

**PAINTING AS THINKING; PAINTING AS CONVERSATION: AN EXAMINATION OF
LEARNING THROUGH PAINTING THROUGH STUDIO VISITS WITH CANADIAN ARTISTS**

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation discusses contemporary Canadian painting practices through a cross-Canada research journey, from the west coast to the east coast, visiting approximately 125 artists (who work primarily with the medium of painting) in their studios. Through in-depth interviews with artists about their artwork, process and communities, and exploration of the studios through photograph documentation, my doctoral research examines: How is painting a way of learning?

As practice-led research, this research is generated and analyzed within the perspective of my own painting practice. I analyze the research through the lens of new materialist theories to examine painting as performative by drawing from Bolt's (2007, 2013) discussion of materiality and the performativity of art practice and through the lens of Barad's (2007) discussion of diffraction. The research is presented as a series of propositions that present qualities of learning through painting with examples from artists interviewed. As a performative practice, these propositions discuss painting as an emergent, embodied, material, affective, relational and experiential process of learning. They propose that through the material process of painting, artists learn about themselves, others and their relationship to the world in which they inhabit. Photographic interludes extend the discussion by presenting the space of learning, the studio. The final chapters present my own paintings that evolved in relation to the research thus revealing a generative relationship between practice-led and qualitative research methods.

This research is conceived, developed and analyzed through my lens as an art educator. Within the context of rapidly changing education that includes inquiry-based, experiential and creative approaches to learning that are often at odds within a system that continues to rely on measurable objectives, and within the context of increased emphasis on digital technologies, I propose that this research has significant implications. This study contributes to research about artistic inquiry within art education particularly as it relates to material practices, and highlights the necessity for embracing uncertainties, ambiguities, messiness, affect, embodiment and material engagement within the creative learning process.

LAY SUMMARY

This research examines painting as a way of learning. It draws together practice-led methodologies, as revealed through an examination of the development of my own paintings and qualitative interview methods through studio visit interviews with contemporary artists working across Canada. Drawing from examples of artists' descriptions of their painting processes, and through a series of propositions about the qualities of painting through the lens of new materialist theories, this dissertation discusses painting as an emergent, embodied, affective, experiential and relational. As the space of the interviews and the setting of artistic practice, the dissertation includes photographs of artists' studios that reveals qualities of the studio as a space of learning through painting. This study reveals ways of learning through painting, therefore contributing to research about artistic inquiry within art education particularly as it relates to material practices.

PREFACE

This dissertation is an original work by the author, Alison Shields. I conceptualized and crafted this research following the guidance of my supervisor, Dr. Rita Irwin and my committee members, Dr. William Pinar and Professor Landon Mackenzie.

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DEDICATION

To my parents, Richard and Mary Lou for always encouraging me to learn for the sake of learning.

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PROLOGUE

A never-ending painting

“A life of making isn’t a series of shows, or projects, or productions, or things; it is an everyday practice. It is a practice of questions more than of answers, of waiting to find what you need more than knowing what you need to do.” (Hamilton, 2009, p. 69)

In an essay entitled “Making Not Knowing,” artist and professor at the Ohio State University, Ann Hamilton (2009) describes making as an ongoing, unfinished story. She explains that art making allows something new to appear and come into existence. As such, while you may begin with something you do know, you move toward something you don’t know. Furthermore, she describes art making as not simply representation or description. Instead art emerges through an urgent engagement with materials and practice (p. 69).

As an artist, my art practice has always led my teaching and research practices. Barbara Bolt and Estelle Barrett (2007) explain that within practice-led research, theory emerges from practice at the same time that practice informs theory. This generative emergence out of practice leads me to wonder, at what point does practice begin? Is difficult for me to pinpoint a beginning of my practice. Did it begin when I first started drawing as a child, or when I started studying fine arts in university, or when I had my first exhibition? I cannot define the single artistic moment or project that led to this doctoral research, as it is all interwoven, each moment affecting the next. For the purpose of this dissertation, I will, however, rewind to a significant period that led the way towards this work.

I first began seeing myself as an artist during my years pursuing a Master of Fine Arts at the University of Waterloo. It was the first time I really delved into art making. I spent two years trying to understand the painting process through a series of self-generating and self-referential paintings. In an attempt to create a ‘never-ending painting,’ I developed an elaborate system of painting, tracing, projecting and repainting (figures 1-4). I would trace the marks, forms and stains from a portion of the painting. I would then use that tracing to form the basis of the next layer. By tracing the marks on the

canvas, I attempted to recover the moment of its creation, simultaneously denying the possibility to capture it in its absolute form, as it is a fragmented reproduction of that moment. Through this repetitive and obsessive act, I created an archive of the forms that make up the layers of the painting that are inevitably covered through time. In a sense, through this process I created a palimpsest, an archive that represents the history of that painting. By using these tracings as the skeletal framework for future layers (and future paintings), I revealed how the layers underneath affect the layers overtop and how my process of painting was always affected by the actions that came before. Through this process I also revealed the infinite potentials of the practice of painting.

These paintings continued to evolve over long periods of time, and each painting would perpetuate its own self continuation as well as generate new paintings, in a process I compared to organisms evolving and breeding, or the evolution of an ever-changing landscape. Considering them as metaphors for organisms or the changing landscape allowed me to view them as active and alive. In an essay, titled “Emergence,” German art theorist, Jan Verwoert, (2005), reinforced my understanding of my painting process as well as shifted my thinking about art making. He describes art making as a complex decision-making process wherein forms and concepts emerge through a continual response and negotiation between the emerging parts of the painting. Furthermore, Verwoert describes emergence as the process wherein structures cannot be derived from single parts but instead emerge through the interaction of elements within a complex and interwoven system (p. 3). This concept of emergence allowed me to embrace the uncertainties of the painting process. It also began my considerations of emergent pedagogies.

My interest in the concept of a ‘never-ending painting’ continued after my Master of Fine Arts work, although it morphed into other ways of working and reworking the painting, from whitening out and then scraping/wiping away, to eventually cutting up and reconfiguring pieces from various paintings together (figures 5-8). This desire for incompleteness remained. Or perhaps it was a resistance towards completion. It was only when I began teaching again and then pursuing my doctoral research that I realized this desire and/or resistance wove into how I understood learning, thinking and researching. I

came to realize and ultimately examine how my approach to making art shapes my approaches to pedagogy. My doctoral research continues to engage in questions about the artistic process, moving beyond my own practice to examine others' practices. My art practice in turn continues to evolve in relation to this research. Through this process, I consider the never-ending learning inherent in the painting process and how we can create the conditions for this to exist within art education. Learning for me is like that never-ending painting that emerges through an emergent process, while always drawing from what came before it. However, what I realized through this research is that it is not enough to state that the intention is for it to never end. Thus, this dissertation asks: How does one learn through this never-ending painting process? And how do we create the conditions for this never-ending learning process to continue?



Figures. 1-4 show the evolution of one painting (right) and how it evolved through the use of tracings (left). This painting was shown at my 2011, MFA thesis exhibition alongside 100 tracings.



Figure 5. *Emergence 1*, 2009-2014. This image shows the same painting as above after evolving for several years.



Figure 6. *Emergence 2*, 2010-2014. This painting was another painting that was shown at my MFA thesis exhibition that continued to evolve into my early doctoral work.



Figures 7-8. *Off Course*, Viridian Gallery, Vancouver, 2016. These images reveal how the never-ending painting process evolved into new directions throughout my doctoral work, culminating in this exhibition.

INTRODUCTION

A journey into artists' studios to examine painting practices



Figure 9. Julie Trudel's temporary studio, Halifax, 2015

Research question

As an artist, my doctoral research emerged out of my painting practice. While I spent earlier graduate work studying painting practices through examining my own process, I realized this examination had its limitations, as it was always through the lens of my own process. This lens was shaped through my education, through my experiences, and through my aesthetic preferences. Through my years studying fine art, and my years working in various studios as an artist, I've always embraced the way that I learn about painting, not simply through painting in my studio, but also through conversations with others. As such, painting, for me, is an ongoing conversation between the solitary and the social. Furthermore, I have found conversations within studios to be a generative and creative way of learning from others within the space of art practice.

As an art educator, I examine art practices through the lens of education. I have worked in K-12 school classrooms, in teacher education and in post-secondary studio art classes. Within these contexts, rather than focus on the making of an object, I focus on the process of learning that occurs through the making of an object. While this emphasis does not disregard the meanings and codes of representation inherent in the final pictures produced through making, I focus on the learning process for its potential contribution to a deeper understanding of how one inquires through art making as a way of learning about ourselves, others and the world we inhabit. Furthermore, I consider looking at a painting to be a learning process, as representational codes are not fixed, but rather constantly changing in relation to that moment of looking. Thus, my work as an artist and art educator is based on the following premise: Rather than thinking about art education as *learning to make art*, I think about art education as *a way of learning*. Learning to make art suggests a fixed concept of art that can be grasped, whereas, I propose that art making as a way of learning allows for a consideration of the ongoing process of learning through the making. Drawing from this premise, my research question emerged through the ongoing interactions of my work as an artist and as an art educator as I ask:

How is painting a way of learning?

The journey

Over the course of the past two years, my desire to more deeply understand painting practices has led me on a research journey, from Victoria, British Columbia to St. John's, Newfoundland, from west coast to east coast of Canada. During this time, I visited approximately 125 artists (who work primarily with the medium of painting) in their studios. Through in-depth interviews with artists about their artwork, process and communities, and exploration of the studios through photograph documentation, I examine how painting is a form of inquiry, and in turn a way of learning.

My research draws from interview methods, performed and examined through the lens of practice-led research. The lens of practice-led research is revealed, firstly by how the research question

emerged out of my painting practice (as described in the prologue), secondly in how the conversations were contextualized through the lens of my background as a painter, and lastly, in the final chapters where I reveal how new directions in my art practice emerged through this research. Over the course of my studio visits, I interviewed artists about their histories, education, personal experiences, philosophical lenses and painting investigations. The studio, as the site of the interview, was an integral part of the interview, as the materiality of the space and the art works interacted with the spoken word, sometimes explicitly, while other times in a sensory, affective, embodied and experiential way. The studio, as examined within this dissertation, is the working and making space for the artists interviewed. My interaction with the studio is revealed through photograph documentation of the space, followed by an unexpected turn that brought the research back into my studio. Following my interviews, I created a series of paintings of artists' studios, painted while listening to artist interviews, in a process I call 'immersive transcription,' that reveals my own creative engagement with the interview and photographic data.

Rationale

Education is rapidly changing. The K-12 curriculum in British Columbia has recently changed to emphasize student-directed and inquiry-driven approaches to learning that emphasize critical and creative thinking, and personal and social responsibility (<https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca>). Similarly, post-secondary education is beginning to embrace creative, experiential, practice-based and inquiry-based approaches to learning. However, based on my experience within these contexts, I believe inquiry as an approach to art education is still being understood. Furthermore, while on the one hand there is a shift toward conceptualizing education as experiential, student-directed and inquiry-driven, there continues to be an ongoing tension between embracing these approaches while also being grounded in objective-based learning standards. In addition, rapidly changing technologies have increased attention toward digital and web-based approaches to learning. Drawing from my experience as an artist and art educator, and in the face of rapidly changing technologies, I propose that there is an urgency in addressing the ways of learning that emerge through the handling of messy, unpredictable materials, such as paint. As such, I

examine how painting is a way of learning, as artists inquire about themselves, others, histories, places, ideas and materials. While the studio spaces examined within this dissertation are spaces of contemporary artists' practices, through engaging with the space of painting, the studio, I explore how we can create spaces of learning that embrace the complexity of the learning process that occurs through making.

In a recent publication created by artist educators from art schools throughout the United Kingdom, entitled *Teaching Painting* (2016), Ayliffe and Mieves examine the ways studio-based classrooms, specifically painting classrooms, may disrupt standardized and objective-driven approaches to education. They argue that there is an inherent contradiction within education between the “emergent and foregrounding of practice-led approaches to education,” while at the same time the reality of higher education that is “focused on distinct learning outcomes” (p. 52). They argue that this educational framework does not provide the environment for studio-based disciplines. They describe their findings from a study they performed through the creation of a week-long studio-based painting program as they argue for the importance of studio-based education:

What became apparent through the week is that fundamental ideas such as providing a personalized studio space, encouraging the experimental handling of materials, allowing the students time to test, mess up, fail, play and develop an individually negotiated art practice have all been effectively sidelined by both educational rhetoric, its systemizing structures and much contemporary art practice and criticism... What we have seen is a gradual erosion of art school teaching pedagogies and methods and we are now in a position where fine art and creative education is so warped by the outcome-driven and employability agendas of the current institution that we need to consider what we have lost that is so integral to maintaining this creative “ecosystem.” (p. 53)

They address the ongoing critique and skepticism of the individualized art studio that emerged through postmodern discourse, while proposing that within the context of the institution today, the studio may resist standardized approaches to learning. Addressing this critique of the studio they state: “The question we have asked here, is to what extent the opposite is true today and to what extent the studio and an active

studio practice has become a place of resistance to current, increasingly institutionalized tendencies in [higher education].” (p. 56). Instead they propose that as an educational space it is “a site of highly personal or individuated learning and a community of practice in which assumptions about art and society can be challenged and tested” (p. 56). Their work asks that we continue to investigate these personalized and experiential approaches to learning within the painting studio.

My doctoral research addresses the urgency that Ayliffe and Mieves (2016) describe by analyzing the learning potentials of working in the studio. Rather than focus, as they have, on the undergraduate classroom, I focus on contemporary painting practices, specifically in Canada. In the same publication, artist educator McClenaghan (2016) states: “Painting is a learning experience and painters learn in the studio; they speculate, take risks and test ideas in materials in an attempt to give them form” (p. 32). My research takes up McClenaghan’s proposal that painting is a learning experience as I ask artists about their process of painting. Through these conversations, as I discuss their histories, their experiences and their making processes, I examine how they learn through making a painting. In addition, I propose that the studio, as the site of practice, further reveals qualities of this learning process. Through examining the learning process of contemporary artists, I propose we can better understand how to bring these qualities of making into the classroom. I have chosen to focus on painting, firstly, because it is my artistic medium, thus the dissertation draws from my knowledge and experience in painting practices, and secondly, because I believe in the necessity in examining the learning potentials for working with material-based practices, particularly in the context of ongoing emphasis on digital-based technologies.

McClenaghan (2016) argues that in order to understand the learning process of painting, we need to shift from representational thinking toward practice in order to understand the process of painting. He argues that while the term “art practice” has gained prevalence within art discourse, it seldom highlights the encounter with process. Furthermore, he argues that “the study of practice requires an interaction with the life of the studio” (p. 36). He states: “Practice is in time. It is durational. Artworks are frozen in time. They represent practice but they are not practice... They stand in for that which is absent. Practice is always somewhere else. Hence the exposition of practice brings about the collapse of representation” (p.

36). I take up McClenaghan's challenge to address practice as a constantly changing process of learning rather than a static way of describing an artist's work. This dissertation addresses this call to draw out the processes inherent in the practice of painting through engaging with the studio.

American, feminist theorist and physicist, Karen Barad (2007) similarly argues that to focus on the performative rather than the representationalist means focusing on "practices or doings or actions" rather than on "correspondence between descriptions and reality" (p. 28). Barad uses the term diffraction to describe the ongoing relational intra-actions between bodies, materials and ideas, and the effects that these intra-actions produce. It is a process of ongoing interference that continuously generates new effects. Through this process, Barad argues that we move away from representationalism and toward the performative:

It is possible to develop coherent philosophical positions that deny the basic premises of representationalism. A performative understanding of naturalcultural practices is one alternative. *Performative* approaches call into question representationalism's claim that there are representations, on the one hand, and ontologically separate entities awaiting representation, on the other, and focus inquiry on the practices or performances of representing, as well as the productive effects of those practices and the conditions for their efficacy. (p. 49)

I draw from the work of Barad as I explore the complexities of working with the materials of painting as ideas and experiences become embodied in the process. Through this lens, painting becomes a performative practice. Barbara Bolt (2004, 2013), lecturer in Visual Media at the University of Melbourne, similarly emphasizes the embodied and performative process of art making that occurs through handling materials.

Within this dissertation, I use the word performative through a broader lens of discussing ways of thinking, and more specifically to refer to the learning processes of studio practice. Through the lens of Barad (2007), performative refers to ways of engaging with the world as an ongoing process of becoming in relation to ongoing encounters that produce change. Performative approaches therefore challenge an understanding of thinking as representational, static and separate from our engagements with the world,

and instead views thinking as an embodied, sensory and experiential engagement with the world. Thus, performative allows for an ontology of knowing that engages with practice. I draw from Bolt's (2004, 2013) discussion of performative ways of understanding artmaking processes to address performative understandings of studio practice. Within the context of painting practices, I refer to performative as way of attending to the time-based process of making. Through this lens, I contend that it is not possible to make a purely representational painting, as the time spent making the painting involves an ongoing encounter with materials and these encounters always produce difference and new potentials. Thus, a performative lens of painting practice allows us to engage with the embodied, affective, sensory, experiential and emergent learning process of painting.

It is my contention that the examination of the performative qualities of the painting process, does not deny the representational systems and codes that exist within all art works. However, to shift the focus toward these performative qualities of painting, allows us to embrace the learning that occurs through this process. While the artists discussed herein bring their own educational backgrounds, theoretical lenses and personal experiences into their descriptions of painting processes, Barad's work provides a lens through which to examine practice as performative. Through examining this performative process, I engage with the learning processes that emerge through making.

Dissertation Format

This dissertation is structured to guide the reader through the theoretical lens through which I approached my methodology, through to the analysis of the interviews and back to my own practice. Firstly, I provide background into the theoretical lenses that shape my research, focusing on new materialism, painting theory and studio practices. Next, I examine my research methodology, interview methods, which were performed through the lens of practice-led research. The art studio, as the site of interviews played a significant role in shaping the interviews and is revealed in photograph documentation. Within this methodology section, I address the ways that new materialist approaches shaped my research process, from the ways I approached interviews and explored the studios through to

my analysis of the research data. Next, I reveal the data analysis through presenting several studio visits that exemplify the performative processes of painting. Within this section, through a series of propositions, I present qualities of painting practices that reveal the learning processes within painting. Woven throughout the dissertation is a series of visual essays (visual interludes) that reveal my exploration of the studios, and my visual analysis of this exploration through photography. The purpose of these two lenses of examination (interview and photography) is to present the interconnection between painting practices and the painting studios. The interviews reveal the qualities of the learning process of painting, and the images reveal the space of learning, and how that space affects the learning process. Lastly, I return to my own practice as I present paintings that emerged through the research process. Through returning to my own practice, I reveal how this research emerged out of my own painting practice. I also reveal, not only ways that I learned about painting through this research, but also how I learned about research through painting.

CHAPTER 1

New materialism within the painting studio

Moving beyond representation toward the performative

Two books that were influential for me throughout my doctoral work were Simon O’Sullivan’s (2006) *Thought Beyond Representation* and Barbara Bolt’s (2004) *Art Beyond Representation*.

Particularly within the realm of painting, language about representation and the critiques of representation can dominate discourse. While social practices, new media and performance art have moved art education discourse into realms beyond representation as they embrace art making as performative, as relational, as an encounter and as an event, painting discourse within art education continues to struggle to find the language to describe these same qualities. Moreover, as an artist and painter, these books resonated with my own experiences working in an art studio. They address the ways that the process of making art allows for an active, embodied and performative experience. I will draw from their work as I propose that through examining this performative lens of painting practices, we can understand the ways of learning that occur through this process.

O’Sullivan (2006) examines this question from the perspective of an art historian, who completed a PhD in art history while also trying to resist traditional ways of discussing art. He describes how his dissertation was a deconstruction of various discourses on art, creating a map of the terrains of representation (p. 10). He explains that his dissertation was for the most part a negative critique of representation: “My argument back then was that these theories of representation tended always to be in crisis. They would posit a system of representation – that would become undone in the very exposition of that system” (p. 10). He explains that he quickly grew tired of this continual deconstruction, and sought out a more productive way to think about art as he returned to works by Deleuze and Guattari (1980):

What I found in their writing was a different conception of what intellectual work might involve; no longer the endless critique of previous bodies of knowledge (or not just this) but the creative invention of concepts and the intensive mapping of affects and events. I recognized then, as I do

now, a different possibility, another avenue, for thinking art and culture away from the horizon of the signifier. (p. 11)

O'Sullivan suggests that this way of thinking aligned with his understanding of how he lives and interacts with the world, an affirmation of intuition that views art as creative, constructive and connective.

Bolt (2004) writes from the lens of an artist and states: "The impetus for this book emerged in the heat of practice" (p. 1). She describes how she was painting two works, one titled *Reading Fiction* (1995) and the other *Reading Theory* (1995). Through this process she "began to question representationalist logic" (p. 1). In the introduction, she recalls the process of painting these works. She describes how the painting began through working through established painting principles, working with shapes, composition, dark and light, following through on representational strategies and habits. She explains how the painting process activated an embodied and affective experience. It is this process that she argues moves painting beyond simply representation as this performative quality allows the painting to emerge through the process:

However, at some undefinable moment, the painting took on a life that seemed to have almost nothing to do with my conscious attempts to control it. The "work" (as verb) took on its own momentum, its own rhythm and intensity. Within this intense furious state, I no longer had any awareness of time, of pain or of making decisions. In the fury of painting, rules give way to tactics and the pragmatics of action. The painting takes on a life of its own. It breathes, vibrates, pulsates, shimmers and generally runs away from me. The painting no longer merely represents or illustrates reading. Instead, it performs. In the performativity of imaging, life gets into the image. (p. 1)

Through her description of this painting, Bolt highlights the relationship between theory and practice as she describes ways theory becomes embodied in the work rather than simply represented. Furthermore, by personifying the canvas in this way, she describes how it comes to life and implies a relationship between the maker and the painting.

O'Sullivan's (2006) writing resonates with me, as it resists traditional ways of discussing painting that seem to lead to closures or fixed meanings, and instead, he opens it up to multiplicities as he addresses ways of thinking through art. Bolt's (2004) work resonates with my own embodied and affective experiences as a painter in the studio. I am interested in the relationship between these two perspectives and how they shaped the direction of my research wherein I seek out a way of looking at painting beyond representation, and beyond deconstruction.

