a twisting and turning journey often understood to be based off the meandering pattern of the Menderes River in Asia Minor (present day Turkey), yet also a symbol often viewed as representation of the figure



Figure 1: *Labyrinth* (2015). Timber, polypropylene sheets, string. 3000 x 3000 mm.  
Author's own image.



Figure 2: *Eternals* (2017). Plywood, black and grey paint. 1200 x 1200 x 1200 mm.  
Author's own image.

of a labyrinth in linear form (Kerenyi, 1986), the motif found depicted in regions far from the Hellenistic period it is most commonly associated with, seen in Shang bronzes from the Yin Dynasty c. 1600 BC – c. 1045 BC and prehistoric Mayan designs, prior to western contact (Lodge, 1929).

The work adapted this ontological symbol to repeat across three-dimensions in cubic form, designed to be approached from all angles, whilst the positive and negative space which formed the symbol on each face permitted a visibility from external to internal. This permitted viewers to engage with the sculpture from all surrounding places, promoting movement around the sculpture which held a central presence within the courtyard. To further reinforce this symbolic representation of a journey, of wandering and wondering, a half hour film was directed which revealed an overlaid, semi-opaque, repetitive figure (myself) walking in continuous circles in both directions around the sculpture. For the exhibition catalogue accompanied text was selected from Carl Jung, quoting: “*The right way to wholeness is made up of fateful detours and wrong turnings*” (Jung, 1968, p.44).

The introduction of different ontological symbols, such as the meander, led to further works, such as *Continuity*, which employed the use of a pendulum and the static forces of gravity to create spiral drawings, through various mediums and scales. This was often displayed as a live drawing or as a video installation, the action repeating and form developing



over time, with each passing motion. Yet even as a static, final form, as seen in Figure 3, the movement of its conception, of action, left clear to viewers. The spiral, again, a motif of movement, a representation of a journey from one place to another, of evolution, birth and rebirth, a symbol found in nature, and repeated throughout time, a symbol most profound to myself when identified engraved repetitiously upon the central entrance stone to the burial chamber of the ancient neolithic monument of Newgrange, Ireland, when connecting to my own Irish ancestry, displayed in Figure 4.

It became apparent within my practice that the realm of symbolism was a rich source to weave from, influenced by a vast array of cultures and different periods of human civilization, and the writings of psychologist Carl Jung or cultural and religious writer Joseph Campbell. Yet what became most obvious, and fundamental, to each of these works, regardless of form, scale, or medium, was that a direct correlation between viewer, work, and site, took precedence, mostly influenced through a direct engagement of body, space and time. I was a firm believer throughout this time that experience was the evidence. It was not my role as an artist to describe the experience, merely promote to experience, and hope that this experience would trigger an inherent response within viewers. By the time I graduated the works which built the body of my practice, aptly named *Internals*, *Externals*, *Eternals* and *Continuity*, each sought to represent, promote, or evoke, the human experience, a universal condition which we have sought to encapsulate throughout the history of human dwelling.

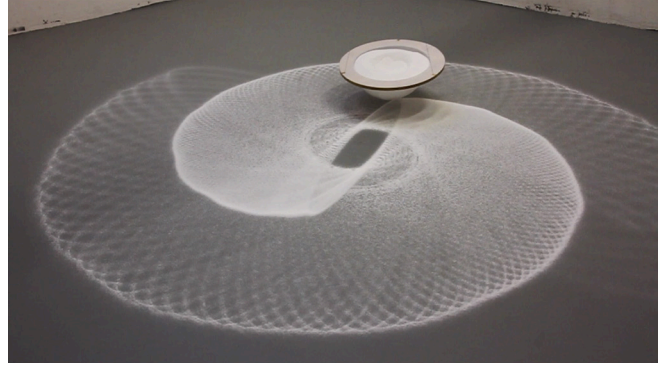


Figure 3: *Continuity* (2017). Formed plastic, steel wire, salt, and timber. 2000 x 2000 x 4 mm. Author's own image.



Figure 4: Entrance stone with spiral motif engravings at Newgrange, Ireland. Author's own image.



Now continuing my research into landscape architecture, I seek to redevelop my skillset as an artist, broadening the application of both physical and conceptual design which was founded in sculpture. Yet when I describe my education as a sculptor, and my current academic interest in landscape architecture, there is often a misconception around what surrounds each practice, and why, or how, I perceive them to interact. This is understandable, when in a contemporary sense, the practices of each are expansive, and, often deemed inaccessible, or misrepresented, to wider audiences. This is unassisted by various definitions which limit the possibilities of each practice.

The Tate Institution defines sculpture as “Three-dimensional art made by one of four basic processes: carving, modelling, casting, constructing” (Tate, n.d.). It is widely perceived in its traditional context, a high art which uses mediums of clay, plaster, and stone to create representational sculpture, or as I would define sculptural objects, usually displayed in the confinements of the white walls within galleries and museums of art. Simply put, for most audiences it is encountered as the art which is often placed in the centre of the room rather than hung on the wall. These audiences may even encounter the same forms displayed within a garden, escaping their condition of the white wall prison, and persuading a distanced contemplation in an outdoor environment.

On the other hand, the NZILA website describes that, at its core, landscape architecture is “the art and practice of designing the outdoor environment, especially designing parks or gardens to harmonise with buildings and roads” (NZILA, 2018). To a general audience, the role of a landscape architect is confined to the realm of designing residential gardens, or urban parks; a limited perception which overlooks the limitless potential for a practice in its adolescence, a practice designing in a vast, heterogenous medium; landscape.

In contrast to these untrained opinions, I believe the generic categorization of each practice to be an extremely thin, underwhelming, and limiting perception. Furthermore, in contrast to the perceived separation between practices, I believe that throughout history there has been periods where the relationship between sculpture and designed landscape has been remarkably close, and that through the evolution of human civilization different forms of both landscape design and sculpture are seen to develop, often within the same setting. It is also my understanding that in contemporary practice, examples of “designing the outdoor environment” (NZILA, 2018) constantly seem to transcend the realms between each discipline. Yet it is my belief still that, for an emerging practice such as landscape architecture, and its broad range of application, much is to be gained from sculpture, a practice with thousands of years of human development, a practice which has seen constant expansion through periods of time.

Many examples throughout history can act as precedent, reinforcing how the coalescence of sculpture and sculptural processes to designed landscape can create unique characteristics within a given landscape. Taking these precedents into consideration, it is my role to then offer insight as to how this shift may be developed within contemporary practice of Landscape Architecture in Aotearoa, proposing how the sculpture practice of Richard Serra, one of Americas most renown contemporary artists, could offer methods as to forming a more diverse language of landscape design within this practice.

## **Göbekli Tepe: Sculpting Landscapes of Religion**

The earliest examples of the blurring between the lines of sculpture and designed landscape include temples and monuments such as Göbekli Tepe, located in South-Eastern Turkey, which the eldest layers excavated date to 10<sup>th</sup> millennium B.C, and youngest to 9<sup>th</sup> millennium B.C. (Schmidt, 2010). Again, as can be made example for the aforementioned neolithic site of Newgrange, here, the coalition of sculpture and land help to explain an ancient understanding of the surrounding landscape, their world, and how they exist within.

The discovery of historically significant monoliths beneath the artificial hill at Göbekli Tepe, displayed in Figure 5, provides evidence that, as the NZILA defines as landscape architecture as shaping the land “to design an outdoor



Figure 5: Göbekli Tepe, Şanlıurfa. Image credit: Teomancincimit. CC BY-SA 3.0. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:G%C3%B6bekli\\_Tepe,\\_Urfa.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:G%C3%B6bekli_Tepe,_Urfa.jpg)

environment” (NZILA, 2018) has been practiced since before mankind's transition from hunter-gatherer. However, it is the combination of both designed landscape and sculptural depictions throughout this site that creates its significance.

The pictorial language of sculpture employed at Göbekli Tepe is used as a tool to express further importance of the designed site, communicating the understanding these people had of the surrounding landscape they occupied. Sculptural methods employed at Göbekli Tepe range from large scale minimalist representations of anthropomorphic forms to relief sculpture used to depict a wide range of animals, as shown in Figure 6, including cats, bulls, wild boar, foxes, ducks, cranes, gazelles, wild asses, snakes, spiders, and scorpions (Schmidt, 2010). There are three dimensional figures depicting both animals and men, whilst a combination of both architectural and sculptural elements can be seen in the remains of a totem pole (Schmidt, 2010). This same combination is found upon the dominant T-Shaped pillars, such as found upon Pillar 27 in Enclosure C, displayed as Figure 7, where the combination of animal motifs, perhaps zodiacs, aligned with representations of both the sun, central, and three repeating sunsets at the crest, may have been designed in alignment with the celestial bodies above, acting as a time-stamp of construction.

The vast representation of these figures throughout the site, alongside the fact that excavations of the layers found at Göbekli Tepe found no evidence of residential buildings, show



Figure 6: Relief sculpture of animals at Göbekli Tepe. Image Credit: Teomancimit. CC BY-SA 3.0.



Figure 7: Vulture stone on Pillar 43, Enclosure D, at Göbekli Tepe. Image Credit: Sue Fleckney. CC BY-SA 2.0.

that the site likely occupies a religious sphere rather than one of habitation (Schmidt, 2010; Tobolczyk, 2016). In this regard, the combination of landscape and sculpture features which form Göbekli Tepe could be seen developed as an early form of ritualistic or memorial landscape, with various forms of commemorative sculpture throughout depicting the physical, or spiritual landscape surrounding. At Göbekli Tepe, the distinction between each discipline is seemingly non-existent, rather, seen as a whole, a way of communicating an understanding of their neolithic world.

## **Ginkaku-ji: Sculpting**

### **Landscapes of Philosophy**

Another example of designed landscape and sculpture employed in unison to communicate cultural beliefs can be seen in the Zen Gardens throughout Japan. The fundamental thing about the design of these gardens, as described by art historian Langdon Warner, is “the fact that the art was definitely used by China and Japan to express the highest truths of religion and philosophy precisely as other civilisations have made use of the arts of literature and philosophy” (Warner, 2014, p.96-97).

Japanese aesthetic principles, founded in Shinto and Buddhism, which are essential principles to both a philosophy of life and to creating these gardens, have correlation to the fundamental principles of sculpture; “orientation, proportion,

scale, articulation and balance” (Rogers, 2023). Principles such as *wabi-sabi*, can be seen expressed physically through these principles of sculpture. The *wabi* is the aesthetics of simple, austere beauty, whilst the *sabi* is the aesthetics of rustic patina (Parkes & Loughnane, 2018). The principles of *wabi-sabi* are;

- Fukinsei: asymmetry, irregularity;
- Kanso: simplicity;
- Koko: basic, weathered;
- Shizen: without pretence, natural as a human behaviour;
- Yūgen: subtly profound grace, not obvious;
- Datsuzoku: unbounded by convention, free;
- Seijaku: tranquillity, silence.

(Parkes & Loughnane, 2018).

Traditionally these gardens have separated into three types; dry landscape gardens, or *karesansui*, that express naturalness through stones, gravel, and sand; tea ceremony gardens or *chaniwa*, which use landscape paths, or *roji*, leading to a teahouse; and natural scenery gardens, or *shizen fukeishiki*, which represent nature with ponds, hills, stones, and vegetation. Garden designers employ sculptural principles and processes to express fundamental principles of design essential to each garden type. An example of sculpture employed as a tool to transform landscape is most visible in the dry rock gardens, or *karesansui*, of Japan.

At the Temple of the Silver Pavilion, or Ginkaku-ji, in Kyoto, the *karesansui* has two main features which represent the surrounding landscape, shown in Figure 8, in the form of *wabi*. The *kogetsudai*, or moon viewing sand mound, is a conical mound of sand, styled to represent Mount Fuji (Parkes & Loughnane, 2018). It has a balanced, symmetrically sculpted upright form which creates its simple, and elegant beauty, orientated towards the end of the sand garden. Its nearby *ginshadan*, or silver sand sea, is a vast sand landscape built to represent the ocean through the balanced raking of sand, creating texture and pattern which articulates the landscape leading toward the *kogetsudai*.

The combination of these two *wabi* elements create a simple, abstractly sculpted garden, in direct contrast with the *sabi* of the rustic tea palace nearby. The careful and considerate approach to sculpting these landscape elements is an integral part of the design philosophy at Ginkaku-ji. The silver sand landscape at Ginkaku-ji is optimally viewed from the second floor of the pavilion under a full moon, as raked sand stripes appear as waves on the surface of a motionless ocean, and the smooth symmetry of the moon viewing platform elevates above (Parkes & Loughnane, 2018).

At Ginkaku-ji the intermingling of sculpture with landscape reveals an extremely unique, creative design. The resulting *karesansui* and *ginshadan* utilise extremely sculptural forms and processes to illustrate both a distinctive landscape and



Figure 8: 'Ginshaden', or Sea of Silver Sand and 'Kogetsudai', or Moon Viewing Platform, at Ginkaku-ji. Image Credit: Jean-Marie Hullot. CC BY 3.0.



to represent fundamental cultural beliefs and philosophies of life, and once again, any distinction between each discipline absent. These philosophies maintain a time-space approach, to be perceived by viewers as they experience the place in its entirety, with elements depicted as abstract forms, rather than literal depictions, requiring a different phenomenological approach.

## **Sculpture and Landscape**

Throughout history, the relationship between sculpture and designed landscape has been a diverse and culturally rich phenomena. Rosalind Krauss, who is discussed in greater depth throughout this dissertation, would describe in her seminal essay *Sculpture in the Expanded Field* that examples as such illustrated are in essence “part of a universe or cultural space in which sculpture was simply another part” (Krauss, 1979, p.38). It is the western perception of sculpture becoming restricted to the realm of fine art, historicised, and categorized into its own medium, which has created a separation between the two.

Yet even within the recent history of modern art, examples of contemporary sculpture continue to transcend into the boundary of designed landscape. One has only to look to, for example, the Land Art movement, to see the direct implications sculpture has had upon the outdoor environment in recent history. Artists such as Robert Smithson and his *Spiral*



*Jetty* (1970), or the site-specific environmental installations of Christo and Jean-Claude, displayed as Figure 9, have become modern icons, the resulting imagery widespread throughout contemporary society, their influence upon the perception of contemporary landscape through sculptural interaction becoming undeniable, each practice so vast, expansive, and fundamentally different. Whilst currently the purpose is to assess a single sculptural practice and bring learning outcomes to the field of contemporary landscape architecture in Aotearoa, I believe the same process could be undertaken for many of the previously aforementioned artists with extremely exciting results.

It is my proposition that through interrogation of contemporary sculpture practices, and its relationships pertaining to “designing the outdoor environment” (NZILA, 2018), sculpture and sculptural techniques may be employed as a catalyst in developing existing attributes within landscape architecture, a practice emerging from its adolescence, yet still a practice that “has accomplished so much for society with so few people and with so little understanding for of its scope or ambitions” (Olin, 1999, as cited in Beardsley, 2000).



Figure 9: Christo and Jeanne-Claude. (1972). *Valley Curtain*. Image Credit: Bruce McAllister, EPA/National Archives.

# CHAPTER ONE

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## INTRODUCTION

### **1.1 - Introducing Serra to Landscape Architecture**

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Throughout this dissertation I intend to explore the potential relationships between sculpture and landscape; generate an extensive understanding towards the sculptural practice of Richard Serra; explore the potential relationships between Serra and landscape; how Serra's practice could expand into the realm of landscape architecture; and if Serra's practice could expand attributes within contemporary landscape architecture, and if so - what, and how.

The pursuit of this selected topic seeks to compare contemporary landscape architecture to distinguishing features seen within other contemporary art practices. I wish to offer, if only through a single example, an insight as to how this practice, a practice which "has failed to attain the public profile of architecture or the fine arts: built works of landscape are not as readily identified and evaluated as paintings, sculptures, or buildings" (Beardsley, 2000), could use sculptural practices as a catalytic tool to evolve within Aotearoa.

The idea of these two practices intertwining is not particularly revolutionary. Sculpture, and contemporary art practices, have had a diverse history with regards to landscape, and though adolescent when compared to sculpture, contemporary landscape architecture is already seen "as an 'Expanded Field', as a discipline bridging science and art, mediating between nature and culture" (Beardsley, 2000), a term coined by

Rosalind Krauss to explain the conditions surrounding post-modernist sculpture only forty years prior, a term that is also used by Krauss to locate the practice of Serra between multiple categories. (Krauss, 1979).

It is this bridge with art that I intend to explore, with the hope that the practice of contemporary landscape architecture may employ some of the attributes found within sculptural practices, such as the practice of Richard Serra, to further distinguish its artistic endeavours. I have selected the practice of Richard Serra for a few reasons, though the point is to be made that the same could be done with the practice of many other contemporary artists.

Firstly, Serra's sculptures are extremely identifiable. The forms Serra creates, usually from a single material, are world renown for their formal qualities and for their phenomenological effects upon viewers. It is this effect that I wish for landscape architecture in Aotearoa to further develop, an effect commonly found within contemporary art practices.

Secondly, Serra's sculptures are site-specific, containing a direct relationship with the surrounding environment. Site-specificity is widely understood as an element within landscape architecture, discussed in literature such as Kenneth Frampton's *'Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for Architecture of Resistance'* (Frampton, 1983), or James Corner's biological analogies of *'Species, Clone, or Hybrid'* (Corner,

2013, in Girot & Imhof, 2016). I believe this site-specificity to be useful when developing a sense of how Serra's sculpture practice responds to landscape, how it may be considered as a landscape practice, and if, or how, it may in turn evolve attributes within landscape Architecture practices in Aotearoa.

Thirdly, Serra has a strong, well-documented and often processual design practice as design is a fundamental process to both the practice of Serra and contemporary landscape Architecture. I believe this overlap to be essential when determining potential effects of which the former may have upon the latter.

With these considerations, it is my theory that Serra's practice, which has been located as working within an 'expanded field', maintains a strong relevance with regards to the condition of contemporary landscape architecture, and to attributes displayed within the practice.

## **1.2 - Research Approach**

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The following discussion outlines the research approach that this dissertation will follow. It is my theory, that when analysing the practice Serra, an artist with a vast history within the realm of contemporary art, and expanding it to the realm of landscape architecture, a multi-method approach to conducting research is best suited to this dissertation. Through

use of multiple research methods, such as Literature Review, Biographic Research, Design Drawing, and Design Critique, a wide range of approaches to explore research questions are gained. This is critical as each approach allows for broader outcomes, expanding the potential knowledge generated within this dissertation.

To only analyse Serra's artistic practice from a theoretical standpoint would be ignoring the premise of combining sculpture and landscape, two practices embedded in design, to generate new knowledge. It is particularly critical that, as the realm of Serra's practice is heavily artistic and design orientated, a research-through-design method is applied, to fully realise the potential as to how Serra's practice may have influence upon the realm of landscape architecture. For this dissertation, a series of questions have been formulated as a basis for subsequent research.

## **1.3 - Research Questions**

### **1.3.1 - Q1. What are the potential relationships between sculpture and landscape?**

This chapter begins with a theoretical review of the topics of sculpture and landscape. To unpack these relationships gives foundation to the research continued throughout this dissertation, and in a wider perspective, offers rationale as to how other influences could take place within this discipline. As such, Chapter Two acts a scope, employing a Literature Review method which explores existing relevant

academic and theoretical information which underpins this dissertation topic, focusing on *'Sculpture in the Expanded Field'* (1979) by Rosalind Krauss. The literature review then expands to include connections to pertinent material and literature from the field of landscape architecture, including *'A word for Landscape Architecture'* (2000) by John Beardsley, *'Landscape Architecture in an Expanded Field'* (2013) by Blanchon-Caillet et al., and *'Synthetic patterns: Fabricating landscapes in the age of 'green''* (2013) by Karen M'Closkey. Locating intersections between sculpture and landscape, and the importance of Serra to sculpture within this chapter, the question then shifts to place focus upon Serra's practice.

### **1.3.2 - Q2. How to Explore and Generate an In-Depth Understanding towards the Sculptural Practice of Richard Serra?**

This question then shifts focus from theoretical underpinnings of sculpture and landscape towards understanding the practice of "Richard the Artist" (Crow, 2015). Albeit, understanding, and furthermore representing, a career which spans over a half-century is an arduous task for any piece of research. Yet the benefits of an extensive understanding of Serra's practice are multi-faceted, this foundation of knowledge generating the potential for interdisciplinary studies such as the purpose of this dissertation, the outcomes of which also contain the capacity to influence prospective designers within the field of landscape architecture, and furthermore encourage a multi-modal, interdisciplinary form of research and inquiry into sculpture, or the wider field of arts, amongst limitless

other fields of activity and interests. Chapter Three therefore employs a Biographical Research method to begin unpacking the developing practice of Richard Serra, highlighting key life experiences, influences, and artworks, all of which assist in locating key themes, interests, and processes behind Serra's sculptural practice. Chapter Three then concludes by adapting a Design Drawing method, formulated from both Serra's *Verblast* (1967) and 'Form and fabric in landscape architecture : a visual introduction' (2001) by Catherine Dee, to explore the practice of Serra, utilizing design as a critical, visual method which develops relevant knowledge. Design Drawing is a fundamental process within both the practice of sculpture and of landscape architecture. As Serra's career is predicated upon a heavy visual practice, developing a variety of techniques from Serra's practice through drawing assists in developing a stronger understanding the attributes which drives Serra's practice. Upon this foundation of knowledge, the question then develops a connection between this specific practice, and the wider field of landscape.

### **1.3.3 - Q3. What are the Potential Relationships between Serra and Landscape?**

Upon an established foundation of knowledge pertaining to Serra's practice, the themes, processes, and influences throughout his career detailed, Chapter Four then develops in questioning the possible relationships between Serra's practice and landscape. This area of exploration is crucial to deepening an understanding of the multitude of ways in which Serra's practice finds grounding and influence in the

realm of landscape. Through analysing and critiquing three examples from Serra's career in the form of a Design Critique method based upon the work of architectural critic Wayne Attoe, as highlighted in *'Landscape Architecture Criticism'* (2020) by Jacky Bowring, this Design Critique focuses on the categories of descriptive, and interpretive, purposed critique. The point of two modes of critique is to gain a variety of critical approaches when analysing the relationship between Serra's practice and landscape. These approaches are then applied to positions identified by Bowring later in *'Landscape Architecture Criticism'* In *Chapter 5: Theoretical Positions: Art and Aesthetics, Experience and Emotion, and Context.* (Bowring, 2020). These three positions are adapted to extensively explore Serra's relationship to landscape, moving chronologically through his works *Shift* (1970), *Tilted Arc* (1981), and *East-West/West-East* (2014).

#### **1.3.4 - Q4. How could Serra's Practice Expand into the Realm of Landscape Architecture?**

With connections between Serra and landscape explored between three works throughout Serra's career, Chapter Five then expands upon this question, detailing potential interrelations between Serra's practice and the realm of landscape architecture. As previous questions have analysed Serra using research methods such as Literature Review, Biographical Research, Design Drawing, and Design Critique, predicated upon existing documentation and literature surrounding Serra's practice, this section of the dissertation adopts another form of research inquiry to deepen



understandings of Serra's work through an Experiential Design Critique, a form of critique located by Alexandra Lange in her book *'Writing about Architecture: Mastering the Language of Buildings and Cities': Formal, Experiential, Historical, and Activism* (Lange, 2012). An experiential approach is fundamental when exploring "how a work makes you feel" (Bowring, 2020, p.26). This chapter details a first-hand, phenomenological account of an experience at Serra's *Te Tuhirangi Contour* (2001), influenced by the works of traditional philosophers such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Martin Heidegger, but also through the likes of phenomenological geographer John Wylie. This process is essential when developing an understanding of metaphysical and sensory aspects of Serra's works, yet for the purpose of this dissertation maintains a descriptive foundation rather than become submerged in philosophical rationale.

### **1.3.5 - Q5. Could Serra's Practice Expand Attributes within Contemporary Landscape Architecture in Aotearoa? If so what, and how?**

Given the first-hand knowledge gained during the account of *Te Tuhirangi Contour*, in combination with the cumulation of knowledge gained throughout previous chapters, Chapter Six then concludes research by focusing upon contemporary landscape architecture in the context of Aotearoa, seeking to explore ways in which this developing practice may begin to develop an attainable, recognisable form of its own, as the likes of contemporary art and architecture has. This question is a final, fundamental stage where the sculptural

ethos, processes and works of Richard Serra are applied to recent landscape architecture projects within New Zealand, the Maungawhau Tihi Boardwalk, and He Puna Taimoana Hot Pools. These projects are notable as they both receive appraisal in the NZILA award category of Parks, Open Spaces and Recreation. Through a combination of critique forms, including analysis of judges' comments, descriptive, and experiential design critique, these works are discussed through positions such as utility, and experience, with direct reference to Serra, in a discourse which highlights the impacts Serra may have in expanding landscape architecture in Aotearoa.

## **1.4 - Research Methods**

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### **1.4.1 - Literature Review**

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When approaching the main topic of Serra and landscape architecture, this dissertation begins with a scoping question which underpins the relevance between the topics of sculpture and landscape, responding to Question 1: *What are the potential relationships between sculpture and landscape?*

This chapter seeks to explore the relevant theoretical and academic information relevant to the topic, motivating the aim of the dissertation, justifying research questions, and providing a theoretical foundation for the study.

Due to the nature of this dissertation bridging boundaries between two separate fields, a literature review method has been selected to identify what theory exists surrounding

the fields of landscape and sculpture. The literature review method is commonly applied as a tool to “help provide an overview of areas in which research is disparate and interdisciplinary” (Snyder, 2019, p.333). As such, an integrative review method has been selected, as this type of review “often requires a more creative collection of data, as the purpose is usually not to cover all articles ever published on the topic but rather to combine perspectives and insights from different fields or research traditions” (Snyder, 2019, p.336). Whilst the data collection and analysis of integrative and critical reviews are often poorly formulated, and are often not developed to a specific standard, the main focus of this review is to “critically analyze and examine the literature and the main ideas and relationships of an issue” (Snyder, 2019, p.336).

The basic steps which formulate the process for which this literature review takes form is developed through an amalgamation of various standards and methods for conducting literature reviews as detailed by Hannah Snyder in *‘Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines’* (2019). This format contains four main phases: designing the review, conducting the review, analysis, and writing up the review (Snyder, 2019).

As the focus question of this chapter is examining the relationship between sculpture and landscape, the review begins with an in-depth analysis of Rosalind Krauss’s seminal essay *‘Sculpture in the Expanded Field’* (1979). This piece of

literature, as previously mentioned, is extremely pertinent in locating the interrelation between sculpture and landscape, in a condition of evolution of which Krauss calls an 'expanded field'. Given an extensive account of information related to Krauss's theoretical stance, the research then finds grounding within the realm of landscape architecture, searching for relevant sources of information and literature pertaining to the topics, through keywords: sculpture, landscape, architecture, expanded field. These key terms are applied to a variety of journal and article databases, including the Lincoln University library catalogue, Google Scholar, and JSTOR. Through these databases, the selected information to be included will be the most relevant, theoretically based sources in approaching the main focus of Question 1: *What are the potential relationships between sculpture and landscape?*. Information will be compiled, and presented in chronological order of source, seeking to understand the development of relationships between disciplines.

#### **1.4.2 - Biographical Research**

Continuing from the theoretical underpinnings of sculpture and landscape, where Serra is located as a key figure working within this expanded field between landscape and sculpture, a second question is generated in Chapter Three as to further understand the key attributes of Serra's practice: Q2. *How to explore and generate an in-depth understanding towards the sculptural practice of Richard Serra?* This chapter explores this question through two methods, the first being in the form of

Biographical Research, seeking to develop a narrative which explores Serra's developing practice in a chronological order, summarising key life events, experiences, influences, themes, artworks and processes which develop towards Serra's sculptural practice.

Qualitative research methods such as Biographic Research draw influence from a variety of theoretical approaches, the term biographic method itself being constructed of a combination of loosely related terms and activities, including "method, life, self, experience, epiphany, case, autobiography, ethnography, auto-ethnography, biography, ethnography story, discourse, narrative, narrator, fiction, history, personal history, oral history, case history, case study, writing presence, difference, life history, life story, self story, and personal experience story" (Denzin, 1989, p.43). As such, the definition of Biographic Research can be problematic due to the variety of approaches contained. For this chapter, the Biographic Research method will focus on a life history method to detail an account of Serra's developing practice, moving in a chronological order.

The life history method refers to the "collection, interpretation and report writing of the 'life' (the life history method) in terms of the story told or as the construction of the past experience of the individual (from various sources) to relate to the story" (Roberts, 2002, p.3). Not to be mistaken for the similarly termed life story approach, the life history method revolves around the narrative of the researcher, seeking to explore an account of an individual life within its social context. Whilst the role of the researcher is to represent

an authentic, credible account of the subject, maintaining as much of an objective role as possible when representing information from sources, undoubtedly there is a manner of subjective interpretation when forming a narrative. This narrative is important, as a narrative approach allows for a factual basis to become secondary to a creative, explorative construction of the subjects unique position, incorporating life stories and information in a way which interplays between subject and researcher (Miller, 2000). A Biographic Research method of research, applied to Q2. *How to explore and generate an in-depth understanding towards the sculptural practice of Richard Serra?*, develops a key step in locating and understanding the sculptural practice of Serra for both reader and researcher, and deepens a connection to the overall topic.

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### **1.4.3 - Design Drawing**

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Following the Biographic Method which begins Chapter Three and generates a deeper understanding of key themes, events, life stories and artworks which developed Serra's sculptural practice, a secondary research method is employed to answer Q2: *How to explore and generate an in-depth understanding towards the sculptural practice of Richard Serra?* The latter half of this chapter utilises a Design Drawing method to expand upon knowledge gained throughout the former biographic account, exploring Serra's processual attributes through an immersive, critical and visual method of research.

Design Drawing is a fundamental process within both the practice of sculpture and landscape architecture. As

highlighted in the previous biographic account, Serra's allure is formulated upon a heavy visual practice, and as such, developing a variety of techniques from Serra's practice through drawing will assist in developing stronger understandings toward the attributes and processes which drives Serra's practice, which may encourage further development towards design attributes within the realm of landscape architecture.

Design drawing has foundation as an approach to landscape architecture design theory seen throughout practices such as that of artist and landscape architect Catherine Dee. Dee is author of the books *'To Design Landscape: Art Nature and Utility'* (2012), *'Form and fabric in landscape architecture : a visual introduction'* (2001) and conceiver and editor of the critical visual essay section *'Thinking Eye'* within the *'European Journal of Landscape Architecture'* (JoLA) until 2012. Dee is known for her unique approach to the use of drawing in attainable and critical approaches to landscape architecture education, and in the development of landscape architecture as an art practice.

It is Dee's belief that "innovation in landscape architecture could be more enhanced if drawing was treated less as a technique, and more forcefully as an experimental method" (Dee, 2016, p.52). She explains one of the vital roles in founding *'Thinking Eye'* was to illustrate how visual media can change the perception of actual landscapes, and through those gaining the imagined, gain credence in the making of future landscapes (Dee, 2016). She elaborates that "another

impetus for establishing a platform for critical visual research was to better link landscape architecture with the wider arts, in particular, with contemporary fine art” (Dee, 2016, p.52).

In *‘Form and fabric in landscape architecture : a visual introduction’* (2001), Dee illustrates seven morphological attributes related to landscape design; ‘Landscape fabric’, ‘Space’, ‘Paths’, ‘Edges’, ‘Foci’, ‘Thresholds’ and ‘Detail’ (Dee, 2001). These attributes can be used to “provide a conceptual framework for understanding the experience, use and structure of landscape for design” (Dee, 2001, p.2). Discussed throughout this dissertation is how a Serra-esque practice may contain influence in design towards the above, particularly Foci, a collective term to explain forms and places which are visually dominant and distinctive, a rich feature throughout both Serra’s career, and the wider realm of art and architecture. Yet to structure landscape design according to processes attributed to Serra requires grounding within his own practice. As such, the Design Drawing method applied in the latter half of Chapter Three will draw influence from Serra’s *Verblast* (1967), where a series of verbs were developed by Serra as a framework to creating works from various materials, acting as engagements of action in relation to self, material, place and process. These drawing processes, and drawing outcomes developed throughout this design exploration are grounded in concepts such as ‘embodiment’, ‘incorporation’ and ‘taskscape’ discussed in Tim Ingold’s *‘The Temporality of the Landscape’* (1993), where Ingold discusses “through living in it, the landscape becomes a



part of us, just as we are a part of it" (Ingold, 1993, p.154). As 'body' and 'landscape' are both described as 'form', the formative process is described as 'embodiment', elaborating that the embodiment process requires what he describes as 'incorporation': "a movement wherein forms themselves are generated" (Ingold, 1993, p.157). As the drawings are a series of operations, or 'tasks', which are to be performed within an environment, or 'landscape', they become a form of 'taskscape', and rather than becoming focused upon the final product, as found within the likes of landscape painting, the focus becomes placed upon the process itself, largely self-referential, a recording of action and time.

The framework provided by Dee then details how, as a designer, the attributes, and processes of design drawing, as formulated in Serra's ethos, may develop within a landscape architectural setting. This could be used as a guide to assist in capturing qualities of materiality or ephemeral, temporal elements of nature in particular landscape settings, "our task in design, is, as it were, to sculpt time" (Dee, 2012, p.15). For this dissertation Dee's framework will be referred to in discussion, rather than applied to the Design Drawing process, yet these concepts remain extremely valuable when developing a different understanding of spatial morphology and landscape experiences as an architectural designer.

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### 1.4.4 - Design Critique

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Following the insights developed towards understanding Serra's practice in Chapter Three, another method of research is developed within following chapters throughout the dissertation when answering the following research questions developed, Q3. *What are the potential relationships between Serra and landscape?*, Q4. *How could Serra's practice expand into the realm of landscape architecture?* and Q5. *Could Serra's practice expand attributes within contemporary landscape architecture in Aotearoa? If so what, and how?*

These objectives will be discussed through various methods of Design Critique in subsequent chapters, with two methods at first applied to develop knowledge surrounding a variety of Serra's works, found in Chapter Four, and again in Chapter Five. These objectives will also serve as a foundation of knowledge when approaching the final objective, which employs yet another Design Critique method to compare and contrast two examples of contemporary landscape architecture to various attributes, processes and artworks attributed to Serra in Chapter Six.

Design Critique within landscape architecture is an "important part of reinforcing the discipline's particular qualities and strengths" (Bowring, 2020, p.18). In '*Landscape Architecture Criticism*', Bowring describes that "Landscape architectural criticism is an emerging form of practice. It is evolving from within landscape architecture, and also in distinction from allied fields of criticism such as art and architecture" (Bowring, 2020, p.9).

In contrast, yet extremely relevant to the discourse within this dissertation, the history of criticism and critique within contemporary art practices has a well-documented history, with major contributions from critics ranging from Clement Greenberg to Lucy Lippard and Rosalind Krauss. As Serra's contemporary practice is world renown and has been discussed since the expansion of modernist to post-modernist sculpture, there is a vast range of supporting documentation to draw from. I saw no reason as to not apply this information to critique where necessary, especially as many sites were unable to be visited.

#### **1.4.4.1 - Chapter Four Design Critique**

Chapter Four begins by applying a Design Critique method to Q3. *What are the potential relationships between Serra and landscape?* This exploration of Serra's works is a fundamental step which assists in developing a more substantial understanding of the ethos, processes and attributes upon which Serra's practice is founded upon, and how this may find grounding in the realm of landscape, and landscape architecture, accordingly.

This question will be answered through applying a variation of Attoe's Design Critique method from his book *'Architecture and Critical Imagination'* of 1978, and discussed by Bowring (2020), with focus on 'Descriptive' and 'Interpretive' modes of critique, to a range of Serra's works. Descriptive critique is factually based and seeks to expand the understanding of

a work through describing it within its context, and for the purpose of this chapter, will focus predominantly in a static account of the artwork during its time of creation. (Bowring, 2020). Interpretive critique seeks to question and expand understandings of design, often purposed in a manner which is not seeking to evaluate, nor judge a work, but seeks to persuade in seeing a work in a particular manner, and for the purpose of this chapter, will be predominantly purposed as an advocatory criticism (Bowring, 2020).

The purpose of different forms of critique is to gain a diverse range of critical approaches towards the interrelation of Serra's practice and landscape, "emphasising how critique is a fluid art" (Bowring, 2020, p.25). These two purposes of critiques described prior are then applied to three separate positions identified by Jacky Bowring in '*Landscape Architecture Criticism*' In '*Chapter 5: Theoretical Positions:*' '*Art and Aesthetics*', '*Experience and Emotion*', and '*Context*'. (Bowring, 2020). Through examination of Serra's *Shift* (1970), *Tilted Arc* (1981), and *East-West/West-East* (2014), it is anticipated that various relationships between Serra's practice and landscape will be revealed. These potential relationships are fundamental when examining later objectives, with knowledge gained used as foundation as to how these relationships may function within the realm of landscape architecture.

### **1.4.4.2 - Chapter Five Design Critique**

Following the descriptive and interpretive critique, positioned through different theoretical lenses and applied to three of Serra's works, Chapter Five employs yet another form of Design Critique when discussing Q4. *How could Serra's practice expand into the realm of landscape architecture?* Rather than relying on existing documentation and literature related to Serra's works, this chapter seeks to deepen the understandings formulated of Serra's artworks and underlying ethos through a first-hand, experiential account of being with his *Te Tuhirangi Contour* (2001), Serra's longest work internationally, and his only existing work within the context of Aotearoa, located in Kaipara Harbour. Unpacking this question is fundamental when seeking to explore the phenomenological aspects which underpin his practice.

Experiential Design Critique, a position of critique located by Alexandra Lange in her book *'Writing about Architecture: Mastering the Language of Buildings and Cities': Formal, Experiential, Historical, and Activism* (Lange, 2012), has an important position when understanding "how a work makes you feel" (Bowring, 2020, p.26). In this form of criticism, rather than convincing a reader of what is successful, what to like, or not, the critic acts as a guide, helping readers to experience (Meis, 2011). Through an experiential account, this form of critique can interpret sensory aspects of a work to readers, and draws particular influence from the theory of phenomenology (Bowring, 2020).

Influenced by the works of philosophers such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Martin Heidegger, yet also the work of geographer John Wylie and anthropologist Tim Ingold, this form of research lends itself to understanding the metaphysical and sensory aspects of Serra's practice, and the influences gained for the wider practice through 'being with' his work. It is to note that, for this chapter, rather than becoming submerged in philosophical rationale, foundation or arguments, this account takes a descriptive form, in an attempt to guide and deepen connection to Serra for the reader.

#### **1.4.4.3 - Chapter Six Design Critique**

Upon the knowledge gained from the descriptive and interpretive Design Critique methods of Attoe in Chapter Four, applied to Serra's *Shift* (1970), *Tilted Arc* (1981), and *East-West/West-East* (2014), and the experiential Design Critique method of Lange in Chapter Five, applied to *Te Tuhirangi Contour* (2001), a final method of Design Critique is introduced in Chapter Six. This chapter seeks to discuss Q5. *Could Serra's practice expand attributes within contemporary landscape architecture in Aotearoa? If so what, and how?* This final question is crucial in relating the knowledge gained involving Serra, his sculptural ethos, processes and artworks, to contemporary landscape architecture in Aotearoa, seeking to develop ways in which this knowledge may assist this evolving practice in developing an attainable, recognisable form akin to the realm of art, and architecture.

After a brief introduction to the question, highlighting the value which Serra has to the realm of landscape architecture, a hybrid Design Critique methodology is applied to recently completed landscape architecture projects within Aotearoa, the Maungawhau Tihi Boardwalk in Mt Eden, Auckland, and the He Puna Taimoana Hot Pools in New Brighton, Christchurch. These projects are both commended within the NZILA awards, the former award winning, and latter granted Award of Excellence, within the Parks, Open Spaces and Recreation category.

The Design Critique methodology followed in assessing these two works is a combination of both the 'Formal' criticism method of Lange (2012), the Descriptive criticism method of Attoe (1978), and to an extent, the Comparative criticism method of Blanchon (2016), each as identified by Bowring in '*Landscape Architecture Criticism*' (2020). These methods, again, "emphasising how critique is a fluid art" (Bowring, 2020, p.25).

Formal criticism relates to the qualities of a work's form, and tends to focus on visual aspect, and could be judgemental, where a critic might "walk you through the building, describing and picking at it as they go, suggesting improvements" (Lange, 2012, p.10). This is akin to the Descriptive critique method as identified by both Attoe (1978) and Blanchon (2016), which again, is purposed in a critic observing and assessing the aesthetic qualities of a work (Bowring, 2020). Yet when 'suggesting improvements', as described by Lange, Chapter Six draws direct reference back to Serra, and as such, is also

considered a form of Comparative Critique as identified by Blanchon (2016). This Comparative Design Critique explores projects in the same area, or which address the same question (Bowring, 2020), the question being: *Could Serra's practice expand attributes within contemporary landscape architecture in Aotearoa? If so what, and how?* Through each of these critique forms, and analysis of judges' comments highlighting rationale for appraisal of each project, these works are discussed through positions such as utility, and experience, with direct reference to Serra, in a discourse which highlights the impacts Serra may have in expanding landscape architecture in Aotearoa.

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# CHAPTER TWO

## A REVIEW OF THE EXPANDED FIELD

### 2.1 - Sculpture in the Expanded Field

When discussing sculpture, and the potential for sculpture to operate within relation to the realm of landscape architecture, it is hard to move past Rosalind Krauss's *'Sculpture in the Expanded Field'* as a starting point for discourse. Although written in 1979 and composed with specific concerns to the condition of sculpture and its turn from modernism to post-modernism, this seminal essay has been well discussed throughout the history of contemporary sculpture, becoming influential to the development of post-modernism, yet also elaborated upon within many other fields, including contemporary landscape architecture.

In *'Sculpture in the Expanded Field'*, Krauss discusses the emergence of post-modernism and its "conditions of possibility" (Krauss, 1979, p.44), applying a logical expanded field to develop upon the previous conditions of Modernism. She describes that during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly seen in post-war America, an infinitely wide variety of evolving artworks began to intersect perceived boundaries between disciplines, the criticism surrounding the category of sculpture becoming "kneaded and stretched and twisted in an extraordinary demonstration of elasticity" and increasingly difficult to define, unless "the category can be made to become infinitely malleable" (Krauss, 1979, p.30).

Krauss describes this condition, though developed in ideology

of the new, as being due to the rage to historicise, the new made familiar through critical comparison to forms of the past (Krauss, 1979). Through the historians attempts to rationalise the progressing forms of sculpture, the differences became diminished, and as the art began to incorporate a wider range of subject matter, so did the rationale, thus the definition of sculpture becoming harder to pronounce, until we “both do and don’t know what sculpture is” (Krauss, 1979, p.33).

Krauss argues that in fact, we do know what it is; that at its core, sculpture is a historically bounded category, not devoid of its own logic and rules, and though able to be applied to a variety of situations, they are not incredibly open to change (Krauss, 1979). The logic of sculpture is then defined as being “inseparable from the logic of the monument” (Krauss, 1979, p.33), a commemorative representation of the unique site it sits within, most represented in western society through vertical figurative sculptures placed upon plinths. (Krauss, 1979).

The logic of the monument however, as any convention, was not to last. Krauss describes sculpture as entering “the space of what could be called its negative condition – a kind of sitelessness, or homelessness, an absolute loss of place” (Krauss, 1979, p.34). Sculpture became largely abstract, self-referential, and nomadic, entering its Modernist period toward the turn of the century. Toward the following mid-century, the characteristics of modernism was perceived as increasingly negative, descending into a state where it appeared “as a kind

of black hole in the space of consciousness” (Krauss, 1979, p.34), the positive content of what it is becoming increasingly harder to define, and much easier to detail in what it was not.

Krauss examples the work of Robert Morris in the late 60’s as the purest examples of this condition. In his *Green Gallery Installation* of 1964, displayed as Figure 10, the sculptural forms produced are intentionally minimalist, architectural forms which extend from the surrounding architecture.

The reading of this sculpture is reduced, until it can only be described as what is in the room that is not the room. The same example is made for his work *Untitled (Mirrored Boxes)* of 1965, pictured as Figure 11, where minimalist mirrored boxes are displayed in an outdoor pavilion, and though visually reflective of the surrounding landscape context, are just exactly not part of that landscape.

Describing Modernism as in its “full condition of its inverse logic... pure negativity: the combination of exclusions” (Krauss, 1979, p.36), Krauss begins to diagram her foundation for the Expanded Field. Sculpture is then categorised as being ‘not-architecture’ and ‘not-landscape’, her additional diagram, shown as Figure 12, representing the restraint of modernist sculpture in its inverse state (Krauss, 1979).

The diagram is then expanded, Krauss describing that “the expanded field is thus generated by problematizing the set of oppositions between which the modernist category sculpture

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Figure 10: Morris, R. (1964). *Green Gallery Installation*. Polyhedrons made from 2x4 wood painted gray. (From Krauss & Krens, 1994).

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Figure 11: Morris, R. (1965). *Untitled (Mirrored Boxes)*. Mirror, glass and wood ; 914 × 914 × 914 mm. From *Notes on Structure*, by E. Henriksen & R. Morales for Cabinet Magazine, 2005. ([https://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/19/henriksen\\_morales.php](https://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/19/henriksen_morales.php)).

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Figure 12: Rosalind Krauss’ diagram illustrating the inverse logic problem seen in modernist sculpture (Krauss, 1979, p.36).

is suspended” (Krauss, 1979, p.38). The logical expansion of the modernist condition introduces the addition of each category in their positive state, this expansion a form of a Klein group, creating interrelationships between each axis, displayed in Figure 13. In this display, Krauss explains sculpture as “only one term on the periphery of a field in which there are other, differently structured possibilities” (Krauss, 1979, p.38).

Within this expanded field, the practice of many artists can be seen to be occupying multiple places, for “within the situation of postmodernism, practice is not defined in relation to a given medium – sculpture – but rather in relation to logical operations on a set of cultural terms, for which any medium – photography, books, lines on walls, mirrors or sculpture itself – might be used” (Krauss, 1979, p.42).

Krauss identifies that many artists have been seen to practice within the ‘expanded field’, often occupying a variety of different categories. One artist defined as practicing between the categories of both ‘landscape’ and ‘not-landscape’, in the periphery field of marked sites, ‘architecture’ and ‘not-architecture’, in the periphery of axiomatic structures, is the work of Richard Serra, who I have chosen to continue exploring through this dissertation. (Krauss, 1979).

Krauss’s *‘Sculpture in the Expanded Field’* shows that connections between Serra and landscape have been discussed within the relevant literature since the dawn of post-

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Figure 13: Krauss’ diagram illustrating the expanded field of sculpture as a Klein group, locating different structured possibilities for each axis (Krauss, 1979, p.37).

modernism, and that exploring this connection is therefore not a revolutionary idea. However, for Krauss this 'expanded field' is discussed only within the realm of contemporary sculpture, without mention of this potential intersection into the realm of landscape architecture, and what it could mean for this emerging practice.

## **2.2 - The Expanded Field of Landscape Architecture**

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Similar examples within literature pertaining to contemporary landscape architecture can be found to recognise the same condition when considering the current state of landscape architecture and its interdisciplinary potential, and that "we are now apt to view landscape architecture as an 'expanded field', as a discipline bridging science and art, mediating between nature and culture" (Beardsley, 2000).

In '*The Expanded Field of Landscape Architecture*', Blanchon-Caillet discusses that, because modern landscape architecture was never universal, the terminologies of 'transitional, modern, modernistic, modernist' by Marc Treib are more fitted to the practice of landscape architecture (Blanchon-Caillet., et al, 2013). She elaborates that because "landscape architecture has been locally nuanced by aesthetic, social and most importantly, environmental considerations, comparisons with modern art(s)-and even architecture- are difficult to make. Landscape design is less pure, less an object, less advanced as form and more accepting of natural processes"

(Blanchon-Caillet., et al, 2013, p.4).

It is this condition, and the advancement of form within landscape architecture, that I intend evaluate through the comparison of the practice of Serra to landscape. This proposal could be perceived how Treib defines modernist landscapes, a landscape that “deliberately proposed and tested new spatial and formal ideas, often adapting graphic idioms drawn from the modern plastic arts” (Treib, 2013, p.6); the expanded field of Serra’s practice applied to landscape architecture to propose innovative ideas within contemporary practice.

Blanchon-Caillet then identifies the work of Karen M’Closkey and her article *‘Synthetic Patterns: Fabricating Landscapes in the Age of ‘Green’*”, where an argument is developed that “today’s profession needs to complement and extend its problem-solving mode of environmental consciousness with an emphasis focused equally on expression and experience” (Blanchon-Caillet., et al, 2013, p.4). Serra’s practice, extremely spatial and experiential in nature, when applied to this practice, could be understood as an attempt to emphasise expression and experience, as M’Closkey proposes necessary in the contemporary practice of landscape architecture.

In exploring the ‘expanded field’ of sculpture, and landscape architecture, it is my hope to offer an example as to how advancements can be made within the field of landscape

architecture in Aotearoa. Though this idea is explored through the practice of one sculptor, this insight then may be applied to a variety of contemporary artists, or even to other disciplines in general. As the practice of landscape architecture is considerably adolescent, lacking the “rich theoretical and critical traditions of architecture” (Beardsley, 2000) or contemporary art, interdisciplinary studies such as this may serve as an insight to how specific attributes can begin to evolve and develop recognition for a practice emerging from its adolescence.

### **2.3 - Richard Serra and the Expanded Field**

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Continuing this condition of expansion into the realm of landscape architecture, I intend to explore the work of Richard Serra ‘as’ landscape. Krauss defines Serra as one of the first to explore this expanded field, with works such as *Shift* operating between ‘landscape’ and ‘not-landscape’, in the periphery field of marked sites, and *One Ton Prop* located between ‘architecture’ and ‘not-architecture’, in the periphery of axiomatic structures (Krauss, 1979).

Most known for his large-scale sculptures designed for site-specific landscape, architectural and urban settings, Serra’s art practice has continued to expand the definition of sculpture since the mid-1960’s. Serra’s works have a direct relationship with the surrounding landscape, the site-specificity of his practice meaning the art produced becomes inseparable from the context of which they are located. This

site-specific approach to creating works often highlights the unique qualities of the landscape, drawing attention to the surrounding environment, whilst exploring relationships between the body, space, and time.

In many of the works explored through this dissertation, such as *Shift*, *Tilted Arc*, *East-West/West-East* and *Te Tuhirangi Contour*, Serra continues to practice within what Krauss defines as 'Marked Sites': the periphery between 'landscape' and 'not-landscape'. The essence of these interventions in the landscape, as Robert Smithson would explain, attempted to "get away from the formalism of studio art... to give the viewer more of a confrontation with the physicality of things outside" (Smithson, cited in Glueck, 1968). Even in architectural settings, it is this 'confrontation of physicality' that becomes most prevalent within Serra's practice, with often heavy and large-scale works activating the surrounding space. It is the viewers navigation of this space, and the resulting experience, which in essence becomes a part of the artwork, an embodied, breathing process.

Given the period of time which has passed since Krauss' first coined this condition of evolution within sculpture, a period of progression in which Serra and the broader realm of sculpture has continued to develop upon their previous states, I wonder; are we now more apt to understand this rather as an 'expanding field'? A condition which progresses according to the surrounding influences, growth and development of practice in a contemporary world? Rather



than historicise, or romanticise, these seminal moments which led to revolutionary ideas, yet distinguish them as different modes of design discipline, should we not revisit, reintegrate this knowledge, back towards our own practice? Towards the emerging practice of landscape architecture? This logical progression of continual development, of self-awareness and improvement, of external influence, is a prevalent theme within the arts. It seems rather fitting that the expanding field, rather, gives credence to the idea that we may have yet hope for our landscapes, that we may yet attain a similar form of understanding and recognition in the public sphere, 'removing the pedestal' of our discipline and seeking towards new forms of architectural expression and experience.

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# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **LOCATING AND EXPLORING SERRA'S PRACTICE**

### **3.1 - A Biographic Account of Serra's Practice**

To begin this chapter, the Biographic Research method will focus on a life history method to detail an account of Serra's developing practice, moving in a chronological order. This narrative developed throughout Chapter Three develops a key step in locating and understanding the sculptural practice of Serra, deepening a connection to the overall topic.

#### **3.1.1 - Early Life**

Richard Serra was born in San Francisco, California on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1938. He was the second of three sons to Tony, a Spanish native of Mallorca, and Gladys, a Russian Jewish immigrant from Odessa (Krauss et al., 1986). As he would reveal throughout his career, Serra's earliest spark of creativity link back to memories from his childhood, a spark which would influence a lifetime of artistic endeavours.

His father Tony was a pipe fitter for a local shipyard in San Francisco. Serra recounts a memory of crossing the Golden Gate Bridge to visit this shipyard at age four, where he witnessed a tanker "as big as a skyscraper on its side" being readied for launch (Serra, cited in Seidner, 1993). As the ship was released and broke through its supporting scaffolding, headed towards the sea, a young and imaginative Serra watched as the ship transformed "from an enormous obdurate

weight to a buoyant structure, free, afloat and adrift" (Serra, cited in Perreault, 2007). Serra states of this moment: "All the raw material that I needed is contained in the reserve of this memory which has become a reoccurring dream" (Serra, cited in Seidner, 1993).

His mother Gladys was a painter and avid reader of 19<sup>th</sup> century French novels and contemporary American writers such as Hemingway (Solomon, 2019). From an early age, Gladys would encourage Serra to draw, bringing rolls of paper from the butcher for his drawings of boats, planes and zoo animals (Gamerman, 2011). He would draw after dinner and whilst watching his brother and father work on cars in the garage (Foster & Serra, 2018). After taking to art in the third grade, Serra realised art "as a way to catch his parents eyes" (Serra, cited in Crow, 2015). During the third grade, Serra's teacher called his mother into the class, displaying his drawings around the entire periphery of the room, and told his mother that "you have to take this student to museums, you really have to encourage this" (Gamerman, 2011). From that moment, Serra's mother would then introduce him as "Richard the Artist" (Serra, cited in Crow, 2015).

These early influences from Serra's childhood may be seen to reinforce Serra's interest and identity in art. The impression of weight, gravity and raw material from his experiences related to his father would become a reoccurring theme throughout the span of Serra's career, whilst his mother encouraged a

practice of drawing, a way to develop a language of his own, something that Serra could always rely upon. These sparks of creativity would be later reinforced for Serra throughout his

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### **3.1.2 - Education**

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time at college.

Serra studied English literature at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1957, before transferring to the Santa Barbara campus, graduating with a BA in English Literature in 1961. At Santa Barbara, Serra was to gain further influence in art, taking drawing classes under the mentorship of famous muralists Howard Warsaw and Rico Lebrun (Bui, 2011).

After graduating from Santa Barbara Serra chose to pursue interests in art, studying Painting at Yale University, Connecticut, graduating with both a BA in Art History and an MFA in 1964. Under the guidance of teacher Neil Welliver, Serra was introduced to the value of inquiry and free play within art, as Welliver would invite not only painters, but poets and performers, to his classes. (Bui, 2011).

He discusses that one of the most important courses during his time at Yale was a design class in which the only instruction was to work with dots (Bui, 2011). This simplicity of form introduced the complexity of materiality, as students explored different methods of making. Serra explains “Welliver would

introduce all different kinds of material but he was insistent that no matter which material you chose, it had to be used in a way where it was clear how matter imposed its own form on whatever you were making. I started pushing cement through a meat grinder and I was thinking of the output as an abstract canoli" (Serra, cited in Bui, 2011). An early introduction to the process of materiality and art making, this logic of process taught by Welliver was to remain a theme embedded within Serra's developing practice.

The influences surrounding Serra at Yale were extensive. He recalls not only the lectures and lecturers at Yale, but famous works of art in the collection, stating: "twice a day at Yale I passed Mondrians Foxtrot; Duchamps Tu m was upstairs, and Brancusis Yellow Bird was in the hall" (Foster & Serra, 2018, p.13). During his time at Yale, Serra would study with fellow alumni Chuck Close, Rackstraw Downs, Nancy Graves, Brice Marden, and Robert Mangold, whilst encountering artists from the New York School such as Philip Gusto, Robert Rauschenberg, Ad Reinhardt, and Frank Stella (Krauss et al., 1986). During his final year Serra took a position as an instructor, assisting in teaching a colour theory course with Josef Albers, and after graduating was asked to assist Albers in proofing his notable colour theory book '*Interaction of Colour*' (Krauss et al., 1986). The influence of this time spent interacting with great artists and artworks of the generation

### 3.1.3 - Post-Graduation

undoubtedly reaffirmed, as his mother would once introduce him, "Richard the Artist" (Serra, cited in Crow, 2015).

In 1964, Serra was awarded a one-year travelling fellowship from Yale, where he spent year in Paris and continued his artistic endeavours as a painter. Serra describes this as a time which "changed (his) whole grounding" (Foster & Serra, 2018, p.13). In Paris, Serra encountered the work of Constantin Brancusi, a sculptor well renown in the realm of contemporary art. Serra would return daily to the reconstruction of Brancusi's studio at the Musee national d'Art Moderne, shown in Figure 14, where he would "sketch his way into the internal logic of Brancusi's way of thinking about sculpture" (Krauss et al., 1986, p.18). This inspiration from sculpture would prove influential upon his identity as a painter, as for Serra, at Brancusi's studio, "something just clicked" (Foster & Serra, 2018, p.13). Serra would later describe Brancusi's work as "*an encyclopaedia, a handbook of possibilities*" (Foster & Serra, 2018, p.13; Brancusi et al., 2011).