O'Sullivan (2006) describes art making as an encounter, which he explains is different from an object of recognition. Recognition, he explains, reconfirms our beliefs, values and understandings of the world. Thus, an object of recognition is a representation; it represents what we already know (p. 1). With an encounter, on the other hand, our systems of knowledge and ways of being are disrupted. An encounter allows us to see or think about the world differently as our habitual ways of being in the world are challenged: "This is the creative moment of the encounter that obliges us to think otherwise. Life, when it truly is lived, is a history of these encounters, which will always necessarily occur beyond representation" (p. 1). Art, therefore, is both an object of the encounter and the encounter itself. Representation privileges hierarchies, fixity and stasis. He desires to move beyond post-modern models of deconstruction that emphasize textuality and signifier, that may only consider representation in the negative. At the same time, he does not want to return to traditional, artist-centred models (p. 4). Thus, O'Sullivan seeks to examine art as a process of becoming, invention and creativity that privileges complexity and connectivity. He draws from Deleuze and Guattari's (1980) concept of the rhizome that allows for transversal connections and a moving sideways that emphasizes intensity and affective encounters.

According to O'Sullivan (2006), the word representational does not only apply to academia but is the way we think of ourselves in relation to the world wherein we are subject and the world is object. These dualities are affirmed when we ask "what does art mean?", which sets up oppositions between object/form and meaning/content (p. 13). Instead O'Sullivan suggests that we ask "What does the art work do? Or what does the art work set in motion?" (p. 22). Describing art as being in motion allows for this fluidity. Rather than fixed meanings, it implies that art might produce a number of effects. Like a

pebble dropped in still water, it can produce simple or complex effects as it forms relations to the world. He describes these complex connections and relationships as assemblage. This approach to examining art brings art back into a space of invention, production and imagination. I propose these effects he describes align with Barad's (2007) discussion of diffraction, wherein each interaction, relation and encounter causes a series of effects. This concept will be addressed in more depth in the next section.

Bolt's (2004) writing addresses the embodied performative process of making art. Regarding her work, she asks: "If a painting comes to perform rather than merely represent some other thing, what is happening?... Does the visual image, like the speech act, have the power to bring into being that which it figures? Can the image transcend its structure as representation and be performative rather than representational?" (p. 3). She highlights the way an image may speak and emphasizes the image's relationship to spoken conversation. Bolt critiques the ways theory may stagnate practice, in what she calls the "theorization effect" (p. 4). Through theorization, the "fuzziness" of practice is replaced by fixity and stasis (p. 4). Arguing that there is a logic of practice, she wonders how practice can be articulated or whether practice escapes theoretical contemplation altogether: "Thus, in our attempts to grasp, divide, classify and reorganize the results of research into a particular code or logic, practice is *itself* effaced" (p. 5). Bolt addresses various 20th century lenses for evaluating artworks, from Greenbergian to Bauhaus to semiotic, in addition to sociological or anthropological approaches that are more concerned with the place of the artist in society. Addressing this history, Bolt argues that what has failed to be taken into account within these discussions of artworks, is the space of the studio, the bodily engagement and the material practice of art making (p. 5).

At the same time, Bolt (2004) acknowledges the complexity of this process. Arguing that creative practice is an ongoing exchange between objects, bodies and images, she shifts the conversation away from representational ways of thinking that establish a fixity or mastery over the world. She instead highlights art making's performative qualities. This shift toward examining the performative process, acknowledges the representational codes within the process, however emphasizes that these meanings are constantly changing and always re-generated through the embodied and subjective experience of the

maker (and viewer). Similar to O'Sullivan (2006), Bolt seeks to discuss art beyond the postmodern deconstruction and critique of painting: "Postmodern artists have worked to subvert, disperse and counter the system of mastery," however she wonders if they "have become too self-conscious and become representationalist in the quest to ruin representation" (p. 50).

Bolt (2004) asks "So what is it that takes us out of ourselves, so to speak, so that the work of art leaves the domain of representation to become experience?" (p. 49). She states that we can only come to understand the world theoretically after we come to understand it through handling; understanding comes from the care that comes in handling or being thrown into the world and dealing with things (p. 49). Handleability does not simply refer to the act of handling artistic materials, but rather refers to the way we engage with the world, through encountering materials, objects, knowledge and bodies. Through the making of images, we perform these encounters.

Through monstrous performativity, images leak into the world and produce it in some unforeseen way. This is the power of the work of art.... In the heat of practice, the body has the potential to become language and the work may take on a life of its own. Through process, the outside world enters the work and the work casts its effects back into the world (p. 187-190).

The way she describes how the world enters the work and then sends effects back onto the world, I propose embraces a new materialist process that occurs through painting. In a special issue about new materialism in the *International Journal of Education Through Art*, guest editors, Perez de Miles and Kalin (2018) challenge purely linguistic and representationalist approaches to understanding art and research as they address new materialism within art education and research. They argue that modes of thought from Western Humanism need to be reconsidered, through a "radical reconfiguration of the linguistic turn, critical theory, self-reflexivity and epistemology" (p. 4). They emphasize the ways that objects have agency on their own and relationships occur through an intra-action between subject and object.

The shift from the linguistic turn and representational thought open up to diffractive methodologies that make evident that entanglements such as matter and meaning or matter-

meaning (Barad 2007), materiality and discourse or material-discursive (Braidotti 2013) are processes that are iterative, unbound, in-the-making, and relational. (p. 6)

Similarly, in a recent article in *Art Education*, Hood and Kraehe (2017) examine new materialism through an analysis of artists' processes as they explore the ways artists "pose questions, construct problems, conjecture, investigate, experiment, and many times fail but then make discoveries in the process" (p. 33). They describe dualistic thinking "imprisoning" most research that separates human from non-human and argue that this poses a challenge to art education research practices by overlooking the "*thingliness of things*" (p. 33). Instead they argue that for many artists, the attraction to being with objects and creating with materials is what drives their art practice. They ask what happens when artists and researchers look at the interconnectedness of things: "Rather than *representing* the symbolic or cultural meanings of things as otherwise inert objects, a new materialist approach supports speculative questions and methods that seek to make sense of the vitalities of matter and agency of things" (p. 33). They examine one artist's description of objects in his studio through the lens of Jane Bennett's (2010) discussion of the vitality of materials. Hood and Kraehe describe the artist's interaction with things and argue that the things communicate and interfere with the narrative process: "His work is about human narrative, but at the same time, his attentiveness to things and their participation in making is foundational to his practice and construction of narrative" (p. 34). They argue that this approach to research, which is based on being with things and asking what things do rather than what they mean, is a contemplative and speculative research process (p. 33). I take up this approach to engaging with art as "being with things" and "asking what things do" (p. 33) within this research as I examine painting as a way of learning.

A new materialist perspective of art practice

Bolt (2013) examines the materials of practice as she engages with theories of new materialism. She states: "The emergence of neo-materialism 'now' may be understood as the result of the butterfly effect – a confluence of currents across disciplines that have validated a rethinking of the relationship between humans and non-humans" (p. 3). She compares it to humanist approaches that privilege humans

in the human/non-human binary. The new materialism is conceived instead as a relationship between human and non-human, social and physical, and material and immaterial (p. 3). In addition, new materialism emphasizes the body's materiality and how the body is affected by these interactions.

In the introduction to the edited book *Carnal Knowledge: Towards a 'New Materialism' through the Arts* (Barrett and Bolt, 2013), Bolt begins by discussing Raphael's 1508-1511 fresco, *The School of Athens*. She explains that in it, Plato gestures toward the immaterial, referring to the mind (reason), and Aristotle points towards the material world, the practical world (empiricism) (p. 1). Bolt argues that this painting represents two dominant perspectives within Western thought. The one point perspective alludes to the objective position of the viewer looking at the world as picture: "In this relation of representation, the human is the active subject whilst the world is passive matter to be acted upon" (p. 1). However, Bolt explains that within the same painting is another figure, Epicurus who focused on the matter of things. It is within this space of materialism that Bolt argues is a relevant perspective to examine art making. She argues that through the 1980s and 1990s, cultural theory that permeated social and political theory removed the matter from art (p. 3). Within this context of cultural studies, poststructuralism and postmodernism, art was framed as social and ideological, and the construction of art always occurred through language (p. 3). She argues instead that all visual art engages with material processes.

Bolt (2013) addresses the new materialist approach as she confronts the postmodern and poststructural approach of the 1980s and 1990s within cultural theory. "In the 1980s and 1990s the influence of cultural theory spread beyond the boundaries of social and political theories and came in to infect the arts *and* leach 'matter' out of art" (p. 3). However, she contextualizes this theoretical shift within the context of Modernism. She describes how an artist's relationship to matter became codified due to Roger Fry who in 1911 celebrated the material beauty. She goes on to explain that the 'truth to materials' took on a dominant platform within Modernism by Clement Greenberg's formalism wherein he claimed that the character of an artwork is based on the purity of the material medium (p. 4). Bolt describes the faults in the notion of 'truth to medium': "Mary Kelly points out the problem with a modernist formalism, as an incoherent contradiction: on the one hand it trumpeted materialism through its

claim to ‘truth to materials,’ but on the other, it championed notions of artist’s genius, originality, self-expression and the Kantian notion of taste” (p. 4). In response to the failure she explains how within this lens arose the “framing of art as primarily social and ideological in nature occurred within the broader context of the rise of cultural studies, post structuralism and postmodernism” (p. 4). Rather than emphasizing art history and aesthetics, art was framed within the context of its cultural production. Underlying the examination of art from this perspective is the assumption that discourse prescribed that which is represented and art is socially and culturally mediated (p. 4). Therefore, she claims: “Thus through the colonization of the arts by cultural theory, art’s materiality disappeared into the textual, the linguistic and the discursive” (p. 4). Bolt argues that despite theory that sought to disentangle matter from discourses, materiality is at the core of artistic practice and this is integral to our understanding of it (p. 5). However, rather than a Modernist conception of purity of materials, within new materialist approaches, the materials embody an artist’s experiences in the world. It is an ongoing interaction of the effects of our experiences in the world onto the practice and the effects of practice back onto our experiences in the world. The legacy of Modern painting practices, and postmodern critique has had great influence on the education and practice of painting. It is within this art historical context that all of the artists I interviewed became artists. Bolt argues that there is a need to develop approaches to examine painting that embrace materiality and move beyond the critical and deconstructive lens that challenged authorship and the individuality of the artist. It is within this context that I propose an examination of a painting from a new materialist lens.

It is important to point out that new materialist lenses to examining painting approaches developed out of and in relation to its own art history. Painting practices are complex and always in conversation with their own art histories, and the artists interviewed are working within a complex web of educational, social and cultural, and theoretical influences that shape their approach, and their work is created through a web of influences from modern and postmodern painting practices. Thus, if viewed in isolation, new materialism as an approach to examining painting may ignore the complex history of painting practices. In addition, new materialism as a theoretical approach to understanding painting

emerged within the context of many disciplines engaging with new materialist theory to examine our relationship to the world, particularly in response to poststructuralist, feminist and post-colonial theory. This wider lens of new materialist theory is beyond the scope of this study that is focused on painting practices, however it acknowledges that this approach to understanding painting does not deny or critique that which came before, but instead highlights a particular moment in understanding art making in relation to a broader desire to understand our embodied relationship to the world we inhabit and an embodied approach to research practices.

Bolt (2004) refers to material thinking as the way that new understandings emerge through handling materials. Within her conception of material thinking, materials are not passive objects but instead actively engage with us. Through this understanding, we can reimagine our bodily engagement with the world: “We come to know the world theoretically only after we have come to understand it through handling” (2007, p. 30). Bolt (2004) analyzes her own painting process and states that through her failure to realize a successful painting, she discovered that there were limits to her conceptual thinking. She discusses how the ‘failures’ that inevitably emerge through the process of making allow for not only unanticipated directions in the art object to emerge, but also make her continually reconceptualize her process. Her inability to produce the intended outcomes activated alternative ways of thinking through the process. Through the making, her thinking is set in motion. Through this process, rather than making art that represents theory or an idea, Bolt argues that the making generates thinking.

Estelle Barrett (2013) similarly explores the material engagement in art making and extends it further to discuss experiential qualities of art making. Barrett describes the active and experiential quality of making as performative: “Unlike images that operate via established symbolic codes and that serve to communicate information, the aesthetic image is ‘performative’: it emerges through sensory processes and gives rise to multiplicity, ambiguity and indeterminacy” (p. 63). Extending Bolt’s discussion of representational views of the world, Barrett questions the privileging of distant, impersonal observation of the world and suggests that this approach be replaced with one that is a material approach that emphasizes interaction and action (p. 64). She emphasizes an embodied experience-in-practice that allows for the

emergence of new ways of thinking and understanding (p. 64). Furthermore, she argues for a heterogeneous subject that puts the subject into process.

This is the logic of material process and of the unconscious where there is “no time” in the sense of linear temporality, and where the binaries and contradictions of the symbolic do not hold... In creative practice the subject can be viewed as a passageway where there is a struggle between conflicting tendencies or drives in response to external stimuli and matter as it is felt. Moments of resolution or stases are rooted in affective relations – the positive or negative values that emerge through the encounter with objects in the world. (p. 65)

In addition to arguing that the subject emerges through the interaction with the process of making, Barrett (2013) also extends her analysis to everyday practice. She states that knowledge gained through everyday experience in the world is recreated through artistic practice (p. 66). Barrett argues that within the process of making, our experiences in the world may be transferred through the work. However, she also argues that the work might simultaneously reflect back onto the artist perspectives or understandings of the world that may not have been apparent prior to the making (p. 67). This encounter, this potential for a work to respond back to the artist something that may not have been understood prior to the making reveals the dialogic quality of art making. It is a conversation between the artist and the art work, and between the materials and the process. Arguing that making is embodied, affective and experiential, the knowledge produced through the performance of making is particular, indeterminate and subjective.

Refocusing the attention in painting toward the materials acknowledges the subjectivity of the artist, but more importantly, I argue embraces the ways these subjectivities are embodied within the process. As such, the painting is not a representation of a fixed identity of the artist, but rather is in a continual state of becoming in relation to the engagement with the materials. This lens does not disregard the artist’s histories and experiences, but rather embraces how these histories continually shape the making of the painting. This embodiment and materialization that occurs through the making is discussed within the dissertation through examples from interviews with artists. Furthermore, I propose that through

this process artists learn about themselves and their experiences in the world they inhabit. This learning process, I argue is the performative quality of painting.

This performative quality of making as described by Barad (2007) in *Meeting the Universe Halfway* draws from the premise that matter and meaning are constantly becoming through ongoing intra-actions. Barad makes a distinction between interaction and intra-action. Thus, she proposes that rather than the world being made up of separate individuals that exist prior to their interaction, that instead individuals exist because of particular interactions. As such, entities are in a constant state of becoming in relation to encounters with other entities in a process of intra-action. This process of intra-action relates to the earlier discussion of performativity as this perspective views the world as constantly changing and in process. Furthermore, it highlights the materiality of our bodies that change in relation to their intra-actions in the world. The process of intra-action is used in this dissertation to refer to a way of being in the world in a way where one is constantly changing in relation to intra-actions with others (both human and nonhuman). Furthermore, intra-action is used to as a way to discuss practice and the process of painting. This lens embraces the process of painting as an ongoing process of encounters between bodies, materials, images and ideas. Through this process, it is not only the painting that changes, but the artists themselves, and I propose this potential for ongoing change is the learning process of painting. Furthermore, as intra-actions occur within specific time and place, this process highlights the particularity of practice. However, as these differentiations occur through relations, it also highlights the relational quality of art practice.

Extending the discussion of intra-action, Barad (2007) discusses diffraction as a way of attending to the with ways that differences are produced. She explains diffraction as both a metaphor and a physical phenomenon. As a physical phenomenon she states: “Simply stated, diffraction has to do with the way waves combine when they overlap and the apparent bending and spreading of waves that occurs when waves encounter an obstruction” (p. 74). For example, she explains how waves behave when they overlap with each other on a breakwater or when encountering a barrier and are diffracted (the barrier is the diffraction apparatus) (p. 74). She provides similar examples of voice travelling through a tube, or how

light bends when it passes by an edge (p. 75). This examination of diffraction illuminates a performative view of the world as always changing in relation to its encounters, producing ongoing differences. For example, she describes the way that by throwing two stones into water at the same time they create two ripples, and as the ripples overlap a new pattern emerges as the relative difference between the overlapping wave. As such, while she notes a slight difference historically in the terms, she uses the term diffraction and interference interchangeably. She grounds her discussion of diffraction patterns as they relate to the behaviour of particles, noting a significant experiment that revealed that under the right conditions matter behaves as waves. As diffractive patterns reveal the effects of superimpositions or interference, this finding reveals the entanglements of matter as it responds in relation to ongoing intra-actions.

Within Barad's (2007) discussion of diffraction, our bodies are implicated within the process. This understanding refers to our ongoing relations with the world and provides a way of re-examining research and art practice. Diffraction, as described by Barad is also understood in relation to reflection, and through this lens highlights the difference between representational and performative engagements with the world, and may expand understandings of painting. Reflection understands the world as representation wherein subject and object are separate entities. From a research lens, reflective understandings entail a subject examining a world to be grasped, understood and represented. From a perspective of painting, a reflective practice creates a picture of the world as representation. A diffractive way of understanding research and art making is to understand the world from within. This lens allows for an experiential, and embodied approach to learning. With regards to this way of knowing she says: "Making knowledge not simply about making facts but about making worlds, or rather it is about making specific worldly configurations" (p. 91). Thus, artmaking and learning become about creating particular configurations, thus revealing the potentiality of making. Thus, on a metaphorical level, diffraction also reveals the entanglements within the ontology of knowing wherein one knows in relation to ongoing intra-actions in the world (Barad, 2007, p. 73). This ontology acknowledges the complexity of how the we interact with the world. Furthermore, she emphasizes the ways that we are implicated within the

process of engaging with the world: “This is not about solving paradoxes or synthesizing different points of view from the outside, as it were, but rather about the material intra-implication of putting ‘oneself’ at risk, troubling ‘oneself,’ one’s ideas, one’s dreams, all the different ways of touching and being in touch, and sensing the differences and entanglements from within” (Barad, 2012, p. 77). This lens is significant within this research both in how I discuss the artistic learning processes as artists engage with the material process of painting, and in how I approach my research through implicating myself in the materiality of the data.

Discussing the “prosthetic potential of art making,” Garoian (2015) uses diffraction as a way of moving art beyond representation. Garoian uses the term prosthetic to refer to the ways that art making engages with and extends our embodied experiences in the world. Drawing from Barad’s (2007) description of the interaction of waves as they overlap or are interrupted by a barrier, he says that diffraction is a performative process. It is an “‘entangled ontology’ of perpetual differentiation” (p. 491). The differentiation occurs through the indeterminacy that occurs through ongoing interruptions, interferences and interactions. Within this lens, nothing exists as an independent entity, but instead in relation to the interactions with the world. This intra-activity refers to ongoing interaction with others, with materials, through living in the world. Through this examination of painting practices in studios, I similarly argue that this intra-activity that occurs within the studio while painting, brings out the relationships between the engagement with materials in the studio and our embodied interactions in the world. As such, painting is an ongoing process of what Garoian refers to as perpetual differentiation. I draw from the work of Garoian, particularly as it relates to the prosthetic, as I describe the mechanism through which diffraction may occur through artistic practices.

Through my examination of painting practices, I suggest that painting may be an ongoing process of interruption. These interruptions occur between the materials of paint and the artist, as well as through our ongoing experiences in the world which are part of this diffractive process and become materialized within the process of painting. Diffraction as a metaphor for the art making process, allows for a lens that addresses the experiential, material and embodied learning process of painting. Through this lens,

diffraction embraces the ways that each intra-action shifts our thinking and being. Through this lens of diffraction, I propose that artists' experiences outside the studio are not distinctly separate from their art practice, but rather form a generative and active relationship. Thus, the artist is an ongoing site of diffraction as they engage with the world, and the painting becomes a site of diffraction where these intra-actions collide through making. Furthermore, I propose that painting records the ongoing processes of interference, interruption, reinforcement and difference. Through this process, I describe painting as a generative learning process.

My understandings of diffraction emerged through engagement with my own painting practice. Thus, I will share one moment that exemplifies my understandings of diffraction as applied to painting. In 2012, as I began my doctoral work, I had a house fire destroy my home and most of my belongings. What I remember the most from this experience is the sensory, material and embodied response of walking through the ruins of my home. The burnt smell and the imagery of fire stains that surrounded the home created a lasting effect on my body. The affective response was stress for having lost my belongings and home, disgust at the putrid smell, and overwhelming awe by the beauty of these marks made by this uncontrollable source. These contradictory emotional and sensory evocations stuck with me. Shortly after, as I worked in my studio, which at the time was my only home, these responses emerged in how I encountered my paintings. I began to aggressively 'whiteout' my paintings, and while not directly referencing this experience, my experience was embodied in the ways I worked with materials (figure 10). I tried to make sense of this experience while avoiding reductive discussions about self-expression. I did not seek to create a representation of this experience, the house or the fire, but rather, my affective response to this experience became consumed within my process. I examined this experience quite extensively in my own personal writing as I sought out ways to explain the affective experience in the studio that was shaped by a particular sensory and embodied experience in the world. Through this work, I have realized that what I have described here reveals the performative experience of art making.

Furthermore, it reveals this process of diffraction as I understand it, as a way of exploring how I engage with the world, engage with materials in the studio and learn through painting.



Figure 10, *Whiteout I*, Oil on canvas, 72''x 60'', 2013

My interest in new materialism is drawn from and in relation to my own art education. Having made art since I was a child, I always understood that there was a sensory, embodied and affective quality to working with painting. This quality of painting is also the reason for my approaches to painting, as discussed in the prologue, wherein I set out to engage in this process for as long as I could. Within my Master of Fine Arts work, as described earlier, I examined this process through the lens of post-structuralism with a particular interest in Deleuzian theory. This approach to understanding provided a deeper understanding of the complexity of painting, particularly in relation to examining the complexities of knowing and processes of becoming (Shields, 2011). However, this work did not account for the

embodied, affective and sensory quality of painting. Thus, my understandings of new materialism extended my previous work, and allowed me to both re-engage with previous paintings while also provoking new directions. In addition, through the doctoral work, I was shaped by not only trying to understand my painting process, but also by my engagement with embodied and experiential ways of learning. Thus, new materialism has allowed me to develop a deeper and extended understanding of my painting process, but also situate it within current approaches to learning that similarly attend to embodied, experiential and performative practices.