The following year Serra went to Florence on a Fulbright, where his painterly identity was "submerged in the rising tide of the logic of process" (Krauss, 1986, p.18). His final paintings consisted of grids which Serra would fill with colour, understanding his application of paint as a verb, to paint, this process determined by a measure of time, his system of choice being a stopwatch (Krauss, 1986). During this process Serra realised his use of paint had become merely a medium, which should be granted no higher esteem than any other



Figure 14: Brancusi's studio where Serra took influence in drawing sculptural forms.  
Image Credit: Edward Steichen.

material (Krauss, 1986). This shift towards process as a system of which to create art drastically influenced Serra, however, after noticing an Ellsworth Kelly painting in a recent issue of *Artnews*, which looked identical to works he had just produced, Serra dropped this influence in painting (Foster & Serra, 2018).

Shortly after his time in Florence on a trip to Spain, Serra encountered the work *Las Meninas* (1656) by Diego Velázquez, where his time as a painter ended. He describes being “flabbergasted” by *Las Meninas* (Foster & Serra, 2018, p.16), illustrated in Figure 15, which provided Serra with the realisation that his way of approaching painting was limited to looking within a frame, bothered by the fact he had now become the subject of Velázquez figures within and becoming wary of the disconnect between the “interior illusion of space and the projected space (he) was standing in” (Foster & Serra, 2018, p.16). This awareness that he had now become an extension of the painting through subversion of the frame confounded Serra, introducing him to a new spatial experience within the realm of painting.

Before leaving Italy for New York, Serra displayed work in an exhibition at the Galleria La Salita, Rome. In his work *Live Animal Habitat* (1965-66), shown as Figure 16, Serra's escape from painting led to a transformation in materiality, his chosen medium transformed from the containment of painted grids to the three dimensions of cages, and the biological world became his medium, filling cages with both stuffed and live



Figure 15: Velázquez, D. (1656). *Las Meninas* . Oil on Canvas. 3180 x 2760 mm.

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Figure 16: Serra, R. (1965-66). *Live Animal Habitat*. Mixed Media. Approx 400 x 860 x 250 mm. (From Krauss et al., 1986).

animals. As Krauss describes, “this exhibition confirmed what had been building since his entry into the intense but provisional coherence of the space of Brancusi studio: that painting no longer held his imagination” (Krauss, 1986, p.19).

These influences from childhood, early education, and international experiences, show Serra's development from

### **3.1.4 - Establishing Practice in New York**

adolescence, through literature, to painter, graduate artist, and developing sculptor. The significance of these influences was an introduction to space, weight, gravity, and dynamic forces, whilst underlying his identity as an artist was the logic of process, combined with a deep understanding of drawing and materiality, each to become a reoccurring theme embedded in Serra's practice throughout his development as a sculptor.

Upon his return to New York in 1966 Serra's interest in assemblages and animals was over. However, this experiment into sculpture developed a new interest into employing a wide range of materials in his art practice. After a rubber company emptied its warehouse onto the streets around the corner from Serra's studio, he was granted access to as much material as he could take away, filling his loft with “tons of rubber” (Foster & Serra, 2018, p.19).



Serra continued with his sculptural endeavours using unconventional, industrial materials, including a combination of neon, rubber, and lead, to create sculpture. He began a series of experimental works, noticing the tonnes of rubber he had been given as an assignment. Serra describes: "At Yale when I was assigned a design problem, I was also given a way of dealing with the material, a set of procedures. I had a lot of rubber; the challenge was to discover its potentials" (Foster & Serra, 2018, p.19). This challenge led Serra to works such as his *Belts* (1966-67), pictured as Figure 17, consisting of rubber, cut into belts, and hung on the wall in looping, serial, abstract forms, using Pollocks *Mural* (1943), illustrated as Figure 18, as subtext. He also refers to influence from Oldenburg, and "how he was using gravity as a force, as a forming device" (Foster & Serra, 2018, p.19).

Serra discusses that although artists such as Oldenburg and Pollock were a matching influence for his practice, his approach to sculpture was predominantly concerned with working in an expanded field. "I wasn't interested in any dictate about how to make an autonomous object. I was interested in my ability to move in relation to material and have that material to move me, bodily, in as open a field as possible" (Foster & Serra, 2018, p.21). This pursuit of differing interests to these artists, alongside the influence from living around a variety of musicians, dancers and artists within the gritty SoHo district was also to impact Serra's practice within the expanded field.

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Figure 17: Serra, R. (1967). *Belts*. Vulcanized rubber and neon. Approx 2032 x 5029 x 508 mm. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York Panza Collection, 1991. © 2018 Richard Serra / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. (<https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/3891>).

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Figure 18: Pollock, J. (1943). *Mural*. Oil and water-based paint on linen. 24290 x 60390 mm. University of Iowa Museum of Art. (<https://stanleymuseum.uiowa.edu/jackson-pollock-mural>).

Serra discusses that due to his interest in “the volume of space, in the entire context – what happened when you walked around, what happened to the rhythm of your body in motion” (Foster & Serra, 2018, p.28), he began to visit dance concerts, to witness how those performers dealt with the expanded field that was becoming embedded within his own practice. In these displays Serra would witness how performers such as Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown, Simone Forti, and Steve Paxton (and other members of the group Grand Union), pictured in Figure 19, would deal with dynamic forces (Foster & Serra, 2018). Within these dances, performers would often bring objects such as ladders, boxes, and mattresses, which would be jumped on, and dancers would perform holds, using weight to counterbalance another performer from falling. In these performances, Serra explains that “I saw things – in terms of movement and stasis, weight and support – that I could use in my sculpture” (Foster & Serra, 2018, p.28).

He recalls that during one of these performances, *Accumulation* (1971), Serra watched as Trisha Brown displayed a piece which performed one movement, and then another,

### 3.1.5 - Verb List

layering the dance as she went along. A similar process is found in Brown's Spanish Dance (1973), illustrated as Figure 20. As Serra would describe, “it was just movement on top of movement” (Foster & Serra, 2018, p.33). The repetitive

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Figure 19: Performance group Grand Union, 1971. From left: David Gordon, Becky Arnold, Nancy Lewis, Lincoln Scott, Yvonne Rainer. From *What Was Judson Dance Theater, Who Was Against It, and Did It Ever End?*, by C. Custer for Wendy Perron, 2022 June 14. (<https://wendyperron.com/judson-dance-theater/>). Image Credit: James Klosty.

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Figure 20: Performers at Melbourne Festival 2014 enacting Trisha Brown's 'Spanish Dance', 1973. From *A Radical Legacy: Trisha Brown's Postmodern Dance* by F. Macdonald for TheConversation, 2014 October 13. (<https://theconversation.com/a-radical-legacy-trisha-browns-postmodern-dance-32683>).

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Figure 21: Serra, R. (1967). *Verblast*. Pencil on two sheets of paper. 254 x 216 mm each. MoMA, NY. © 2023 Richard Serra / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. (<https://www.moma.org/collection/works/152793>).

actions witnessed within this work were reinforced by similar works by surrounding SoHo artists, such as Steve Reichs *Come Out* (1966) and Michael Snows *Wavelength* (1967), which further reinforced action, and doing, as a way of producing works within Serra's practice.

For use within his own practice, Serra created a series of verbs related to the process of creating sculpture, titled *Verblast* (1967), displayed as Figure 21. These verbs were designed as Serra's guide to making works from materials, as operations of action which related to self, material, place, and process. Serra discusses: "The Verb List gave me a subtext for my experiments with materials. The problem I was trying to resolve in my early work was: How do you apply an activity or process to a material and arrive at a form that refers back to its own making? That reference was mostly established by line. In a sense you cant form anything without drawing" (Serra, cited in Rose et al., 2011, p.61). This emphasis placed upon the action within the creation of works, highlighting process, time, and space, rather than any formal properties, led Serra's practice to be linked to the foundation of the Process Art movement.

Many of Serra's early works developed from applying actions from the *Verb List* to experiment with large quantities of industrial materials. Works such as *To Lift* (1967), *Splashing* (1968), *Slow Roll: For Phillip Glass* (1968) and *One Ton Prop (House of Cards)* (1969), largely self-referentially titled, embody these relationships between action and material. In these works Serra can be seen applying a lifting motion to a sheet of rubber to create a freestanding, topological form in *To*

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Figure 22: Serra, R. (1967). *To Lift*. Vulcanized rubber. 914 x 200 x 1524 mm. MoMA, NY. © 2023 Richard Serra / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. (<https://www.moma.org/collection/works/101902>).

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Figure 23: Serra, R. (1968). *Splashing*. Lead Installation at Castelli Warehouse, New York. 457 x 660 mm. Richard Serra/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. (From Krauss et al., 1986).

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Figure 24: Serra, R. (1968). *Slow Roll: For Phillip Glass*. Rolled lead sheets. 254 x 254 x 152 mm. Akira Ikeda Gallery, Tokyo. (From Krauss et al., 1986).

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Figure 25: Serra, R. (1969). *One Ton Prop (House of Cards)*. Lead antimony, four plates, each 1220 x 1220 x 25 mm. Gift of the Grinstein Family. © 2018 Richard Serra / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. (From Krauss et al., 1986).

*Lift*, displayed as Figure 22; splashing molten-lead against the corner of the architecture to create in-situ casts at the Castelli Warehouse for *Splashing*, shown in Figure 23; rolling and folding lead sheets for *Slow Roll: For Phillip Glass*, illustrated as Figure 24; and using counterbalance, weight and gravity to prop freestanding sheets of lead together in *One Ton Prop (House of Cards)*, pictured in Figure 25. As shown, whilst the action which Serra applied to create work developed, so did too the outcome, creating a broad range of process-driven sculpture.

When creating a piece for Jasper Johns, *Splash Piece: Casting* (1969-70), Serra positioned a sheet of lead too large to melt in the corner, where it became free-standing between the walls of the architecture, displayed as Figure 26. Soon after *Splash Piece: Casting*, which can be seen as the culmination of the processes applied to create *Splashing* and *One Ton Prop (House of Cards)*, Serra was to apply the same constraints to a much larger plate of steel to create *Strike: To Roberta and Rudy* (1969-1971), shown in Figure 27. This work was Serra's first true break into space, wedging a large steel plate in the corner of the room, declaring the whole space by dividing it (Foster & Serra, 2018). This use of large-scale sculpture, both segmenting and subsequently activating the architectural space it was designed for, is a prime work when considering Serra's pursuit into large scale, site-specific sculpture in the landscape.

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Figure 26: Serra, R. (1969-70). *Splash Piece: Casting*. Lead. 482 x 228 x 355' 279 mm. Collection Jasper Johns, New York. (From Krauss et al., 1986).

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Figure 27: Serra, R. (1969-71). *Strike: To Roberta and Rudy*. Hot-rolled steel. 2464 x 7315 x 38 mm. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York Panza Collection, 1991. © 2018 Richard Serra / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. (<https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/3899>).

Whilst *Splashing* can be seen to negate the traditional conventions of sculpture and the casting process, using the architecture in which the work is displayed to cast sculpture in-situ and placing emphasis upon movement, time, and process, so does the outcome seen within *One Ton Prop (House of Cards)* and *Strike: To Roberta and Rudy*, where the “fetishization of the base” (Krauss, 1979, p.34), a characteristic of modernist sculpture, has been completely subverted through the sculpture both becoming the base, being self-supportive through the forces of weight and gravity as a medium, whilst also placing emphasis upon the connection to body through activating the surrounding

These works signify how Serra's practice enters the Expanded Field, contrasting the “sitelessness, or homelessness, an absolute loss of place” (Krauss, 1979, p.34) found within modernist sculpture. They also signify a departure point within Serra's practice when moving on from process-based sculpture, into the larger, site-specific works for which Serra has become renown. Whilst Serra continues work within the constraints of architecture, as seen in his famed *Torqued Ellipses* (1996), the culmination of Serra's works leading towards *Strike: To Roberta and Rudy* serve as preface before moving into landscape orientated works, of which is the focus within this dissertation. Through these selected works, and surrounding influences, the development of action, process, space, time, and body can be understood as a fundamental underlying theme emerging within Serra's practice.

## **3.2 - An Embodied Design**

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### **Practice**

The second half of Chapter Three employs an experimental Design Drawing method to expand upon knowledge gained throughout the former biographic account, adapting Serra's *Verblast* to explore processual attributes within this practice through an immersive, critical, and visual method of research. It is noted each of the illustrated figures often employ multiple actions in their creation due to the materiality of the mediums selected to develop this design process: willow charcoal, and Indian ink. These specific materials are selected as each have inherent material qualities unattainable by the other, one being in solid form with the ability to be broken down, the other being liquid with the ability to flow. The main attribute shared between mediums is that each is black, understood by Serra as not a colour; but a material which has weight, space, and relation to fundamental laws of gravity. (Rose et al., 2011).

For this two-dimensional dissertation, the textural and sensory qualities is most easily reflected in black, the processes reflected, or contrasted, on the white surfaces of drawing paper. Given a room, or three-dimensions, to present this process, research outcomes generated may have varied. Yet given the connection between the arts and landscape through drawing, this process highlighted in this dimension is a valuable form of knowledge for reader, researcher, and designer. These images generated are then discussed during the discussion section **7.2 - Responding to Q2**.



Figure 28: To split, To smear, Of friction, To force, Of time. Indian Ink on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Author's own image.



Figure 29: To smear, Of Friction, Of Force, To pair, Of time. Indian Ink on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.



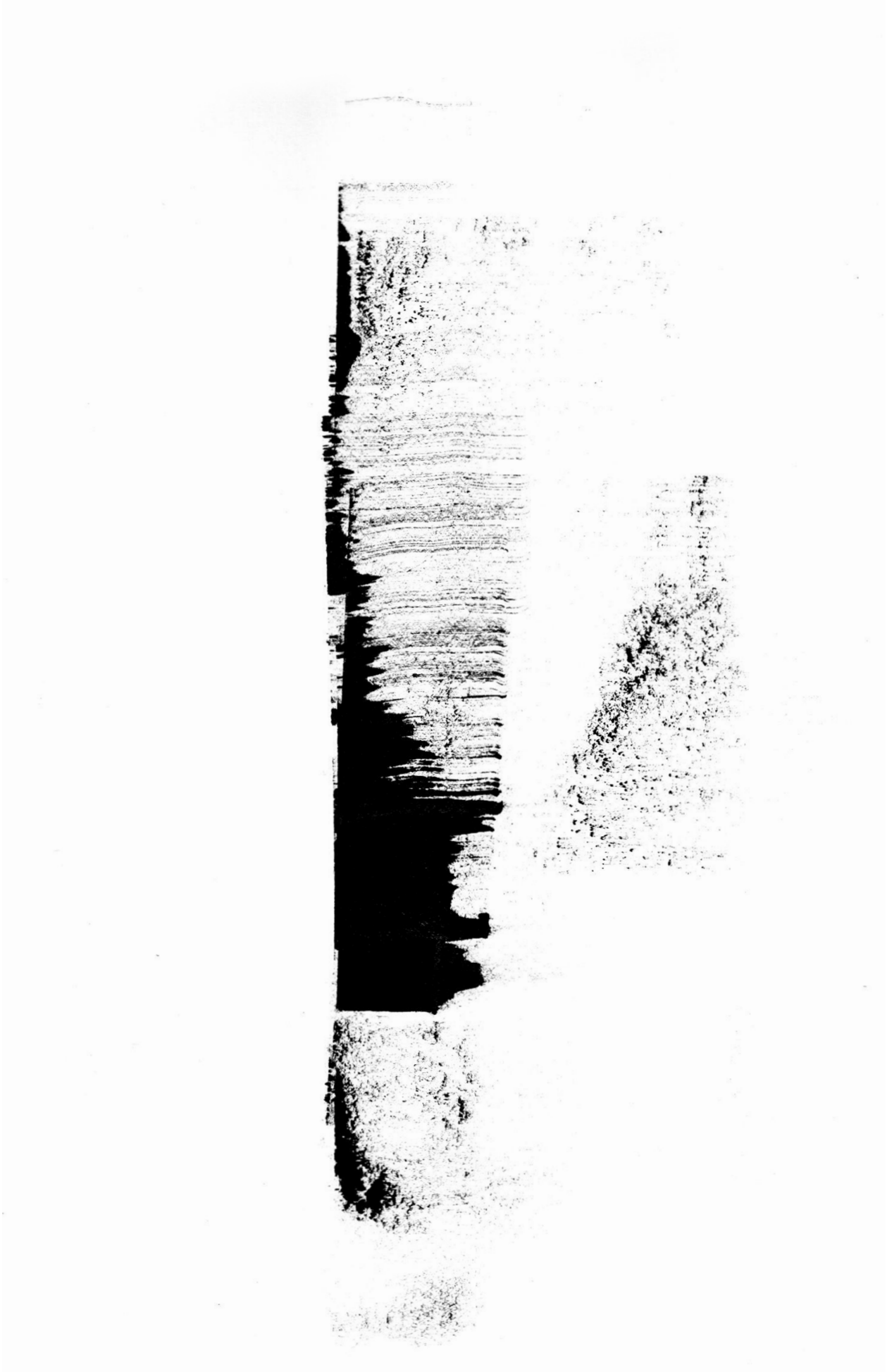


Figure 30: To smear, Of friction, Of Force, Of time. Indian Ink on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.

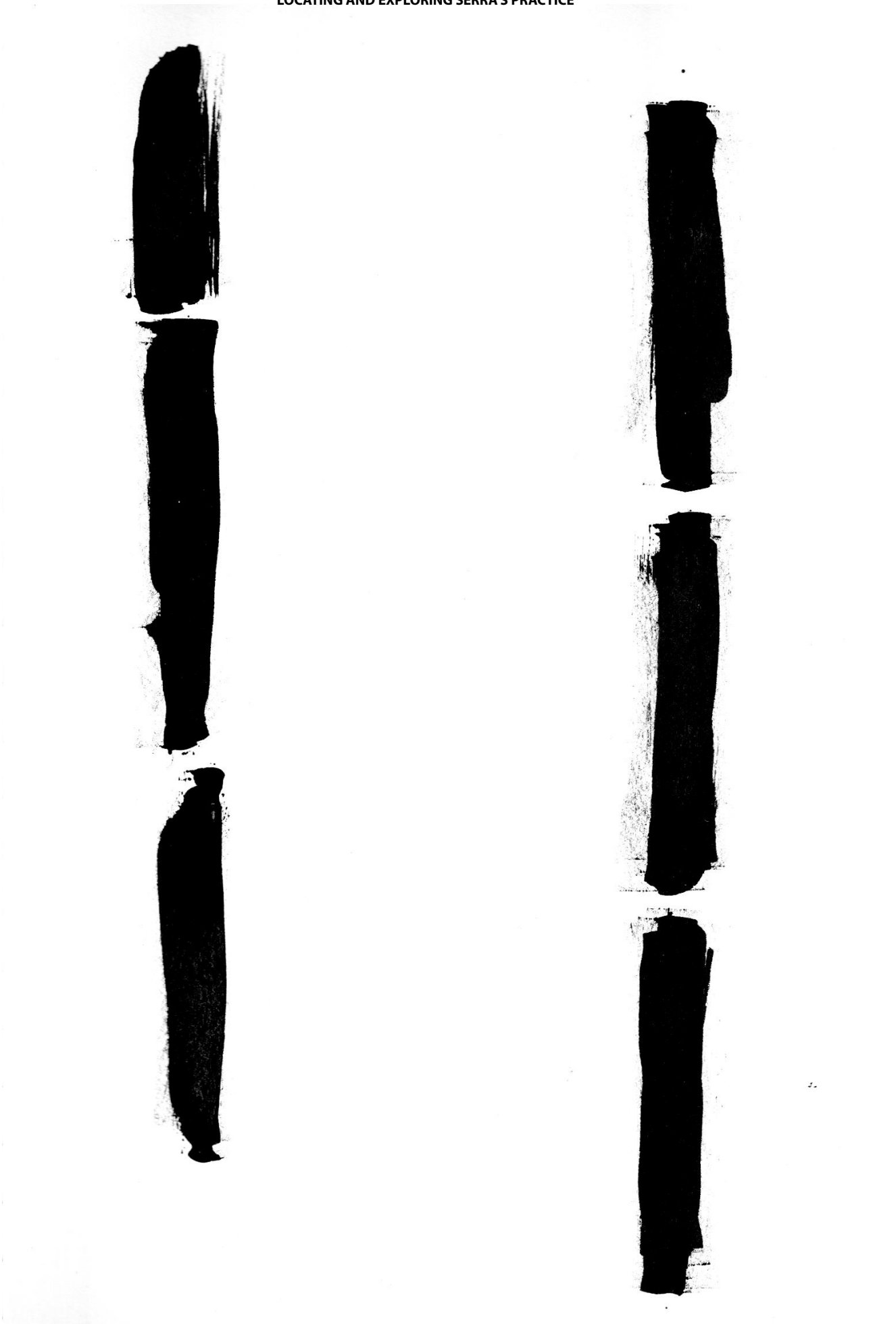


Figure 31: To flow, To pair, To smear, To systematize, Of friction, To Force, Of time. Indian Ink on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.



Figure 32: To flow, To smear, Of friction, To force, Of time. Indian Ink on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.



Figure 33: To smear, Of friction, To distribute, To force, Of time. Indian Ink on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.

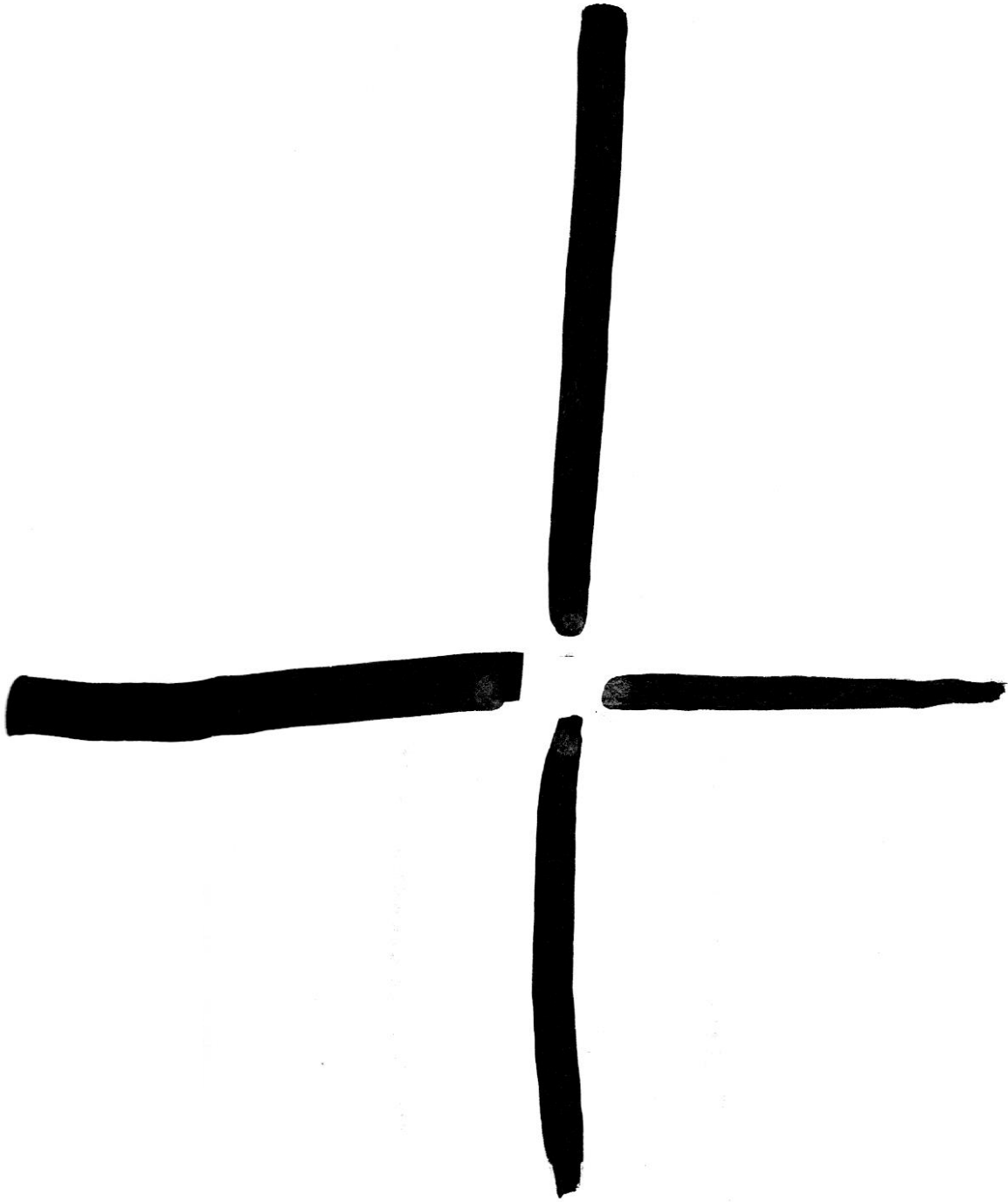


Figure 34: To pair, To expand, To smear, Of friction, To force, Of time. Indian Ink on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.

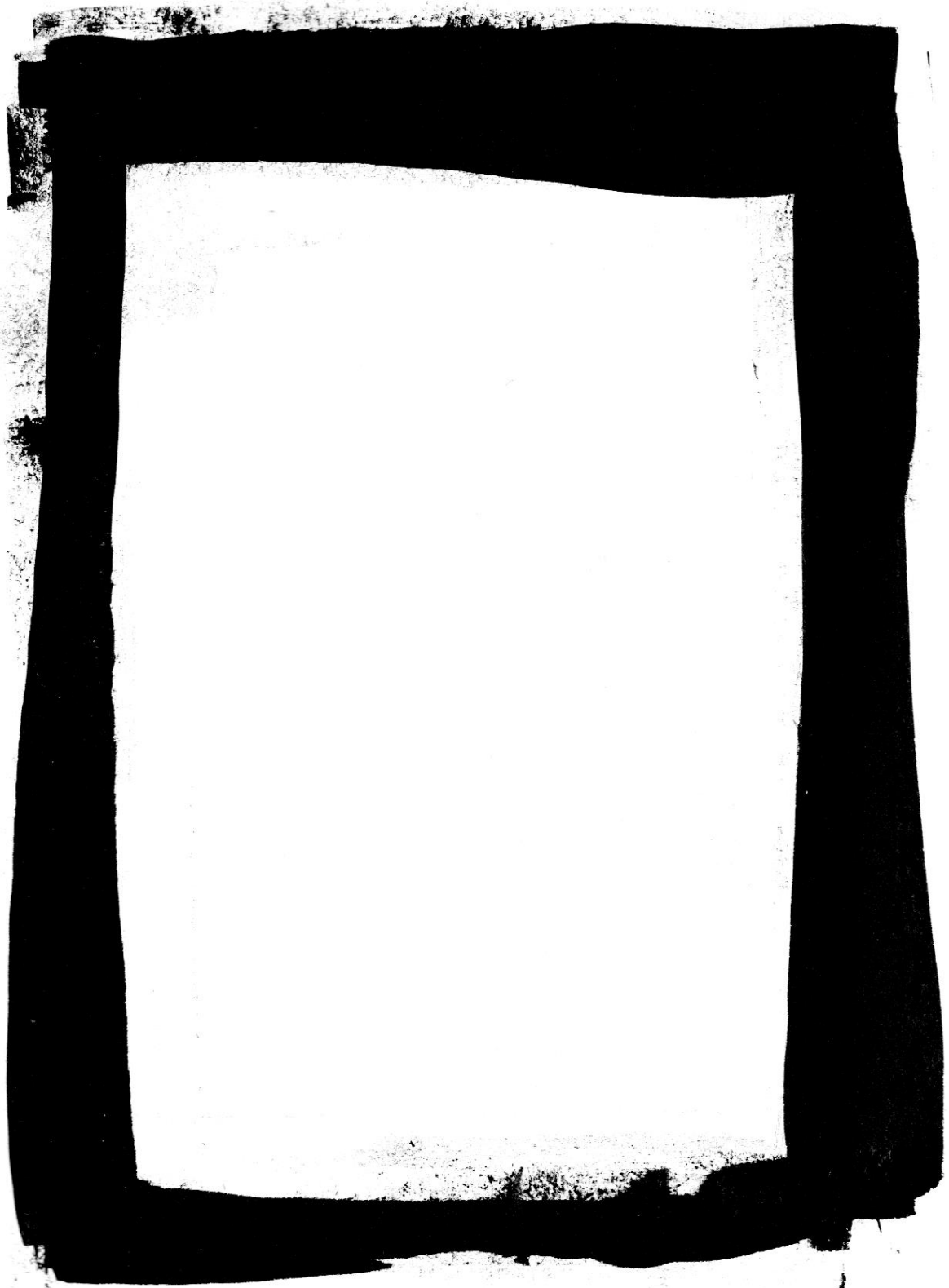


Figure 35: To enclose, To surround, To smear, Of friction, To force, Of time. Indian Ink on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.