Within the dissertation, diffraction serves as a metaphor that addresses the complex and interwoven effects that emerge through painting as revealed through my interviews. Through this lens, I suggest that diffraction may serve as an ontology of practice that views painting as a way of being that always seeks further potentials. I acknowledge the limits of new materialism. These limits I propose are the limits of any theoretical lens, which when seen in contrast to other theory denies the complexities of knowing. Instead I suggest that new materialism reflects a particular moment in understanding painting that engages relationally in the theoretical discussions and approaches that came before it. In addition, I acknowledge the limits of new materialism in particular because of its emphasis on the body, affect and experience, which are often challenging to put into words. Thus, written and spoken language, I suggest, will always fall short in expressing what painting does, particularly on an affective and sensory level. While acknowledging these limits, I seek to address these concerns through the particularities of the stories told by artists within the dissertation as they reveal the complexities of their influences as artists.

Thus, it is not my contention that this is the sole way to understand painting, but rather a lens through which to extend the conversation about what painting does. Furthermore, it is a lens that allows me to focus on the process of making, and therefore the learning process. It addresses an embodied approach to thinking about painting processes that resonates with how I work in my own studio, a lens that embraces the process in a way that was not addressed during my own experience in art education. This lens appreciates the complexity of the ways our influences shape our practice. In addition, this lens allows me to express the ways this research project shaped my own studio practice. I acknowledge,

however, that painting is created through many lenses, and that each artist discussed herein (all of whom have a BA/BFA and most have an MFA) have their own theoretical lens. I don't believe these other lenses stand in opposition to new materialist approaches as I have described them, but rather contribute to the complexity of artistic practices that new materialist approaches embrace. Furthermore, I do not disregard the representational codes inherent within the process, but instead argue that these codes are worked throughout the process of painting and embodied by the unique approach and lens of each artist. Thus, these codes of meaning are performative and always in flux, even when the painting is complete, as the viewing process is similarly a performative process. Within this lens, the painting is always active. While effects are continually produced on the painting throughout the making process, the painting similarly produces effects back to the artist. These effects may continue to be activated through the unique interaction of each viewer, thus revealing the ongoing potentials of painting.

Painting as material practice

As discussed in the previous section, the history of painting is complex and the ways artists respond to art history and allow it to engage with their practice is particular to each artist. New materialism provides another lens that is not distinct and separate from that which came before it but instead is complexly intertwined. Twentieth century art history has seen many significant periods in the history of painting. From the rise of Modernist abstraction toward mid-century Abstract Expressionism, toward post-painterly abstraction, and conceptual art, and toward the continued persistence of painting to this day. I do not want to reduce the complexity of the history of painting, however, as this is not an art history or contemporary art theory dissertation, I will not go into great depth about the various threads of 20th century painting history that has led to current painting discourse. However, the painters I work with in this research, are situated within contemporary art in Canada, and therefore, I have chosen a few significant publications to provide an overview of some of the current painting conversations. Furthermore, as someone who was educated in painting as many of these questions and discussions

occurred, I believe it reveals where I am coming from in my own practice. These texts also provide some insight into how and why I chose this research direction.

The current state of painting is discussed in 2001 in an exhibition accompanied by a publication of painting theory by artists and art theorists from the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, titled *Painting at the Edge of the World*. In an essay by the editor of this book, “The Trouble with Painting,” American curator, Douglas Fogle (2001) specifically addresses the critique of painting within the ongoing discourse of the death of painting:

This continual death and rebirth of painting, what we might call its Lazarus effect, has become a common feature of the artistic landscape over the past 200 years, ranging from Paul Delaroche’s perhaps apocryphal declaration upon seeing his first Daguerrotype more than 150 years ago that “from today painting is dead” to Mondrian’s Neo-Plasticism, Ad Reinhardt’s “last paintings,” and the constant allusions to the “death of painting” in the critical discourse of the 80s. (p. 14)

Introducing this exhibition, American curator, Kathy Halbreich (2001) expresses that despite its continual demise, painting persists and evolves, comparing it to a virus that is exposed to an antibiotic and that mutates with each generation.

The viability of painting has undergone a number of examinations precipitated by factors ranging from the onset of photomechanical reproduction to the revolutionary attempt to forge a new aesthetic erasing boundaries between art and life. Over and over again, these crises of modernism have been linked to the death of painting as a progressive form of aesthetic expression. Today, however, with the apparent resurgence of painting, it has become clear that reports of this medium’s demise continue to be greatly exaggerated. The medium persists in being an inclusive one, capable of suggesting both the inner necessities of the artist and the world(s) in which the artist operates. (p. 5)

Fogle (2001) suggests that rather than focus on “painting’s vitality” we instead examine its ontology, the “nature of its being” (p. 15). He highlights the heterogeneity of painting that is no longer bound by strict categories of figuration, abstraction or even the convention of paint on a canvas (p. 22).

Furthermore, he argues that it was the Renaissance, as painting became viewed as a window to the world through pictorial representation, that eventually led to the ideological critiques of painting. Through a desire to move beyond the negative critique, Fogle calls for a focus inward on the “being” of painting (p. 15). He asks: “Is painting a mode of thought? Is there a philosophy of painting that extends beyond the confines of the medium? Where does the edge of the canvas end and the edge of the world begin?” (p. 15). Through these questions, he extends the examination of painting beyond simply the object and toward examining it as a way of thinking and a way of engaging with/understanding the world. It is through this lens, I propose that we may better engage with painting as a way of learning.

O’Sullivan (2007) explains that due to its materiality and its loaded history, a painting will always be as much about a painting as it is about anything else (p. 81). In this way, he argues that painting simultaneously seeks to move beyond clichés, as it creates new spaces. It is both a text and the matter that a text is written upon. Describing painting as an event, he highlights the movement through and between meanings and responses as “moments of signifying clarity, of conceptual work, and moments when it stops making sense, when it stutters, foregrounds asignification, or tells lies” (p. 81). He argues that painters are trying to capture something that cannot be put into words.

In a recent publication titled *Thinking through Painting*, German art critic, Isabelle Graw (2012) attempts to unravel ways of thinking through painting to understand the current state of painting.

We therefore cannot be sure what we are referring to when we talk ‘about painting.’ Do we mean painting in the sense of a medium, a technique, a genre, a procedure, or an institution? As a way out of these semantic quandaries I will propose a less substantialist notion of painting: a form of production of signs that is experienced as highly personalized. This understanding of painting as a highly personalized *semiotic* activity has several advantages – it is less restrictive, allowing us to see how painting is at work in other art forms as well, and it is able to capture what is specific about painting’s codes, gestures, and materiality. In addition to this, the focus on painting’s indexicality enables us to grasp the particularly strong bond that we encounter between the person and the product. This bond has been of particular relevance for anthropology, which tends to

regard artworks as equivalents of people... Painting takes this aspect of artworks – that they are perceived as social indexes – to the very extreme. (pp. 45-46)

Graw acknowledges the representational codes, however she argues these are experienced through a personalized lens. While she draws from semiotic theory as a means to uncover meanings in painting, she also frames it within the subjective and personal experience of the artist. Furthermore, she highlights the relationship one has with the painting through the time and labour spent creating it. She argues that the painting reveals the bond between the object and the person which she describes as a physical connection. The brushmarks left on the canvas are the obvious trace of that action. She gives an example of German artist, Gerhard Richter, whose squeegee action traces his body movement. However, she argues that even through attempts to eliminate subjectivity of the artist, which played out through the postmodern critique of painting, this subjectivity of a painting persists. This, for her, is a defining feature of painting. Graw argues for viewing painting as a “quasi-person” (p. 45). She examines painting from an economic perspective as she claims it is this trace made by the artist that gives it its value. While she argues that the value of painting does not exist beyond this economic system, which is outside the scope of my research, I am interested in drawing from her discussions about the relationship one forms while painting. Through this process, I argue, painting becomes an encounter.

While Graw (2012) focuses on the relationship between the artist and the painting, American art historian, David Joselit (2009) focuses on the network of an art object in an essay, “Painting beside Itself.” Addressing the relationship between the artist and the artwork, Joselit uses the term transitivity to address the relationships between the artist and the artwork. When describing art making, this term applies to the way the artist’s actions are passed onto the art object. He specifically uses this term to describe how paintings embody their contexts within their marks and materials and it is this embodiment that allows for a shift from viewing a painting as a cultural artifact to a recognition of the social networks surrounding it (p. 125). Through transitivity, as Joselit explains, the painting may absorb its context. Furthermore, he highlights the way an artwork is part of a network, as it is circulated and translated in different contexts. Similar to Graw, Joselit, as an art historian, describes the significance of this network

within the context of contemporary art discourse. The emphasis on the context of painting, how it is situated within a network, highlights the relational quality of painting; it does not exist in isolation, but instead always exists in a social context. Furthermore, he highlights how a painting's meanings evolve and change through context, through connections in the network. Rather than fixed and static, the paintings change and transform through their context.

Since the publication of *Thinking through Painting* (2012), Isabelle Graw, along with Ewa Lajer-Burcharth have organized a conference to discuss contemporary painting, followed by a publication, *Painting Beyond Itself* (2016). In an essay in this publication, Graw discusses the agency or subjectivity of a painting: "The following essay draws on the assumption that painting can be regarded as a trace of an activity, that it evokes subjectivity – the subjectivity of painting – and suggests agency" (p. 79). She goes on to describe how painting has a subjectivity of its own, that it is a quasi-subject with a life of its own (p. 79). She explains that for her this liveliness resides in the time and work that artists put into the painting, the indexicality or trace of that labour (p. 81).

In a recent publication entitled, *Studio Talks: Thinking through Painting*, Swedish artist and curator, Jan Ryden (2014) brings the examination of painting processes into the studio. As an artist, he discusses the theory of painting through the concerns of painters themselves. In his essay, he refers to Graw (2012). He argues that rather than looking outward to painting's limits, from an outside perspective, that instead we examine painting from its nucleus, from the inside out. He says that if we look inward, we end up in the "body of paint itself" (p. 46). Essentially he looks inward toward the practices of painters themselves rather than the critical contemporary art discourse. He says: "I believe paintings get a lot of their magic from the fact that we go back and forth between seeing them as images, windows into another world, and as objects and surfaces with a bodily, fleshy presence in the room... The reason this attracts us might be that painting is closely related to how we think: in metaphors and images that arise from bodily experiences" (p. 47). How images affect the body and trigger thinking is integral to how I view painting as taking us beyond representation and as a performative learning process. Drawing on the relationship between thinking and making, Ryden uses the term "embodied cognition" (p. 47). He argues that the

separation of body and mind through the enlightenment, led to a disconnect. He believes that through painting we engage the mind through the body and the body through the mind.

Within Graw and Lajer-Burcharth's (2016) edited book, alongside art theoretical discussions, there are also writings by artists. These writings were of particular interest to me, as they engage with the materials of painting and the process of painting. While not using the term, I propose they address the new materialist approaches I describe in this dissertation. In an essay titled "On Color," American painter, Amy Sillman (2016) describes the materiality of working with pigment. She explains that she learned about colour in art school in the 1970s, in the post-Bauhaus, post-Abstract Expressionism, and post-hippie environment of the time (p. 103). She describes with vivid descriptions how one learns to feel and understand colour through the time and practice spent working with it:

Color as *object* is earthly material stuff. Color as *subject* arches over everything like a rainbow, from cosmic rays to the minerals in the earth to what happens inside your eyes, from religious symbology to philosophical problems, from phenomena to noumena. But aside from all that, color is just a tool that a painter wields in making a painting. To deal with color as a painter is to render these overarching problems as physical propositions, as sensuous experiences synesthetically merged under the sign of the hand... Each hue adds a nearly anthropomorphic character to the operations in a painting: a painter will know that Naples yellow will make things turgid, chromium oxide green is overbearing, flake white has a dry indifference, pthalo blue seems filmy but always ends up domineering, king's blue appears classy at first, but is really kind of vulgar. (p. 105)

She concludes this essay saying: "I am more interested in color as an engine of ongoing change and metamorphosis than as a static theory... In other words, let us welcome the collision of mistakes, accidents, desires, contradictions, destruction, and possible disasters that color embodies" (p. 115-116).

Later in the same book, Ethiopian-born and American-based artist Julie Mehretu (2016) similarly speaks to her process. Using poetic language, she describes the experience of making: "Sensory experience, emergent sensile form, tactile, acoustic, auricular, lingual, sensory, olfactory, auditory,

haunting knowledge, premonition... Find the break, the gap, the fissures, undoing and pulling apart – open force of unraveling potentiality. Improvisation can be radical possibility. Painting as performative time” (p. 275). Both Mehretu and Sillman’s vivid and expressive descriptions engage with the material, embodied and performative quality of painting practice, taking it beyond representation and critical art theory, into the studio practice. As such, they offer insights into how painting is a way of thinking and learning.

German contemporary art writer and theorist, Jan Verwoert (2005, 2008) argues that art making is a complex and interactive way of thinking. Verwoert (2005) uses the term ‘emergence’ to describe the way that art emerges through the process of making. He has been a significant figure for my development as an artist through the past several years, as he dissects the process of art making and thinking. He was also the most referenced theorist discussed by participants in this research. Verwoert seeks to move beyond the negative critique of painting and toward the material, emergent and intuitive qualities of painting. Verwoert (2008) uses the term ‘latency,’ the period between stimulus and reaction, to describe the temporality inherent in art making that allows meaning to be delayed. He is critical of the way that culture celebrates only potentiality that is immediately grasped and actualized (p. 93). The gap, he explains, allows for not only multiplicities of connections to be made, but for a subjectivity to be inserted into the making process, as the meaning is not fixed to the work, but rather to the process:

[Temporal latency] reaches out both to that which is not yet and to that which is no longer quite present in the mind’s eye. In this sense, the space of abstraction is an echo chamber in which each enunciation resonates with intuitions of the yet unthought and the presently forgotten... [It] treasures the latencies of thoughts, memories, and feelings as a source that is inexhaustible precisely because its content can be neither instantaneously nor ever fully actualized. (p. 93)

Verwoert argues that art making allows for a delay in the generation and apprehension of meanings. This latency period when examined through the lens of diffraction may be viewed as that space that exists as ideas, materials and experiences intra-act to produce new effects through the process of painting. Rather

than trying to state too quickly what a painting means, I argue we need to acknowledge the various interwoven webs of influence that emerge through the material engagement with the process of painting.

The articles discussed herein lead me to the ways I engage with the analysis of painting practices through my studio visits. Drawing from Fogle's (2001) call to move beyond the negative critique of painting and to recognize the heterogeneous and inventive persistence of painting today, I examine current painting practices in Canada. Graw invites us to view painting for the active relationship between the maker and the object and Joselit invites us to view painting as an active player in a network. Both these theorists take painting out of the isolation of the studio and highlight its relational quality. They highlight its solitary and social qualities. However, as art historians and art critics, they examine painting from the outside looking in. Graw in particular, while emphasizing painting's ability to capture the trace of the painter, situates painting within the economic realm, wherein the value of the painting is equated with the value of the artist, situating it only as it functions within a capitalist system wherein the artist (and the mark transferred to the canvas) becomes a commodity. While there is no denying painting's involvement within this system, I argue that painting functions beyond that. By focusing on the process and practice of painting, I highlight the role painting plays in understanding material ways of learning. Graw continues to engage with painting as an object, however proposes that its materiality embodies the act of making. Drawing from Fogle's (2001) argument for the necessity to address the ontology of painting, as its nature of being, and Ryden's (2014) similar call to examine the body of the painting, I similarly propose that we examine painting as an ontology, as a way of being. Through this lens, I propose that through the process of making a painting, our experiences of being in the world become materialized through the process.

Describing his frustration with art critique that leads to generalized responses to painting, Ryden (2014) states: "Someone might write: 'after that article, argument, artwork, it was impossible to continue painting...'. These types of statements are all about mistaking the map for the terrain" (p. 38). I interpret this referral to mapping as describing the gap between critical theory and practice; they look to the current art discourse rather than the practice to consider 'Why paint?' Through examining painting from the

inside out, Ryden seeks to draw theory out of practice rather than theory imposed onto practice. I take up Ryden's call to examine painting from the inside. This inside is the practice of painting. Through examining painting through the lens of practice, I propose we may understand the ontology of painting and the process of being and learning through painting.

O'Sullivan (2007) argues that there is always a remainder, an excess after any discursive account of painting. How do we address this excess, this remainder, that which cannot be grasped or articulated, that pushes painting beyond representation? Regarding the hybridity of artists' work in the exhibition (and accompanying publication) *Painting at the Edge of the World*, Fogle (2001) states: "... painting's traditional function as a window on the world has been circumvented, or rather someone has left the window open and a number of things have crawled in" (p. 22). Within this statement, I view the window as a metaphor for representational ways of framing painting and O'Sullivan encourages us to move beyond this lens, to embrace this excess. Furthermore, through imagery evoked with the words "things have crawled in" Fogle (p. 22) recognizes the ways that the painting becomes an active and material engagement with the world rather than a representation of the world. I propose that the "things that have crawled in" (p. 22) referred to by Fogle reveals Barad's (2007) discussion of the process of diffraction: diffraction as interruption; diffraction as interference; diffraction as iteration; diffraction as reconfiguration; and diffraction as entanglement. This diffraction occurs through the materiality of the paint, the materiality of the body and the materiality of our experiences in the world. I propose that Barad's concept of diffraction allows for an understanding of how our experiences in the world become materialized through the process of painting. Furthermore, I propose that the studio is the site of this process of diffraction. Within the studio, our bodily experiences in the world become materialized.

McClenaghan (2016) argues that while the term "practice" has been prevalent in art discourse, it has yet to fully explore the processes of the painting practice (p. 32). Arguing that only looking at finished art works, ignores practice and fosters mimetic production, he proposes that we examine practice as a "speculative process of searching" (p. 32). He describes practice within

painting as material engagement, wherein the “medium embodies layers of action and reflection” and the painting becomes a “residue of an event” (p. 32). McClenaghan draws from Bolt (2007, 2013) as he pleads for attention toward the practice rather than theorization.

Heraclitus wrote that you can’t step twice into the same river. If we attempt to isolate part of the river for examination we find that we have only water. We can examine its properties and qualities just as we can in the case of an artwork but this brings us no closer to understanding it as a process. (p. 33)

I suggest that McClenaghan alludes to a process similar to that discussed by Barad (2007) wherein he acknowledges the relationality of material practice. In this case, I propose the studio is the river and it is within this context that the practice of painting emerges. Furthermore, I suggest that the events in the studio are shaped by all the influences that surround it. The studio, materials and actions generate a “speculative process of searching” (p. 32) that allows the paintings to become part of this flowing river. However, while always in motion, the river exists within a specific time and space that allows specific intra-actions to occur that allows new combinations to emerge. As such, Barad (2007) states that “entanglements are highly specific configurations” and this is “in part because they change with each intra-action” (p. 74). As I engage with questions about the processes of practice, I similarly highlight the specificity of each particular practice, each of which is generated out of particular intra-actions. Within the context of painting practices, I highlight the specificity of practice, as each painter’s practice is located within their specific embodied experiences in the world. These experiences are interwoven with their practice, with each intra-action shifting their practice, even in a small way. Through this lens, we may see painting as situated within the history of painting and within the embodied history of each artist. It highlights the specificity of practice and the studio as the specific location wherein this practice exists.

The materiality of the studio: The studio as a space of learning

The invention of the studio

In order to examine the materiality of the painting process, I argue, we must examine the space of the practice. As the space of both my research data collection and my research analysis/creation, the studio is the site of research. The studio has been examined through art history for its role socially and culturally. It has also been examined as the space of artistic production. This examination is often loaded with tropes of artistic genius that have been critiqued throughout the past several decades. Here I will address some of what has been written about studios within this context before moving toward discussing the learning, thinking and making processes that occur within the studio. While this is not an art history dissertation, and I am not an art historian, I will briefly discuss the history of representations of studios and how they constructed a mythology about artists. While not a comprehensive examination, by briefly describing representations of studios, I seek to set the stage for moving beyond these representations and deconstructive critiques in order to examine the processes that occur within the spaces.

Art historians, Michael Cole and Mary Pardo (2005) date the invention of the art studio to the Renaissance. Furthermore, they describe how the artist's studio constructed the Modern artist. In their anthology, *Inventions of the Studio, Renaissance to Romanticism*, the authors trace through depictions of artists and their studios, the way the early Modern artist was constructed through the narratives depicted of the studios. Until the late 17th century, Cole and Pardo explain, the word studio referred to the space where the scholar worked (p. 3). The word *studio*, derived from the word *study* referred to a study space that was separate from the *bottega*, which referred to the workshop and was more commonly associated with craft work. Cole and Pardo argue that the rise of the studio in the 18th and 19th century signifies the intellectualization of the artist's work and created an artistic personae, as not simply a crafts person, but as an intellectual, student or scholar of the humanities (p. 23). They analyze biographical writing, drawings and paintings made at the time that construct this persona of the artist within the studio. In the seventeenth century, the studio became not just a subject of painting, but through this subject matter, artists were able to make statements about the nature of their vocation as artists (p. 25). These

representations were not real representations of the studio, but rather fictitious spaces that depict collections of artifacts, relics of scientific study, literary references and imagery that reflected the artists' in depth knowledge of the world. Cole and Pardo reveal the contradictory nature of this new studio. It is at once a private, hermetic space, while simultaneously glorified and put on display. They describe the theatricality of the image of the private, isolated artist scholar, however these images of the artist in the studio, when put on display generated public perceptions of the artist: "The opening of the studio to the world, but also the absorption of the world into the studio. . . the place of painting and sculpture was now simultaneously a domestic space and a stage, an anatomy theatre and a laboratory, a kitchen and a monastic cell" (p. 25).

The anthology *Inventions of the Studio* (2005) follows this creation of the myth of the artist through depictions of artists in their studios. Following Cole and Pardo, Christopher Wood (2005), similarly describes how the fifteenth and sixteenth century saw art works being understood as representations of the artist's experience of the world. He describes how images of the art studio depict the artist as a solitary scholar surrounded by items such as texts and specimens, carefully selected and displayed in the images to reveal his scholarly struggles (p. 37). The images of the solitary artist retreating from the world, while simultaneously depicting imagery from the world surrounding him in the studio, Wood argues implies that it is the artists who reveal their experiences of the world through work in the studio (p. 44). He states: "Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries the studio became a powerful symbol of the artist's exemption from social convention and of all the mystery and ungroundedness of artistic talent" (p. 38). Through analyzing depictions of artist studios, Wood describes a transformation of the real into the fictional. H. Perry Chapman (2005) follows this depiction of the studio as an ideal place through an analysis of paintings by artists Vermeer and Rembrandt. Chapman describes the pictures as performances and the artists as playing roles. Finally, Marc Gotlieb (2005) describes how through nineteenth century romanticism, the imagery of the artist in the studio transformed the artist into a victim of his own creative pursuits. Gotlieb argues that imagery of artists in their studios fueled a myth and fiction of artists suffering for their creativity.