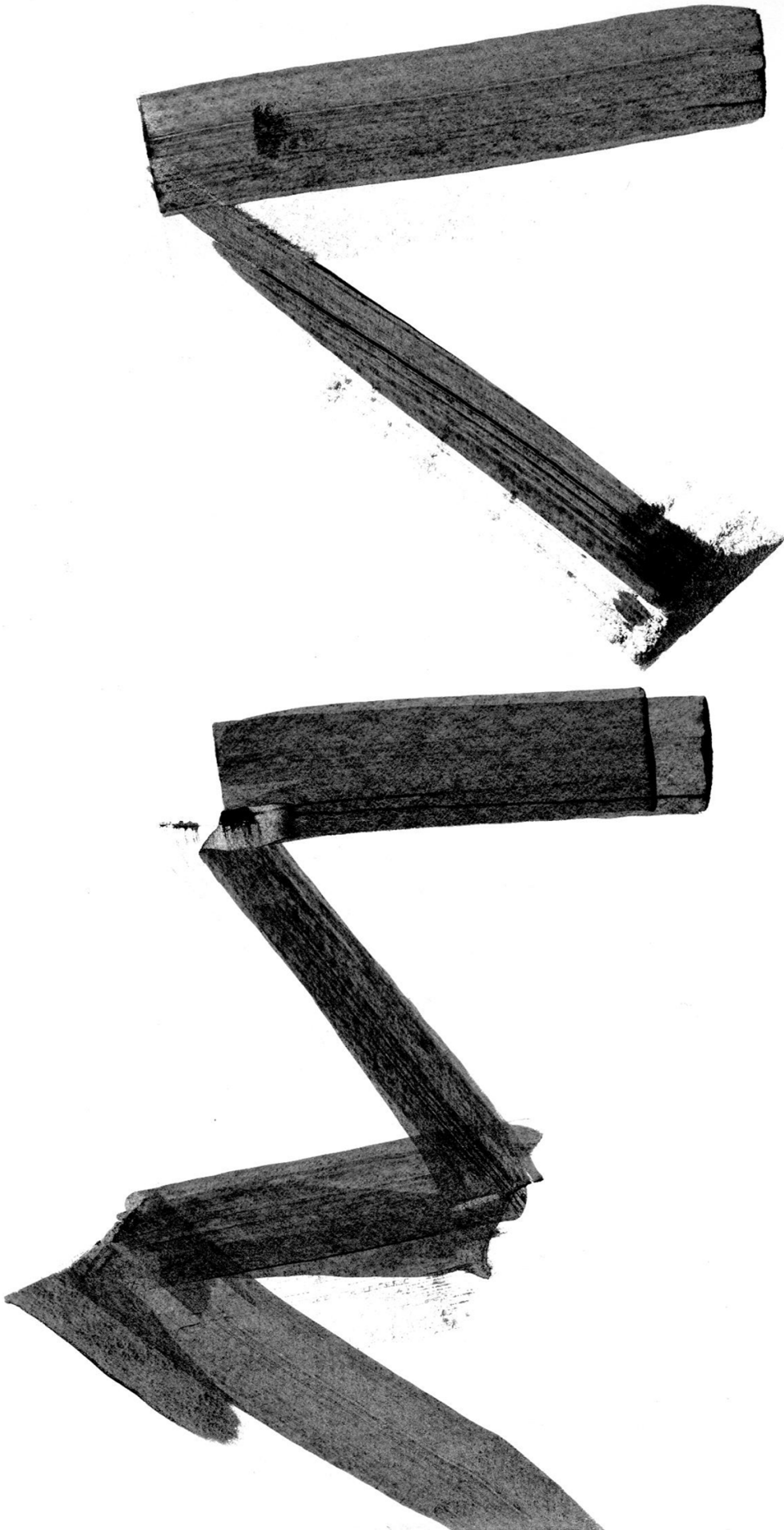


Figure 36: To weave, To flow, To smear, Of friction, To Force, Of time. Indian Ink on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.



Figure 37: To bend, To smear, Of friction, To force, Of time. Indian Ink on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.





Figure 38: To bend, To curve, To smear, Of friction, To force, Of time. Indian Ink on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.



Figure 39: To twist, To curve, To smear, Of friction, To force, Of time. Indian Ink on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.





Figure 40: To dapple, To lift, To drop, Of time. Indian Ink on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.

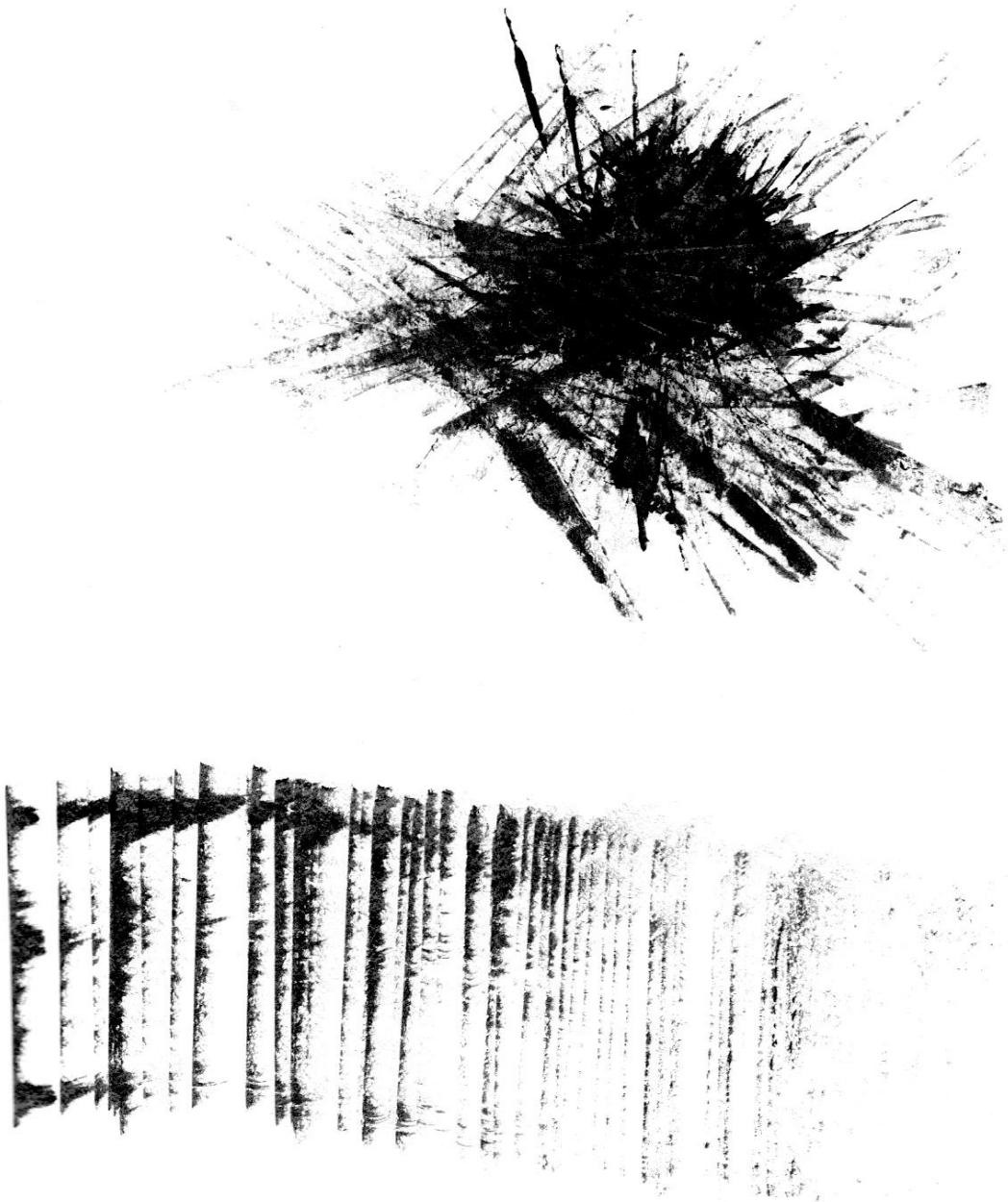


Figure 41: To dapple, To lift, To drop, To systematize, Of grouping, Of time. Indian Ink on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.



Figure 42: To dapple, To lift, To drop, Of time. Indian Ink on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.





Figure 43: To enclose, To surround, To encircle, Of layering, Of time, To continue. Indian Ink on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.

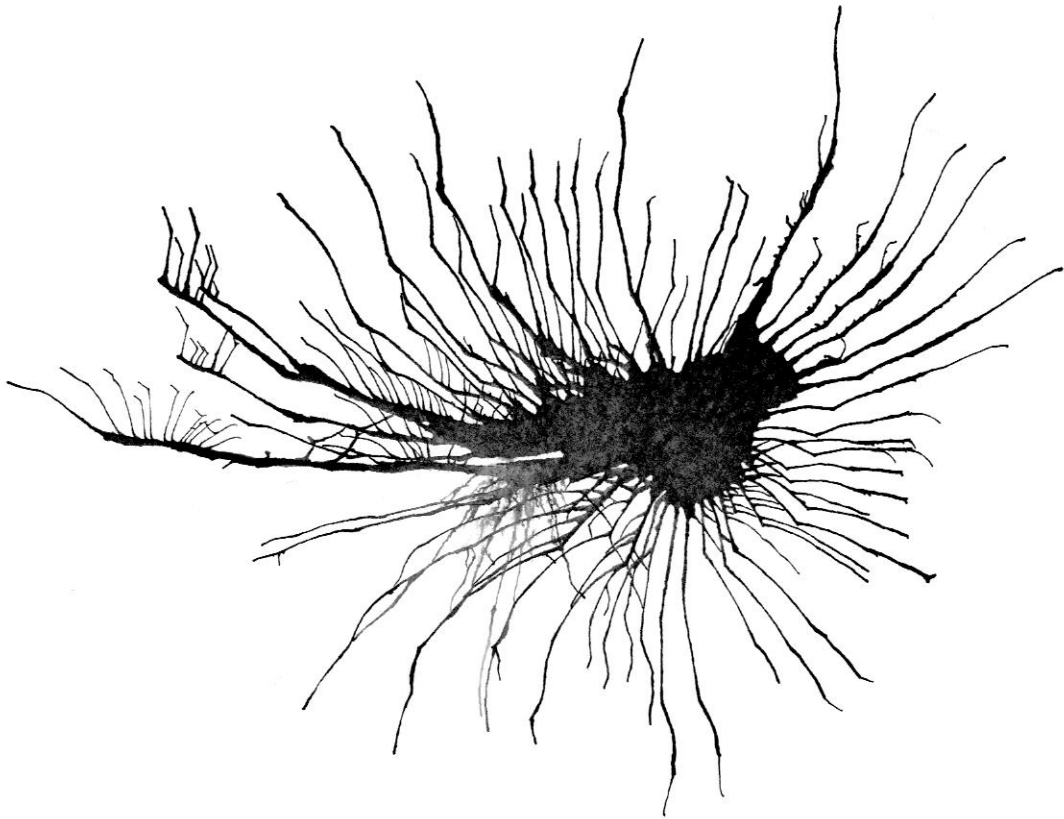


Figure 44: To spill, To droop, To expand, To distribute, Of force, Of time. Indian Ink on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.

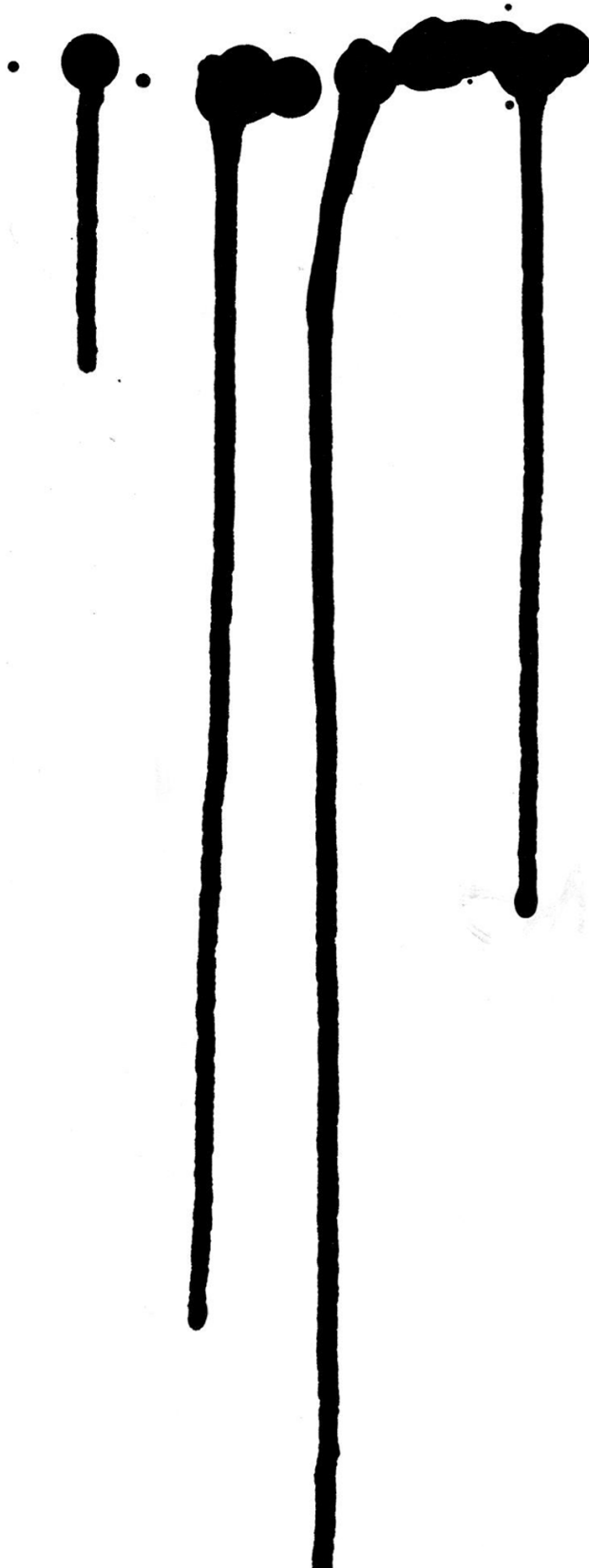


Figure 45: To drop, To droop, To spill, Of gravity, Of time. Indian Ink on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.



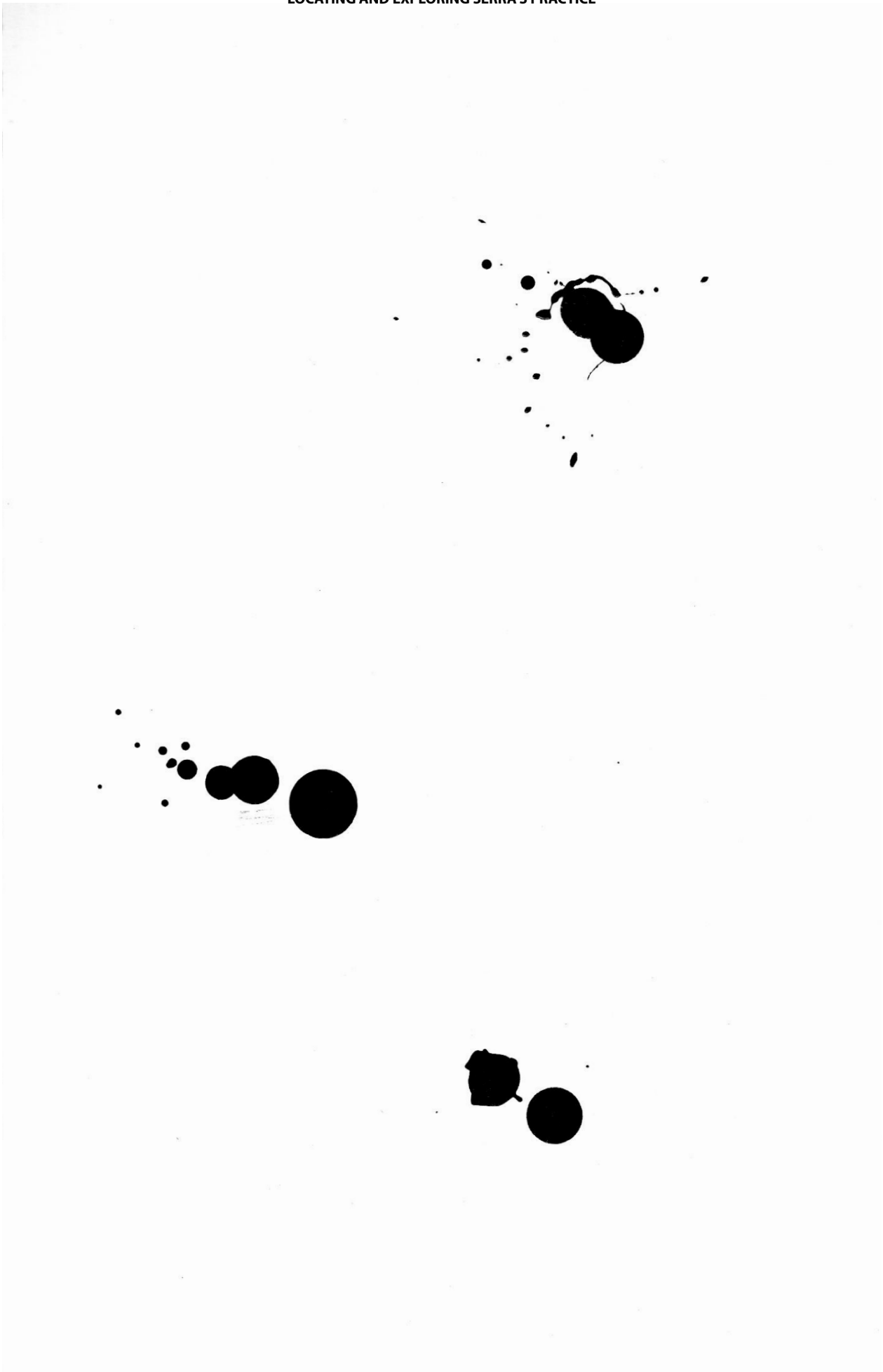


Figure 46: To droop, To spill, Of time. Indian Ink on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.



Figure 47: To fold, To smear, To force, Of time. Indian Ink on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.

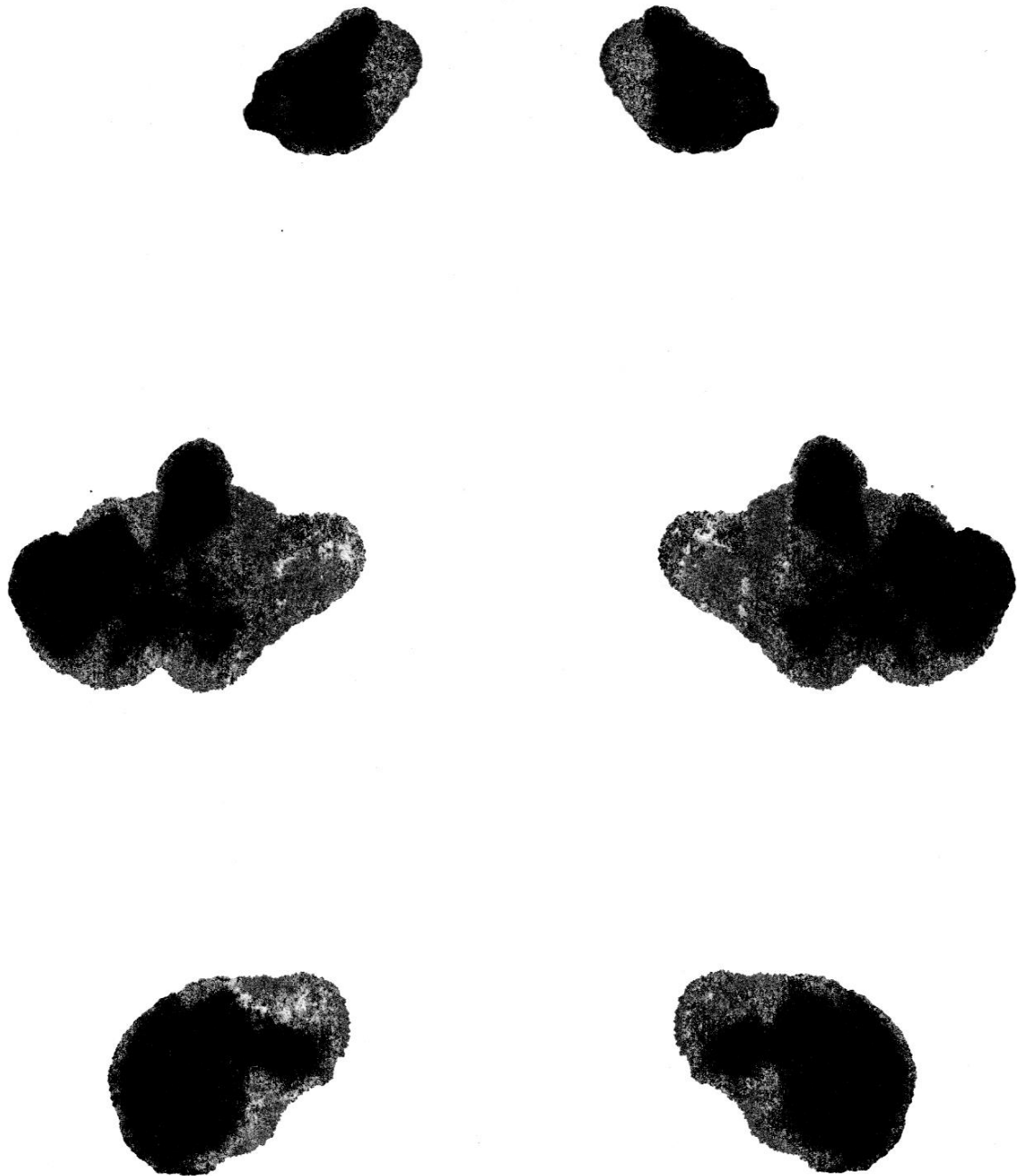


Figure 48: To spill, To fold, To force, To lift, To hinge, Of symmetry, Of reflection, Of time. Indian Ink on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.



Figure 49: To impress, To force, To lift, Of time. Indian Ink on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.



Figure 50: To impress, To force, To lift, Of time. Indian Ink on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.



Figure 51: To shave, To drop, Of time. Willow charcoal on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.

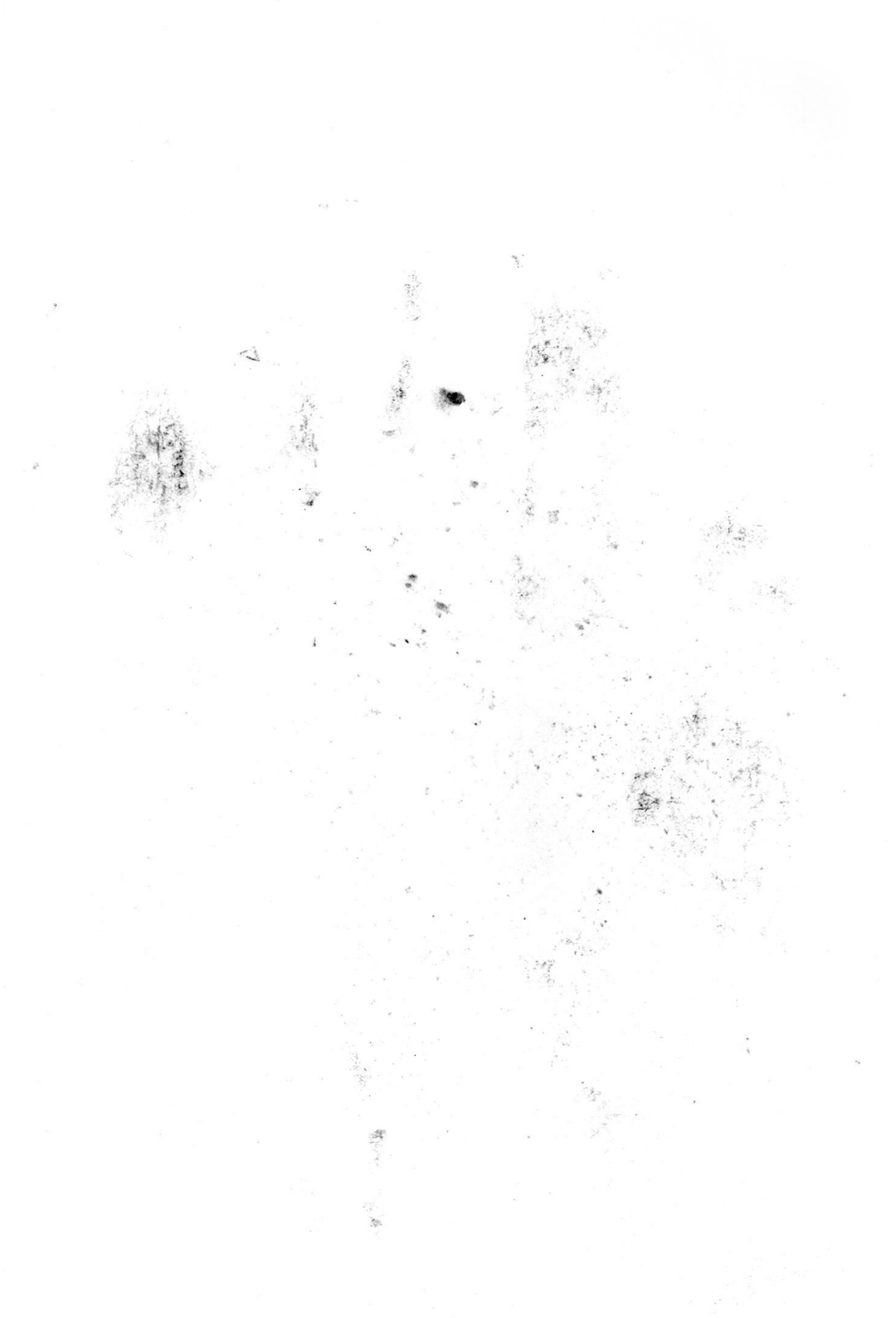


Figure 52: To impress, Of force, Of time. Willow charcoal on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.



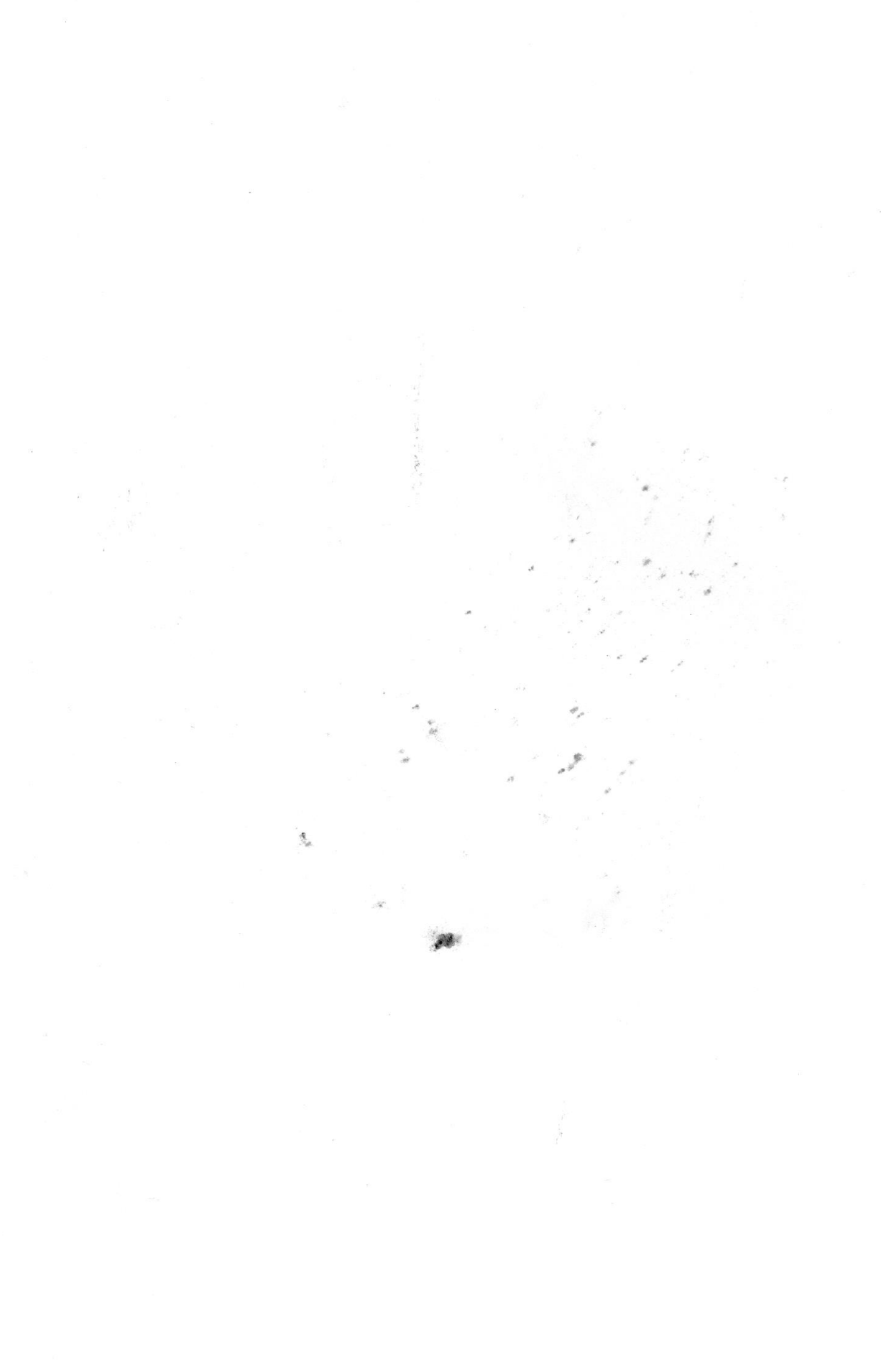


Figure 53: To impress, Of force, Of time. Willow charcoal on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.