In 1971, artist Daniel Buren wrote an essay entitled *The Function of the Studio* that arguably questioned the role of the studio for the first time and may have foreshadowed the rejection of the studio and post-studio discourse. He describes the studio as having three functions. Firstly, it is where work is originated, secondly it is a private place (which he compares to an ivory tower, thus reinforcing the trope of the solitary artist), and thirdly it is a stationary place (p. 51). In addressing the gap between where a work is made and where it is exhibited, Buren argues that within the confines of the studio, the work is isolated from the world, while at the same time he states the work is closest to reality when in the studio. He describes the studio as simultaneously idealizing and ossifying (p. 55).

Yet while critiques of mythologies of artists and studios persist, studios still continue to exist, and an interest in artistic practices that inhabit these spaces also persists. Over the past several years, several artists, theorists and writers have taken up the studio visit as a source of research and curiosity. In *Sanctuary*, writer Hossein Amirsadeghi (2014) explores 120 of Britain's leading artists in their studios. In the introduction to this collection of artist interviews and photographs, he quotes artist, Shirazeh Houshiary: "The world is a chaotic place. When I come to my studio, it is a place where the chaos is unified. To me that's the most creative force in the universe" (p. 7). Continuing in his quest to understand artistic processes, Amirsadeghi (2013), made a second journey into studios, this time in the United States. He describes this journey as a social narrative, rather than art history, attempting to understand psychological and social qualities of artistic processes, through studio visits. In an introductory essay to this book, Benjamin Genocchio (2013) addresses the clichés surrounding the studio's legendary status, while describing the variety of studios visited, from factory-like spaces filled with assistants, to open lofts, to rooms with a desk and books, to auto-body-like shops, cluttered self-contained worlds, to experimental spaces. He describes his interest in this project using the term studio-as-revelation, claiming it to be romantic, yet also real. This term emphasizes the thinking processes inherent in studio practices.

In a similar attempt to address both contemporary artistic processes as well as the myth of the studio space, artist Joe Fig (2009) similarly set out to investigate artists' spaces. This work began as an art project for which he recreated historically significant artists and their studios as mini sculptures.

Following this series, Fig turned toward contemporary artists and interviewed over fifty artists in their studios. He viewed the photographs and interviews he performed as a record of the making of the work. Most recently, contemporary painter, Sarah Triggs (2013) visited over two hundred artist studios over the course of three years. She calls her project a written and photographic record of artists' curiosities. Recognizing her own empathetic position as a fellow artist, she describes her methods as an anthropological approach and says she is not attempting to make a curatorial statement but instead calls her work an exploratory field expedition. By describing her interest in the project as investigating artists' curiosities, rather than elevating the status of the artist, she highlights the experimental and experiential nature of artistic processes and artistic ways of thinking. She notes that through her exploration, she observed artists' resourcefulness, and inventiveness through problem solving, thus highlighting the working process. Secondly, she says the studio visits illuminate the artists' belief system. The artists' views of the world are revealed through both the conversations and objects, thus disclosing not only elements of their studio practice but also their relationship to the outside world (p. 10). Finally, she states that the project revealed not a unified theory of artistic practices but rather a constellation of viewpoints (p. 13). Through this metaphor, Triggs draws out connections and perspectives. I align with Triggs' observations of studios and art practices as a web of viewpoints. I take these investigations further within this research project as through more thorough interviews and analysis of the interviews, I examine how these multitude of viewpoints are embodied within the process of making and reveal ways of learning through making.

The exhibition of the studio

In 1998 after director of Hugh Lane secured the donation of artist Francis Bacon's London studio, a team removed the entire contents of the studio and moved it to the gallery in Dublin. A team led by conservator Mary McGrath of archaeologists, conservators and curators, carefully tagged and packed each item (including the dust), the walls, floor and ceilings. Seven thousand items were catalogued, creating a computerized archive of books, photographs, slashed canvases, artist materials, drawings, artist's

correspondence, magazines, records, newspapers. The studio was then recreated at the Dublin gallery, as an exact replica of the studio preserved as it was in the last moments that it was inhabited by the artist. Through showcasing this work, this exhibition highlights Bacon's internal experiences and thought processes through the objects and space that he inhabited (retrieved from <http://www.hughlane.ie/history-of-studio-relocation>).

As I began writing this dissertation, another exhibition about artist studios opened at the Art Gallery of Hamilton, 2017. *Joseph Hartman: The Artist's Studio* features photographs he took from artists' studios across Canada. In these photographs that feature the studio space without the artist, Hartman suggests the studio may stand in as a portrait of the artist. A concurrent exhibition at the same gallery, titled *Behind the Scene: The 19th-Century Studio Reimagined* imagines a studio in 19th-century France (figure 11). The exhibition examined how "artists' workshops served multiple functions, including spaces devoted to artistic creation, locations of social interaction and debate, sales rooms for unsold works, exhibition spaces for artists' personal collections, and storage sites for wide-ranging art and artefacts" (retrieved from <https://www.artgalleryofhamilton.com/exhibition/behind-scene-19th-century-studio-reimagined/>).



Figure 11. *Behind the scene, 19th century studio reimagined*. Hamilton Art Gallery, 2017

Through this exhibition, the contents of the studio reveal the cultural and social conditions of Europe at the time, as “ease of travel and expansion of international trade during the 19th century facilitated the birth of culturally diverse metropolises” (retrieved from <https://www.artgalleryofhamilton.com/exhibition/behind-scene-19th-century-studio-reimagined/>). This exhibition revealed how the studio highlights not just the inner, solitary experiences of the artists but also what is happening in society outside of the studio.

Across the country at the same time, the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria featured an exhibition titled *Karen Tam: With wings like clouds hung from the sky* (2017), about a Chinese immigrant, Lee Nam who is known only through writings about him in the journals of Emily Carr. In this exhibition, drawing from the archival research of these journals, Tam created a speculative studio of Nam’s (figures 12-13). Through this recreation, she imagines Nam’s possible studio to “evoke the presence of an unknown artist” (retrieved from <https://aggv.ca/exhibits/archive/karen-tam/>). Furthermore, drawing on Carr’s journals, she imagines the space as a site of conversation between the two artists. This exhibition highlighted something different than the other two exhibitions; it highlights the importance of relationships formed through studio production. Specifically, it examined relationships formed between Eastern and Western artistic styles.



Figures 12-13. *Karen Tam: With wings like clouds hung from the sky*, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 2017.

Francis Bacon's studio exhibition and the exhibition at the Hamilton Art Gallery of 19th Century studios complement each other: the former reveals the solitary artist practice, and the other reveals the social context of artistic practice. There are several reasons I am drawn to these exhibitions of artists' studios. Francis Bacon's studio is recreated to reflect a specific moment, as if frozen in time. It is a representation of his studio, recreated to reflect this singular moment, and recreated again in the photographic representation of the studio. The exhibition of a 19th century studio at the Hamilton Art Gallery creates a space that reveals how the studio represents artistic, social and political aspects of the time, and assumptions about the roles and practices of artists in the 19th century. Representations of artists' studios are often regarded as reinforcing clichés about the solitary artist genius, and this exhibition disrupts this narrative through revealing the societal influences on art practices. As a viewer, we are encouraged to consider the historical context and influences of artists' studio practices. Both of these representations reveal aspects of art practice, however as viewers we are looking at these practices from the outside.

Karen Tam's exhibition functions differently for me than Francis Bacon's and the two exhibitions at the Hamilton Art Gallery. It is not a representation, but rather an invention that encourages viewers to imagine. It not only reveals relationships formed as a part of practice but performs it. Rather than simply representing the relationship between Nam and Carr, Tam also develops a relationship with both artists, through engaging with the process of making alongside these two historic artists. The exhibition reveals the ways of learning that happen through these relationships, rather than reinforce the image of the artist isolated in the studio. She reveals the iterative process of drawing from one art practice in the creation of another, how one affects the other. Essentially, through creating work that might exist in the space, she extends our understandings of artists' relationships to others' art practices.

This exhibition also provoked me to consider the nature of artistic research. Through artistic research, rather than simply factually represent a subject, an artist allows for invention and imagination within the work. This imagined studio functions within an in-between space, between fact and fiction. Tam implicates herself as an artist into the relationship between these artists from almost a century ago.

Through doing so she reveals how these relationships continue to evolve and influence others. Furthermore, through creating this immersive space, she invites viewers to embody the art making processes of both Tam and Nam and to consider the roles of conversation within studio practices. Rather than a representation of this studio, it is an iteration of her interaction with the research, as she brings her artistic response into her understandings of the story revealed within Carr's journals.

The process of the studio

Lisa Wainwright (2010), professor at the Art Institute of Chicago describes the importance of the studio space for the creative process: "The studio is a space and a condition wherein creative play and progressive thinking yield propositions for reflecting on who we are – individually and collectively – and where we might go next" (p. ix). She highlights the ongoing relationship between thinking and making, material and concept, theory and practice. She describes studio practices as allowing for thought and expression to be revealed, new perspectives to emerge and productive failures to enable unexpected results. In a compilation of writing by artists and art theorists examining the role and function of the art studio, Wainwright highlights the importance of learning processes that develop within the art studio for education as a whole: "Learning through experience means acquiring multiple orders of skill. It is a form of research that follows a path of unfolding ideas as the hand and body, as well as the mind, learn. And it can yield surprising and powerful results" (p. ix).

I will begin discussing the studio, through a reflection on my own experiences with studios. Throughout high school, I spent most of my time, particularly in my last couple years, in the art room, an open concept studio space that took up the entire top floor of the high school. Of all my courses, I was most focused on art and I would spend as much time as I could working in the studio. It was there I felt most at home. And thinking back, I believe those experiences sparked my interest in the pedagogical potential of a studio classroom, as a space that stood in contrast to the other classrooms within my high school. I went to the University of Victoria to study art as this seemed like the most obvious progression. I took two art courses in my first term. While I enjoyed the studio art courses, I found class critiques very

challenging. Critiques entailed putting our work up in front of the class to be discussed by everyone else (something I have continued to experience, now in a more positive light, throughout the rest of my art career). At the time, as a young student, I felt apprehensive about the critique experience, feeling like I could not speak assertively about my studio practice that I will still trying to make sense of. For this reason, after only one semester, I transferred from visual arts to a joint major of art history and psychology. However, I continued making art, and I always regretted not continuing in the fine arts program. Years later, after having completed a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Education, I returned to complete a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the University of British Columbia.

I remember these moments from that first term of art classes very clearly, as I always think back to them when I consider my values, philosophies and interests in art education. At the time, I thought I had to know everything about something in order to speak about it or show it. I would only speak in class when I ‘knew’ the answer, or when I had read ‘everything’ about an idea, concept or issue. I only wanted to show work when I ‘knew’ what it was about or why I had done it. It is only after years of coming to learn and understand pedagogy, art making and creativity that I realized that this perspective of knowing is a myth, a myth of completion, a myth of certainty. I have come to appreciate and foster the complexity, multiplicity and nonlinearity of the creative process and the web of influences and meanings inherent in art making. Looking back on that experience, I have three reflections about it. Firstly, art making was such large part of who I am, that it continued to be woven into my life until I felt compelled in a sense to completely dive into it years later. Secondly, I believe that this need for certainty came from the way I was taught within the education system with fixed standards and measurable objectives, which perhaps stifled the uncertainties inherent within the artistic process. And thirdly, I think that is where my interest in the studio began.

I see the studio as a space that has the capacity to counteract that desire for certainty. It is a space that is in process. It is a space full of curiosities, and a space where one is constantly seeking out unanswerable questions, new problems and generating new connections and new meanings. It is a space where knowing and not knowing are constantly battling up against each other. It is a messy space, both

physically and psychologically and a space of incompleteness, uncertainty and continual change and a space where the materiality of the studio, materials, experiences and ideas become entangled in continual learning process. In the introduction to an anthology entitled *Studio Reader*, Michelle Grabner (2010) describes the practiced space of the studio as critical, ironic, sentimental and practical (p. 11). It is a space that is active, constantly changing and a space where artists work through ideas. Within this anthology, artist, Charline Von Heyl (2010) describes the studio: “The idea of the *studio* is as much a fantasy as the idea of the *artist* is a fantasy. both cease to exist when the work begins” (p. 125). Marjorie Welish (2010) similarly describes the difficulty in explaining what happens in the studio: “What happens in a studio may be hard to pin down. Unstated, uncoded, and subject to on-site improvisation” (p. 182).

I went to see an exhibition about artist William Kentridge titled *No It Is!* at Martin Gropius-Bau Gallery in Berlin in the spring of 2016. William Kentridge is a South African artist who creates drawings, prints, installations and animated films that reveal personal, social and political narratives. This exhibition examines the complexity of the art making process and absorbs viewers in his artistic process. The first room contained videos of him working/performing in the studio, shown in reverse.

Walking, thinking, stalking the image. Many of the hours spent in the studio are hours of walking, pacing backwards and forwards across the space gathering the energy, the clarity to make the first mark. It is not so much a period of planning as a time of allowing the ideas surrounding the project to percolate, a space for many different possible trajectories of an image, of a sequence, to suggest themselves, to be tested as internal projections. (Kentridge, 2016, p. 22)

Through showing his artistic process in reverse, he plays with time and encourages viewers think about how time functions differently in the studio.

The studio is an enclosed space, physically but also psychically, an enlarged head; the pacing in the studio is the equivalent of ideas spinning round in one’s head, as if the brain is a muscle and can be exercised into fitness, into clarity. So the fragments are the internal noise, each finished fragment a demonstration of those impulses that emerge and are abandoned before the work begins. (Kentridge, 2016, p. 23)

His animations are made through a process of drawing, erasing, and rebuilding the image, and the narrative emerges through this process on a single paper. Each frame captures a moment in his drawing process, before that mark will be erased or transformed, revealing the emergent qualities of his art making process. He highlights the active conversations that occur between the artist and the work, and between the viewer and the work.

One of the things that is elicited in the studio, particularly when walking around it, is a trust in the material. Once a drawing has begun there is a conversation between what appears and what one imagines will appear. The drawing becomes a membrane between the world and yourself.

(Kentrige, 2016, p. 28)

In another room, fragments, pieces of work from drawings, sculptures and texts fill the room.

One thinks of collage as a particularly 20th-century artistic phenomenon. But in its very nature of pasting together different fragments of the world and the possibility of constructing a coherent world from them, it is a central category today, both for artistic activity in itself and for artistic activity as a metaphor for how we think in general. This idea of taking the world as a single element and then splitting it apart is one of the fundamental activities of the studio. This is embodied in the activity of making a drawing in the studio. (Kentrige, 2016, p. 25)

This immersive experience did not represent a studio or explain the art making process, but instead immersed viewers in the process. It presented a thinking, feeling and meaning-making process that emerges through the action of making art. As a visual artist, this exhibition resonated with my own way of working in the studio and reinforced what excites me about going into art studios. It is an overwhelming process, an overload of sensory and visual information, however, it is difficult to put into words the multiple connections, meanings and affects that emerge within that space. This dissertation is my attempt to do just that, while at the same time embracing the gaps that exist between the embodied, visual process of making art and finding the words to describe it.

I propose that these excerpts from the exhibition reveal the new materialist process of studio work. It is an embodied process, a sensory process, an iterative process, and an interactive process. It is a

process that reveals itself through the making. I propose that Kentridge describes the performative process described by Barad (2007), specifically as it relates to the artistic process within the studio. This process by which our experiences become materialized in the studio is expressed by artist Amy Granat (2010): “There is emptiness and history, acting together... This history, my memories, they still insert themselves in this space and, for me, that is important – and not just in art, but in life” (p. 259). She describes the ways that the materiality of the studio allows for a newness to appear, however this potentiality of the studio is always drawn out of her experiences. Artist Carolee Schneemann (2010) similarly describes how experience become entangled through her art making process:

It is empty, it is filling. It is the constant site of permission – permission of uncertainty and the rarity of the circumstances in which I can address only my materials and the influences which may or may not bring them into a new form... but the permission is that I can be in a solitary concentration... the strands are pulling at research, at dream, synesthesia, at political outrage...

The studio is full of nests. (p. 154)

The concept of nests is an interesting way to imagine a studio. It suggests that firstly, what happens in the studio is created, and secondly, that within it, like a home, artists immerse themselves. Granat expresses how the studio appears as an apparent contradiction. It is a space that begins as empty, thus it is created through the process, allowing for something new to emerge. However, at the same time, our histories and experiences outside the studio, become embedded within it, and take on a new form within the studio.

This is both the diffractive potential of the studio, as well as the way the artist may be conceptualized as a site of diffraction, where their experiences are given new form through the encounters with the process of painting within the studio

CHAPTER 2

Methodology: A practice-led approach to qualitative research

Practice-led artistic research

My research, as an emergent process, came out of my own painting practice. As such, through this practice-led research, the research is always read through the lens of my practice, and the theory and practice emerge in relation to each other (Barrett and Bolt, 2007). Therefore, while I draw from interview methods as I perform the studio visits, my approach to performing and analyzing them is always in relation to my practice. Furthermore, rather than simply informing my understanding of my practice, the interview research data affects my practice, and allows for new images and approaches to making to emerge in my painting practice. Through this process, my painting practice is not only shaped by my research, but shapes my understandings of research. Barad (2007) views diffraction as a way of “reading insights through one another” (p. 71). This ongoing emergence within my art practice reveals this diffractive process, wherein the research process allows my theory and practice to be read through one another.

My research entailed travelling across Canada on two separate trips, visiting more than 125 artists in their studios. I chose painting because as a painter myself, there was something I intuitively understood about how I felt within the studio painting and working with materials that is difficult to articulate. I sought to better understand this process in which I had so actively engaged throughout the years. As an artist and art educator, I was particularly interested in how we learn through this messy painting process. I selected artists who had achieved recognition from their peers in the form of awards and gallery exhibitions. All of the artists have a Bachelor of Fine Arts, and most have a Master of Fine Arts. Many are professors at universities in Canada, and while their approaches to teaching are not examined within this research, it is acknowledged that their teaching practices shape how they approach painting. It is also worth noting that the artists selected represent a particular moment. For example, many emerging painters

within this dissertation had received significant recognition at the time of my research journey. While they have been recognized for their practice, thus giving them the public reception that allowed me to encounter their work at this particular moment, it is not my intention to make statements about who is significant within contemporary art discourse within Canada. Nor is it a comprehensive study of each artist's whole practice. I acknowledge that there are many significant Canadian painters who are not discussed within this dissertation. In addition, I acknowledge that this research is through a particular lens of a Western tradition of painting. Their backgrounds grew out of and in response to a Western art historical as well Western theoretical perspective and this shaped the outcomes of the research. Furthermore, a lack of diversity, particularly of Indigenous artists was revealed within these academic and gallery institutions through who had received recognition and visibility and therefore who became participants. Further research through expanded sources may reveal different processes and ways of knowing through making. However, some ways these dominant traditions and narratives are challenged are presented through some of the artists' practices. I suggest, however, that new materialism as it is discussed through a feminist methodological lens also challenges a particular Western, Cartesian world view so has potential to open up to alternative ways of knowing and being. Furthermore, the interviews reveal not a complete practice, but a moment in time for each artists' practices. As such, the visits reveal works from that moment in time. Many artists with whom I met were in temporary studios or have moved to new cities since our meeting and for most, their work has continued to change (sometimes significantly) since the interviews. In Appendix A, you may find links to each artist so that you may learn about their practice further.

I would also like to acknowledge that the artists' educational background largely shaped their ways of approaching and examining painting. Many were skeptical of the theoretical or art historical lenses that shaped their education. Others acknowledged how their 'upbringing' as artists shaped the ways they now teach, and some described how their students now make them reconsider how they approach painting. For example, many artists I interviewed (many of whom are now professors) went to the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in the 70s or 80s when it continued to feel a lasting impact from its

history as a centre of conceptual art practices in the 1960s, and their understanding of painting developed from that this lens. I cannot fully unravel all the ways that their education shaped their views and practices within the scope of this dissertation. However, I do discuss these influences within some interviews. Moreover, these interviews prompted a reconsideration on the lenses and biases I have internalized through my BFA and MFA backgrounds and how they shape my approach and defense of painting. My own educational background, in addition to the context in which my painting practice has continued to develop within both Vancouver and Toronto, greatly influenced my choice to pursue this research in the first place. Furthermore, this background shaped my approach to the analysis of the research through a new materialist lens, to extend discussions about painting in a way that aligns with my own intuitive and material explorations within my studio that I have often sought to understand more thoroughly throughout my years as an artist.

This dissertation reveals particular moments, particular conversations within a specific time and space (the studio) and engages with what I learned through these moments. As the site in which painting takes place, the studio is the ideal site in which to examine how one learns through painting. One artist, Toronto-based artist, Monica Tap¹, stated in our interview, that walking into her studio is like walking into her brain. While it perhaps sounds trite or cliché, I viewed my experience of going into artists' studios as having the potential of taking me into the minds of the artists. Furthermore, by visiting artists across the country, I saw the interconnectedness of their processes; each studio was like a node that stood in relation to the others.

As the site of interviews, the studio played an integral role in the interview. The objects, art works and space created an intra-active relationship with the spoken word. Furthermore, I continued my own studio practice alongside my two-year studio visit research, oftentimes taking up a short-term studio in the cities I visited, sometimes even in the buildings with artists whom I interviewed. During those two years, I had studios in an old elementary school, an old church, an old factory, in several cities across Canada.

¹ Details about the dates and locations for my interviews with all artists mentioned and quoted are listed in Appendix 1. In addition, there is some biographical information and links to their websites.

While at first, I thought this ongoing studio work occurred alongside the interview research, I next considered its ongoing effects on my own practice, and in turn how this practice affected my role as a researcher. Now through a new materialist perspective, I view this interaction through the lens of diffraction which allows me to view the intra-actions that I had with artists, the studios, the paintings as patterns of interruption, patterns of reinforcement, patterns of interference, and the productive of difference within my own practice.

Through the lens of practice-led research, in this chapter I discuss my research methodology, as I describe my approach my data collection through interviews and photography from my studio visits.