Figure 54: To shave, To drop, To impress, To roll, Of time. Willow charcoal on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.

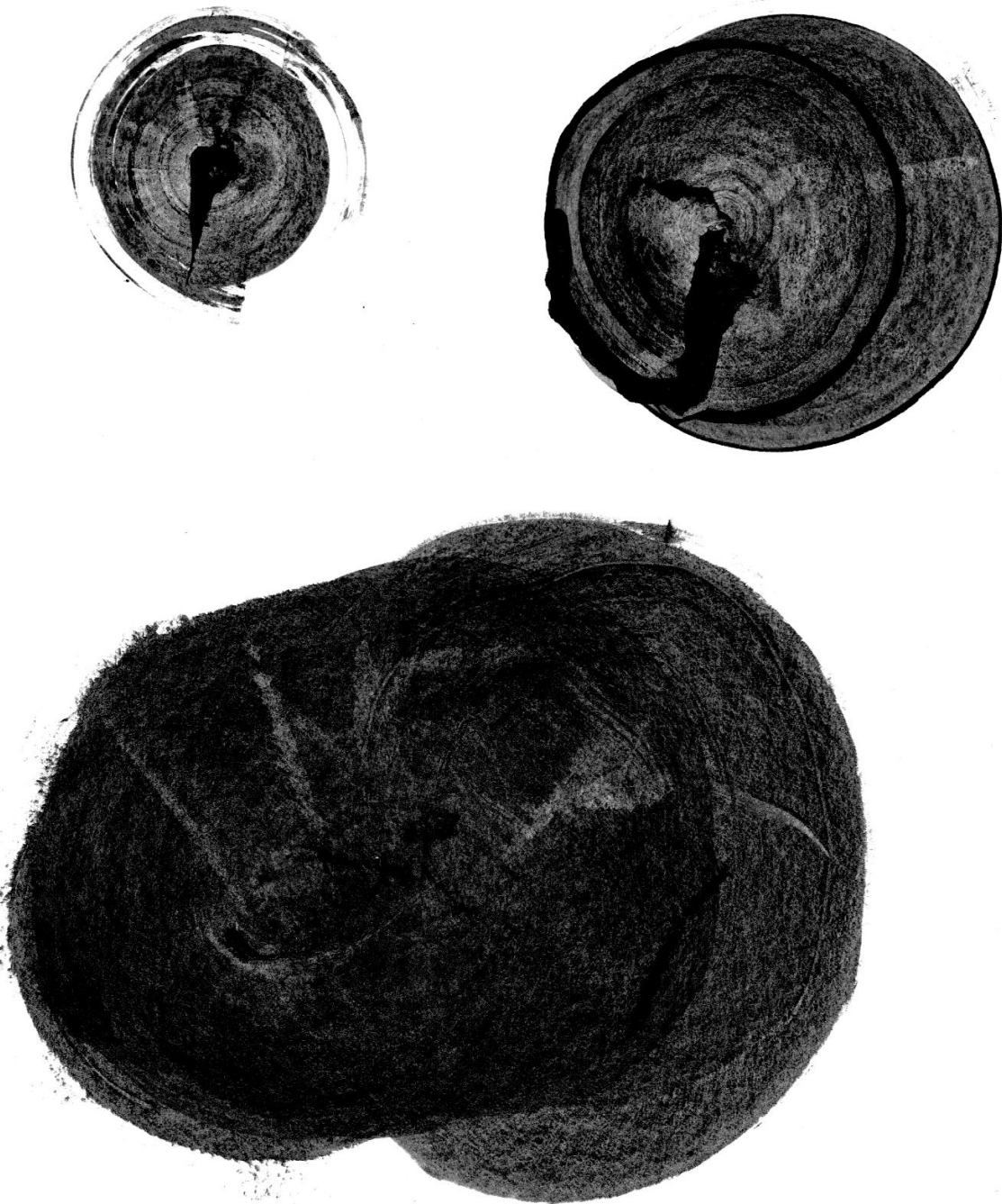


Figure 55: To twist, To rotate, To force, Of time. Indian Ink on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.

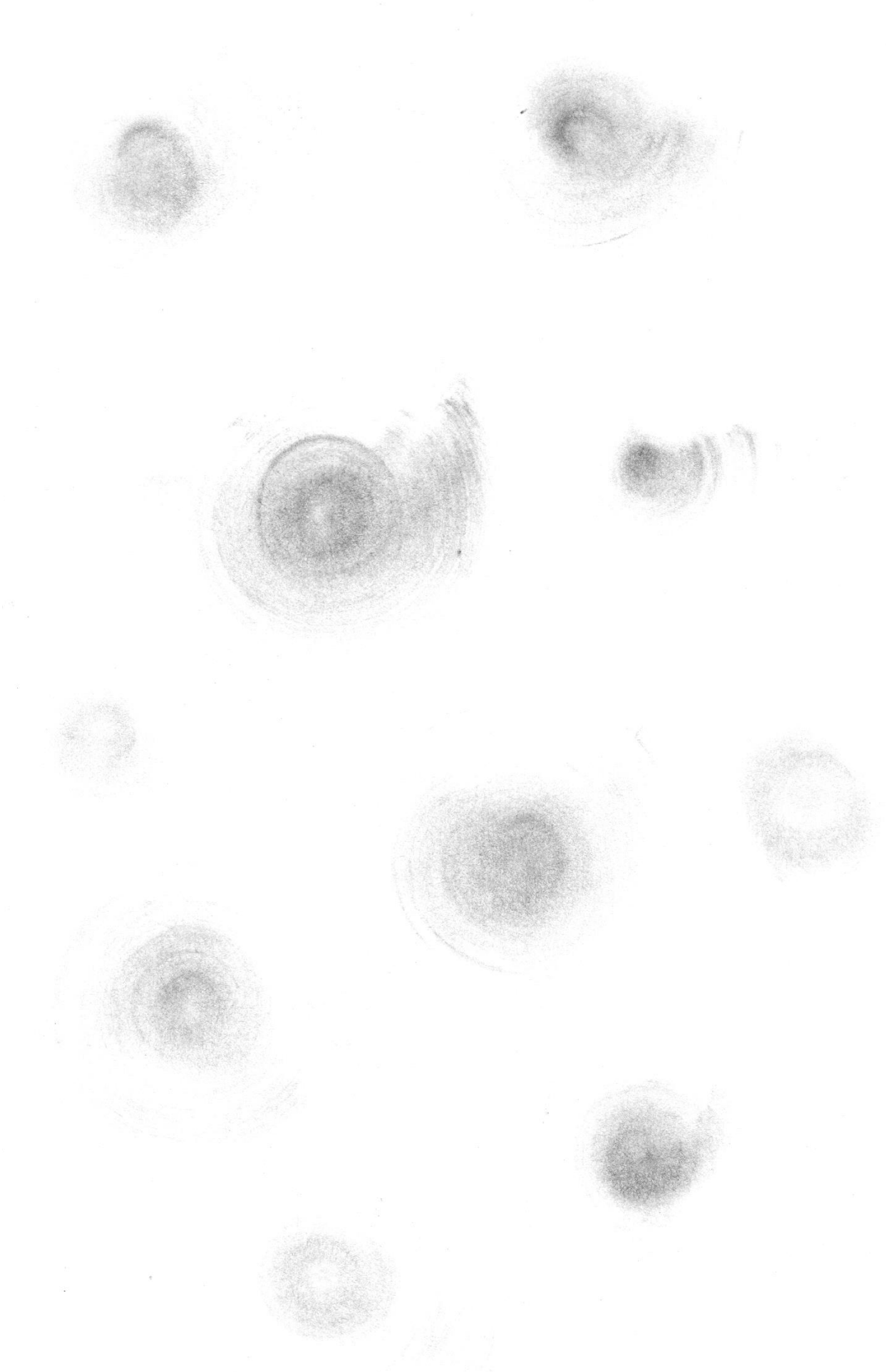


Figure 56: To twist, To rotate, To swirl, To force, Of time. Willow charcoal on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.



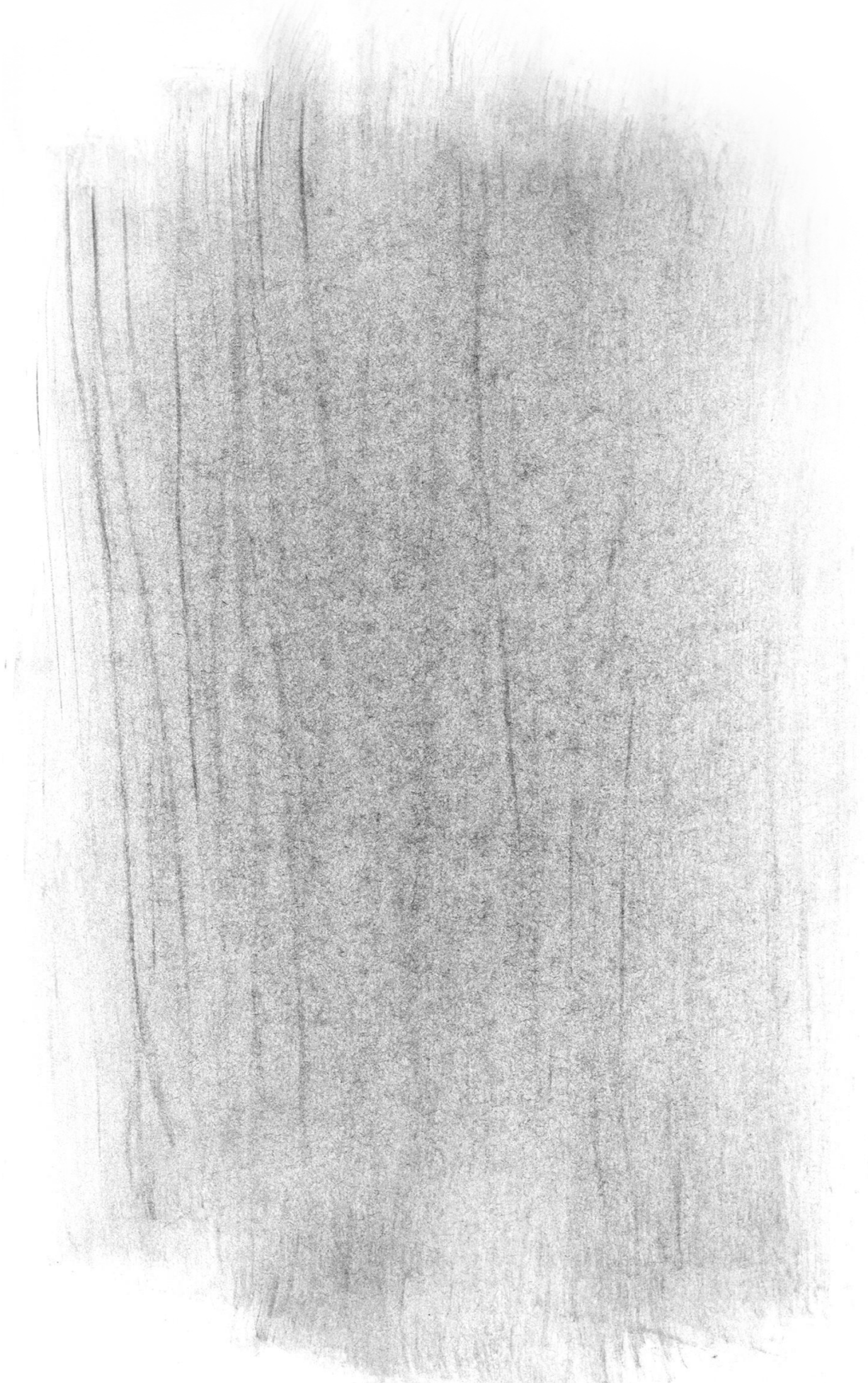


Figure 57: To smear, Of force, Of time. Willow charcoal on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.





Figure 58: To spray, To splash, Of time. Indian Ink on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.





Figure 59: To dapple, To smear, Of force, Of time. Indian Ink on paper. 210 x 297 mm. Authors's own image.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## CONNECTIONS OF SERRA TO LANDSCAPE

When examining the relationship between Serra's practice and landscape, the research question focus within Chapter Four, I intend to continue a chronological ordering when applying a design critique method to selected Serra works. This chronology, which spans a near half-decade, will help to analyse the relationship between Serra and landscape, and how this relationship has developed over time, through multiple works, with his first landscape work, *Shift* (1970-72), being completed eleven years before *Tilted Arc* (1981), and forty-four years before *East-West/West-East* (2014), each site-specific design located within a very different setting.

### 4.1 - 'Shift' (1970)

*Shift* (1970-1972), illustrated in Figure 60, is one of the earliest landscape works within Serra's practice, unique due to being the first of two works created from concrete before Serra's shift to a preferred medium of steel. *Shift* was commissioned in 1970 by art collector Roger Davidson to be designed for a 4.03-hectare property, a cornfield, in King City, Ontario. The work consists of six narrow concrete forms, each nearly twenty centimetres thick and one and a half metres high, measuring around seventy-three metres at the longest and thirty-two metres at shortest lengths, each embedded horizontally within the earth. The combination of these forms spans over three hundred metres in length, the work creating a zigzag across the landscape, with forms often obstructed due to the rolling slopes of the land that the work is situated within.

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Figure 60: Serra, R. (1970-72). *Shift*. Concrete. Six sections ranging 1524 x 203 x 27432 - 73152 mm per section. King City, Ontario. (From Krauss et al., 1986).

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### **4.1.1 - Art and Aesthetics**

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Serra discusses his approach to framing site and connections to the dominant underpinnings of the Picturesque, to which landscape architecture has been historically concerned. “When (Robert) Smithson went to visit Shift... he spoke of its picturesque quality, and I wasn't sure what he was talking about... If you use the word frame in referring to the landscape, you imply a notion of the picturesque, I have never really found the notion of framing parts of the landscape particularly interesting in terms of its potential for sculpture... I'm interested in framing, but not if it's overarticulated, as in “you must look through this frame, and remain stationary as you do.” Not framing with a camera, seeking out just one image.” (Foster & Serra, 2018, p.75).

As Yves-Alain Bois would highlight in his essay '*A Picturesque Stroll around Clara-Clara*', “Serra's interpretation of Smithson's remarks is based on one of the commonplaces of the picturesque garden: not to force nature, but to reveal the “capacities” of the site, while magnifying their variety and singularity. This is exactly what Serra does: “The site is redefined not represented... The placement of all structures in the open field draws viewers attention to the topography of the landscape as the landscape is walked”. (Bois & Shepley, 1984, p.34). In this sense of the picturesque, Serra's approach to framing site is then less concerned with a pictorial approach, instead placing focus upon a phenomenological approach. Serra's resistance towards a static reading of space, and the advocacy for a walking based, experiential process, opens space to the body of viewers, and focuses attention back upon unique characteristics of landscape, as viewed in



Figure 61. Discussing this approach within *Shift*, Serra states:

“What I wanted was a dialectic between ones perception of the place in totality and ones relation to the field as walked. The result is a way of measuring oneself against the indeterminacy of the land” (Serra, cited in Krauss et al., 1986, p.30).

This experiential notion of the picturesque landscape breaks from pictorial conventions, which Serra discusses regarding earthworks like Smithsons *Spiral Jetty*, being represented in photographic documents throughout the 70s, a form of “non-site” (Foster & Serra, 2018, p.65). “Lateral extension in this case allows for sculpture to be viewed pictorially – that is, as if the floor were the canvas plane. It is no coincidence that most earthworks are photographed from the air... for the most part earthworks are graphics imposed on the landscape. I was interested in a different penetration into the land, one that would open up the field and bring you into it bodily through movement, not just draw you in visually. The rhythm of the body moving through space has been the motivating source for most my work”. (Foster & Serra, 2018, p.65).

*Shift's* framing of the site is developed in an experiential sense, formed around movement throughout the landscape, rather than in a static, pictorial sense. This connection formed through rhythm of body and space deepens the experience of site, whilst highlighting the individual characteristics of the landscape. Though built for physical interaction, the sensory exploration within Serra's *Shift* also is predicated upon psychological and philosophical enquiry.

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Figure 61: Serra, R. (1970-72). *Shift*. Concrete. 1524 x 203 x 27432 - 73152 mm per section. King City, Ontario. (From Krauss et al., 1986).

### **4.1.2 - Experience and Emotion**

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It is this unique landscape in Kings County, Ontario, and its connection to the body and experience of viewers, which is most highlighted by Serra's *Shift*. As the forms rise vertically, level, from the earth, the viewer becomes alerted to the subtle indifferences of the landscape surrounding. The barely undulating topography of each slope is marked by the protuberance of the concrete forms, as illustrated in Figures 60 and 61. "The sculptural elements act as barometers for the landscape" (Serra, 1983, as cited in Bois & Shepley, 1984, p.34), with forms extending across to reveal contours of the land, whilst also creating a new horizon line which provides both a direct and visual connection between the viewer, the work, and the landscape.

This influence of body, space, and time, emphasised through *Shift* and Serra's other subsequent landscape works, can be seen a direct influence from Japan. Discussing the experience of Zen gardens at Myoshin-ji, Kyoto, Serra states: "...the experience of Japanese gardens was enormously important for my first landscape pieces. The gardens opened up a perceptual world... What is essential is the time of experiencing the gardens as you move through them: its a physical time. Time is compressed or protracted, but its always articulated. Perception narrows to details, but it always returns to the field in its entirety." (Foster & Serra, 2018, p.62). This perception of time, space, and motion, used at Myoshin-ji to articulate individual components within the landscape whilst being viewed as a total field, can be understood through Zen philosophies such as *Uji* or being-time, and *Ma* or negative space, which are seen directly in Serra's approach to *Shift*.

This philosophical enquiry into existence and experience, a common theme found within Serra's works, can also be linked to his early influences in Existentialism, authoring his senior thesis at Santa Barbara on Camus' *'The Stranger'* and *'The Myth of Sisyphus'*. Discussing this influence, Serra describes "what existentialism does is bring you back to the intensity of where you are at that exact time and place, which is not like any other time and place, and how meaningful it can be. It makes you focus on your relationship to time and its passage, your relationship to your own necessities. And that became a subtext of the way I've led my life" (Foster & Serra, 2018, p.9). In this regard, *Shift*, as well as the body of Serra's works, could be viewed as an existentialist trigger, promoting the viewer to experience the intensity, or uniqueness, of that exact time and place.

When illustrating the experience of *Shift*, emphasis can be found placed upon movement throughout space, and its change upon perception, this change of perspective, most clearly illustrated in Figures 62 through 64. Serra describes this process in detail, explaining that: "Moving over the ground of the work, one experiences the walls as elements in constant transformation: first as line and then as barrier, only once more to become line. From the vantage of high ground, the upper edges of the walls are the vectors along which one sights as one stands looking down, and they thereby establish ones connection to the distance. Whereas from the vantage of ones "descent," they broaden and thicken to become an enclosure that binds one within the earth. Felt as barrier



Figure 62: Linear perspective standing beside Richard Serra's *Shift*, establishing a connection to distance. Image credit: JasonParis. CC BY-SA 2.0.



Figure 63: Angled perspective moving around *Shift*, with depth of plane beginning to broaden. Image credit: JasonParis. CC BY-SA 2.0.



Figure 64: Barrier perspective standing beside *Shift*, heightening experience toward the physical location of the body. Image credit: JasonParis. CC BY-SA 2.0.

rather than as perspective, they then heighten the experience of the physical place of one's body. Without depicting anything specific, the walls oscillate between the linear and the physical, articulating both a situation and a lived perspective. And it does this in the most abstract way possible: by the rotation in and out of depth of a plane" (Serra, cited in Krauss et al., 1986, p.32).

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### 4.1.3 - Context

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The design for *Shift* is site-specific, with each length of concrete determined by the topography of the land. Each form follows a specific path which Serra had surveyed over five days with fellow artist Joan Jonas, captured on video, illustrated as Figure 65. Discussing the process, Serra describes: "We discovered that two people walking the distance of the field opposite one another, attempting to keep each other in view despite the curvature of the land, would mutually determine a topological definition of the space. The boundaries of the work became the maximum distance two people could occupy and still keep each other in view. The horizon of the work was established by the possibilities of maintaining this mutual viewpoint. From the extreme boundaries of the work, a total configuration is always understood. As eye-levels were aligned—across the expanse of the field—elevations were located. The expanse of the valley, unlike the two hills, was flat." (Serra, cited in Krauss et

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Figure 65: Videotape of landscape survey for *Shift*, 1970. (From Krauss et al., 1986).

al., 1986, p.29-30).

As described by Serra, this site-specific survey is derived directly from the body in space, using human scale and perception to configure each element of the design. The outcome of this survey led Serra to create an elevational map, displayed as Figure 66, the work consisting of two sections, each containing three separate forms, measuring: 60 x 1080 x 8" (152.4 x 2743 x 20.3 cm), 60 x 2880 x 8" (152.4 x 7315.2 x 20.3 cm), 60 x 1800 x 8" (152.4 x 4572 x 20.3 cm), 60 x 1440 x 8" (152.4 x 3657.6 x 20.3 cm), 60 x 1320 x 8" (152.4 x 3352.8 x 20.3cm), 60 x 1260 x 8" (152.4 x 3200.4 x 20.3cm). These lengths, when viewed together at distance, frame the boundary of the site, the maximum area the site occupies based upon "the maximum distance two people could occupy and still keep each other in view" (Serra, cited in Krauss et al., 1986, p.30), and elevation becoming based upon the alignment of eye-levels.

When discussing the progression of Serra's practice from large interior installations towards creating his first landscape pieces, Serra highlights the process and problem solving aspect of working with site-specific sculpture. "Once I got into a larger context, I had to deal with how the space functions. Wheres the door? How do people enter? Where does the light come from? Whats the weight load? And then other contexts, other settings, opened up. The move into landscape, which happened with Shift (1970) and Pullitzer Piece: Stepped Elevation (1969-71) was huge, and that raised other questions in turn. Whats the elevation? How do you deal with its shifts?

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Figure 66: Elevational plan for *Shift*, 1970. (From Krauss et al., 1986).

I was still involved with making and doing, but my hand was extended by other people, by the riggers and their tools.” (Foster & Serra, 2018, p.57). As Serra makes clear, his response to site is concerned to a spatial realm, of what exists on the site, and how the body moves throughout, which in turn forms *Shift*.

“How do you deal with space in a way that will bring a sculptural resolution to all its indices? How do you take a field that is undifferentiated or heterogeneous and turn it into a homogeneous sculptural place that anybody can recognise the moment they walk into it?... how do you challenge those spaces, changing them in a way that deals with volume in a way that hadn't been done before? Basically what I try to do is articulate space.” (Foster & Serra, 2018, p.60).

Whilst it was not Serra's intention in creating *Shift*, the work could also be seen to reinforce a connection between landscape and natural history, as the unique topography which *Shift* emphasises is part of the Oakes Ridge Moraine, an ecologically important geological landform in Southern Ontario, created through the advance and retreat of glaciers 12,000 years ago (Green, 2016). The land which *Shift* is located was to be protected by the Oakes Ridge Moraine Conservation Act, enacted by the Government of Ontario in 2001, as a green space which protects the ecological and hydrological integrity of the moraine.

The land was purchased from the Davidson family by Hickory Hill Investments, a land developer, in 1974. Whilst the work was to be protected under the Ontario Heritage Act in 1990,

the construction of a nearby housing development threatened the survival of both the artwork and the natural landform it was placed within. Although appealed by Hickory Hill Investments, *Shift* was to become fundamental in preserving a segment of this landscape, recognised in 2010 as a site of cultural significance and given designation which further protected it under the Ontario Heritage Act (Adams, 2013). This protection may develop in future to allow access and maintenance of the site, as currently the work lays derelict, located upon private property with signs erected towards any visitors trespassing, an ironic twist considering the naming of Richard Serra Crescent in Clearview Heights, located only 500 metres away.

When viewed as an expanded realm, Serra's practice can be examined to have direct correlation to landscape, and landscape architecture. Serra's design for *Shift* contributes an understanding as to how his work operates in relation between body, space, and time. *Shift* creates a physical presence within an otherwise unnoticed landscape. Yet, as seen in its relation to the natural history of the site, and the preservation of site, there are extended relationships that can

## 4.2 - 'Tilted Arc' (1981)

be perceived from this work, and extended practice of Serra, when viewed within the realm of landscape architecture.

*Tilted Arc* (1981) is Serra's most controversial artwork, becoming internationally renowned due to issues the work raised surrounding the purpose and ownership of art within public space. Commissioned at a rate of \$175,000 USD by the U.S General Services Administrations Art-in-Architecture program, *Tilted Arc* was designed toward a planned extension of the Jacob K. Kravitz building, located in the Foley Federal Plaza, Lower Manhattan. Serra's design consisted of a seventy-three tonne, thirty-six metre-long, four-metre-high sculpture, formed out six-centimetre-thick rustic COR-TEN steel which intersected across the plaza courtyard, as illustrated in Figure 67, the sculpture impeding upon both the view and pathway of pedestrians. This engagement was important to Serra's site-specific design, intending to transform the spatial interaction

### 4.2.1 - Art and Aesthetics

of commuters within the plaza, a location usually passed through hastily en-route to elsewhere (Michalos, 2007).

As in multiple of the works within Serra's practice, relationships can be drawn back to his *Verb List* (1967) and the procedure undertaken when approaching *Tilted Arc*. The work applies the action to bend to create a large, arcing site-specific sculpture from plate steel, clearly illustrated in Figure

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Figure 67: Serra, R. (1981). *Tilted Arc*. Corten steel. 304 x 3048 x 63 mm. Federal Plaza, NY. (From Krauss et al., 1986).

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Figure 68: Serra, R. (1981). *Tilted Arc*. Corten steel. 304 x 3048 x 63 mm. Federal Plaza, NY. (From Krauss et al., 1986).



68. Often read as a conical section by viewers and critics alike, Serra made a point to distinguish the process of creating the arc from that of a conical section, stating that the arc "... is a rectilinear plate which has been bent one foot over its elevation. It was then impaled into the ground at both ends so that the middle section rides flush with the ground. When you bend the plate without cutting, the fact that the middle is riding continuously along the ground means that the top will crown so that the piece rises into the center". (Serra, cited in Senie, 2001, p.24). Other verbs such as to curve and to lift can be seen within the steel form, whilst to split, of location and of context when approaching the site-specificity of the plaza.

*Tilted Arc* does not carry the same readings of the picturesque as seen through earlier works such as *Shift*, which highlights unique characteristics of the rural landscape it is located. Yet there are aesthetic considerations made for *Tilted Arc* which link to location, which Serra perceived a "pedestal site in front of a public building. There is a fountain on the plaza, and normally you would expect a sculpture next to the fountain, so that the ensemble would embellish the building." (Serra, cited in Senie, 2001, p.24). Aware of surrounding federal buildings and the situation being "within the very centre of the mechanisms of state power" (Serra, cited in Senie, 2001, p.82) and wishing to avoid his sculpture becoming a symbol of state, Serra discovered "a way to dislocate or alter the decorative function of the plaza and actively bring people into the sculptures context" (Serra, cited in Senie, 2001, p.24). Subverting the plazas function as an embellishing feature for the bureaucratic site, Serra reinforces that the experience of

his sculpture is one based in phenomenology, of space, time, and body, rather than aesthetics.