The materiality of a studio visit

In our studio visit, while talking about studios and the influence of space on our practice, Vancouver-based artist Christann Kennedy gave me a book called *The Poetics of Space* by Gaston Bachelard (1994). In the introduction to the book Bachelard describes how the poetic imagination emerges through the interaction of the real and the unreal. Regarding arts-based research and art education, Jack Richardson (2011) argues that the materiality of space must be considered as a means of understanding the complexity of experiences in the world (p. 3). Richardson states: “Objects, the environment, and human agents are produced by space through an unending negotiation of function and meaning” (p. 5). He describes how a poetic image of a place holds an “echo of the past,” associated with that place, for example its intimacy, its comfort, or its contribution to our sense of belonging. It carries with it the impression of a past relationship with material places.

While visiting the studios, I was interested in the juxtaposition of artistic practice with the space itself. There is a juxtaposition between the smells of the paints, the overflowing of materials and objects, and the room or building that this art practice inhabited. While in some cases the studio was first created as a studio, in the vast majority of cases, the studio exists in a place that was repurposed as a studio, a place with its own history. I describe here some examples of spaces I visited.

Elementary School. Over the course of my trip, I visited three elementary schools repurposed as art studios. Having spent much of my life as a student and teacher in schools, I recognize the similar material qualities of schools: the texture of the floor, the grid-like architectural designs, rooms filled with chalk boards, and the bright exit signs permeated these spaces. I visited both Jessica Groome and Ashleigh Bartlett's temporary studios in an old elementary school on Toronto Island and found that this space contained my own memories from elementary school. The institutional green floors with a yellow stripe, the chalkboards along the walls and the long corridors reminded me of every elementary school I'd ever been into. Looking around the space, I could imagine rows of desks, children lining up to walk in the hallway and organized rows of children's work along the walls. The iconic elementary school that I envisioned was one of order and structure. Now, as an artist residency, I thought about how the art changed the space. Along one wall were paintings Bartlett had been working on of imagined experiences to be had on Toronto Island, such as going for a picnic. She also had piles of cut up paintings surrounding the room. She explained that having moved around so much, the cutting up of the paintings made them easy to carry around in a suitcase and install in another space. Along the wall hung three life-size cut up paintings that looked like puppets re-inhabiting the space.

The community centre stage. In Saskatoon, I visited a space that used to be an old community centre. It was shared by Marie Lanoo, Sean Weisgerber and other artists. It reminded me of the space in an old church near where I grew up and where we would hold yearly dance recitals. These triggers of memories made it once again a 'type of space' that is familiar. High ceilings and a large open space with bright windows created an open light filled space. A stage that might have once held community performances housed Weisgerber's studio. His space stood in stark contrast to the imagined history of the space. Sean's work entailed creating paintings by dipping objects into paint. He had concocted an elaborate system to create these paintings that consisted of vats of paint and chain pulleys hanging throughout the space.

Old empty buildings. In several cities, neighbourhoods filled with old rundown empty buildings were turned into studios. These empty buildings that were not suited for any other purpose came to house

artists' studios. In Vancouver, the downtown eastside houses hundreds of artists in these spaces. These neighbourhoods quickly transformed as cities became more expensive and these buildings were torn down in favour of new reconstructions. During the time of my research, I witnessed several of these evictions occur, with some artists moving out of necessity during the one year between visits. In Winnipeg, the Exchange District was one neighbourhood that continued to be a vibrant arts community. Artists Ufuk Guerray and Erica Mendrinski, joked that their cheap space in this beautiful old building overlooking the city of Winnipeg was the most typical 'romantic' studio space I'd seen.

Backyard sheds. Many artists who lived in cities where studios were expensive or hard to come by, or who lived in a rural area away from an art centre built their own studio in their yards or in a garage. David Blatherwick who lives in Elora, Ontario talked about after having lived in large cities like Montreal, moving there allowed him to build this peaceful space in his yard. He talked about how walking in the forest behind his place was an extension of his studio and part of his daily routine. The space felt relaxing, peaceful, nestled into the nature that surrounded it and I could see that influence in his work.

Cramped spaces and basement studios. Other artists, unable to afford large spaces were housed in cramped basements or small back rooms. Walking into the space I felt claustrophobic. This was intensified often by the things filling the room. Adam Gunn's studio, for example was filled with old childhood toys, taken apart and reconfigured along the shelves. Spray foam used for house construction surrounded the room. And sheets draped the room with light shining onto a bizarre still life.

Ghosts of previous inhabitants. Perhaps one of the most eerie feelings entering a studio was at the Doris McCarthy residency in Scarborough. Doris McCarthy had bought this land in 1929 and had lived in the home as an artist for 70 years before her death after which it became an artist residency. Artist Ehryn Torrel was there when I visited. Overlooking Lake Ontario on the beautiful Scarborough Bluffs, the house looked like every cottage in Northern Ontario, quaint and quiet. Throughout the house, photos and paintings of McCarthy looked toward the people visiting the space, along with her old books, furniture

and belongings. Entering into this space, I pondered how the materiality of the spaces we inhabit create conversations with the previous inhabitants.

My studio visits allowed me to imagine how art making transforms space. Studios were compared to a stage, a playground, a laboratory, a cabinet of curiosities, a waiting room, a puzzle, a labyrinth, pressure cooker, a brain, a collage, a web. It becomes these “other” spaces through the creative interaction with objects in the space.

According to Jane Bennett (2010), “new materialism is a contemplative, imaginative approach to research that is based on being with things” (Hood & Kraehe, 2007 p. 33). Highlighting the interaction between humans and non-humans, Bennett (2010) explains how the intra-actability of these bodies produces effects. She describes an interaction and the affects produced by a grouping of objects that she happened upon: a glove, oak pollen, a dead rat, a bottle cap and a stick of wood.

When the materiality of the glove, the rat, the pollen, the bottle cap, and the stick started to shimmer and spark, it was in part because of the contingent tableau that they formed with each other, with the street, with the weather that morning, with me...I caught a glimpse of an energetic vitality inside each of these things, things that I generally conceived as inert. In this assemblage, *objects* appeared as *things*, that is, as vivid entities not entirely reducible to the contexts in which (human) subjects set them, never entirely exhausted by their semiotics. (p. 5)

She explains that the thing-power of objects and their power to produce effects: “The notion of thing-power aims instead to attend to it as actant” (p. 3). Through viewing the studio through a new materialist lens, the objects within the studio became active agents within the story told to me by the artists. They also formed an assemblage within the space. The spaces contained remnants of old works next to new works, sketches, piles of books, trinkets, all in a seemingly haphazard formation. It is a collage of both physical objects and ideas. During the visits to the studios I saw: a drone; an animal carcass covered in paint; electronic music equipment; architectural designs; tape sculptures; interior design colour swatches; old spice deodorant; family photographs; animal antlers; gothic art history books; garbage; diapers; suitcases; old costumes; paintings hung from chains; vintage store bird sculptures; paintings of condoms;

fake meat; how-to-draw books; dioramas made out of cheese graters; books about cowboys; neon lights; pseudo-scientific experiments; re-configured childhood toys; nautical tools; newspaper articles; mountains of fashion magazines; google image printouts; sailing flags; fairy tales; strings of paint; piles of fabric; collages; paintings; sketches. As I looked around the studios I began to think about the multiple conversations that are revealed through various juxtapositions.

Sarah Truman and Stephanie Springgay (2016) examine walking as a research method. They describe walking as “an embodied and sensory way of enacting research” (p. 259). Considering how walking produces propositions rather than conclusions, they argue that walking allows subjects to move through space in an unpredictable way. Furthermore, they describe how propositions drawn from walking allow for both potentialities and actualities. It is both actual and speculative (p. 159). “We envision the act of walking as a proposition – a hybrid of movement and *lure for feeling* that can *pave the way along which the world advances into novelty*” (p. 160).

This potential of walking as a “lure for feeling” (Springgay & Truman, 2016, p. 160), I argue similarly exists within the studio visit. Furthermore, the encounter with the space, the art works and the objects in the space allow the space to function as both an actual and speculative space. This conception of the studio was revealed not only through my experience within the space, but reinforced through my conversations with artists. Defining the studio as a Heterotopia, Vancouver based artist, Fiona Ackerman described a studio as both a work place and an anti-work place. She said it is the real and the imaginary existing at the same time. In an interview with artist Sandra Meigs, she similarly said that a great piece of art can transport us elsewhere, to a different world. And the artist’s studio functions in a similar way; it has the capacity to take us somewhere else. Andrea Kastner said that the studio is full of wormholes and portals. An art studio has the capacity to take us on travels into multiple spaces. She explained that a studio is similar to a workplace except that it is full of portals and links that don’t exist in other spaces. In her case, these links exist in the form of paintings. Time doesn’t function in a linear way, and you might get trapped in a wormhole and shoot backward or forward, or things may happen that you have no control over. While the studio is a static place (as opposed to moving through space through walking), I propose,

through the aforementioned examples, that the studio (and the contents and paintings within) function in a similar way to Springgay and Truman's (2016) "lure for feeling," by allowing us to be "transported elsewhere" (as described by artist Sandra Meigs). Furthermore, as a space that is both actual and speculative, the studio is a propositional space. As the site of my research collection, it opens up a space for propositional approaches to research.

In a discussion about studio visits, artist Marjorie Welish (2010) states: "A working definition of the studio visit might be that it presents an occasion for the artist to show his or her art to a critic and to engage in a dialogue with this informed audience of one... But what actually happens in a studio may be hard to pin down. Unstated, uncoded, and subject to on-site improvisation, the exact nature and purpose of the studio visit may always remain elusive" (p. 182). While the exact purpose of the studio visit may remain difficult to define, my experience with studio visits in a variety of contexts has led me to propose that studio visits have the potential to generate dialogue between artists, art works and objects. As such, they are a form of interview that is located within a specific space, the studio. The materiality of the studio actively shapes the nature of the interview. In my interview with Vancouver-based artist, Ben Reeves, I noted that I couldn't stop looking at the painting behind him to which he responded: "Yes, the paintings are telling their own stories." This multiplicity of information from the objects, the space and the spoken word sets up a space of difference and disjuncture, as what is being said doesn't always line up with the objects in the room. The choice of two modes of data collection, audio recording of the interview, and photographing the space is meant to complement and extend each other rather than represent. I will next discuss these two approaches to data collection.

Practice-led interviews

As I began to articulate my research intentions, I struggled with using the word 'interview.' My assumptions about interviews were that they were meant to be objective; the interviewer and interviewee were somehow disconnected, and that the time and context were irrelevant. I did not view my conversations with artists in this way. As I dove further into my research, I learned that many social

science researchers grappled with these same concerns. Gubrium and Holstein (2003) describe an “active interview” as a dynamic meaning-making process, wherein meaning is constructed through the active dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee. As such the interview is a social encounter that constructs and generates knowledge throughout the process. In their edited book, *Postmodern Interviewing*, Gubrium and Holstein (2003) argue that the past decades have seen a re-examination of the interview process. As representations of research have been questioned, “standardization has given way to representational invention” (p. 3). Always subjective, situational and contextual, they argue that reflexivity, poetics and power are at the core of interviewing. They describe how the interview process is always enacted “through the lenses of language, knowledge, culture, and difference” (p. 3). As such, the roles of researcher and subject are fluid and changing. Through these shifts of perspective, the interview is viewed as a construction or production of meaning. Gubrium and Holstein describe the subject being interviewed as active and it is the active interaction between the researcher and subject that produces meaning: “It transforms the subject behind the respondent from a repository of information and opinions or wellspring of emotions into a productive source of knowledge” (p. 32). Both the subjectivities of the interviewer and the subjectivities of the interviewee are active in the production of knowledge.

Norman Denzin (2003) emphasizes the dialogic relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. Describing this co-construction of meaning, Denzin calls this process a “dialogue as a process of discovery” (p. 153). Within my interviews this dialogue occurred in several ways: as I asked for more explanation on topics that drew my curiosity; as I pushed further to understand how the artists’ experiences shaped their work; as I empathized and related to their stories; and as together we examined ways of thinking and feeling that emerge through painting. As the interviews took place within their space, the interviews were very much led by the interviewee. The interviews were set up to be casual, open-ended and spontaneous. Over the course of 1-3 hours, we talked about several topics. We talked about how they first got into art making (oftentimes taking me back to childhood influences). We discussed artists and art works that had greatly influenced them, sometimes referring to a single interaction with a painting that has remained with them for decades. These conversations revealed the

imprint an art work has on a person. We discussed their educational background and how it shaped their approach and theoretical lenses for their painting. We discussed current research interests, which would often lead into a tangential discussion about a particular subject. They told me how their life stories wove into their work. And we discussed their art works both current and past. The interviews were open-ended, often moving out toward many different subjects and then back again. Through this process, they revealed how many ideas were interwoven in the making of their paintings.

The studio conversations led me in many directions, each of which allowed me to learn something new. Through our conversations, I imagined sifting through garbage sights and piles of fabric. I was led through mythical forests and into dark basements. I was guided through maps of sunken ships and sailors lost at sea. I was invited to consider art making as a form of dancing. I was explained quantum physics and chaos theory. I considered the relationship between neuroscience and art making, between math and art making, between physics and art making and between theatre and art making. I was brought into artists' travels around the world. I was told that Calgary is the sunniest place in Canada, taken into Winnipeg's snowy winters, and talked about the rustic coastlines of Newfoundland. I was taken back into ancient archeology, Gothic architecture, Renaissance painting and Modernist Art. Conversations quickly jumped from personal stories, to humorous anecdotes, to philosophical texts, to contemporary art theory. Several artists talked about how for them, art making was at the intersection of their interest in science, politics, history, sociology and psychology. They often described studio practice as a way of thinking through the world.

When I commented that we were getting off track, Ben Reeves stated, "tangents are a natural part of studio life." This was often the most engaging part of the interviews as artists explained about something they'd been investigating, such as local architecture, quantum physics, global warming, old (incorrect) illustrations of animals, childhood fairy tales, 1950s advertising, and they would take me on a journey into their thinking about these subjects through painting. I left each studio having learned about many subjects beyond the subject of painting, thus revealing the transdisciplinary nature of art

making. Other artists would take me into deeply personal stories that while not explicitly revealed through the work, was embodied within the material process of making the painting.

Addressing practice-based research within artistic research methods, Hannula, Suoranta and Vadén (2014) examine practice-focused interview methods. They argue that researchers should all do interviews in their respective fields. Through doing so, they bring interview methods into practice-based artistic research methods as a means of expanding, developing, understanding and generating the practice. They explain that a narrative interview allows one to dig deeper into the nuances and ask “how” something is rather than “what” something is “in and through an individual perspective as it is perceived and conceived” (p. 39). The purpose of the analysis of these interviews is thus not to synthesize and summarize, but to reveal connections between artists each drawn from their own unique context:

It is never experience (see Jay, 2006) as given, or neutral, or as the final answer, but experience as the base of constant play of leaving and returning, getting closer and gaining distance, but always staying with it – staying with the productive dilemma and its time and place-bound articulations and actualizations. (p. 41)

They describe ways that interviews reveal how reality is plural, connected to the past, present and future, and enacted “through the social imagination of a particular structural space” (p. 41). Within my interviews the studio was the specific context. The space, the art and objects in the space and the fact that I was visiting their studio within different cities across Canada shaped the stories revealed through the interviews. Through their work I examined how the interviews were performed through the lens of practice-led research.

Interviews with artists have been performed for generations, and in preparation for my interviews, I read several books about artist interviews over the course of my doctoral work as a way of investigating ways artists discuss their process. Several of these interviews, performed by critics and curators approached the interview from a very different perspective than I did as an artist. For this reason, the book that influenced me the most was introduced to me in a studio visit with Eliza Griffiths: *Studio Talks: Painting as thinking* (Habib, Ryden, Bength, & Sandstrom, 2015). As it was created by four Swedish

artists, I found their intentions most closely aligned with my own, particularly as they chose the site of the studio for the interview, and in their emphasis on the “incomplete” nature of conversation. They describe their intentions: “We decided to create the conversation that we ourselves had longed for and to work together in a longterm, nonhierarchical and organic manner through studio talks, readings and critical reflection” (p. 9). Focusing on the casual and intimate tone of studio visits, they don’t present the interviews as complete, but rather as moments. Furthermore, they wanted the book to begin with painting practices and focus on how painting is understood by practitioners rather than critics. From this lens, rather than attempt to define what painting is today, they wanted to understand how painting can be articulated through the perspective of practitioners.

When we choose to pose these general questions, one could say that we place ourselves between the general question’s desire for a general answer and the specific means of providing multiple examples. Rather than investigating the essence of painting, we hope to say something about its existence. How does the material influence ideas? How does the thought, the hand and seeing interact with each other? (p. 12)

Similar to my research, they chose the studio as the most appropriate space where they could examine the ‘how,’ rather than the ‘what’ of painting because the studio is the site of practice and through their interviews, they sought to understand the ontology of painting by engaging with the ways the materials, the hand and thought interact.

Photography: Documenting the materiality of the space of the interview

Throughout my journey across Canada, I took thousands of photographs of the studios. These images depict the studio space as a whole, the buildings/neighbourhoods, old art works next to new ones, sketches, books, tools, notes, collections, trinkets, etc. These objects within the space shaped the interview. They showed traces of old artistic processes, exemplify discussions about specific works, and reveal collected objects. These objects triggered memories, stories, discussions of material processes, and oftentimes took the conversation on a new course. The photography process allowed me to more deeply

explore and engage with the materiality of the space. While on one level, the photography serves as visual evidence and clarification of that which is discussed in the interview, on a deeper level, it allowed me to further explore the artists' thinking process and make connections that were not articulated in words. The residue of their process was apparent in how art and objects were placed within the space. Capturing these images and artifacts in photography creates a visual trail of my engagement with the studio visit.

Photography and other means of visual representation have been explored within the context of educational research, particularly within the field of art education. Many researchers in art education come from a visual arts background or have an art practice and therefore bring art making into their research methodologies. Despite several developments within arts-based research, researchers still argue for more validity and emphasis to be given to image-based work. While images are often used to exemplify what has been written, arts-based researchers argue that the images are text in and of themselves. Marin and Roldan (2010) use terms such as 'photo series,' 'photo essay,' 'photographic discourse,' 'photo abstract,' 'photo conclusion,' and 'photographic quotation' as a way of describing the potential for photographs to stand in as text within research, rather than simply illustrating written text. Through doing so, they emphasize ways that images generate meaning in and of themselves. They ask: "How do we decide what image content is relevant for a particular kind of investigation? How should we differentiate illustrative uses of photographs in educational research from contextual, narrative, argumentative or demonstrative uses?" (p. 8). While describing how art education researchers may draw from artistic modes of showing work, such as exhibitions or catalogues, they also explain that problems may arise as educational research involves other methodological purposes that are not required in exhibiting art works. They describe the goals of photo-educational research: "The photographs included in a visual arts educational project combine to generate formal, narrative and conceptual interactions that are decisive in terms of their scientific and artistic interests" (p. 9). They suggest organizational frameworks that open up that space between artistic practices and educational research by using photographic essays. Through these processes, the researcher creates an argument, offers a line of reasoning or creates interconnections.

The photographs serve several purposes throughout the research. Firstly, the process of taking photographs was an essential part of my research process, as a way of exploring space. They were a way of engaging with the studio. As someone who works firstly in a visual language, they reveal that exploration in a way that I cannot adequately express in words. Secondly, within the analysis phase of my research, the photographs served as both triggers and reminders of the studio visit; they allowed for a more thorough examination of the research data. Furthermore, within the analysis phase the photographs became a source of artistic production. I will discuss how the images participate within the dissertation in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

From analyzing the data to data-in-the-making

Following the previous discussion of my data collection, in this section, I discuss my data analysis and the presentation of data. I propose that new materialism allows for a productive relationship between my interview research methods, the material, embodied and experiential approach to these studio visits, and the ways this research was consumed by my own painting practice.

Diffraction research analysis

Given the embodied and material engagement with the interview process, I took a similar embodied engagement with the materiality of the data analysis. Taguchi (2012) who refers to diffraction as an embodied engagement with the materiality of research, seeks to engage with what data can produce. She states: “Understanding the body as a space of transit, a series of open-ended systems in interaction with the material-discursive ‘environment’, diffractive analyses constitute transcorporeal engagements with the data” (p. 265). According to Taguchi, thinking diffractively allows for an examination of the entanglements of ideas and other materialities, in ways that reflexive methodologies do not (p. 271). Furthermore, she argues that data is a co-constitutive force, as the researcher becomes with the data and the “bodymind of the researcher becomes a space of transit in the encounter with data” (p. 172).

Examining hundreds of hours of interview data, and thousands of photographs was an overwhelming process. I resisted tendencies to reduce the data to similarities and themes, through coding strategies of data analysis. Instead, I saw each studio encounter as a learning experience, wherein I learned through conversation, and through exploration of materials. I understood each visit as revealing a unique story that took place in specific time and space. At the same time relationships formed between visits as I read each studio visit through insights revealed by the ones that came before it, in the same way that Barad (2007) speaks of diffraction as a methodology of reading insights through one another. Liza Mazzei (2014) similarly took a diffractive approach to data analysis as a practice of reading insights

through one another. She says: “we produced an alternative approach to analysis having become frustrated with the imperative to produce a coherent and familiar narrative and spurred by the ways in which each of us had been using theory in our previous and current work with qualitative data” (p. 742). Through this process, she says, knowing, thinking and meaning are produced in unpredictable ways that take a rhizomatic rather than hierarchal form. Through this process “data is always partial and incomplete, where the telling of one story is always in place of another possible story” (Taguchi, 2012, p. 270). Thus, through this diffraction process, I was liberated from the inevitable failure of the data to reveal something complete and whole as I opened up to allowing the data to produce a story and through doing so reveal insights and propositions about the process of painting. This led me to re-viewing data as data-in-the-making.

Data-in-the-making as artistic interference in analysis

Springgay and Zaliwska (2015) address new materialist methodologies as they relate to arts-based research. They use diagramming from a new materialist perspective as an approach to analysis: “... our article enters into the theoretical conversations around critical and materialist research-creation to explore the concept of *diagramming* as self-organized enfoldings that do not describe or instruct experience, rather they are expressed as an open process that is emergent, vital, and abstract” (p. 136). Their analysis of their research methods allowed me to expand my understanding of materialist methodologies beyond simply working with art materials in the studio, toward an examination of all my research data. From the beginning, I resisted models of transcription and coding that reduced or simplified the practices described by artists and removed my own artistic practice from the experience. I sought out ways to examine the data that engaged with my own practice and that embraces the emergent learning process that happened through working with the data.

Springgay and Zaliwska (2015) seek to move beyond a model of analyzing data that fixes and organizes it into categories. In a sense, they seek to analyze research beyond representation and look to new materialism as an approach to do this. They resist common understandings of diagrams as schematic

images. Instead, they draw from Deleuze & Guattari (1977, 1980), Manning (2013, 2014), Massumi (2011) and Barad's (2007) understanding of diagram as "self-organized enfoldings that do not describe or instruct experience, rather they are expressed as an open process that is emergent, vital, and abstract. Abstract because there is always more to an experience than can be perceived" (p. 137). Drawing from Massumi's notion of pure-edging, they describe the "more-than" (p. 137) of data and "data-in-the-making" (p. 137) and "data as open-ended assemblages" (p. 140). As such they embrace the limits of data, they open it up to creative intervention.

They discuss their approach to diagramming through analyzing an artist-in-residence research project wherein social practice artists work in schools. I won't go into detail on the research project but focus on the data analysis that Springgay and Zaliwski describe. Over the course of the residency they collected digital images, researcher journals to record observations, student writing, class discussions and interviews with artists and teachers. The purpose of the "traditional" qualitative methods was "not intended to be more rational, representational or formative models" or "with the aim not to use these methods to validate or generalize the artistic work produced" but instead as a means to produce something new (p. 138). They discussed how at first they were faced with an overwhelming impenetrable wall of data. They explained their first attempt to diagram the residency on large brown paper, cutting out excerpts of transcripts and other texts and drawing out links within texts and images, creating maps of data. In the end, they found this process made the analysis and research static, which was the opposite of their intentions. They discuss the shortfalls of seeking out data to fit this map format.

Bolt (2004) similarly critiques mapping as a form of representation that creates a reductive model of the world, detached from experience. She states: "A map is a series of drawn lines and marks on paper, but may not be able to feel the cold, or smell the salt air." (p. 27). Such an attitude of mapping creates a world as a picture for a human subject, a colonializing occupation and ordering of space. She argues that maps removed our body from experience, as the printing press allowed maps to be reproduced as a representation of a place rather than an experience of a place.

Such a description of a map made me resistant to using the term map to describe my process. However, at the same time, I wondered how to approach mapping through a more embodied, experiential approach. O’Sullivan, on the other hand, from the perspective of a rhizome views a map as an experimentation and a performance. He views maps as open and connectible from multiple directions. Rather than a tracing, it is experiential as one creates the map as one moves towards “worlds-in-progress” and “subjectivities-to-come” (p. 35). For O’Sullivan (2006) a map is creative, constructive and always in process.

Art practice as a form of cartography then, the creative mapping of our connections and potentialities, a mapping that pays attention to regions of intensity (the destruction of affects) and to trajectories of future becomings, as well as those already delineated continents of representation and signification. (p. 36)

O’Sullivan’s discussion of mapping as an approach to uncover potentialities and connections is how I view mapping. I draw from O’Sullivan’s description of a generative and creative map, and Bolt’s call to feel the cold, smell the air and engage with the materiality of the world, as a way of addressing the wandering, emergent and embodied way I approached the research journey.

Through their critique of this representational mapping of data, Springgay and Zaliwska (2015) instead wanted to look at the diagram as abstract machines: “Diagrams are not representations of thought but thought itself” (p. 139). They realized they had to abandon the brown paper and think more performatively and materially. They describe pure edging as affective perception, wherein data is perceived as sensation and “embraces the limits of data as a site of creative intervention” (p. 139). As they embraced this approach to analysis, they no longer sought nodes to connect to a unified whole. They began to work with the text and images in a creative way.

This article provides a means of understanding my way of not simply analyzing the data, but experiencing the data through a practice-led approach. I similarly, in the beginning tried to map out the nodes of my interviews onto large sheets of paper, and found this approach limiting and reductive. I felt like I was trying to capture everything, while recognizing the impossibility of such a task. Through this

article I came to examine and apply a mapping metaphor to my analysis, as not simply writing a diagramme of connections, but rather by embracing my experience of working within the data. Rather than creating a map as representation, that tries to outline the connections, which ultimately makes them static, this diagramme is an experiential, immersive map that works within the data as a means of engaging with it rather than representing it. I also came to understand materialism as not simply working with materials in the studio, but rather as engaging with all the materials of practice in a creative way. As such, the interviews, the studio visits, the photography all became the materials of my practice. Reading Springgay and Zaliwska's (2015) article gave me the permission I needed to view the data for its generative potential and realize how we may "co-compose ourselves with the data." This occurred in the ways I approached transcription of interviews and in the ways I worked with the photographs.

Springgay and Zaliwska (2015) state: "Pure edging offers the transcription a new life outside of its coding function" (p. 139) and creates an event out of the concepts that emerge through analysis. Perhaps the strongest influences this article had on my analysis of data was in how I approached transcription. One way I consider this is through what I call *immersive interview transcription*. I listened to each of the interviews several times. I transcribed approximately 30 of the most influential (and discussed here) interviews in a traditional way, listening and typing out what was said, and analyzing the contents. However, I also listened to each of the interviews several times, in an immersive way, that I propose reflects, the materialist approach as described by Springgay and Zaliwska and reveals my connection with my practice. I listened to interviews as I visited galleries throughout my doctoral work, allowing the conversation with the artist in the audio-recording interact with, extend and interrupt my viewing of the art in the gallery. It was an immersive experience to be in a gallery looking at historical and contemporary painting, while hearing the voices of the artists talk about painting. Through this process I considered how the interviews shape my experience of the artworks and how the artworks shape my interpretations of the interviews. While I don't believe that I can quantify or fully describe that experience, I do propose this experience extended those conversations. I also re-listened to the interviews (many of them several times) within my own studio as I painted. Once again, the conversations with

artists interacted with my painting process. Gradually, new directions in my painting practice began to emerge.

Regarding working with the images, Springgay and Zaliwska (2015) state:

Rather than approach an image for what it might contain, we allowed it to live a new life, one that implicates us... In learning to pay attention to the edges of representation, we simultaneously let go of our desires to instrumentalize and impose meaning on the images, and found the audacity to entangle ourselves with the data-to-come. (p. 139)

I have spent a lot of time going through the images and looking at them for what they reveal about studios and the artistic process. However, as a painter, I have always found the painting process to be a way to engage more deeply with a subject, as I slowly build up a relationship with the painting. I took the immersive transcription to a deeper engagement as I brought the interviews back to my own studio and eventually I began painting images of the studios, drawn from the studio photographs, while listening to the interview by that artist. Through this process, rather than analyzing data, the research data was consumed by my art practice. This process allowed me to further relive the interview process and embody the transcription process. I believe this process allowed me to engage more deeply with the images and the interviews, as I engaged with the painting process itself. I propose that these paintings are another form of transcription, the diagrammatic process that Springgay and Zaliwska (2015) discuss, as they seek to engage with the more-than-data and data-in-the-making. I return to this in the final section as I present these paintings.

Propositions as an emergent, speculative and generative approach to data analysis

The data is presented as a series of propositions about the qualities of learning through painting. I use propositions to highlight potentials and possibilities rather than conclusions and generalizations and emphasize the particularities of practice.

Springgay and Truman (2016) describe propositions as both actual and speculative, and “lures for feelings” (p. 259). By examining walking through propositions, they allow for an unpredictable and non-

prescriptive approach to research that is experiential, embodied, open and generative. I similarly present this dissertation as a series of propositions. Through the use of propositions, this dissertation is both an analysis and a performance of new materialist methodologies. I perform these methodologies through the use of propositions that reveal the data analysis as proposal rather than conclusion. I propose that research is a diffractive process, as it disrupts, shifts or interrupts ways of thinking. Barad (2007) argues that diffraction allows us to read insights through one another. I similarly found that I read, listened to and responded to my studio visits through one another. I didn't engage in the interviews in an isolated way, but in relation to the ones that came before and after. I developed the propositions in a way to encourage the reader to read them through one another, each one in response to what came before. Furthermore, as practice-led research, the propositions emerged through the lens of my practice, as my own practice is always in relation to the artists interviewed.

I use the term proposition within this dissertation as “something offered for consideration,” as a “point to be discussed” and as a “problem to be demonstrated or performed” (retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/proposition>). The propositions are offerings for a way of thinking about the qualities of learning through painting. I've titled each section as a proposition that is drawn from comments made by artists that allude to the active ways they engage with painting. While I propose that the propositions may be read in any direction, I have organized the propositions firstly to discuss the emergent and embodied engagement with the materials, secondly addressing ways this process absorbs and activates experiences within the world and allow for new understandings about oneself, and lastly discussing relational qualities of painting, as artists describe how this process engages with others that came before. Through this process I highlight the ways that the performativity of new materialism recognizes the particularities practices while also emphasizing how these particularities are created within and through relationships. They also allude to the ways that they absorb their experiences, surroundings and ideas through painting. Through this process, I highlight that tension that exists between the solitary and the social and I reveal how painting is a relational practice and that this relationality is generated

through the materiality of making. And I propose that the studio is the space in which these relations are formed: relations with the materials, with our experiences and with the world.

Through the presentation of these propositions, it is not my contention that this a complete or conclusive picture of painting today. Rather through presenting moments of conversations and connecting them with each other, I provoke an examination of the qualities of learning through painting. In their compilation of studio visits, Bength, Engqvist, Ryden and Sandstrom (2014) similarly argue that through engaging in these momentary conversations about painting, they “hope to say something about its existence” (p. 12) or its way of being: “The project is driven by the belief that the various answers and examples that appear during the process will point out something common, something that becomes visible in the overlaps between the various conversations” (p. 12). Through this dissertation, I seek to similarly draw out connections. Furthermore, I seek to reveal how we continually learn in conversation with others. This format is intended to present the interwoven ways that I learn and am influenced by artists, their works, and their words through this practice-led research process. This interwoven nature of my learning through making is further reinforced in the paintings I created out of this research that are revealed in the final sections.

Taguchi (2012) point out that through telling one story, another one is untold. As such I don’t proclaim to have selected interview data that reveals the whole story of painting in Canada. What I share, reveals just one path, one trail of thinking, and one relational composition of data. I have selected interviews that performed a shift in my own thinking, that allowed for new propositions to emerge. I use new materialism as a lens to examine the processes of painting as I propose that painting is relational, interactive, emergent and iterative. Through these propositions, I reveal both the effects on and of painting and through this performance in propositions, I reveal qualities of painting as a way of learning. These propositions are not conclusions but instead provoke discussions about the qualities of the painting process that suggest the conditions that enable learning through as an ongoing and generative interaction with our experiences, materials and processes.

The propositions propose qualities of learning through painting. These qualities of the painting process are drawn from and exemplified by specific studio visits. Within these propositional sections, I include excerpts from interviews. In some sections, I have included long excerpts from interviews because the conversations and words used by the participant are significant in how I present painting. In these sections that include parts of our interviews, the questions in italics refer to my own responsive questions asked during the interview. Images of the studio, and of paintings by the artists, complement the written text. I begin by examining the solitary practices in the studio, as I highlight ways that artists engage in conversation with the painting and the materials. Next, I propose ways that through this process, artists engage with their experiences in the world. And finally, I examine how through this process connections are formed through the relational process of painting practices. These propositions invite readers to consider the ways we learn through painting and consider how to create the conditions for these qualities to exist within art education.

Photographs and Visual Interludes

Within the dissertation, I use photographs in two ways: 1. Alongside text about artists; and 2. As separate visual essays (visual interludes). I use images to accompany text, to provide a visual cue to what is being said in the interview. They complement the text and/or visually extend what the artists have said about their work.

Interspersed throughout the written propositions about painting are a series of visual interludes that reveal my embodied and material exploration of the studios. The visual essays are a compilation of images from my visits and develop a text solely through images. Aside from an introduction, I do not use written text within these essays as the images are meant to function as text in themselves. Through doing so I resist traditional research methods in which written text dominates and images are valued only in as much as they are explained through text. The visual essays highlight the main purpose of the photography: They reveal my embodied engagement with the materiality of the studio and the materiality of the painting process. The images allow the reader to follow my eye, my body and my trail of thinking

through the studio. I draw from Marin and Roldan (2010) to construct visual essays that reveal the contribution of the studio space to the interviews. Within the dissertation, the propositions reveal the qualities of learning through painting and the visual essays reveal the space where the learning occurs. Through these two lenses, the written propositions and the visual interludes, I argue that the studio space and the painting process have a symbiotic relationship within the process of learning through paint. The space allows the paintings to emerge as the artist engages in the painting process. Simultaneously, this space is not simply a room, distinctly separate from the artist, but rather it is created by the artist in relation to the process. It is an active space, one that is constantly changing. These photographs capture one moment in that artist's process as well as my exploration of the space. As O'Sullivan (2007) describes, there is always an excess after any account of painting. I propose that the photographs of the studio reveal this excess and as they reveal 'more than' is revealed in the interviews.

The visual interludes extend/expand on the written propositions drawn from the interviews by visually presenting the ways the space shapes the painting process. These visual interludes support the written propositions as they engage in Richardson's (2011) discussion about the materiality of space. He argues that the materiality of space must be considered to understand the complexity of experiences in the world. Furthermore, he argues that as humans influence space, space influences humans. The interludes that emerge alongside the written propositions of the same subject provide visual cues about the qualities of painting and therefore prompt consideration of the relationship between the space of painting and the process of painting. Through these images, I examine the ways that the studio is created through the process of painting, and in turn, the studio is in an active and generative relationship with the painting process. Thus, similar to this symbiotic relationship between the studio and the painting process, I propose that the photographic interludes are interwoven with the written propositions as they provoke consideration of the diffractive quality of not only the painting process but also of the studio space.

CHAPTER 4

Painting Propositions

Painting Proposition 1: Painting as a process of diffraction

Within this first proposition, I expand on what I have described earlier about Barad's (2007) discussion of diffraction as I examine how these processes were revealed within the studio visits. Barad argues that to think diffractively is to understand the world from within. I discuss diffraction in two ways within the dissertation. Firstly, I propose that painting may be considered a diffractive process as artists experiment with paint. Within this lens, the paint becomes as site of interference that continuously allows new potentials to emerge through the process. Secondly, I discuss diffraction as a way of attending to the ways paintings become sites wherein artists' embodied experiences are materialized. Within this lens of diffraction, artists' bodies engage with the world and these multiple experiences are woven in and through the painting process, thus drawing connections between experiences in and outside of the studio.

Throughout my visits, artists described the painting process as intuitive, embodied, sensual, emotional, emergent, improvisational, ambiguous, multiple. They lamented on the difficulty of putting into words the processes that occur while thinking through making. Furthermore, they described painting as a web of explorations, experiences, ideas and influences that becomes materialized through the painting process. In an interview that significantly shaped my thinking about practice, Hamilton-based artist, Daniel Hutchinson described the "anxiety of influence" as the impossibility of knowing all the threads that come into every decision in the studio, from slides he saw in art history lectures years ago, to fabric in local stores, to early childhood memories of drawing on a carpet. He explained that that is how he defines intuition: "My definition for intuition is everything you've ever learned bubbling up in random ways that you can't possibly understand. That's how I imagine it. I imagine this kind of soup of stuff with this unimaginable depth of knowledge that I'm not fully conscious of." Hutchinson also highlights and complicates questions about intentionality.

Addressing the teaching and making of a painting, artist and educator, Daniel Sturgis (2016) echoes this sentiment: “Painting can be seen as condensed knowledge, as every brushmark, every choice, is loaded with history and its interpretation, with – if you like – ethical implications and meanings – and indeed, even how one defines painting is ethical” (p. 11). In the same collection of essays about the teaching of painting, Gordon Brennan (2016) similarly argues that painting is a process of working with webs of interwoven knowledge:

If you study art properly and in serious depth you learn about the history of princes and the history of serfs, of astronomy and astrology, of mathematics and magic, topography, agriculture, architecture, clothes and manners, animals and birds, saints and martyrs, religions and philosophies” (Robertson, 1988, as cited in Brennan, 2016, p. 18)

I propose that this interwoven, embodied and intuitive knowledge is not presented in a linear way but rather performed through the making process, as described by Hutchinson. I propose that these descriptions of the multiple influences that affect every decision in the studio reveal the diffractive potentials of painting. Barad (2007) refers to diffraction as the ongoing intra-actions between bodies, materials and ideas, and the effects that these intra-actions produce. It is a process of ongoing interruption, interference, iteration and intra-action. Drawing from Hutchinson’s discussion of “anxiety of influence,” I propose that each of our encounters throughout our lives, from life experiences, to images we’ve seen, to our educational background may be viewed as ongoing interruptions that allow us to be in a continual state of becoming. Furthermore, I propose that these influences emerge through the process of painting, as the artist engages with materials. The materials in turn become a new site of interruption. As such, I propose that Hutchinson’s description of intuition aligns with Barad’s notion of diffraction as it provides a way of attending to these multiple threads that emerge through the process of painting. Artists within this dissertation explain how their education shaped the ways they engage with materials and images. They describe how earlier life experiences become manifested while working with paint. They describe how art historical images and discourse continually interact with their current painting practices. They describe how their research takes them in many directions that become embedded in their work in

explicit and implicit ways. They reveal how personal experiences emerge within their work. And they describe how all of these past experiences interact with the present, as they generate new ideas and images within the studio. Thus, I propose that diffraction provides a lens to view this bridge between the present and the embodied effects from the past, between the studio and outside the studio, and between the materials and the artist, in the way that Hutchinson describes intuition. Furthermore, new materialism's emphasis on the body highlights the sensory and affective quality of painting, as the intra-actions between the body, the paint and the materials of the process intra-act to generate affective embodied responses.

Barad (2007) describes diffraction as an ongoing process of interruption, interference, iteration, intra-action. The various intra-actions interruptions, and influences that occur within a specific time and place (the studio) produce different iterations that allows for the uniqueness of each painting. This generative and iterative lens of painting allows for the unique formation of each painting, without reinforcing tropes about artistic genius and originality. It allows for the specificity of each moment, each event, each action, and each interaction during the performance of painting, while acknowledging the effects that the context and relationships to others have on the practice of painting. Furthermore, it allows us to understand the ontology of painting, as a way of not simply revealing our experiences in the world, but performing them through the making process. Furthermore, as a generative process, diffraction embraces the ways this performative process has the potentials to generate sensory and affective responses on the body, thus revealing the potentialities of the painting process. As such, I understand diffraction as the ways that we are continuously affected by every intra-action. Through this understanding of diffraction, I propose that we may understand the materialization of these intra-actions as the ontology of being through painting. Thus, I propose that this ontology of painting is a sensory, affective, embodied process.

In *Reassembling Painting* (2015) Joselit describes painting as a passage as “a force that is exerted through painting, whose unfolding resists representation” (p. 178). He describes the negotiating and remapping between subject and object through Modernism as an interwoven passage (p. 179) as he asks

“Why paint now?” He states: “Passage, as I have defined it, is a form of materialized time; it is duration lacking both a starting and ending point but nonetheless unfolding in space” (p. 179). His analysis, however is still drawn from an interpretation of paintings rather than process. Within this journey of painting studios, I examine this space of materialized time through painting practices. I argue that this materialized time is the process of diffraction within painting; it is a space of intra-action. And I argue that it is within the in-process space of the studio, through conversations with artists, that we may better understand this material process.

Diffraction offers a way of considering the way we experience the world, each encounter shaping us: some in a small way and others in a more complex way. As exemplified by Hutchinson, we cannot fully comprehend all these effects that every intra-action has on us. Through the following propositions I begin firstly by describing the qualities of the painting process that creates the conditions for allowing this embodied and material process to occur. Following that I present examples of the ways that experiences, from their personal stories, to daily experiences, to art history become activated through the process of painting. I encourage readers to embrace the ways that these propositions connect with each other to express the complexity of how we learn through painting.

Visual Interlude 1

Materiality of the studio 1: The studio is both actual and speculative; real and imaginary

While a studio is a real space, I propose that it is also a speculative space. The studio sits within old buildings, re-purposed rooms. However, the objects, images and paintings allow the imagination to go elsewhere. Within this visual essay, I present photographs of spaces I visited that reveal this dichotomy. An old elementary school is transformed through paintings hung on the wall. A mural size landscape takes viewers into the space of the wall. Still lifes are theatrically set up within the room and mirrored in the adjacent paintings. Faces direct the eye in every direction. Backyards are filled with paintings. A magnifying glass takes the viewer into a miniature model of a room. Copper plates are hung with chains. And odd sculptures cast shadows on the walls. Windows reveal the relationship between the city outside and the space within.



Figure 14. Ufuk Gueray and Erica Mendritzki's studio, Winnipeg, 2014



Figure 15. Ashleigh Bartlett's studio, 2015, Toronto Island Artist Residency (temporary studio)



Figure 16. Kim Dorland's studio, Toronto, 2014



Figure 17. Adam Gunn's studio, Halifax, 2014

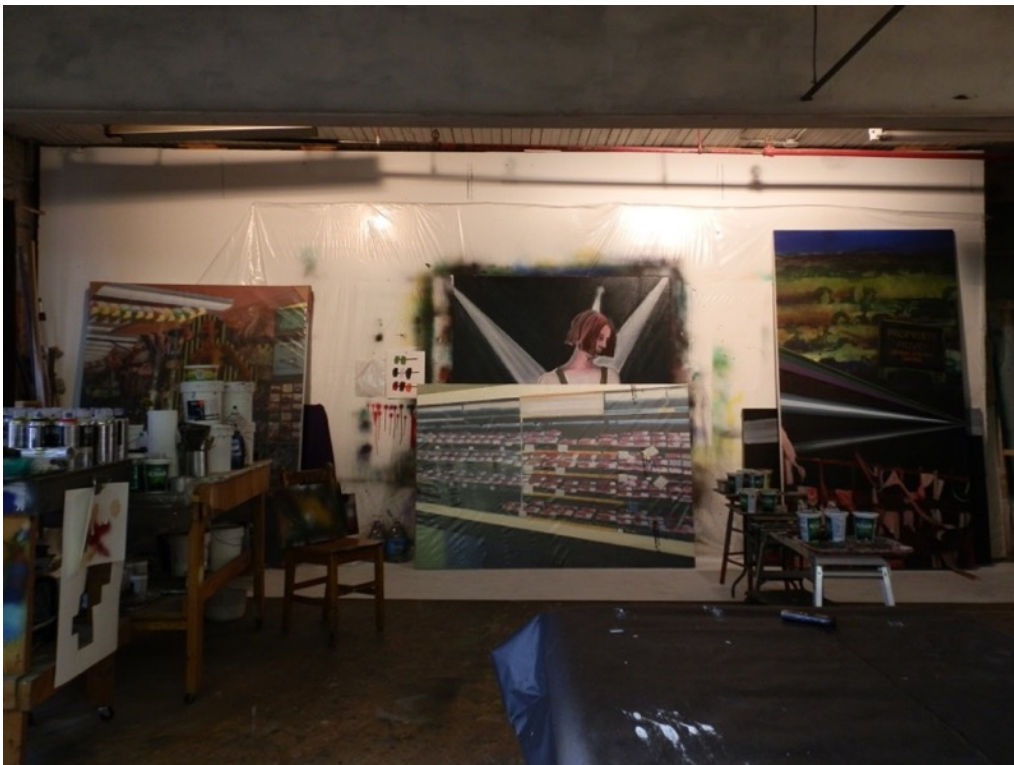


Figure 17. Christine Major's studio, Montreal, 2015



Figure 18. Chris Cran's studio, Calgary, 2014



Figure 20. Mitchell Wiebe's studio, Halifax, 2014



Figure 21. David Blatherwick's studio, Elora, 2014



Figure 22. Ian August's studio, Winnipeg, 2014.