When discussing the notion of beauty, and Serra's responsibility when making site-specific sculpture, Serra states that "Its really the obligation of the sculptor to define sculpture, not to be defined by the power structure that asks you, that while you put your sculpture up, to please make this place more beautiful. I find that a totally false notion, because their notion of beauty and my notion of . . . sculpture are always, invariably, at opposite ends." (Serra, cited in Senie, 2001, p.24). Approaching the urban site, Serra's intention with *Tilted Arc* was to block the views of pedestrians walking to and from the buildings, encompassing them within the volume of the plaza. Serra was aware that this approach was not an attempt to glamorize the space as a functional area for the federal buildings, stating: "The intention is to bring the viewer into the sculpture. The placement of the sculpture will change the space of the plaza. After the piece is created, the space will be understood primarily as a function of the sculpture" (Serra, cited in Senie, 2001, p.24).

This transformation of site, from a bleak place of circulation control to a place of pure sculptural experience, marks Serra's fulfilment to make sculpture which fills a role in activating surrounding space for viewers, actively engaging them in site over a prolonged length of time, rather than that of a fulfilment to the vast and subjective realm of aesthetics. Though pure in intent, this approach was proven in the years

### 4.2.2 - Experience and Emotion

post-installation to have mixed reactions from audiences.

Serra said of the design that “The viewer becomes aware of himself and of his movement through the plaza. As he moves, the sculpture changes. Contraction and expansion of the sculpture result from the viewers movement. Step by step, the perception not only of the sculpture but of the entire environment changes.” (Serra, cited in Senie, 2001, p.80). As per many of the previous Serra works, the basis of walking, and gradual transformation of viewer, becomes apparent, this rotation of plane illustrated in Figures 69 and 70. Describing this process, Serra states: “When you face the concavity of a curve, the entire breadth of the curvilinear volume opens up in front of you; you see it all at once. However, as you walk around its end and it changes to a convexity, the volume evaporates. It reveals itself only through walking – you cant see the openness of the field or how volume is sucked into it” (Foster & Serra, 2018, p.171).

Whilst this intent was of pure sculptural approach, the experience of being confronted by the sculpture had mixed responses, and due to the highly public nature of the sculpture, a common consensus towards this experience is hard to capture. As Bradley Arthur, a citizen and neighbour, would raise during the ensuing controversial hearing surrounding Tilted Arc, “You cannot take 2000, 4000 or 10,000 people at a particular time and place.... Tilted Arc belongs to 230 million people” (Serra, cited in Senie, 2001, p.37). Though it was inevitable for context to play a large place within the larger dialogue surrounding this work, the

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Figure 69: Pedestrians pass along the concavity of the curved face of *Tilted Arc*. (From Krauss et al., 1986).

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Figure 70: Pedestrian passes around to the convexed face of *Tilted Arc*. (From Krauss et al., 1986).

experience designed by Serra, again, was of a purely sculptural intent. Serra states “Placing pieces in an urban context is not synonymous with an interest in a large audience even though the work will be seen by many people who wouldn't otherwise look at art. The work I make does not allow for experience outside the conventions of sculpture as sculpture. My audience is necessarily very limited.” (Senie, 2001, p.41).

The approach of creating a work which fulfils an avant-garde, contemporary art role, within such a public context, surrounded by government workers and officials, was undoubtedly going to face some controversy. Yet Serra knew exactly what he was doing, taking an anti-authoritarian stance, whilst both creating a confronting piece of public art and fulfilling his contractual obligations to the US General Services Admission. Aside from this controversy, when thinking toward the experience and emotion intended by Serra's design intent, no other work adheres to Serra's allure as an artist so strongly. In creating an arc which spans thirty-six metres long, intersecting the courtyard of a hasty, rapidly speeding urban area, Serra dominantly encourages the public, in masses, to engage with life on a deeper level, whether on a personal, or a wider, socio-political, level. As highlighted by Harriet Senie in '*Tilted Arc: Dangerous Precedent*' (2001), the work spanned a length of time in which shifting political paradigms and social values took place, installed at the height of the Reagan administration, and deinstalled eight years later, the same year as the Berlin Wall. As such, the work could be said to metaphorically represent this split, a divide between two sides, in stark view of the public and government alike. At

bare minimum, the physical barrier created within the plaza encouraged pedestrians to take a break from the busy, bleak New York lifestyle.

Though providing a strong, unique sculptural intervention for viewers and commuters within the Foley Federal Plaza, a sculptural experience approved in construction by the commissioners, the US General Services Administration, Serra's intervention with this landscape, however, was not to last. *Tilted Arc* was to become a catalyst in opening a harsh, lengthy dialogue surrounding the role of contemporary art in public areas, the dialogue openly recorded in legal hearings, a case which was presented as the public versus art.

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### **4.3.3 - Context**

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Serra's selected design towards *Tilted Arc* is unique, as commonly Serra's approach to urban sites is to make sculpture which is "generally closed... You enter in the structure, which is a space that breaks with the surroundings". (Foster & Serra, 2018, p.70). *Tilted Arc* instead can be seen to have much of the characteristics of a landscape piece, which Serra defines that, "In the landscape, even if I go through the same process of site analysis, the sculptures have more to do with movement than with location. The landscape pieces are usually open." (Foster & Serra, 2018, p.70). In distinction to vertical urban pieces, such as *Sight Point* (1972-75), a towering figure containing enclosed space within, illustrated as Figure 71, *Tilted Arc* maintains the open characteristics of a landscape piece,

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Figure 71: Serra, R. (1972-75). *Sight Point*. Corten Steel. Three plates each 1016 x 254 x 63 mm. Amsterdam. (From Krauss et al., 1986).

placing emphasis back upon the movement and circulation of pedestrians within this location.

This site-specific design approach shows Serra's careful considerations to working within the urban environment of a plaza. Aware that every urban site has its degree of ideological connotation, and that "its difficult to subvert those contexts" (Serra, in Crimp, 1981, cited in Krauss et al., 1986, p.49), Serra's explains that, within urban environments, "there is one condition that I want, which is a density of traffic flow" (Serra, in Crimp, 1981, cited in Krauss et al., 1986, p.49). As the plaza contained a large volume of space, and a dense circulation of traffic to and from the buildings, pictured in Figure 72, his design process towards *Tilted Arc* is heavily predicated upon transforming the space as an experiential location.

The ensuing response from both the GSA regional office and workers within the area was overwhelmingly negative, finding the work extremely disruptive to daily routine, with the GSA handing out flyers seeking members of the public to Speak Out, shown in Figure 73. (Kammen, 2006). Within months over 1300 government employees in the greater metro area had signed a petition to remove *Tilted Arc* (Kammen, 2006). A public hearing surrounding *Tilted Arc* was held in March 1985, with one hundred and twenty-two people testifying in favour of keeping the piece, including notable speakers such as Phillip Glass, Keith Haring and Claes Oldenburg, and fifty-eight in favour of removal. (Michalos, 2007). Whilst Chief Judge Edward D. Re would claim "we who work here are left

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Figure 72: Dense flow of traffic, and *Tilted Arc*, intersecting the open space of the Foley Federal Plaza. (From Krauss et al., 1986).

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Figure 73: Speak Out flyer handed out in GSA buildings and surrounding areas against *Tilted Arc*, 1985, Federal Plaza, NY. (From Senie, 2001).

with a once beautiful plaza rendered useless by an ugly rusted steel wall” (Serra vs US General Service Admin., 1987), others defined the sculpture as “an expression of the commitment of our country to artistic expression as a vital element of our culture through the utilization of appropriated funds for this purpose and as a form of freedom for the artist to make his statement about the life and times in which the artist lives and works; and as an expression of the deepest values of our society.” (Serra vs US General Service Admin., 1987).

As the government made additional supporting claims of removal due to security, stating that in keeping the artwork would “run the risk of deflecting explosions into government buildings opposite and impeded adequate surveillance of the area beyond” (Hopkins, 2000, p.159), a jury of five voted four-to-one in removal of the artwork. In 1986, Serra was to sue to U.S GSA, launching the most prolific public sculpture controversy in the history of art law (Kammen, 2006). As Serra designed the work as site-specific, Serra argued that it could not be relocated without destroying the artwork. He argued that his contract with the US GSA stipulated that the work would not be removed from the plaza, and doing to do so, would have to “be predicated on the negative judgements of the artistic expression of the work and on its aesthetic, social and political meaning, a removal in violation of the claimed contract would violate the First, and ultimately, the fifth Amendment to the Constitution” (Serra vs US General Service Admin., 1987). The work, deemed property of the US Government, was removed on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 1989, displayed in

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Figure 74: Police and construction workers at the removal of *Tilted Arc*, March 15, 1989. (From Senie, 2001).

Figure 74, and has never been exhibited again. The removal and trial of *Tilted Arc* led to the construction of the Visual Artists Rights Act in 1990, the first federal copyright legislation to grant protection of moral rights.

In an ironic twist, the site of *Tilted Arc* was replaced by the work of American landscape architect Martha Schwartz, completed in 1997, displayed as Figure 75. Schwartz's complete redesign of the site, now renamed the Jacob Javitz Plaza, was executed in a more user-friendly manner in accordance with her government commission, the primary role in providing a seated lunch area for workers within the government buildings, her curling maze of bright green bench seating and grassed mounds which omit steam commonly viewed as the antithesis of Serra's bold construction, yet frequently suggested as hard to navigate, and due to surrounding renovation, was recently replaced by the work of MVVA / Michael Van Valkenburgh. When viewed from a landscape architecture perspective, *Tilted Arc* defied the common consensus of how urban landscape architecture activates space, becoming a hinderance to the wider public who utilize the space for non-sculptural purposes. Yet through its sculptural form, the transformation, the subversion, of the urban environment in which it was located, and the emphasis upon the interaction between audience and space, still occupies a periphery of urban landscape architecture, raising an argument of what constitutes public space, and how it must look, and function.

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Figure 75: Schwartz, M. (1997). *Jacob Javitz Plaza*. From *Jacob Javitz Plaza*, by F. Tonini, 2013 Febuary 8. (<https://oldgardens.wordpress.com/2013/02/08/jacob-javits-plaza-nyc-usa/>).



## 4.3 - East-West/West-East

(2014)

The final and most recent work discussed throughout this chapter of the dissertation, *East-West/West-East* (2014) is likely one of Serra's least discussed, yet visually, most compelling works, possibly due to the isolated location of the sculpture. Constructed in the Brouq Nature Reserve in Qatar, the four vertical plates which combine to create *East-West/West-East* span over a kilometre in length, with the height of each plate level set by their relation to the topography of the natural corridor of a gypsum plateau in which they are located within, as displayed in Figure 76. Each vertical Corten steel plate between 14.7 and 16.7 metres, separated by 250 metres. The sculptures combined efforts across the landscape see Serra's largest, and possibly most unique, landscape works, the immense scale of both steel and desert permitting for encounter and exploration from either end.

### 4.3.1 - Art and Aesthetics

Serra's site-specific design of *East-West/West-East* could be said to be nothing short of magnificent, its vertical forms protruding high above the horizon line of the desert, reaching toward the sky like towers which pair with the surrounding contour, the combination of both desert and steel creating an awe inspiring, minimalist, landscape scene, alike to Figure 77. The tone and form of the Corten sculpture, in combination with the natural setting of the desert, create a work, which when viewed through the static medium of photography, can construct scenes alike to the abstract paintings of New Zealand's own Colin McCahon, shown in Figure 78. Though



Figure 76: Serra, R. (2014). *East-West/West-East*. Corten steel. Four sheets each 14700 - 16700 x 100 x 100000 mm. Image shows direct correlation to the height of surrounding gypsum plateau. Image credit: Qmamarketing. CC BY-SA 3.0.

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Figure 77: Minimalist landscape scene composed of desert, steel and sky. From *Richard Serra's East-West/West-East Rises in the Qatari Desert*, by K. Rosenfield for ArchDaily, 2015 April 30. (<https://www.archdaily.com/626191/richard-serra-s-east-west-west-east-rises-in-the-qatari-desert>). Image credit: Nelson Garrido.

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Figure 78: McCahon, C. (1965). *As there is a constant flow of light we are born into the pure land*. Enamel on hardboard. 598 x 1800 mm. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu. Courtesy McCahon Research and Publication Trust. (<https://mccahonhouse.org.nz/100/john-coley/>).

specific elements are missed, such as the texture of sand beneath the feet, or the heat of the desert, *East-West/West-East* could be seen as the work in which is most well represented through photography, the feeling of being with the sculpture most accurately portrayed.

From further distances, the angles in which capture these sculptural forms in a singular vision hold an immense power in containing, and framing, the site, between the surrounding plateaus. As noted in an interview with Hal Foster (2018), Serra discusses his disinterest in framing site from a specific angle, and his confusion of what Robert Smithson referred to as the picturesque quality when viewing *Shift* (1970). Yet, and although perhaps not of interest to Serra, there are angles which are able to accurately portray the design intent, and the landscape context the design is formulated upon, perhaps more than any other of his works.

Again, as Yves-Alain Bois would make point in discussing Serra's *Clara-Clara* (1983), the static images still maintain in holding a persuasion of movement around the site, with the location becoming “redefined not represented... The placement of all structures in the open field draws viewers attention to the topography of the landscape as the landscape is walked” (Bois & Shepley, 1984, p.34).

### **4.3.2 - Experience and Emotion**

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Serra's *East-West/West-East* is another example of his commitment to creating phenomenological, immersive sculpture which interacts with both nature and viewer through time, and space. In the Brouq Nature Reserve, Serra continues to exploit the formal and physical properties inherent to Corten steel, including gravity, density, and weight, to heighten the awareness of spectators, with each of the four tall, vertical forms dwarfing all who visit. As Serra would say, "If you are dealing with abstract art, you have to deal with the work in and of itself and its inherent properties." (Solomon, 2019). In the Qatari desert, the combination of the inherent properties of Corten, in unison with the vast, barren expanse of the desert, its endless sands and punishing heat, could develop feelings of the sublime, of wonder, and of trepidation, to humans, left vulnerable in the presence of steel and sand. The sheer volume, weight, and scale, all monumental, en-situ, nods towards the sculpture standing the test of time within a harsh, isolated environment, alongside the much older, more experienced, and weathered friend it mimics: the surrounding gypsum plateaus.

At a greater level, there is a certain element to the work, perhaps its monolithic properties, which could serve as a metaphysical reminder of a greater power, or the purpose of man, a similar reading both formally, and potentially, epistemologically, to the experiences of the apes in Stanley Kubrick's *'2001: A Space Odyssey'* (1968) displayed in Figure 79, with a kilometre long measurement drawn in the sand, and in the sky, between man, his monolithic constructions,

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Figure 79: Image still from Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, 1968. Image credit: MGM. ([https://mediaproxy.salon.com/width/1200/https://media.salon.com/2013/07/2001\\_monolith.jpg](https://mediaproxy.salon.com/width/1200/https://media.salon.com/2013/07/2001_monolith.jpg)).

and the expanse of both space and time. It may be considered as Serra's sculpture for the celestials, his Stonehenge of the desert. Though perhaps a creative reading, one must consider the adventure undertaken by those visiting these protruding forms, located in the middle of nowhere away from the safe city walls of Doha, an area which reaches temperatures upwards of 45 degrees centigrade, with limited options for food, shelter, or water. Humankind is undoubtedly tested in this isolated location, and thus, must wonder, what, or who else could this work be in communication with.

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### 4.3.3 - Context

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At the location of *East-West/West-East*, site-specificity is formed through Serra's direct engagement with the surrounding landscape. The height of his steel forms, directly based off the height of the surrounding topography of the gypsum plateaus, creates a conversation between sculpture, and land. The sculpture can be understood as a demarkation, a measurement, of topography and of elevation, between the two planes, illustrated in Figure 80. This sizing then creates further dialogue between the scale of the body of the viewer, sculpture, and the plateau. Serra uses space in a way which distinguishes it as a material, which takes precedence over other concerns, using sculpture and sculptural form to present space in a unique manner (McShine et al., 2007). Each of the four vertical forms are used to not only heighten awareness of the landscape, but also to the volume between forms, and the existence of the body in space, all located in the wild, untamed

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Figure 80: Relationship between gypsum plateau and *East-West/West-East*. From *Richard Serra's East-West/West-East Rises in the Qatari Desert*, by K. Rosenfield for ArchDaily, 2015 April 30. (<https://www.archdaily.com/626191/richard-serra-s-east-west-west-east-rises-in-the-qatari-desert>). Image credit: Nelson Garrido.

stretch of the desert, a place where heightened awareness is crucial yet known to such little extent, a place now highlighted, visited, and explored, due to Serra's interaction with site.

Within the desert in Qatar, Serra's use of Corten steel to create a location, a transformative process in which creates a new place, a place which did not exist before his intervention with it, other systems visibly play into the aesthetic experiences of *East-West/West-East* whilst connecting the work to site. Here, time is a system which is employed by Serra to thoroughly reinforce place, the context in which it is located. Each of the vertical forms display rustic, weathered scars, each unique pattern a result of the oxidation formed from their proximity of the peninsula, as detailed in Figure 81. These geographically specific patterns show the elements interacting with site, using the forms as a blackboard to display the results of living in harsh environments. The climate of this location has also caused bending within the steel, weathering over time due to the extremities of temperature and wind. In the desert, the elements have their way with Serra's forms, and rightfully draw much of the attention from the viewer. Another scar revealed from the test of time in the desert sands is the visible inscriptions upon the base of the steel forms from countless visitors, also seen in Figure 81, etched into the surface oxidation and steel. Though perhaps unintentionally, Serra's forms act as a record book, displaying a palimpsest of both nature and mankind, with many participators employing the use of stones to present their presence in the desert to future encounters.

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Figure 81: Detailed view of weathering pattern on steel due to environmental characteristics. From *Richard Serra's East-West/West-East Rises in the Qatari Desert*, by K. Rosenfield for ArchDaily, 2015 April 30. (<https://www.archdaily.com/626191/richard-serra-s-east-west-west-east-rises-in-the-qatari-desert>). Image credit: Nelson Garrido.

Yet, seen over countless sculptures throughout Serra's practice, time is again employed as a system which reinforces a connection between body and site, through one of an evolving experience. In such an expansive, rugged environment, it is hard to think of how one may find comfort for lengths of time and embrace the encounter. However, the process of walking the land, the heightening of awareness between oneself and the environment, of movement, is again an overarching theme found at *East-West/West-East*, this display between space, time, body, and form creating an utterly unique place in which viewers are enabled to connect, moving in and out, and around, the landscape over time.

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# CHAPTER FIVE

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## AN EXPERIENTIAL ACCOUNT

In approaching the next phase of this dissertation, my main motivation is simplified. Rather than discourse about specific works in Serra's vast history, and all the ways they connect with the realm of landscape, I instead seek out a personal experience of being with a Serra work. Through an experiential account of my journey to visit the *Te Tuhirangi Contour* (2001) at Gibbs Sculpture Farm in Kaipara Harbour, north of Auckland, I gain first-hand experience as to what these works feel like.

### **5.1 - A Cue to Experience at**

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### **Te Tuhirangi Contour**

Approaching the site after a short journey from Central Auckland, what becomes first apparent along this journey is the drastic shift in environment. In what feels like a matter of minutes, the advanced urban sprawl of our largest city fades to a remnant. A motorway offramp leads our bus towards semi-rural areas, diverting through roads and roundabouts until the route traversed becomes narrow, developing steep elevations, tucking, and turning through pockets of dense vegetation to what becomes a vast, expansive farmland environment which stretch across the rolling valleys of Makarau.

As our bus turns and ascends a final private driveway, carefully clearing the entranceway to the property, the work produced by Serra for the site becomes instantaneously visible, unmissable to any visitor, located in the nearest depression

from the start of a private road which weaves through an enormous section of land filled with large-scale sculpture. As I descend the steps of the bus, this open, seemingly endless, pastoral landscape, though stereotypical of many rural areas throughout Aotearoa, begins to feel quaint, my South Island background unfamiliar, and oddly curious, of the warm and humid air, the overcast day possibly indicative of both rain and shine. My first steps from the bus, to grass, and hastily back to the road, a confirmation of the land's exposure to the elements, as moisture from mud rapidly encroaches the soles of my footwear. On the road, I prepare my things for the day: a notebook and pen, camera, and water, grab a prepared lunch from the event coordinators, and set my phone to record voice notes, as myself and much of the crowd from the bus cautiously descend the first valley towards Richard Serra's *Te Tuhirangi Contour*.

From a distanced encounter the first sense I gain of this work is purity. The work is visually clear, dark, and minimal, a rustic form of weathered Corten steel which is born solely from the landscape it is situated within. From this perspective, shown in Figure 82, the full length of the dominant serpentine form is visible in its totality, with each twist and turn understandably derived from the context of the rolling valley floor. Spanning over 250 metres in length, the form emphasises the horizontality of this landscape, sprawling across the open valley, meandering through the undulating farmland landscape towards the distant ranges. As overcast cloud, pockets of light rain, and illuminating rays of shine pass overhead, certain faces of the valley floor darken, then return, to light, yet the



Figure 82: Serra, R. (2001). *Te Tuhirangi Contour*. Corten steel. 252000 x 600 x 50 mm.  
Author's own image.



solid shadow cast from the sculpture remains strong, blending shadow with steel, subject to change as the day passes.

My first desire in engaging with this sculpture is to remain at distance, in observation, as many continue to slowly descend toward the form. As through research I am aware of Serra's oeuvre, his intention in facilitating a direct engagement between site, space, and viewer, particularly through walking the landscape, I am interested in what physical reactions can be witnessed, and how people choose to engage with the work, and navigate through its surrounding site. Although a few spectators remain alongside, at distance, beneath the shelter of the trees and safe from the potential dangers of sopping, slippery segments of terrain, I witness as many finally reach the beginning of the sculpture.

The figures beside, or seemingly beneath, the sculpture begin to seem truly insignificant, dwarfed in relation to the plates of steel, this diminutive feeling enhanced by those selecting to venture on the side to which the eleven degree incline leans. Many choose to stand at this point, noting the thickness of the sheet, or pointing toward the crest of the work, alerted to the difference in the size, and weight, between the steel sheet and their own bodies, each of these fifty-six steel sheets weighing in the realm of eleven tonnes, and standing six metres tall. The difference in scale almost implies the work must be built for a larger being, the truth being that, when viewed from this distance, the larger being is the land.

I watch onward as the figures decide to continue their journey, some selecting to walk beneath the incline of the steel on the lower slopes, opting to pass down what appears as the more confrontational pathway, the weight of thick plate steel suspended overhead of the figures as they diminish in size with each step. On the opposite side, a group travel on together at distance from the form, deciding to walk, talk, and laugh, on a less precarious path. Before I decide to adventure forward and experience this phenomenon first hand, I move to a different angle to further indulge in the ways the land and the form interact, supervise the departed figures, and plot my approach across the moisture laden pastureland.

From this angle, still distanced and contemplative of the experience to come, I attempt to force out any predisposed notion of what tools my research thus far has provided me towards understanding Serra's work. I begin to take account of my senses, a meditative survey, as an attempt to ground myself within my body, at this location. As I breathe, I note that a constant wind flows through the valley, and although the breeze is warm, it interests me in thinking how this large steel wall could offer refuge and shelter for the exposed landscape when the elements are harsh, either blocking or redirecting wind. The remnant markings of animals, perhaps from llama, or emu, but most likely, sheep, rubbing against the lower sections of the form reinforces this thought. Yet, perhaps, they instead seek the warmth of the steel in the later ends of the day. For now, I am glad the day is tame, with no single dominant element seeking my attention. The pockets of light and shadow that move hastily through the valley confirm

that this land is rugged, and vulnerable to high levels of wind, and rain. I appreciate the hospitality the day has provided.

I make my final approach down the slope towards the form and become aware of another meandering feature located in the bottom of the valley. A corridor of native grasses and tī kōuka trees line the crevice of this gully, seemingly mimicking the upright, serpentine form of the sculpture above, the juxtaposition of both displayed as Figure 83.

Though currently smaller, and located lower to its steel counterpart, I tease with the idea that, over time, the steel will wear and weather, gaining grit from the environment, whilst this natural feature, detailed in Figure 84, will gain nourishment, growing tall, dense, and strong, with the potential for this patch to eventually mirror Serra's creation. The squelch of water beneath each step, and deep mud approaching my ankles, reaffirms the fertility of this land. I find stronghold in some drier land upslope and make my final move to encountering the increasingly large, solid, unyielding form.

Now standing at the base of the form, the direct encounter I have previously witnessed now becomes extremely apparent. The second sense I gain here is of presence, through scale, and mass. The steel form is dense, staunch, standing tall and burdensome with no sign of wavering. Every individual marking from weathering in this environment becomes significant, offering an understanding to how this material survives in situ. A quick touch confirms the cool texture of steel, as corrosion stains the fingers. As the eye scans the blemishes, my sight is drawn to the edges, displayed as



Figure 83: Native plantings in gully mirror form of *Te Tuhirangi Contour*. Author's own image.



Figure 84: Native plantings in gully beside *Te Tuhirangi Contour*. Author's own image.

Figure 85, a feature which is most apparent in representing the weight of the material. Repetitive geometric lines along the cutting edge allude to the industrial process of creation, disturbed only by the grained textures of rust, and the occasional blemish. The definitive line these edges draw, in contrast to the environment, cut against the surrounding light, most visible towards the crest of the panels, where the sky is dissected by a raw, unrelenting barrier, highlighted in Figure 86. I sense that I am to follow the route in which I am contained under the incline, seeking to explore this overarching presence, to wander, and wonder, along in its company.

As I begin to walk beneath Serra's creation, the selected path displayed as Figure 87, I gain an understanding of details previously unnoticeable from distance. The buttressing between each of the steel panels leaves minute gaps in which, when peered closely, allows light to be seen through an otherwise solid, dense form. Inspecting these gaps, I note that, although glimpses from the other side of the towering feature may be seen, it is now nearly impossible to gain a sense of how thick the sheets are. Yet, without observed density, the vertical sheets of steel which angle overhead still suggest weight, just with an implied buoyancy, as if this balance of mass is not possible. It is an uncanny, awe-inspiring feeling, seemingly unavoidable at this scale, which connects you to this form.



Figure 85: Detailed view of Cor-ten steel edges of *Te Tuhirangi Contour*. Author's own image.



Figure 86: Form of *Te Tuhirangi Contour* intersecting with environment and light. Author's own image.



Figure 87: View of pathway beneath incline of *Te Tuhirangi Contour*. Author's own image.

Now walking along, the form begins to divert, opening to the left. I approach the first, and largest, arc within this serpentine journey. The curve sweeps around, eventually returning to its original vector, creating a semi-dome effect. This area is interesting as the curvature applied throughout the form is most apparent, a design feature which seems to juxtapose the inherent properties of structural steel, most regularly seen applied in industry in flat planes. This area, the feeling of being enclosed, has a reminiscent feeling of an amphitheatre, or coliseum, as an intriguing effect comes to awareness. The noise of another group approaching the opposite end of this arc reverberates down the panels, sweeping the arc, and is caught by my ears. Though the steel is dense, blocking physical movement to the opposite side of the vertical form, an opposite effect can be found through sound, carried horizontally down the path, able to overhear pockets of conversation of figures much further away than I would expect, the distance between us displayed in Figure 88. From this experience I gain a sense of how contemplative walking the landscape can be, overhearing the dialogue of others in discussion, and my own internal monologue keeping pace alongside.

As I pass my company of strangers and approach the end of the form, preparing to encounter the trip along the opposite side, I stand again at the base of the sculpture. The thickness of the plate steel is, again, now visible, the opposite end reflected in Figure 89, returning the perception of mass to my senses. On one side, I can now reflect upon the encounter



Figure 88: Relocated sound along steel arc from distanced figures at *Te Tuhirangi Contour*. Author's own image.



Figure 89: Opposite end of *Te Tuhirangi Contour* veers away from body and land. Author's own image.



beneath the incline of steel, the uncanny, precarious feeling of mass suspended over my head, the security of shelter, and accentuation of sound, provided by the contour. On the other side, the form now allures to what seems to be a different experience entirely, the lean of the steel veering away from the body, opening the space between figure and form, creating a wide gully between steel and land.

I begin to venture around to this alternate path and note another assembly of enthusiastic spectators addressing this incline, preparing to endeavour beneath the steel for the first time. Though only a minor vertical detail across the long and winding form, it is this slight angle that creates such an obvious difference between the body, space, and viewer on each side. I am no longer overwhelmed by the vertical face of steel, and instead, welcomed by the space between myself and the contour, my perception now focused on the ridge of the sculpture, illustrated in Figure 90, toward the space gained between myself and the form.

Now roaming along this new space, my senses seem to heighten, perhaps as they are no longer contained by the overwhelming masses of steel. I am instantly aware of the textural differences upon this face of the contour. An unfamiliar repetitive pattern, highlighted in Figure 91, falls across the lengths of steel, the overall effect spreading across the whole length ahead of me, from rim to floor. Assumably, as per the rustic residue found on the opposite face, the



Figure 90: View towards ridgeline of *Te Tuhirangi Contour* and opposition of incline angle. Author's own image.