Figure 23. Sean Weisgerber's studio, Saskatoon, 2014



Figure 24. DaveandJenn's studio, Calgary, 2014



Figure 25. Holger Kalberg's studio, Winnipeg, 2014



Figure 26. Renee Van Helm's studio 2015

Painting proposition 2: Painting as a process of getting lost

Not knowing: The captain knew too well where he was



Figures 27. Carly Butler's studio, Halifax, 2014, 2015

In Halifax, I met artist Carly Butler² (figures 27). Over the course of our two visits, our conversations made me consider the role of curiosity and not knowing in research. She explained how she had grown up with a father who was determined to sail around the world. She said his dream finally came to fruition when she had just moved away from home as a young adult, so was not able to join him on that journey. This “almost” adventure, that she never got to go on, fueled an obsession with shipwrecks and being lost at sea. She also revealed that her grandfather had been lost at sea for several days during a sailing race. While obsessed with the romance of being lost at sea, she was also critical of the colonial history of travelling somewhere no one has never been. She was reminded of Canada's Group of Seven and the romantic wilderness images they portrayed. In my first visit with Butler, as I looked around the room, I saw maps of the east coast where she had marked where shipwrecks had occurred. She had books about sailors lost at sea, and rules of navigation. She had mixed media paintings on which she had inscribed nautical sound wave patterns she had taken from the manual of navigation that had belonged to

² Carly Butler is an emerging artist with a BFA from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and an MA in Art History from Central Saint Martins in London. She was an RBC Painting Competition Finalist in 2014. We had two studio visits in her Halifax-based studio. She currently resides in Ucluelet, BC. <http://carlybutler.com>

her grandfather. She excitedly talked about how these quotes enticed her but that she didn't fully understand their meaning: "It's about not knowing too. These things are kind of on the edge of our comprehension."

I met up with Butler again the next year. She told me about an exhibition she'd had that year entitled *The captain knew too well where he was*, which refers to a quote by Joshua Slocum, a Nova Scotian who was the first person to sail alone around the world. She explained that Slocum was out at sea and met a "young cocky captain" who told him their exact latitude and longitude and Slocum thought "the captain knew too well where he was." She explained why this interested her:

I've been thinking a lot about the idea of getting lost and not knowing where you're going. If you look at GPS and we're getting so reliant on our iPhones, we know where we are but we don't know where that is. We can pinpoint it, 'I'm here' but have no idea where that is in the world. It's like we've lost our sense of direction.

Butler next explained some of the other works she had done since the previous year. She went to Mexico for two months. While she was there, her father taught her how to use a sextant to navigate. She showed me the sextant and explained how you use it to find out where you are by using the sun and stars. She demonstrated how to use it, showing me how to find the sun, and pull it to the horizon. She said she tried it daily and ended up in different places every day, thus revealing the errors in her methodology. "Part of my practice is that I'm not an expert and it's about what I don't know and it's all about the failures." The title of her exhibition *The Captain knew too well where he was*, highlights the significance of getting lost and not knowing within the process. Trying too hard to know where we are may limit possibilities. At the same time, she expressed that it is emotional to have someone in the studio because there is evidence of our failures everywhere. Butler's work revealed the way that artistic explorations may become analogies for ways of being in the world. Through her work she drew parallels between this nautical exploration, ways of making art, and ways of living our daily lives. I similarly drew parallels between this exploration and ways of performing research.

Drawing from Butler's exploration of getting lost, I interrogated notions about "not knowing" within the artistic process. The first paper I wrote after completing my first journey of studio visits was titled "Getting Lost in Artist Research." I presented this paper at a conference for the Canadian Society of Education through Art. Within this context, I was thinking about how to discuss my findings within educational discourse. I continued to resist closed off objective-based ways of teaching and was drawn toward a more emergent way of learning. I began considering this notion further upon being introduced to social science researcher and professor, Patti Lather's (2007) book *Getting Lost* that encouraged me to examine the value of getting lost in research. I was also introduced to professor of media studies, Elizabeth Ellsworth (2005) who similarly embraces a way of viewing knowing as active and changing. Ellsworth challenges us to think of knowledge as active and in continual movement: "Knowledge, once it is defined, taught and used as a 'thing made,' is dead. It has been forced to give up that which 'really exists': its nature when it is a thing in the making, continuously evolving through our understanding and our own bodies' experience of and participation in that world" (p. 1).

In a project through the Visual Intelligence Research Project at Lancaster Institute of Contemporary Art in 2004, artist and professor Rebecca Fortnum (2009) studied the creative processes of visual artists. Through her interviews with artists, she found that a sense of discovery and a search for the unexpected was a dominant motivator for art making. Rather than seeking a mastery of materials, she found that the challenges of handling materials, working through problems, encountering doubts and facing uncertainty are at the core of artists' practices. Furthermore, she believes this search for the unknown is not necessarily out of a belief in the avant-garde. Instead her interviews revealed that artists have a desire to create work they might not understand, or that may exceed their intentions. She argues that resolution is a fiction and this fiction perpetuates a continued search for understanding that creates an ongoing tension between knowing and not knowing inherent in the creative process (p. 3). For this reason, she states: "The artist is thus in a continual state of process, compelled to repeat because he can never know how (or even if) he has achieved his intention" (p. 3). Artist Ann Hamilton similarly suggests that a comfort in not knowing is a driving force of art making: "Go from something you know to something you

don't know... Not knowing isn't ignorance. Not knowing is a permissive and rigorous willingness to trust, leaving knowing in suspension, trusting in possibility without result, regarding as possible all manner of response" (p. 68).

In a publication based on a symposium entitled *On Not Knowing*, artists Rebecca Fortnum and Elizabeth Fisher (2013) argue for the necessity of not knowing:

Where knowledge is positive, the *unknown* is often simply the opposite: it is *uncertain*, *invisible*, *incomprehensible*. *Not* knowing represents a lack or absence, inadequacy to be overcome.

However the essays, conversations and case studies gathered together here describe a kind of liminal space where *not knowing* is not only not overcome, but sought, explored and savoured; where failure, boredom, frustration and getting lost are constructively deployed alongside wonder, secrets and play. (p. 7)

I am particularly drawn to their emphasis on the generative rather than negative qualities of not knowing.

Several artists similarly described wandering, getting lost and not knowing as part of their process. Victoria-based artist Rick Leong explained how a river emerged through laying down paint and following the trail in a natural way. Toronto-based artist, Linda Martinello referred to herself as a hunter and gatherer, hunting for experiences. Montreal-based artist, Dil Hildebrand described art making as getting lost in the wilderness, searching, while not sure what you are looking for. And in Montreal, Janet Werner similarly compared the creative process to digging a hole that you have to find your way out of.

Artists talked about how wandering and moving became a part of their practice, whether it was David Blatherwick who explained that his daily walk in the woods by his studio was essential to his practice, or Pearl Van Geest who described her weekly commute between Windsor and Guelph as another studio. Colin Dorward described how through coincidences and chance happenings, by moving from Ottawa to the Yukon to Halifax, his paintings became a layering of junk left behind in a studio he had subletted, objects in a back alley, the craft history of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, and the horizon line of the Yukon landscape. Ambiguity was at the core of several artists' interest in art making.

Toronto artist, James Gardner spoke enthusiastically about the strange slippages and coincidences that occur through making in the studio.

When I met with Winnipeg-based painter Holger Kalberg, I asked him why he makes art. He said that his recent work is largely about the question: “Why am I still making things/objects?” I asked him if he came up with anything and he replied “No and I don’t want to. If I do that’s probably the end.” Scott Bertram similarly described his comfort with not knowing. Of his process, he stated that he was not sure why he was doing what he was doing but preferred that uncertainty. Not knowing was at the core of many studio visits: not knowing why they decided to follow a particular direction; not knowing the precise meaning of their work; not knowing exactly where the work came from; not knowing how a work will turn out; and not knowing for sure why they make art. Drawing on this idea, Winnipeg-based artist, Mark Neufeld asked: “How do you make knowledge that’s not just about ends, to have an excitement with discovery?”

When I met with artist Maegan Harbridge in Guelph, she similarly celebrated a comfort in not knowing. She described the anxiety felt as a child being constantly told that one day she would figure things out, that one day everything would come together and make sense. This anticipation of an eventual resolution or closure haunted her for years. She explained how making art allowed her to approach life from a different perspective: “Making art is like philosophy. It’s always about questioning. It’s not like you’re ever going to come to a place of knowing, it’s just about the questioning and that in itself is a politics of living... Why go to art school? It helped me become ok with not knowing.” Through the process of getting lost or not knowing, the painting emerges.

Drawing from these conversations, I propose that getting lost is significant within the process of learning through making art. As experimentation, risk-taking, exploration and curiosity are increasingly encouraged within education, I argue educators need to create the conditions for getting lost. This proposition, recognizes how through embracing getting lost, and not knowing, one learns to be open to discovering new ideas, images and ways of thinking.

Painting Proposition 3: Painting as an emergent process

Artist Ann Hamilton (2009) describes the way an art work emerges through the process: “One doesn’t arrive – in words or in art – by necessarily knowing where one is going. In every work of art something appears that does not previously exist, and so, by default, you work from what you know to what you don’t know” (p. 68). Hamilton’s approach to addressing art making is open to a process of emergence, whereby it continuously moves toward an unknown space. Hamilton laments the suspicion in society toward unproductive time, things that aren’t utilitarian and a rejection of daydreaming altogether. She admits to the difficulty in explaining the necessity of experiences that are not quantifiable, easily named, measured, or categorized. This is where the challenge in articulating the knowledge and meaning produced through art making lies. Hamilton refers to the butterfly effect, the way a flap of a wing in one continent may change weather in a different continent, to describe how often small, undetectable variations in phenomena may cause huge differences. She uses the butterfly effect to allude to the emergent process of art making.

In an introduction to a painting exhibition of the work of Tomma Abts, Verwoert (2005) uses the term emergence and its multiple definitions to describe the way that art emerges through the process of making. Verwoert firstly argues that simplistic approaches to the analysis of art making reduce the process to either intention, which he compares to sequential beads on a thread, on one end, or intuition, which assumes art making to be an irrational model based solely on self-expression on the other end (p. 1). Instead, he describes art making as a complex decision-making process wherein forms and concepts emerge through a continual response and negotiation between the emerging parts of the painting. Secondly, Verwoert analyzes the roots of the term emergence from the Latin term *emergere* which means to “work one’s way out of a critical situation” (p. 2). Within this definition, the term emergence, has the same roots as the word emergency which he describes as a crisis that requires a response. He describes this process: “The crisis is the moment when a decision is urgently required, the point at which it becomes clear that a decision is needed, that the indecisiveness of the situation demands a decision” (p. 2). Within the context of art making, creative work often responds to a crisis. Lastly, Verwoert describes emergence

as the process wherein structures cannot be derived from single parts but instead emerge through the interaction of elements within a complex and interwoven system (p. 3). Using neurons in the brain as an example, he describes how, through these complex interactions, new patterns and connections emerge.

Charles Garoian (2008, 2013) analyzes the role of the body and subjectivity in art practice and research. Through doing so, he explores the complex potentials and possibilities of art making as the body and subject interacts in time and space. Garoian claims that through these moments of making, artists create spaces rather than reproduce them, and make meaning rather than discover meaning (2013, p. 6). As such, the process of making is performative rather than representational. He describes these spaces as ‘emergent spaces’ that are continually moving and changing and reside in a state of unpredictability and uncertainty. Through analyzing the potentials of art making, Garoian argues that artistic processes exist in this space of emergence, unpredictability and openness. Barad (2007) describes diffraction as generating patterns of interference. Through this process of interference, new possibilities and potentials emerge.

Within this section, I draw from examples of interviews with artists who describe how their paintings emerge through the painting process. While the artists explain how paintings emerge through the process, they also emphasize ways of thinking that emerge throughout the making of a painting. Within this proposition, I describe how three artists embrace emergent qualities of making. I begin by discussing Dil Hildebrand who explicitly describes his belief that painting is an ongoing learning process with infinite directions and possibilities. The emergent qualities of this learning process allow him to continually learn through experimentation. He also describes how through the process he continually engages with his art education background which frames his understanding of painting and his engagements with image-making. Next I discuss Fiona Ackerman who dissects her problem-solving approach to learning through painting. Lastly, I discuss James Gardner, who expresses how his daily experiences become activated and materialized within the studio. Through his work, I reveal how paintings emerge through the embodied engagement with materials and space.

Dil Hildebrand: An infinite game and an ongoing learning process



Figures 28-32. Dil Hildebrand's studio, Montreal, 2014, 2015

For Montreal- based artist Dil Hildebrand³ (figures 28-32), painting is an ongoing learning process. It is like an infinite game wherein the goal of the game is to keep the game going.⁴ Painting is like trying to find someone in a crowd, while not knowing what that person looks like; you may be looking for something even though you don't know what you are looking for. This is how Hildebrand describes painting. He explained that his work is essentially all about learning through doing, a process of learning to solve a problem. While he first starts with a sketch, he said that's just the first step as he always has the freedom to destroy it, obscure it, or change it as he goes.

The first sketch bears no resemblance to the work in the end. It doesn't have that purpose. It's not just an armature upon which I hang everything where it takes the shape that it had originally. It's a sequence of movements and changes and testing different shapes and I don't really know where I'm going. It's really just a walk in the woods. I sort of think of in this way, like a walk in the wilderness where you don't know where you're going and every decision is based on what's there right now. It's not based on the map that you might have in your hand that gets you where you are

³ Dil Hildebrand is a mid-career artist living in Montreal, QC. He received a BFA and an MFA from Concordia university. I first encountered his work in 2006 when he was the winner of the RBC Painting Competition. We had two studio visits in his Montreal-based studio. <http://dilhildebrand.com/>

⁴ Hildebrand references a book by James P. Carse (2013) titled *Finite and Infinite Games*.

you going. I don't have a map. I'm just walking through the woods and making decisions. There are problems with that because sometimes you do get lost; I get lost each and every time.

The paintings in his studio on my first visit were painted green, like a chalkboard or a cutting mat. Both of these references allowed me to see how he reveals his learning through the process, taking things apart and putting them back together, which he says is how learning works, in his opinion. When describing the space between what you might imagine and what is made through the process, he personifies the painting, saying: "It doesn't really know what it wants to be." He expands on that personification later saying that each painting is a Frankenstein of previous work, they feed into each other. "So, for me, that is the creative process. It's having rules, but where the object isn't to finish the game. The object is to keep the game going." Through this work, he draws parallels between painting practices and learning processes, thus revealing how he learns through painting, while commenting on the necessity of play and unpredictability within learning.

When I went for a second visit the following year, he compared painting to architecture. "What is architecture? It's a movement between opacities and transparencies. That's the way I think about it. Windows, passageways and walls. You can think of it as different modes of being able to enter or not." He explained he was interested in windows, because Western painting, since the Renaissance had been based around the architectural aperture of the window, the *trompe l'oeil*. He reflected on a work he had done in undergraduate school where he tried to fuse craft with conceptual. He explained how at the time they used slides (rather than digital files), and the colour was not accurate, often tinted pink or orange and the teachers often accidentally put the slide in the projector in reverse. "It's funny, learning art history from faulty images and faulty reproductions of the past. So, there are always these steps of removal away from the original image. So, our view into the past is always misrepresented." Here he alludes to the materiality of reproductions, in this case slides that contain evidence of the particular material qualities of representations. He showed me a painting he still had, a reproduction of a painting he had learned about in art history, Edouard Manet's *The Fifer*, tinted with a pink colour. The way he had painted it in pink

prompted memories of slides I had seen years earlier as well. At the same time, he explained how he was reading Walter Benjamin (1936) about mechanical reproduction. In response, he did an exhibition where he made charcoal drawings of the windows of the galleries at Concordia and then placed them in the gallery windows to replace the view with a drawing of the view. Through this process he engaged with the materiality of representations and reproductions. Reflecting on other work he had done in the past about theatre sets, and on his newer work, he said the window motif has come back.

There's so much Trompe l'oeil in the work I do. Because it's all trompe l'oeil. That's what theatre is all about. It's about faking something, about pretending. Really, the painting is pretending to be of a similar world to you, of the same world as you. You know those original trompe l'oeil paintings of a violin hanging on a wooden door or something, it's meant to be so realistic that you could reach out and grab it. The painting is trying to tell you 'we're of the same reality.' But it's a lie of course.



Through this discussion with Hildebrand, I considered how his painting is playing with rules of representation, while at the same time disrupting them. Through the architectural metaphor of creating passageways, walls and windows through compositional and colour strategies, I considered how by breaking painting down to its basic components, he opens it up to infinite possibilities for exploration.

Fiona Ackerman: Painting as calculus

In Vancouver, Fiona Ackerman⁵ (figure 33) described a way of thinking analytically about improvisation, and about responding to the needs of a particular painting. She described how painting is compositional problem solving. She explained that in her first year of university, while studying fine arts, she enjoyed a calculus elective. She described her understanding of calculus as a study of how close you can get to something and that that's how she treats painting, as compositional problem solving. She explained that seeing how close you can get to a good composition is like seeing how tight you can hold a wine glass before it breaks. This comparison reveals the way she embodies the act of painting.

It's a way of thinking that appeals to a certain mind. I loved doing calculus problems; you keep going and get through this whole process. It was so abstract, it had a logic in itself. I feel like what I've learned from years of painting is that just because X worked in one painting, doesn't mean it's going to work in another painting. So, I have to look at the painting I'm doing and say: What is the problem I'm dealing with here? What is the language I'm speaking? Then you work through that problem. That's what calculus is. You set up a problem and just because something worked in another one, doesn't mean it works here. You have to look at this problem and get to the end of it.

Ackerman's approach to discussing painting highlights the logic of this emergent process as she draws from her learned understandings of image-making to problem-solve for the unique conditions of each painting.

⁵ Fiona Ackerman is a mid-career artist living in Vancouver, BC. She received a BFA from Emily Carr University of Art and Design and was long-listed for the 2015 Sobey Award. We had two studio visits in her Vancouver-based studio. <http://www.fionaackerman.com>

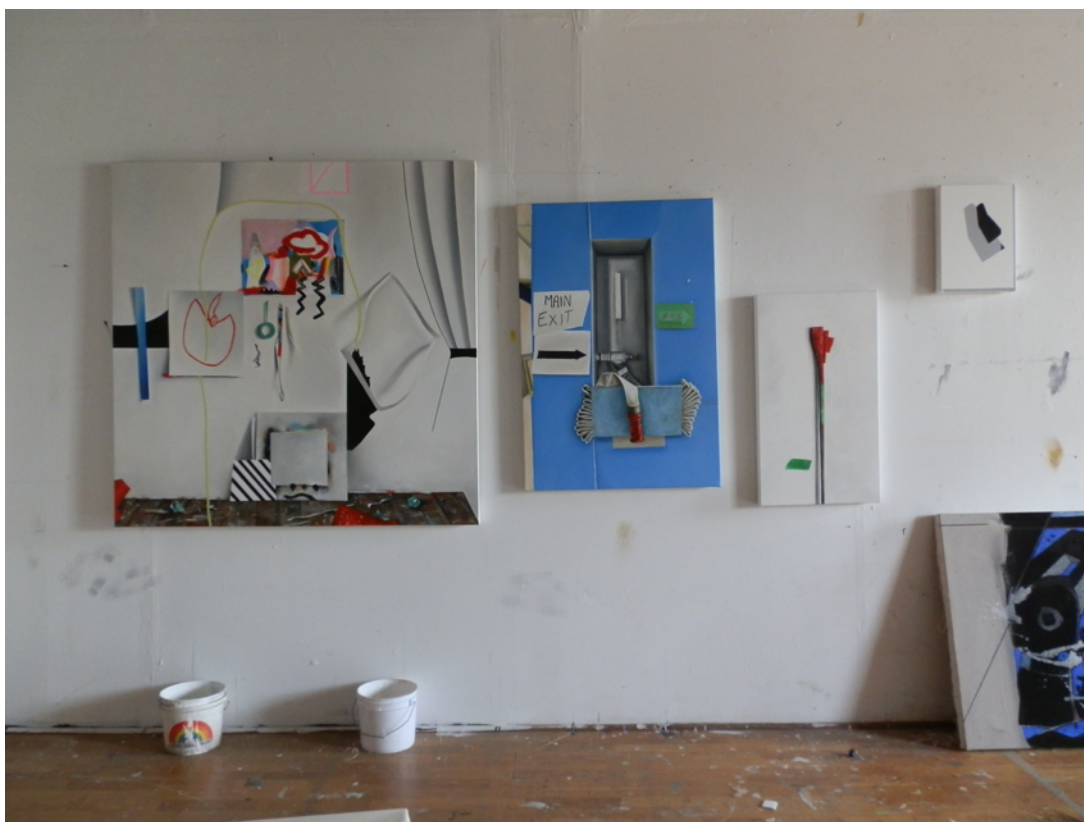


Figure 33. Fiona Ackerman's studio, Vancouver, 2015

James Gardner: The studio as a pressure cooker

Stating that the “ecology of the studio” is a driving force in his work, James Gardner’s⁶ (figure 34) studio is a space filled with action. Filled with old paintings, piles of wood, tools and paint, Gardner constantly works and reworks old paintings into new configurations. He described it as an active meditative process, of rigorous exploration and paying attention to the processes. While he hesitates in using the word alchemy as it is becoming a very popular way of talking about materiality and painting, at the same time, he believes it is a productive way to talk about these material processes. He explained: “I think it is really interesting how you can understand processes through material, and ideas of change,

⁶ James Gardner is an emerging artist with a BFA from Guelph University. At the time of submission of this dissertation, he was an MFA candidate at Concordia University. He was an RBC Painting Competition Finalist in 2014. We met twice in his Toronto-based studio which also housed an artist collective VSVSVS of which he was a founding member. <http://www.jamesgardner.ca>

metamorphosis and transformation, which may be understood through language, but is really a material thing.” He is particularly interested in the inner experience and how that manifests itself through studio practice. He used the word “transference” to explain how all his experiences in the world, from the landscape, to billboards he passed on the way home, to images in magazines, manifest themselves through that material process of painting. He said for him, that is what intuition is: “It can be very practical. It’s about those actions in the studio.” In this way, he said the studio is like a pressure cooker. These various influences weave into the work through the process.