Figure 91: Repetitive pattern falls along face of *Te Tuhirangi Contour*. Author's own image.

pattern is a result of weathering, a combination effect of water, steel, and air. Yet the addition of two details enters on this side, the first of favourable slope to precipitation, and the second, presumably the residue from bird droppings. These two elements in unison creates an impressive depth to the rustic texture, a palimpsest of nature, building layers upon layers, each decaying to the background over time. As I inspect closely, my field of vision is surrounded by this pattern, resemblant of stars blanketing the night sky, and I am reminded of the process drawings undertaken with Serra's *Verblast* (1967) in mind. Although perhaps unintentionally, through being in the world, Serra's creation now captures the natural processes evolving around the landscape, on display to the visiting audiences as a live action painting, best viewed in Figure 92.

I ponder along, my cognition focused steadily ahead, towards the vanishing point of the form. I find interest in watching figures ahead, disappearing behind the tall, solid form, as they wind their way along the valley, taking time before eventually reappearing as smaller figures further down the form. I perceive there to be a type of magic in this disappearing act, as for each figure in this moment of isolation, they are alone with the work, embraced by the contour, and free to their own subjectivity. I sense this to be a major premise in Serra's construction of the contour, its lengthy form not only a physical demarcation of a unique detail of the landscape, but a call for individual experience, a place of contemplation and connection, yearning to be walked throughout time, the



Figure 92: Repetitive weathering pattern at *Te Tuhirangi Contour* acting as live action environment painting. Author's own image.

process of phenomenological bracketing upheld by the pure, minimal, and massive form.

I find calm in this idea, and again take time to engage in the phenomenon that is the *Te Tuhirangi Contour*, deepening my senses, noticing breath, and feeling the air. Again, an unusual effect is noticed through sound, as I am alerted to the presence of a bird, the noise of its call, seemingly beside me, as I walk. In a rare moment since I first engaged this adventure, my attention is taken away from the form, seeking out the illusive source of this sound seemingly so nearby. As a result of this search, I find a distant pair fluttering high in the sky, directly above me. For a second time I am signalled to the fact that the contour has the potential to alter sound, the slanted steel form again acting as a sound barrier, now working to resonate sound from far overhead back towards the land. I watch as the birds flutter away, finding a sense of joy in this unusual connection, and continue onwards.

Approaching what I believe to be the opposite side of the major arc, seemingly close to returning to the place in which I departed, I am surprised by yet another aspect of this sculpture. My gaze, still drawn towards the crest, watches as the serpentine arc flows, crossing the path of its own vector whilst darting back and forth in a snakelike pattern. This aspect, again seemingly defying the common structural use of industrial steel, has a feeling which is akin to materials with lighter properties like paper, or silk. Though static, Serra's form allures to a feeling of movement through the warping and wrapping motion which builds throughout the form. It



is interesting to think about this juxtaposition, though solid, bold, and full of weight, alike to the landscape from which it is formed, there are contrasting qualities about the *Te Tuhirangi Contour*, such as its interaction with nature, flowing form, and meandering influence upon the viewer, which imply a lighter, floaty essence. Furthermore, though dark, rustic, and firm, the impression left by this work is contemplative, connective, and rather enlightening.

Now completing a full rotation of the contour, I realise just how long the passage around this form has felt. The work, its twists, and turns, toward this final point shown in Figure 93, excels in highlighting just how immense both the landscape and resulting form is. In some respects, the work acts as a mural, a symbolic gesture, representational of this segment of the valley, most accurately communicated through physical interaction, each step further embracing the work and land. As I turn, pausing, looking back upon the pathways I have ventured, I think of how, without this totem, this land would likely have had minimal interaction with the outside world. Yet thousands of people, many of which journeying with specific intent in seeking out the direct experiences provided by Serra, have walked this same path, becoming alerted to the unique characteristics of the valley, sharing the land, in what may be described as a transformative, phenomenologically bracketed space.

So, in reflection, looking back at the remaining form from the departing bus, I think about what has changed, and what



Figure 93: Final view of *Te Tuhirangi Contour* within wider landscape. Author's own image.

has remained. Though the day has passed by, with shadow now cast upon the opposite side of the contour, the valley no longer burdened by wind, looming cloud, or rain, the form remains identical in its allure, a pure, strong, gestural monument to the now illuminated landscape. I ponder upon what this means for designing for, or with, or even within, landscape. More specifically, I put thought towards what this makes myself, an aspiring landscape architect with a background training in contemporary sculpture, want to design in the landscape.

Admittedly certain elements associated with Serra's practice may be, perhaps, impractical in all landscapes, specifically the related costs of purchasing and working in large volumes of steel, the associated engineering and installation fees required, and land availability to permit such monumental works. Yet as humans, I think we have built (and will continue to build) much larger monuments which reflect much less, offer little to no connection, and more often lack a distinctive style, most apparent as my bus now approaches the motorway, the city of Auckland now jutting out on the horizon.

The truth is that landscape is homogeneous, and as landscape architects, alike to Serra, awareness of site-specificity is part of our practice. It is how we interpret the language of landscape that allows for us to design. For my own practice, this experience with Serra's *Te Tuhirangi Contour* opens a wider range of ideas and intentions for designing in landscapes. It

inspires me to create places of purity, places which ground the attention of the viewer, directs them back within the landscape, and through sensory and visual cues, connects them to their world. I see these places as opportunities for cues to experience, and subsequently, places to reinforce engaging and positive interactions.

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# CHAPTER SIX

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## FROM SERRA TO AOTEAROA'S LANDSCAPES

In approaching the current state of Landscape Architecture, I wish to use a few examples to make a point as to how “Richard the Artist” (Crow, 2015) could influence, and potentially evolve, contemporary practice in Aotearoa. As discussed at length throughout this dissertation, Richard Serra has an extensive artistic career which extends over half a century, eventually becoming internationally recognised for his unique, large-scale Corten steel sculpture. Developed throughout his career includes a range of methods, from action-based methods of both drawing and creating sculpture, to multiple techniques surrounding engagement with site specificity in the landscape, his often-processual methods of both surveying landscape and constructing forms in context with their surroundings apparent from even his earliest works. In addition to these processes, the sophisticated, predominantly formalist, and minimalist attitude towards materiality in his practice is of particular interest when considering the physical and sensorial engagement of viewer which becomes prevalent throughout all these works. Serra’s signature style, the pure, dominant allure of weathered Corten steel, has become iconic, complimenting, and highlighting, a vast range of landscapes across the globe.

When viewing some of the landscapes of which we dwell, in a country with a widely heterogenous landscape, from city to country, sea to mountain, a country containing rich natural bio-diversity and cultural histories to weave narrative for, there is often a distinct lack of a signature, an absence of any particular stand out style which screams to be recognised, in our constructed landscapes. As John Beardsley would point

out, contemporary landscape architecture “has failed to attain the public profile of architecture or the fine arts: built works of landscape are not as readily identified and evaluated as paintings, sculptures, or buildings” (Beardsley, 2000). As raised in the discussion surrounding Serra’s *Tilted Arc*, much of this may be premised on the belief that landscape must appease the masses and be readily understood, and as found across multiple design practices around the globe, this is often a reductional procedure, stemming from the modernist period at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the current contemporary style placing emphasis upon clean, simple and intentional beauty, often employing the use of curved lines, neutral tones, natural materials, and often a focus on sustainability. In considering these outcomes, it is clear how watered-down effect may eventually take place across our landscapes, the limitations placed around contemporary design practices taking precedence, in what is an ever shifting, growing world.

And yet, as seen through many of the examples illustrated throughout this dissertation, Serra’s use of weathered Corten steel throughout his career aligns with much of this style, his early work born from the minimalist period of art history, located at the turn from modernism to post-modernism, yet standing strong in appeal to this very day. Yet for Serra, there is a distinctive style, a language pertaining to form, materiality, space, and time which lends itself to all landscapes, unique in appearance, and engaging to audiences. Whilst in the case of *Tilted Arc* Serra has retorted that the United States General Services Admission “wanted art that affirmed their

principles of enhancement. They wanted décor that they could understand. They weren't interested in the language of art, not at all, and they never will be" (Serra, in Rose et al., 2011), I believe that our society is ready to embrace the changes necessary, to further develop our vernacular surrounding the landscapes we dwell within.

Again, though only a single example of how an individual sculptor, his processes, and collection of works, could influence and develop landscape architecture in our country, I reinforce the position that the sculptural realm offers a great insight, filled with countless artists, artworks, and art periods, which may be used as influence. By opening landscape architecture to a multi-modal discipline and directly embracing these influences, we can, as John Beardsley called for at the turn of the century, begin to develop for landscape architecture a public profile akin to architecture or fine arts, and perhaps truly "view landscape architecture as an 'expanded field', as a discipline bridging science and art, mediating between nature and culture" (Beardsley, 2000).

As noted in the research preface, this intersection, of influence between the arts and architecture, is not particularly new. One could look through history and find a plethora of examples which reinforce this connection, with many perhaps going further to support the idea of total immersion between all aspects of design – the idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a term popularised by composer Richard Wagner in the mid 1800's.

Architectural examples, each with a distinctive, historically recognised style, which embrace this interrelation, include the likes of William Morris & Phillip Webb's *The Red House* (1859-60), which is built in accordance with the Arts and Crafts movement, Victor Horta's *Hotel Tassel* (1892-93), a hotel designed in the characteristics of Art Nouveau style, or Antony Gaudí's *Casa Milà* (1906-12), a Catalan Modernisme building which finds foundation in the style of Art Nouveau. Whilst Gerrit Rietveld's, *Schröder House* (1924-25) would convey the De Stijl movement in architectural form, Walter Gropius's *Bauhaus Dessau* (1925-26) would reflect the international style and principles taught on the Bauhaus campus. Frank Lloyd Wright's *Fallingwater* (1935-37) envelops the evolution from his Prairie style to a more organic Modernist style architecture, whilst Zaha Hadid's *Capital Hill Residence* (2006-18) displays her signature hybrid futuristic style to the only residential building built during her lifetime, her style characteristic of deconstructivism, neo-futurism and parametricism. Albeit each example is attempted to be characterised to a style of art, defined, and categorised by associated period, my point is to make that each example listed, through both signature of the artist and the surrounding art style of the period, has designed their work in totality, paying attention to all aspects of the work, often incorporating and intersecting realms of design to reach final products which have become distinct, significant works in the history of art and architecture.

In the case of the interrelation with Serra's work, the perceived relationship between sculpture and architecture



has been outlined by Serra in discussion with Charlie Rose in 2001, where Serra has stated that “for the most part what architects have always done is, they use the most progressive art of the time for their own ends. And they get more applaud for it because the culture gives them more honour and prestige, because their signs and symbols are more apparent. But most of what you see in architecture are watered-down ideas of sculptors who have come before... art is purposely useless. And that what makes it more free than buildings... (I) understand that there’s a crossover reference to architecture, but basically I’m dealing with a sculptural language and a sculptural space. It happens to challenge those architects because it’s dealing with spaces and places in a way that they could not have foreseen or had not accomplished yet” (Serra, in Rose, 2001). Serra’s argument compels the idea that, due to the nature of sculpture, and his personal logic of inquiry into both the material properties inert within steel and the fundamental nature of experience, and the approach taken to the details contained in each, sculpture remains free of the constraints contained in architecture. This is what, in his mind, discerns architecture from art, the intent for architecture focused on a completely different, broader mode of inquiry. Yet, as previously highlighted, the cross reference between art and architecture exists, and this influence has assisted in the creation a range of distinctive, renown, and identifiable buildings. So, what about our landscapes?

To further develop the vernacular surrounding our landscapes, I turn to applying Serra’s ‘language of art’ to examples of landscape architecture seen around Aotearoa. And whilst

Serra's utilitarianism is possibly at the other end of the spectrum, existing in a sculptural realm than that of landscape architecture, it appears that functionality, a key focus amongst other design approaches, seems to take precedence across a variety of projects, and the judgments within ensuing awards categories. Obviously, this functionality is appealing to the wider public as the intention is to use these spaces, each project having specific targets and contexts to work within. Yet I believe, in many of these projects, the coalescence between functionality and design, and subsequent design experience, is at an imbalance, the latter being often a garnish to the former. In using a Serra-esque approach to analysing two vastly different purposed landscape architecture projects located in the NZILA Award of Excellence, Parks, Open Spaces and Recreation Category of 2022, I will attempt to locate how these projects meet, and do not meet, the vernacular surrounding his practice, a language which could adapt, and evolve, our landscapes. Each of these award winners have appraisal in specific approaches of experience and functionality which are of particular interest when approaching Serra's design ethos.

## 6.1 - Maungawhau Tihi

### Boardwalk

The first I wish to discuss is the Maungawhau Tihi Boardwalk in Mount Eden, Auckland, which was winner of the NZILA Parks, Open Spaces and Recreation Category in 2022, designed by Isthmus in collaboration with the client Tūpuna Maunga Authority.

The site, the remnant of a dormant scoria cone volcano, is a significant site to mana whenua iwi / hapū of Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland, containing multiple spiritual, cultural and historical associations since indigenous settlement in 1200AD. Due to the value of this prominent landscape feature, being the tallest volcanic landform within the Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland region, displayed as Figure 94, Isthmus undertook the Maungawhau Tihi Boardwalk with sensitivity towards a variety of issues, seeking a “design solution which accommodated and protected the Maunga from growing popularity, whilst not detracting from its complex of earthwork structures, expressive volcanic form, and to enhance the experience as a journey” (NZILA, n.d.). It is this design solution, the utility provided by the boardwalk in protecting the site from growing visitation, alongside the enhancement of experience towards the surrounding natural landscape features, which I wish to make comments surrounding.

In approaching the utility provided by this design, the Maungawhau Tihi Boardwalk successfully offers function of protection of landscape through a innovatively engineered, low-impact design, consisting of a hand installed steel sub-structure which minimises the use of machinery and associated damages, and displayed as Figure 95, clad in



Figure 94: Auckland CBD viewed from the summit of Mount Eden, with the recently upgraded, raised foot path. Image Credit: James Shih. CC BY-SA 4.0.



Figure 95: Materiality of timber and steel at Maungawhau Tihi Boardwalk. Author's own image.



a hybrid perforated steel and timber decking surface which allows for the elements of air, wind, light and rain to reach the surface below. The first stage is constructed purely of this method, with stairs, terraces and viewpoints leading to a large viewing platform. A second stage of construction which extends the platforms, contributes a large gathering space, and adds a planting palette of local native plant species is to be completed in 2023.

Yet there are many qualities about the current utility of this design and its staggered stage construction approach, which upon visitation, clearly do not function in protecting the landscape. The stairways and platforms built to traverse the site are commonly limited in width, often reaching only 1.2 metres wide. Subsequently, as displayed in Figure 96 and 97, visitors move off the side of the boardwalk, creating desire lines through scarring which reinforce this pathway as an alternative route. Though creating narrow pathways creates fewer visual impediments when viewing the landscape, this flaw of design becomes highly apparent upon the repeated violation from heavy traffic and contradicts the overall design vision sought by Isthmus. Furthermore, this circulation pattern is also found within the area awaiting completion, which is currently sectioned off, where visitors ignore poorly maintained fencing and signs to summit the mountain, as shown in Figure 98 and 99. It is hard to say whether completing both stages in unison would affect this circulation pattern provided by the exemplar of the average functioning existing boardwalk.



Figure 96: Limitation of boardwalk width leads to alternative paths and 'desire line' scarring. Author's own image.



Figure 97: Reinforcing the limitation of boardwalk width leading to alternative paths and 'desire line' scarring. Author's own image.



Figure 98: Circulation of pedestrians seeking to summit causes 'desire line' scarring. Author's own image.



Figure 99: Reinforcing circulation of pedestrians seeking to summit causes 'desire line' scarring. Author's own image.

Focusing attention on the experience of the design found at Maungawhau Tihi Boardwalk, whilst there are elements to the experience of the boardwalk which I believe stand in alignment with Serra's sculptural allure, namely due to the use of simple materials such as steel and timber, the resulting muted, naturalistic tonal pallet coalescing with the surrounding natural features in a way which does not detract from experiencing the mountain. Yet the form which this design takes shape is rigid, constructed of harsh geometries which form the boardwalk and divert traffic around the organic topography of the land. Whilst simple, rather elegant in its limited environmental impact build approach, and tonally minimalistic, the design feels to be an obvious human imprint of contemporary style architecture and seems to miss the essence of its design brief: the unique qualities of the site which are to be protected. Loaded with both physical, conceptual, and spiritual qualities, the land of which Maungawhau Tihi Boardwalk is hardly represented in the final design. This lack of design communication is reinforced by the need for signage as displayed in Figure 100, located on steel mounts throughout the site, which inform viewers to a variety of information about the location, or inform them to stay on the boardwalk. The walkway itself tells no story about the land it is predicated upon.

Applying Serra's sculptural approaches and processes to improve the function of the Maungawhau Tihi Boardwalk, at its core, seems remarkably ironic, given his belief that "art is purposely useless" (Serra, in Rose, 2001). The first process which comes to mind is a method which is applied throughout



Figure 100: Signage at Maungawhau Tihi Boardwalk informs visitors of historic and cultural significances or asks to stay on the boardwalk. Author's own image.

Serra's long history, which is simply, walking the landscape.

Applying a similar method, such as the one found in Serra's construction of *Shift* (1970), discussed at length throughout this dissertation, would offer a deeper sense of site and the volume of heavy pedestrian circulation it pertains. As previously noted, the design for *Shift* was purely based around the pathway of a human figure traversing an undulating landscape in Ontario, Canada. Applying this logic, alongside the existing knowledge of dense traffic flow on the existing site and thus the need for protection, Serra's figure would become plural, focusing on how a group, or groups, interact within a given space.

This process could offer a deeper insight as to not only where, and how, pedestrians interact with site, locating points where damages from desire paths may continue to scar the land, but also give an experience of how, and when viewers interact with the boardwalk, and what effect the latter has upon the former. For instance, early morning and afternoon exercisers may move hastily around public spaces, desire less need for sun protection, and often move solo. In contrast, midday groups of tourists or leisurely strollers adhere to a slower, casual form of circulation, slowing or stopping regularly to talk, maximising use of pathway widths, and are more susceptible to punishment from the sun. Obviously, the use of this public amenity will always vary, yet there are a diverse set of needs from this site which does not currently cater for its audiences.



Likewise, in addition to improving the functional aspects of Maungawhau Tihi Boardwalk, the sculptural ethos of Serra could easily be adapted towards communicating distinctive elements about site and creating unique design experiences. Given Serra's extensive practice of creating site specific sculpture, predicated upon the physical relationship between landscape, body and space, and the mental, sensory effects formed upon the viewer, solely through the inherent properties of Corten steel, applying a similar approach to Maungawhau Tihi Boardwalk would undoubtedly create opportunities for this *expressive volcanic form* (NZILA, n.d.,b) which contains a plethora of historic, cultural, and spiritual significances.

Discussed at length throughout this dissertation is how Serra's site-specific forms revert attention back towards the surrounding environment, an attention which deeply connects viewers through creating phenomenological experiences within the landscape. Albeit Serra's forms are more often unbiased regarding the cultural contexts of which they are located, focused instead upon the physical qualities of the site, as found in the fallout surrounding *Tilted Arc*, it is this experience which builds meaning for the viewer. In the case of Maungawhau Tihi Boardwalk, though loaded with cultural, historic, and spiritual significances, the protection of these elements is predicated upon both awareness and rehabilitation of its physical properties. The current experience around site seems to place emphasis on elevated landing pad areas with clear views out towards the cityscape, displayed in Figure 101 and 102. As found in *Te Tuhirangi Contour*, it

### **Material removed due to copyright compliance**

Figure 101: Existing landing pad at Maungawhau Tihi Boardwalk overlooking Auckland cityscape. From *Maungawhau Tihi Boardwalk*, by NZILA, n.d. (<https://www.nzila.co.nz/showcase/maungawhau-tihi-boardwalk>).

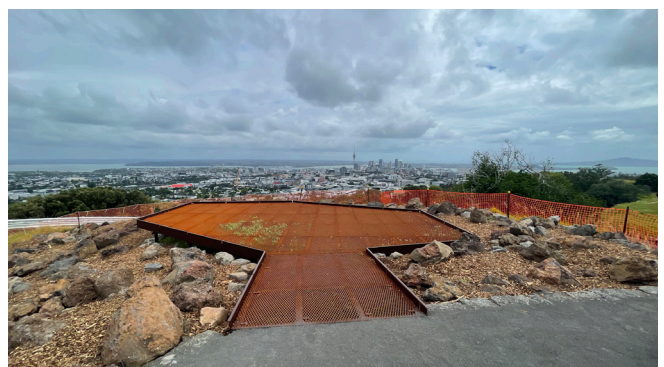


Figure 102: Upcoming landing pad at Maungawhau Tihi Boardwalk overlooking Auckland cityscape. Author's own image.

is often the journey towards the destination, in this case a phenomenologically bracketing journey along a contour of steel and land, which creates a lasting experience. Inheriting this logic, placing focus upon the journey towards the summit, rather than the views from the summit, viewers would gain a deeper, fuller experience, forming a truer understanding of the of the tallest volcanic form in Tāmaki Makaurau through the approach to the its peak.

## 6.2 - He Puna Taimoana

### Hot Pools

The second I wish to discuss is the He Puna Taimoana Hot Pools in New Brighton, Christchurch, which was granted an Award of Excellence in the NZILA Parks, Open Spaces and Recreation Category in 2022, designed by Glasson Huxtable Landscape Architects for client Development Christchurch Ltd.

The site, a rugged coastal location along the sand dunes of New Brighton beach, as displayed In Figure 103, has been a major area of focus for the New Brighton Regeneration Project, a project backed by the Christchurch City Council, Development Christchurch Ltd, and local businesses and community. The project is an effort to revitalise a suburb which previously carried a strong sense of identity and pride to many Cantabrians, yet has become increasingly detached and impoverished, most notably due to the Canterbury Earthquakes in 2010/11. Due to these wishes of community and local council, Glasson Huxtable Landscape Architects sought out a multi-disciplinary approach to designing a set



Figure 103: Construction of He Puna Taimoana. Image credit: Michal Klajban. CC BY-SA 4.0.



of five hot water salt pools, a plunge pool, steam room, and coastal viewing sauna. The design includes restorative soft and hard landscape design for the surrounding streetscape and seafront promenade, incorporating elements of cultural narrative into the design, to provide “*a more meaningful and rich experience for users*”, offer a “*human habitat for relaxation and recovery*” whilst creating a unique “*relationship with the coastal edge*” (NZILA, n.d.,b). It is again this notion of experience, and function, which I wish to highlight on multiple scales, moving from the personal experiences of the individual to a larger notion of site.

The design outcome at He Puna Taimoana Hot Pools, meaning ‘coastal pools’ or ‘seaside pools’, are undoubtedly an enhancement to the area, becoming an attractive amenity for both local, and wider communities. The ability to have a scenic soak, unwinding, rehabilitating, and detaching from surrounding worldly attachments is inevitably valued in a stressed, busy, ever-growing society, particularly for a community previously devastated by a natural disaster.

At its core, He Puna Taimoana serves its function through providing this experience, regenerating both users, coastal environment, and local economy. Through relaxation, fitness, and family pools, steam room and coastal facing saunas, users are provided a variety of opportunities to experience at a personal level, deepening their connection to body, mind, and soul, through their senses. Soft landscaping of native plant species surrounds pools and paths, incorporated with rock and lighting, the materiality of which combining to

create aesthetically pleasing border elements when traversing between areas of the site. Hard landscaping elements such as timber seating and decking both acts to provide static areas of rest, whilst concealing certain functional elements such as pool covers.

Yet the design of areas in which this rejuvenation takes place does little to enhance this experience, perhaps bar the elevated relaxation pool, and sauna, each with coastal views. As displayed in Figure 104, each of these pools are formed of large, open spaces, shaped of angular geometry, and painted blue beneath the water, with a lighter tone applied to the relaxation pools. Within the relaxation pools seating can be found throughout the centre and edges, whilst walls have spaces which provide a constant waterfall to lean against.

The total effect of these design choices leads to an invasion of the senses. Privacy is seldom found in these large spaces, often forced to seat in places with bustling human activity, the ensuing discussions and movements of others reducing from the experience. Although blue is a passive natural colour, relative of the sky and sea environments surrounding the pools, when combined with certain elements of vivid colour placed around the site on buildings and fence design, there is an unconvincing, artificial feeling which is formed. The senses become stimulated, dominated by busy visuals and constant disturbances of sound. Though the pools are located beside the constant rolling waves and salty winds of the sea, the consequence of these design elements becomes a distraction, dislocating the viewer from this environment, and overall,

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Figure 104: Large, geometric open pool spaces. From *He Puna Taimoana*, by AWAarchitects, n.d. (<http://awarchitects.co.nz/#/he-puna-taimoana/>).

in contradiction of appraisal, becomes an inhibition to the potential rejuvenation of visitors.

The dislocation formed between viewer and environment at He Puna Taimoana stands in further opposition of judges citation, the development described as both a “new experience of place” and having “a topography which creates a relationship with the coastal edge” (NZILA, n.d.,b). Whilst specific hard and soft landscaping elements outside of the development act in creating a relationship with the area through rehabilitating the streetscape and seafront promenade for pedestrians in the area, as previously highlighted, only two features within the development, a single relaxation pool and a sauna, maintain a connection to the seaside through simple views of the sea. The other areas throughout the establishment are impeded of views and manage to maintain little connection to site other than seagulls above head.

As seen in the difference between first draft plans, illustrated in Figure 105, and the final design outcome, there is a struggle to execute a plan which successfully immerses in its environment. The suburb of New Brighton has always had seaside views, and though at its core, a new experience of this view has been achieved, there is minimal relationship formed to the unique environment, a coastal topography formed of sand dunes and sea, disturbed only by a prominent feature, the New Brighton Pier. At its core, the design prompt was to develop a rejuvenating experience for visitors to connect with this whenua, the enveloping process inevitably promoting

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Figure 105: Original conceptual drawing towards He Puna Taimoana. From *New Brighton Hot Pools Plan Released for Public Feedback*, by L. McDonald for Stuff, 2017 October 20. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/news/98102876/new-brighton-hot-pools-plan-released-for-public-feedback>

a healthy protection of self, and of environment, through a grounding water-based activity. To expand upon and improve the rejuvenation, recovery and relaxation experiences found at He Puna Taimoana Hot Pools would inevitably mean a success in relation to its design aim.

Throughout decades of developing practice, Serra's formal and subsequently sensory experiments have shown how minimal, site-specific steel forms enact in enhancing sensory information of environment to body and mind, primarily through visual reduction. This practice, grounded in a multi-sensory field of phenomenology, displays how reducing visual stimulus places oneself back in a wider, expanded field of experience. As found in The Therme Vals in Vals, Switzerland, designed by Peter Zumthor in 1996, illustrated in Figure 106 the correlation between site, and thermal bathing, can be used to enhance visitors experience, both within oneself, and of the wider environment. Whereas at The Therme Vals, the mountains in Switzerland are reflected through darkness and stone, which amplify other ambient sensations, He Puna Taimoana has a contrasting natural environment to demonstrate, where coastal environmental qualities of the coast include light, atmosphere, water, and materiality. Gritty sand sticks to salty skin, winds roll through the hair, and the sea maintains in a constant process of tidal change.

To understand Serra's allure, is to unpack the intrinsic properties of not only steel, its density, weight, and gravity, but also the inherent properties of environment. To highlight these elements seems fundamental to successfully developing

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Figure 106: Bathers immersed in pools at The Therme Vals. From *Peter Zumthor's Therme Vals Through the Lens of Fernando Guerra*, by E. Souza for ArchDaily, 2016 October 30. (<https://www.archdaily.com/798360/peter-zumthors-therme-vals-through-the-lens-of-fernando-guerra>). Image credit: Fernando Guerra.

a grounding, phenomenological experience for viewers to immerse.

Serra's practice has dealt with water, in which I believe to be the richest element to this site, in many abstract ways. Works such as *Splashing* (1968), displayed as Figure 23, act as a sculptural transformation of lead to water, displaying the action-based process of splashing. In Zeewolde, Netherlands, Serra's *Sea Level* (1996), located in the middle of the rolling landscape park De Wetering, two 200 metre concrete walls work to highlight the height of the sea, contained in a nearby dike, to viewers. In Doha, Serra's *7* uses seven steel plates, nearly 25 metres tall, to form an enclosed heptagonal tower which protrudes from a man-made section of land surrounded by the waters of the Persian Gulf. Each approach, again, minimal, and formalising the intrinsic properties of material, light, air, and water, to ground viewer experience.

In contrast, He Puna Taimoana uses simple geometry, blue pool paint, and vivid fence designs, to encourage this process. The same application of Serra's site-specific design processes, as described in an account of *Te Tuhirangi Contour*, would communicate a deeper understanding and appreciation of site to viewers, a detail which is currently underwhelming at this development.

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# CHAPTER SEVEN

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## DISCUSSION

The key focus throughout this dissertation has been to explore relationships between the sculptural practice of Richard Serra and landscape architecture, with a fundamental research objective seeking to analyse the ways in which this practice could develop influence, and potentially evolve, landscape architecture in Aotearoa. Yet it is notable that there are further benefits for both reader and researcher in undertaking this form of interdisciplinary study. Whilst this dissertation topic is Serra specific, focusing upon on a sole artist, it develops and explores methods which could be employed to carry out similar integrative research topics between the wider arts fields, exploring the 'expanded field' of landscape architecture.

To conduct this research, five key research objectives have been explored throughout the dissertation.

### **7.1 - Responding to Q1:**

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The first research question developed is Q1. *What are the potential relationships between sculpture and landscape?* In response to this question a literature review method has been employed to commence research into the topics of sculpture and landscape. This process has led to detailed knowledge pertaining to some of the theoretical underpinnings surrounding the 'expanded field' of sculpture, its condition of evolution discussed as occupying the realm of landscape and architecture, or 'not-landscape' and 'not-architecture',

for half a century (Krauss, 1979; Crimp, 1980). Pertinent to this dissertation, Serra is located as a seminal artist within this 'expanded realm' of sculpture and landscape.

In questioning this process of evolution, this review finds the same condition of an 'expanded realm' being either being developed, or seeking development, within the realm of landscape architecture. Discussions surrounding the existing climate of landscape architecture highlight how the practice has fallen short of developing a public profile akin to that of architecture or fine art (Beardsley, 2000). Whilst some critique notes that this interdisciplinary distinction is difficult to make due to the subtle varieties contained within the field, influenced by aesthetic, social and environmental factors, the design of our landscapes being "less pure, less of an object, less advanced as form and more accepting of natural processes" (Blanchon-Caillet., et al, 2013, p.4), much of the consensus within the literature points to the need to consider the 'expanded field' of landscape architecture as a field connecting science and art, nature and culture (Beardsley, 2000).

In view of this 'expanded field', to develop our landscapes, and draw direct influence from the realm of fine arts, or sculpture, as is the purpose of this dissertation, to assist in evolving an advanced, recognisable form of its own, could be considered akin to how Marc Trieb defines 'modernist landscapes', which propose new spatial and formal concepts, commonly drawing direct influence from characteristics within the modern



plastic arts (Trieb, 2013). Moreover, there contains a call for landscape architecture to “develop equally on expression and experience” (M’Closkey, 2013, in Blanchon-Caillet., et al, 2013, p.4), the realm of post-modernist sculpture’s “conditions of possibility” (Krauss, 1979, p.44) not only containing formalist attributes, but processual, and experiential elements also.

Through analysing the relevant literature surrounding sculpture and landscape, this review identifies not only the theoretical connections between the two topics of sculpture and landscape, but also locates ways in which to perceive the condition of expansion within landscape architecture, and identifies attributes correlated to the practice which may act as a catalyst in this development. Given this foundation of knowledge, the dissertation then focuses upon Serra, and his interaction with these topics.

Given the vast depth of history, artists, artworks and literature within not only the realm of sculpture, but also art and architecture, and the limitation of time constraints for research, the scope of this review is focused upon locating a theoretical foundation for this dissertation topic, rather than a literal discussion surrounding all the lengths in which the realm of sculpture interacts with the topic of landscape. As noted in the research preface, one could perceive relationships throughout the history of humankind, or furthermore, enter discussion surrounding the definitions of landscape. It is noted that, given the freedom to explore these topics without the specified constraints, research may open to new values which

may have been omitted or missed completely, values which may have proven useful for not only this dissertation, but also future academic or professional endeavours.

## **7.2 - Responding to Q2:**

The second question developed is Q2. *How to explore and generate an in-depth understanding towards the sculptural practice of Richard Serra?* In response to this question both a biographical research and design drawing method has been employed to deepen understandings surrounding the practice of Serra. Initially the biographical research method explores the evolution of Serra's practice, summarising in chronological order specific key events, influences, and artworks, all of which assist in creating an understanding of Serra's sculptural ethos leading towards larger, landscape-driven artworks which are explored at length throughout the rest of the dissertation. This research is valuable for both the reader and researcher as it familiarises each with fundamental layers which built towards Serra's artistic practice, expanding understanding of what this practice entails, whilst locating a source of key themes which are used as a basis for exploration throughout the dissertation.

Key values from investigating through biographic research include his influences in becoming an artist and relying on methods of drawing since early childhood. More fundamental

to the research topic, the research conducted reveals influences upon understanding materiality and process when making art under the guidance of Neil Welliver during college, becoming further exposed to the sculptural logic contained within Brancusi's studio, eventually adapting a logical, time and process based method of painting. After an encounter with the work of *Las Meninas* (1656), Serra's core practice transitions to sculpture, abandoning painting altogether, and eventually becomes predicated upon action-based explorations, entering a realm where the dimensions of time and space, and inert properties contained within a range of materials, such as weight, gravity and dynamic forces, began to take precedence.

This displayed evolution of Serra's practice, undoubtedly, takes a bias, linear perspective, seeking out information from literature which aligns with the purpose of this research question, and likely misses out a range of other moments and influences from Serra's career which could have claimed effect upon his practice. Again, given the limitations of time, and the task of locating Serra's career development over half a century, the information revealed attempts to maintain relevance to the question. Importantly for the next method applied within this chapter, this development seen within Serra's practice displays how seemingly insignificant moments and influences in one's career can evolve to shape the progression of practice, particularly within the arts. Thus the findings of this form of research are twofold, as these influence give credibility to introducing a secondary method to this research question.

Chapter Three concludes by adapting a design drawing method from Serra's *Verblast* (1967), a list of actions which placed emphasis upon the action-based creation of works, becoming self-referential and highlighting process, time, and space, rather than any particular formal properties. This process of design drawing is a fundamental step in engaging the research question, creating a direct connection between researcher and Serra, and sculpture and landscape, through an experimental procedure which develops a visual understanding of the attributes which drive Serra's practice. During this research it was pertinent to be present in the moment, grounding creative energy towards enacting a specific mode of activity, rather than formal aspects of drawing. This process seems to counteract much of the design commonly prompted within the realm of landscape architecture, moreoften an ocularcentric practice dominated by visual output such as renders, sketches and plans.

It is worth here to note that landscape architecture as an emerging practice has long been restrained by its attachment to the visual dominance of the picturesque and the domain of perspective developed during the renaissance period. When discussing this landscape 'way of seeing' derived from these periods, whilst visually realistic, proportionate, and convincing, it is clearly deceptive, as whilst contained to two dimensions, "the impression of depth, of three-dimensionality, is an illusion" (Wylie, 2007, p.56). Art historian and visual theorist James Elkins describes that, due to the influence this technique has had upon our broader sense of ourselves

and our perception of the surrounding world, we are akin to believe this as “our perspective... one that describes how we view the world and constitute ourselves as viewing subjects” (Elkins, 1994 in Wylie, 2007, p.57).

In *‘Prospect, perspective and the evolution of landscape idea’*, Dennis Cosgrove outlines that, if we are to adopt linear perspective as the basis for understanding landscape, as a way of seeing the world, then we adhere to adopting the connotations of authority, control and ownership, pointing out that fundamentally, the development of perspective was the development of a rationale to the “inherent properties of space itself” (Cosgrove, 1985, p.51). Cosgrove explains that “landscape is thus a way of seeing, a composition and structuring of the world so that it may be appropriated by a detached individual spectator to whom an illusion of order and control is offered through the composition of space according to the certainties of geometry” (Cosgrove, 1985, p.55).

One does not have to seek very far to understand how the visual appropriation of time and space has had wider cultural implications, the authority of the eye becoming engrained into a visually dominant, ocularcentric Western society (Bowring, 2007). Regarding the realm of fine arts, the prevalence of visuality extends through to the Modernist period, during which Marcel Duchamp denounced much of Modernism as retinal art, based upon formal attributes rather than ideas (Bowring, 2007). Furthermore, the intersection between

knowledge and sight, and superiority of the ocular be seen as a “two-headed sword” (Bowring, 2007, p.81), as on one hand, a “plethora of figures of speech in the English language which connect understanding with sight, ‘I see’ being the most obvious” (Bowring, 2007, p.81), or, to share a ‘point of view’. In contrast to this perspective, pure visuality could also be described as a non-observance, a lack of engagement with the richness of the senses of which one beholds, the process of ‘overlooking’ (Bowring, 2007). “The alignment of the ‘eye’ and the ‘I’ emphasises the distancing of the subject from the object, the ‘disembodied eye’ or in landscape terms, a detachment of the self from place” (Bowring, 2007, p.82; Jay, 1993, p.81). Philosophically, much of this is predicated upon the seminal philosophies of Rene Descartes, often referred to as Cartesian Dualism, where the mind is considered a separate and distinct entity from the body. The outer world is then a phenomenon that is to be understood through the process of deduction, rationalising and thus understanding the world through cognitive processes, his renowned dictum being ‘*cogito, ergo sum*’ or ‘I think therefore I am’ (Descartes, 1994).

In contrast to the tunnel visioned field of ocularcentrism and the Cartesian Dualism contained within, a foundation of knowledge pertaining to multi-sensory, embodied experiences is located within the philosophical field of phenomenology, generally concerned with the fundamental nature of existence, and experience of being. It is within this field of experience and liveliness which Serra’s drawing process, and wider artistic practice, finds philosophical establishment, through the works

of traditional philosophers such as Martin Heidegger, or Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who's *'Phenomenology of Perception'* (2010) could be extensively referenced in revealing Serra's sculptural exploration of the phenomenological field, the opening passage of 'The Body' stating "when I look at the lamp on my table, I attribute to it not only the qualities visible from where I am, but also those which the chimney, the walls, the table can "see"; the back of my lamp is nothing but the face which it "shows" to the chimney. I can therefore see an object insofar as objects form a system or a world, and insofar as each one treats the others round it as spectators of its hidden aspects which guarantee the permanence of those aspects by their presence" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, as cited in Krauss et al., 1986, p.32) This interconnected world view, as experienced through the body, assists in explaining a system of relationships between object, or artworks such as Serra's *Shift* (1970), and 'landscape', through the perceptive realm.

Other foundations which link Serra, and the drawing process contained in Chapter Three, to this realm could be found in concepts within the work of Martin Heidegger and his concept of 'Dasein', Heidegger's constructed term for human beings, which translates to 'being-there', in which the hyphen indicates the relationship between our awareness, and the 'there' of being located within a specific location between space and time (Stapleton, 2009). Albeit a concept surrounding our wider understanding of human consciousness, this idea directly correlates with the work of anthropologist Tim Ingold, and his 'taskscape' concept, directly relevant to



the drawing process. As Ingold describes, “through living in it, the landscape becomes a part of us, just as we are a part of it” (Ingold, 1993, p.154). As ‘body’ and ‘landscape’ are both described as ‘form’, the formative process is described as ‘embodiment’, elaborating that the embodiment process requires what he describes as ‘incorporation’: “a movement wherein forms themselves are generated” (Ingold, 1993, p.157). With regards to Chapter Three, the drawings enacted are a set of ‘tasks’ developed within the specificities of environment, or ‘landscape’, and refer to this process of action, time and space, rather than any specific formal outcome. Thus the drawing process through Chapter Three reveals not only the individual actions as specified by Serra in his *Verblast* (1967), each developing a variety of techniques to reflect action within a visual medium, and an implicit understanding of Serra’s drawing process, but also reveal an awareness towards ‘being there’ through this embodied practice.

Connecting this drawing process to concepts outlined by Catherine Dee, a practicing contemporary artist and landscape architect with the belief that “innovation in landscape architecture could be more enhanced if drawing was treated less as a technique, and more forcefully as an experimental method” (Dee, 2016, p.52), this visual method which explores concepts which underpin Serra’s practice could develop further towards the perception, and construction, of our future landscapes. In *Form and fabric in landscape architecture : a visual introduction* (2001), Dee illustrates

seven morphological attributes related to landscape design; 'Landscape fabric', 'Space', 'Paths', 'Edges', 'Foci', 'Thresholds' and 'Detail' (Dee, 2001). Dee highlights these attributes as having the ability to "provide a conceptual framework for understanding the experience, use and structure of landscape for design" (Dee, 2001, p.2). Applying processual, embodied practices of design drawing, as illustrated within Chapter Three, to attributes highlighted by Dee, such as 'Space', 'Foci', or 'Detail', may prompt both designers, clients and the wider public to explore, and understand, a wider perception of landscape, and landscape design.

'Foci', a term used to categorise focal features and places within the environment, are often given attention due to being visually dominant or distinctive, and perform a significant role for human experience and action within a given landscape (Dee, 2001). Dee locates public sculpture as regularly enacting this role within our environments, creating points of differentiation which provide aesthetic, cultural and often orientational roles. Much of Serra's artworks, for example, fulfill this role, being visibly contrasting, large-scale forms, often derived from unique characteristics of their setting, located within different urban or rural environments. This drawing process, a form of 'taskscape' based in experience and activity within a specific time and place, may locate elements within a landscape, and bring them to awareness of the viewer through design. For example, a large vertical form within an otherwise open, horizontally emphasised environment, as shown in *East-West/West-East* (2014), or the

stark contrast of this 'Foci' illustrated within the setting of an urban plaza with *'Tilted Arc'* (1981).

'Space' design "involves the generation of specific forms or shapes for places" (Dee, 2001, p.37). Whilst there are multiple methods in which designers apply to create form, it is the interpretation of both existing site and natural forms, metaphor, and abstraction, as located by Dee (2001), in which I find most prevalent within Serra's practice, and most applicable to outcomes from this design drawing process. To highlight a specific action or quality within a given landscape, perhaps a form of movement, and locate the implicit verbs, 'to walk, 'to run', 'to drop', 'to hop', 'to rotate', and enact through drawing, as illustrated in Chapter Three, will have vastly different formal, and undoubtedly structured, outcomes. Tools such as abstraction and layering may be employed to modify outcomes, or tease out processual attributes, to create spaces. As seen in the likes of George Descombes' conceptual diagram illustrating the regeneration of the River Aire, the development of form towards designing spaces need not be overtly complex. Fundamentally, design is a process, and immersing in rudimentary elements of drawing encourages creative exploration and can generate significant outcomes.

'Detail' is yet another of the section located by Dee in which Serra's drawing process could find significant grounding within the realm of landscape design. Whilst other sections discuss landscape at a larger scale, 'Detail' is concerned with the more minute elements found within a close-up or intermediate

scale, such as texture, and light, but extended to Serra's wider practice, could include aspects of materiality such as mass, weight, and temperature. Dee explains that attention towards detail "explores the potential of design to provide distinct experiences... 'Intermediate' sensory experience of landscapes may often be the conceptual starting point for the design of a landscape" (Dee, 2001, p.188). To extend this drawing process from the hand of the researcher, or designer, to natural elements contained within could illuminate significant details previously unnoticed, as Serra's *Te Tuhirangi Contour* (2001) reveals not only unseen elements of sound, wind, and light, yet also the palimpsest of birds and animals upon its canvas. Accordingly, detail design is not an ornamental aspect of the final product, but an integral consideration, a foundational aspect to consider during the design of landscapes. These can inspire diverse sensory experiences for viewers, through the inert characteristics of things such as colour, pattern and texture, topography, water, or light (Dee, 2001).

This brief discussion surrounding the categories provided by Dee elaborates how, as a designer, the attributes, and processes of design drawing, as formulated in Serra's ethos, could potentially develop within a landscape architectural setting. Dee's text, amongst other design theory, may be employed be used as a guide to assist in capturing qualities

### **7.3 - Responding to Q3:**

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within a given landscape setting at different scales, or when developing a different understanding of spatial morphology and landscape experiences as an architectural designer.

The third question developed is Q3. *What are the potential relationships between Serra and landscape?* In response to this question a design critique methodology has been employed to locate and elaborate upon Serra's practice, and the potential relationships to landscape embedded within this practice. This discussion is formulated through applying two of the categories of critique described by Attoe, descriptive and interpretive criticism, to theoretical positions located by Bowring, Art and Aesthetics, Experience and Emotion, and Context, to three of Serra's works, moving chronologically through *Shift* (1970), *Tilted Arc* (1981), and *East-West/West-East* (2014).

This research reveals a variety of key information regarding Serra's approach to working within landscape. Though each work is located within vastly different settings, even created within different decades, there are fundamental elements found within each work which are instrumental in establishing a deeper understanding of Serra's practice within this expanded field, illustrating his practice as one founded in site-specificity and process, creating distinct relationships between time, space, and body.

First, in works such as *Shift* (1970), a discovery is made that the work itself is formulated upon walking the landscape to discover vanishing points, the direct perception and

engagement of the body employed to respond to the unique topography of the landscape. A direct correlation can be made to earlier process works in Serra's career, the verb now 'to walk', again, the outcome being a form of 'taskscape', an action within a given environment. In turn, this work not only specifies a specific path in which was taken through time, and space, yet permanently reveals the 'shifting' contours of the land, establishing unique relationships between the body of viewers as they walk, the sculpture acting as a barometer between body, and the wider field of environment. This research also finds some grounding between Serra's approach and existentialist philosophy, the work acting to bring conscious awareness to the intensity of a given moment in time, and space, yet also in the philosophies which underpin Japanese Zen gardens, where the experience of time becomes physical, articulated through movement, and details remain in constant relationship with the wider field.

Second, the research surrounding *Tilted Arc* (1981) reveals, albeit controversially, Serra's ability to locate, and potentially subvert, the unique qualities of site. Through intervention, Serra's work activates sculptural space and fundamentally transforms the experience of site, again, predicated upon the movement and awareness of the body in time, and space, facilitating a perceptual change for viewers through each step. Furthermore, the research finds influence from the processual elements in his early career, the physical form illustrating verbs such as 'to lift' and 'to bend', yet within the context of the urban plaza, fulfilling the action of 'to split', 'of location', and

'of context'. The physical and contextual position of this work, and the transformation of its setting to a sculptural space, reinforces philosophical foundations. Instead of fulfilling an embellishing role, it seeks full physical and mental attention, attempting to slow down viewers within a hasty urban environment, imploring connection to each moment.

The final research within Chapter Four focuses upon Serra's *East-West/West-East* (2014) reveals again Serra's foundation of site-specificity, using the unique topography of site, the elevation of a specific gypsum plateau, to form the design outcome within the desert context. Research towards this work emphasises at the largest scale how Serra's ethos surrounding body, time, and space can interact with landscape, the total work stretching over a kilometre in length. The work creates a dialogue between individual viewers and forms, or even the space and time between forms, at an immense size, the viewer dwarfed by both the expansive desert and monolithic scale of form, and undoubtedly aware of their humanly body and mind within this condition. The work maintains an ability to be viewed from long distance through protruding the horizon line and activating the wider area, and the ability to record visitations of man, wind, and salt upon the surfaces of oxidised steel over long durations of time. Yet the abstract combination of steel against setting within this work also opens conversation between the forms and the wider universe, evoking feelings of the sublime, and leaving a monumental mark upon the desert surface, akin to the megaliths of ancient humankind, a 'foci' within a large, desolate environment.

The research formed through design critique in Chapter Four reveals each work individually demonstrates Serra's commitment to fulfilling this expanded realm, a sculptural practice based upon the exploration of body, space, and time, employing specific elements of process, site, context, or materiality to engage the direct experience of viewers. Furthermore, elements within these works reveal theoretical links to Heidegger's 'Dasein', or 'being-there', locating a relationship between the consciousness of being, at a specific time, and location, or in terms of landscape, in essence locating a specific way of seeing akin to Ingold's 'dwelling perspective', perpetuating a continually evolving process between landscape and body.

## **7.4 - Responding to Q4:**

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The fourth question developed is Q4. *How could Serra's practice expand into the realm of landscape architecture?* In response to question another design critique methodology has been developed to explore Serra's practice and the potential connections to the realm of landscape architecture contained within. This discussion is formulated through adapting Lange's method of experiential design critique, seeking to explore the feelings evoked from being-with Serra's *Te Tuhirangi Contour* (2001). This process is fundamental when seeking a deeper understanding of the sensory, physical, and metaphysical attributes of Serra's practice, grounding and supporting information developed throughout the dissertation with a first-hand, phenomenological account.



This research highlights the distinct aspects of Serra's practice and the influence held upon directing the engagement of viewers, both physically, mentally and emotionally. Through examining the work through an extensive first-hand account, these influences are shown to change as the process of interaction occurs. Upon first account, what is most obvious is Serra's use of site-specificity, where the form given to this work is directly formulated upon the contour of the landscape itself. This physical demarcation of space not only emphasises this form, but brings attention to the surrounding landscape, the monumentality of the work understood within the vast context of its environment. This evokes a strong feeling of presence, maintaining a visually pure, dominant form in a rolling landscape where wind, rain and light is all subject to change throughout time.

A sense is gained of the direct engagement Serra's practice has upon viewer, and the wider site. Figures are viewed from distance, each having a type of personal engagement with the form, and as the distance closes between figure and form, the work becomes less about landscape, and more of a direct, personal experience. The subject, engaged through walking the form, is placed back within the body, the connection between work, land and body made most obvious. Feelings evoked through this process vary, often predicated upon the formal elements of the work, and the mental state of the subject. Elements of wind and sound are brought to attention, the steel form often acting to emphasise these natural elements, or physically capture and reveal them, found in the markings left by birds, sheep, or water on the oxidised surface.

The research reveals the work enacting a form of 'foci', as a mural, the symbolism of which is representational of the landscape itself, a mural which can only be viewed through physical interaction and engagement, understood through this interaction. This form seeks to ground the attention of spectators, and through elements such as sensory and visual cues, reconnects them to this environment with each step. Thus, this research revealed through Chapter Five is vital in locating this phenomenon, creating opportunities for viewers to reengage with their world, a meditative approach to landscape design. This is the outcome of Serra's ethos when applied to landscape architecture. Though formal, or processual, elements may assist in locating how a Serra-esque practice works, how it responds to site, or engages viewers, it is vital that, as accurately as an individual researcher can portray, that the work given a sense towards "how it makes you feel" (Bowring, 2020, p.26), as these unique characteristics give foundation for the research and inquiry towards bringing these characteristics into the realms of landscape architecture.

It is noted that this research approach could have adopted a wider field of inquiry, seeking out audiences from Serra's Te Tuhirangi Contour, and gaining insight from a range of participants. This may have encouraged a wider range of outcomes generated, and through prompting a few questions to explore experiential elements, the feelings of subjects, or nature of their visitation alongside Serra's works, this research generated may have avoided any subjective bias built through research prior to this visit, or generated information with

different values. Yet, given the depth of information accounted for in Chapter Five, and the specificity of research pertaining to the realms of sculpture and landscape architecture, maintaining a first-hand account allows for the information generated during this visit to be substantial, and extremely

## **7.5 - Responding to Q5:**

relevant, to research questions.

The fifth, and final question is Q5. *Could Serra's practice expand attributes within contemporary landscape architecture in Aotearoa? If so what, and how?* In response to this question a design critique methodology has been developed to apply knowledge relating to Serra, his sculptural ethos, processes and works, to the realm of landscape architecture through two recently completed landscape architecture projects within Aotearoa, each located within the NZILA award category of Parks, Open Spaces and Recreation.

The research generated through this chapter follows a combination of descriptive and experiential design critique, in combination with analysis of judges comments, to assess and offer improvements with reference to Serra, offering an insight as to how a Serra-esque approach may create new opportunities within contemporary practice in Aotearoa. This research is valuable as it explores ways in which this adolescent practice may develop to gain recognisable, unique qualities with the influence of sculpture and sculptural practices such as Serra's.

To do so, Chapter Six locates two main qualities upon which the judges commend each of these landscape architecture projects, utility, and experience. These qualities, as according to judges appraisal and commendation, are used to evaluate both the Maungawhau Tihi Boardwalk in Mt Eden, and the He Puna Taimoana Hot Pools in New Brighton. A descriptive, detailed account introduces the scope and area of the project, and reveals the successes, or failures, of each project to each topic. Following this process, knowledge generated surrounding Serra's practice throughout this dissertation is applied as a way to suggest changes and improvements to each project, and thus to highlight how Serra, and the wider body of practice related to sculpture, may act as a catalyst for designing our future landscapes.

The knowledge generated within this chapter reveals that methods upon which Serra has built a foundation for sculptural practice may easily correlate to landscape design, and assist in improving both physical and experiential design qualities. This includes Maungawhau Tihi Boardwalk, where the existing boardwalk design fails to locate pedestrian size and volume, and is inadequate in protecting the mountain from the scarring of pedestrian desire lines. Applying Serra's attention towards site-specificity, often walking the site as a form of land survey to gain an understanding of qualities within the existing landscape, and using these qualities as a foundation towards design, as found in the likes of 'Shift' (1970) discussed in Chapter Four, could undoubtedly locate how, when, and what forms of movement exists upon the

site, and design accordingly. Inheriting this logic and designing according to the unique characteristics of the site, particularly its topography, and protecting the valuable historical, spiritual, and cultural landmark from pedestrians, may also assist in developing a unique experience of design, using site-specificity as a way to revert attention back towards the landscape and the sensory qualities contained within the environment of this distinctive form.

Research also reveals at the He Puna Taimoana Hot Pools minimal elements exist which support the recovery and rejuvenation of visitors within pools, and overall, in contrary to judges citations, the site fundamentally lacks a connection to the wider environment in which it is located. Given the extreme richness of nature and natural elements, and the extensive potential for user experiences within this site, recommendations to improve with regards to Serra include formal decisions such as materiality, and minimalism, using form, tone and material in ways which enhance sensory information, a form of phenomenological bracketing, assisting in grounding visitors primarily through visual reduction. This sensory deprivation places oneself back into the body, and thus into a wider realm of experience. Furthermore, this may assist in enhancing the unique qualities of site, in this case, the potential for salt, sand, wind and atmosphere, all distinctive elements of a coastal edge.

Albeit only two exemplars, these projects highlight the ways in which Serra's sculptural processes may adapt and evolve

landscape architecture in Aotearoa, or furthermore, reinforce the ways in which the emerging practice of landscape architecture may find influence from the realm of sculpture, or the wider realm of arts disciplines. These examples are also valuable in indicating the current state of landscape architecture, and architectural design awards, in Aotearoa, often giving appraisal to designs which may fall short of successfully fulfilling their design intention, and thus reinforcing and perpetuating a loop of unengaging, unproductive and generally unsuccessful landscapes.

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# CHAPTER EIGHT

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## CONCLUSION

I ask again: what does it feel like to be a human-being?

Approaching this question from the realm of landscape architecture, to succeed in understanding and designing a world which is engaging, connected, and forward thinking, I deem it necessary to open our landscapes, and way of seeing landscape - our world view, to the rich vernacular surrounding experience, and to the human condition, through the likes of sculpture, and sculptural practices. Introducing the realm of landscape architecture to an interdisciplinary mode of analysis, design, and critique offers a wide range of possibilities for this emerging discipline to develop upon its existing design foundation.

Throughout this research, the relationships between sculpture and landscape, between Serra's sculptural practice and landscape, and Serra's role towards developing landscape architectural practice have been analysed. As seen throughout this dissertation, bringing a singular sculptural practice such as Serra's finds a vast range of processual, formal, and sensory ways to engage the topics of space, time, body, and site, each valuable within the realm of landscape, and sculpture, but most importantly, essential to exploring the experiential realm in which we, as humans, live within.

This analysis not only illustrates a Serra-esque approach, but provides a shift in understanding how we perceive our landscapes, with connections formed towards concepts of phenomenology through the likes of cultural geographer John Wylie, anthropologist Tim Ingold, and philosophers such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Martin Heidegger. These influences deepen the understanding of metaphysical and sensory aspects of Serra's practice, yet also offer a different approach to understanding our 'landscape' way of thinking, and how Serra's ethos may find influence within landscape architecture. In stark opposition to the visual dominance commonly found within landscape architectural practice which finds theoretical foundation in the concepts of the picturesque, or linear perspective from the renaissance period, a phenomenological influence finds grounding in an embodied, action based way of 'being-there', placed back within our body and cognition, and within our environment.

The benefits of introducing this multi-modal, interdisciplinary approach to contemporary landscape architectural practice are extremely rich, pulling inspiration from a discipline which has undergone multiple periods of evolution, both formally and theoretically, through the practices of numerous artists, each located within different cultural, geographical, and historical conditions. The detriments of introducing this approach are extremely low, to null, given the stance that the practice of landscape architecture has already entered an 'expanded field', "a discipline bridging science and art, mediating between nature and culture" (Beardsley, 2000).



Through exploring the depth of interrelations between sculpture, landscape, and architecture, as the purpose of this dissertation with regards to Serra, I believe this emerging practice to gain the ability to develop *“rich theoretical and critical traditions”* (Beardsley, 2000) of its own, akin to the arts and to architecture, and gain the potential to become as readily identifiable and evaluated within this evolution.

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