Figure 34. James Gardner's studio, Toronto, ON, 2015

Visual Interlude 2

The materiality of the studio 2: The studio as an experimental space

Bolt (2004, 2007, 2013) refers to material thinking as the way that knowing emerges through handling materials. Within her conception of material thinking, materials are not passive objects but instead actively engage with us. Through this understanding, we can reimagine our bodily engagement with the world: “we come to know the world theoretically only after we have come to understand it through handling” (2007, p. 30). Within the studio space material explorations surround the room. Within this visual essay, I reveal these materials explorations that occur through the painting process. Strings of paint hang on a hook and threads of canvas pour out of the painting like hair. Objects are playfully arranged around the room and paint covers the space. Colour experiments are carefully executed and in another room fabric takes the place of paint. Canvases are stacked against the walls, and sculptural paintings and discarded materials fill the space.



Figure 35. Angela Teng's studio, Vancouver, 2015



Figure 36. Sarah Cale's studio, Toronto, 2015



Figure 37. Ryan Peters' studio, Vancouver, 2015



Figure 38. Jessica Groome's studio, Berlin, 2016



Figure 39. Jeremy Hof's studio, Vancouver, 2015



Figure 40. Colleen Heslin's studio, Montreal, 2014

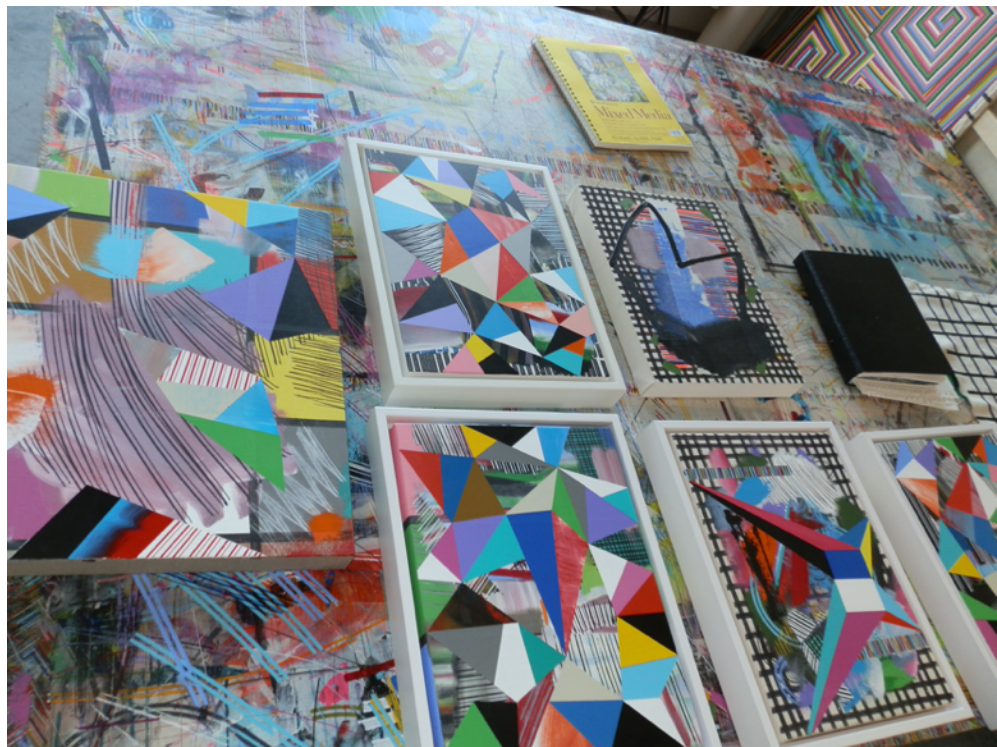


Figure 41. Bradley Harm's studio, Vancouver, 2014



Figure 42. Jared Peters' studio, London, 2014



Figure 43. Chris Millar's studio, Calgary, 2014



Figure 44. Dave Hucal's studio, Hamilton, 2014

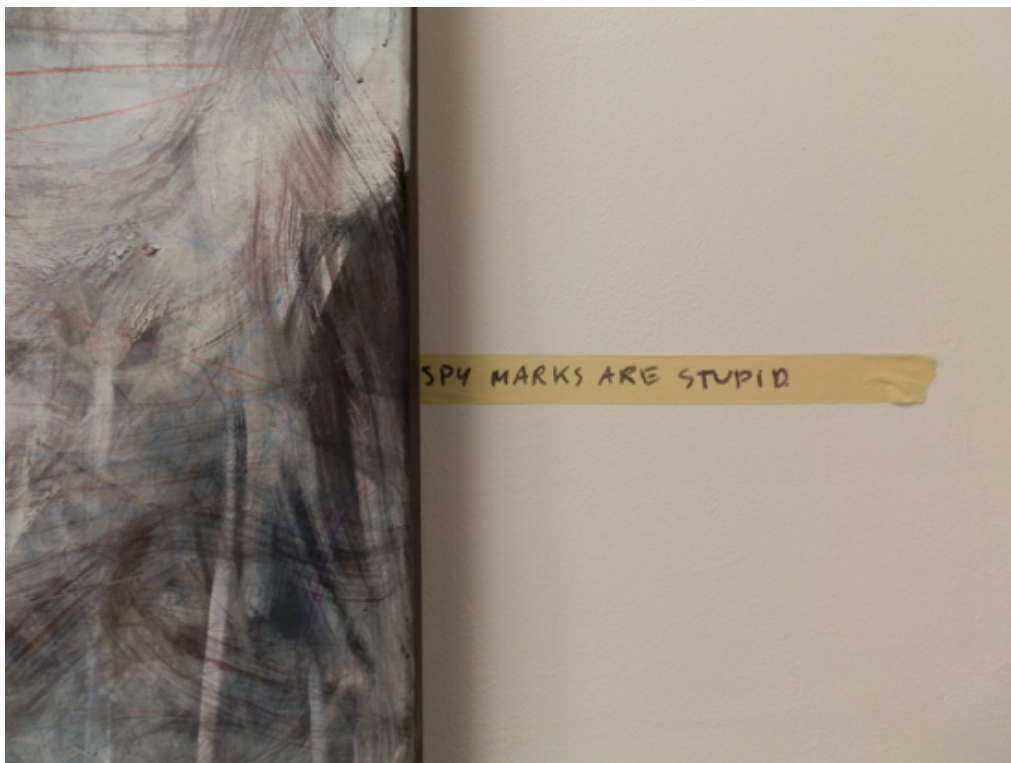


Figure 45. Nam Nguyen's studio, Berlin, 2016.

Painting Proposition 4: Painting as an embodied material practice



Figure 46. John Kissick's studio, Elora, 2016

The handling, touching, diluting, pouring, splashing, feeling, weighing and holding of colours is primordial in painting.... Before it becomes the mysterious and complex force that it has been theorized to be. Before colour is the philosophical or alchemical problem, or a socio-economic demarcation, it is a tool, the ready at hand coloured stuff that you wield to make a painting. It is an inherently synesthetic experience that verges the sense of touch, smell, sight, even sound while the painter makes the painting.... For the artist, there is no kind of art that is not phenomenological since for the artist, you always feel the art while it's brought into being.

(Sillman, 2014, np)

Citing artist and educator Josef Albers, who in the 1960s declared he would “reverse the normal academic order by putting practice ahead of theory,” contemporary artist Amy Sillman describes the handling of materials through colour in painting (Sillman, 2014, np). Sillman emphasizes the role of time and change in painting. She describes the process of making as being a choreography and her method as a physical response to both emotional and analytic change.

Hickey-Moody and Page (2016) argue that our bodies' processes of sensing and feeling inform us about our place in the world: "We sense on top of senses, one sense experience always embedded in another one: cross-modal repetition with a difference. We conceive the world not through a linear recomposition of the geometric vectors of our experience, but by the overlapping of the folds of sense-presentation emerging alongside pastness" (Manning, 2009, p. 215 as cited in Hickey-Moody & Page, 2016, p. 3). They describe how past experiences become materialized through our body's engagements with the present (p. 3). Drawing from Barad (2007), they argue that the sensing body is at the core of new materialism: "The body is pivotal to new materialism; it is a complex intra-action (Barad 2007) of the social and affective, where embodiment is a process of encounters, intra-actions with other bodies" (Hickey-Moody & Page, 2016, p. 3).

Thus, the sensing body is continually affected by our interactions in the world. In this section, I draw from artists who emphasize the bodily engagement with the world and how it becomes materialized through their painting practices. I begin by discussing artist Mary Pratt who expressed how the sensory and sensual process of engaging with the world activated her paintings. Next, I discuss Gary Evans who described how painting may exist in a space between sensing and feeling. Through his work, I suggest ways we learn to sense our body's response to both images and to our environment. Finally, I examine Daniel Hutchinson (also discussed earlier) who described painting as an analogy. In this way, painting allows him examine his embodied experience in the world by drawing connections between experiences and processes.

Mary Pratt: The world speaks to me

I interviewed Mary Pratt⁷ who has had lived in St. John's, Newfoundland for most of her art career (for several decades), at the time married to another artist Chris Pratt, and raising four children

⁷ Mary Pratt (born 1935) is an established artist with a BFA from Mount Allison, living in St. John's, NL. In 1996, she was named Companion to the Order of Canada. She has also received nine honorary degrees, including from Dalhousie University, Memorial University and St. Thomas University. We in her St. John's home, however, due to health reasons we did not meet in her studio (therefore, this section does not include studio-based photographs).

alongside her art practice. By living in Newfoundland, she explained that she had been unaware of many of the contemporary, postmodern practices that had developed through the 70s and 80s as she dove into her figurative and still life painting practice. These still lifes of fish on a plate or jars of jam glow with the time and energy spent creating them. Through the domestic imagery, they also reveal Pratt's story, as a woman raising four children while pursuing painting. She explained with candor and humour a significant moment for her.

At first in Samineer I had a hard time finding the time or a place to paint, because I didn't have a studio, but I painted all over the house. All I needed was my easel and a little trolley that had spaces to keep things warm, so I could keep my paints in that and open it out and it could be a pallet, and it was grand. Anyway, one day, when I was cleaning up the house, I went down this very dark hall and there was a door at the end with a window in it. There was a little bit of light coming through that window but basically it was a dark hall, and I opened the door to our bedroom which I had decided to clean up, wash up, do the floor and there was a blast of light. We faced east, and the river was right next to the house, I mean the kids could practically nip a fly right over to the river from the veranda. And the bed was all tumbled out, and I actually got an erotic reaction from what I was looking at. And I thought, "Oh my god, oh my god, what is this?" And I went over to Christopher's studio and I said, I've got to have a square canvas, have you got anything that's about this size? He said 'there's lots of canvases there, take what you want.' So I went back and I set up the paint and I thought 'Alright, if the world is going to give me this erotic reaction, I won't paint anything that doesn't. I'll never set anything up, I will wait until the world gives it to me.' And I did. And as soon as that happened it was really as if windows and doors opened for me, and everything began to speak to me. And I think I was just terribly lucky. I also think I was kind of crazy. We were out in Samineer, I had no neighbours, I had no one to talk to except for the children, and I think I wanted somebody to talk to and if the world was going to speak to me that was very nice, but I don't think everybody's that lucky. And I thought, this is a gift, and I'll take advantage of this. I will only paint what the world asks me to paint. And the world asked me to paint a great many things... baked apples, and chickens and god knows what, I didn't choose to do it, I didn't set them up, I just came into a room and there it was. And it was an erotic response, a physical response to the world, and don't ask me why that happened, but it happened.

Gary Evans: To bridge the gap between what I'm seeing and feeling

Gary Evan's⁸ (figures 47-48) lush and active paintings are filled with brightly coloured, organic shapes, that hint at a real-life space: a house, a yard or a bush. Evans talked about how these brightly painted fluid shapes reveal to him that space between reality and imagination, and that space between what we see and what we feel.

Well there's this idea that there is a known reality, whether it's a shrub, a tree, an object, a building or a car. And then there is us, which is implied by the edge of the canvas. And then there's all this stuff in the middle which doesn't really exist. So, it's like a projection. Either way we've got a dialogue of what this abstraction is and what the reality is and why do I put the two together. And that's something I've always been compelled to do, to bridge that gap between what I'm seeing and feeling. And I don't really think it's a logical thing. I think it's a way to dialogue with reality in some way and I think that's by and large what I do. It's that feeling of a space. And the feeling of being in the space and aware of that feeling. And then the awareness of looking. I always thought of my paintings as self-conscious looking. You're looking, but you're looking as things happen, and you're conscious that you have a focal point, but there's also activity around it.

He expanded to discuss how we feel the presence of a painting and our body responds to it.

If a picture is this big (gestures with hands), the fact that I feel it as a presence in my world starts a whole bunch of responses: fight, flight, movement, happiness, comfort, discomfort, on a physical level. That's how our bodies work. So, I wonder about those things about painting. Maybe that's the thing we will never understand about it, because we need to turn it into a language. Maybe that's the thing we will never understand about it, because we need to turn it into a language.

Within this statement, he suggests that language may not be able to fully articulate this sensory experience. Through my interview with him, I similarly suggest that learning that occurs through the

⁸ Gary Evans is an established artist living in Alliston, ON. He is a graduate from the Ontario College of Art and Design and is an instructor at the School of Design and Visual Art, Georgian College, Barrie, Ontario. I first encountered his work during my MFA when he spoke in the department as a visiting artist. We met once in his home-based studio in Alliston. <http://www.paulpetro.com/artists/27-Gary-Evans/>

sensing body (as described by painting in this case) is beyond that which can be expressed in written or spoken language, as it does not sufficiently account for the feeling as described by Evans.



Figures 47-48. Gary Evan's studio, Alliston, 2016

Daniel Hutchinson: Drawing on the carpet and gravel in our shoes



Figures 49-53. Daniel Hutchinson's studio, Hamilton 2015

"I think my paintings function better as an analogy than as a picture." Hamilton-based artist Daniel Hutchinson⁹ (figures 49-53) explained to me that his relationship to subject matter was fraught. Rather than his paintings being about a subject matter, he explained that he uses subject matter. I first became interested in his work years earlier when I saw his black paintings, in which there emerges an image of a theatre when moving into the right light and angle. These paintings, both referenced conceptual black monochromes, while disrupting that narrative through encouraging the viewer to move through space to allow the trompe l'oeil effect of the space to emerge. Regarding these paintings, he

⁹ Daniel Hutchinson is a mid-career artist who received a BFA from Emily Carr University of Art and Design and an MFA from Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. He has been a two-time finalist in the RBC Painting Competition, and a recipient of the Brucebo Foundation Artist Residency in Sweden. We met three times in his Hamilton-based studio. He is a regular sessional faculty at Ontario College of Art and Design and University of Guelph. <http://www.dbhutchinson.com/>

stated: "Theatre was the foil for painting. I'm only interested in it as much as it allowed me to make paintings about painting."

He expanded on this idea when he told me about a three-month residency he did by the seaside in Sweden. He explained that while the works were "landscapes" they were "not really about that." He said he would draw ripples from the water, and then go to the studio to make a plan on how to make abstractions of those. Determined to get away from the romance of the landscape and seascape, he learned that Leonardo da Vinci made scientific drawings of water. They were drawn so intricately, he told me, that they stopped looking like water and looked more like hair. He was fascinated with "how you could know something so well, that you move beyond it as a subject." In a sense, it is through always bringing it back to working with it in the studio that it moves beyond the subject, beyond simply being a representation of a subject from the outside world, and becomes something else through the engagement with the subject and process of making.

There's something that you take for granted when you're in a studio. I want to figure out what that is. So, my work whether there's a natural subject or a subject from the world out there, I try to always fold this artifice of the studio into it, or an over wrought or overworked sense into it that acknowledges the studio.

I visited Daniel Hutchinson in Hamilton several times over the course of this research and noted a large shift throughout that time. It appeared that he was drawing more connections between his everyday life and the affective, material and sensory studio practice. When I asked him why he paints he said: "I do think a really good, really affective painting can kind of hit you in the spleen or something, or make you feel like your feet aren't on the ground or something, or like you're lighter, or make you feel pain or discomfort." In that same conversation, we talked about intuition, and he described how intuition is everything we've seen or read or experienced bubbling up and coming out through the work. To explain his understanding of intuition to me he described an experience he remembers as a child, drawing with his hands on the carpet. He remembered drawing lines, a grid, a face and then erasing. I had always thought of his work on an intellectual level, alluding to art historical references, to black monochrome paintings

and conceptual art. This parallel with drawing on the carpet, however shifted that understanding for me toward considering the bodily and material engagements with the paintings. Hutchinson stated that for him painting functions best as an analogy, and as such, the subject of the painting is simply a way to examine painting.

Yes, they're analogies. The seascape made a lot of sense to me at one point because it is so wrapped up in cliché and romanticism. But then it really became insufficient very quickly, because the more you do, the more people think that that's the subject that you are interested in. So, I needed other subjects that could be similarly empty. And textiles as a genre is too broad to necessarily be about anything. (I guess fiber arts or clothing or something, or the tradition.) But I'm not interested in those really. I'm interested in the mirroring of the canvas as a surface, as a textile. And I'm interested in the tradition of decoration and abstraction. And I'm interested in the cycle of fashion and Modernism, particularly around a certain kind of colour and division of space and pattern. I love paintings that create context for other paintings. I like that dialogue.

He explained that these newer engagements with fabric were also drawn from walking around his new neighborhood in Hamilton which was filled with textile shops.

Hutchinson's engagement with the studio became more evident in our final visits, when he explained about the "frottage paintings" he was making. He made these paintings through rubbing against a surface in the studio and allowing the paint to reveal the marks and texture from the surface underneath. Sometimes the surface that he would frottage would be another painting, revealing the textural undercurrents of that painting. In others, he would frottage the studio floors or walls. With this work, he said he was thinking about our bodily engagements with the world. He said there is something about looking to the world outside the studios and seeing these affinities that predate his painting processes. These parallels interest him. Within these frottage paintings, he looked for these parallels between the experience or process of painting and a bodily engagement with the world. He compared this process in one case to the feeling gravel in your shoe, or in another case to the feeling of wearing wet clothing against your skin. For him the action of looking can parallel an action of the body.

[It alludes to] how I “felt” the painting with the squeegee or the rake or whatever it is. So, I have to find a title that suggests both looking and feeling; it suggests how I felt the painting with the squeegee. And I like this idea of having gravel in your shoe when you’re trying to stand somewhere or trying to have a conversation with somebody, and it’s this thing that you feel that you know is there but you can’t quite see it. And it impacts your body in a way that it maybe changes the gape in your walk. So, all of these slight variations in pressure and sensitivity around the gravel in your shoe. I like gravel because it has sharp edges, you can’t just leave it, you have to just attend to it at some point. Another title, *Clinging to your shoulders* is like a shirt that maybe got wet in the rain and hangs on you differently. So, you become aware of it in a way that it’s pulling on parts of your body that aren’t necessarily pulled on.



When I think of allegory, I think of it as referring to subject. In the case of Hutchinson’s work, he describes an allegory as process rather than subject. The allegories connect the act of painting and the act of looking to our experiences in the world. Specifically, in these recent works, they are allegories of our

material engagements in the world and our bodily memory of those experiences. Hutchinson further complicates the relationship to the subject as the viewer may look into these paintings that depict simply the act of painting, but instead find an image or subject. I looked at one of his paintings, a rubbing of another painting, but within the paint marks, I found a seascape. In a sense, Hutchinson inverts our usual expectations of painting as representation through making work that emerges from the studio itself. And through doing so he reveals its relationship to the world. So, rather than being in the studio painting a representation of the world, he instead paints from his engagements with painting in the studio, and what emerges is an image of our world, a projection onto the painting. Regarding this process, he states: “Painting is a vehicle to talk about our particular place in the world, our unique embodied place in the world. So, gestures tied to a particular body, or finding images in gestures seems honest. Finding images in there suggests a desire.” Through our interview, I further considered the complex relationship between representational and performative, and our body’s role within this process. By describing affinities between his body’s experiences the world, and how he paints, he draws connections between the studio practice and everyday experience. Through this process, he expressed how representational codes are performed rather than fixed, as he described how imagery emerges through a desire that is revealed through the looking process.

Painting Proposition 5: Painting as a conversation



Figure 54. Brendan Flanagan's studio, Montreal, 2014



Figure 55. Carol Wainio's studio, Ottawa, 2014

Artist Mary Heilmann¹⁰ discusses how every painting is an autobiographical marker, a memory of a place or event. She describes the process as a “*pas de deux* with natural force” (van den Boogerd, 2013, p. 19). She explains that a viewer can take pleasure in having a conversation with a painting: “I am very happy to sit and look all around at painting after painting and allow them to speak to me, as I silently, verbally or non-verbally talk with them, say things to them and to myself” (Heilmann, quoted in van den Boogerd, 2013, p.23). My interviews with artists similarly revealed painting as a conversation. This conversation exists not only between humans but also between artist and the painting. The term conversation emphasizes an exchange, a back and forth, rather than simply an interaction wherein one thing causes effects on the other. A conversation, reveals the way these effects occur in both direction through interactions. The artist affects the painting, while the painting affects the artist, in an ongoing exchange, an ongoing conversation.

In a presentation by Jan Verwoert (2013), he describes painting as a host:

¹⁰ Mary Heilmann (born 1940) is an American artist. She was an artist who had a large influence on future generation of painters (as exemplified by many artists that I interviewed who reference her work) (retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Heilmann).

Painting [is a] threshold between private and public...[The] canvas is the space of hosting. The canvas hosts the social that assembles in front of it. I would suggest that we shouldn't just think of the canvas as the surface of depiction, but as a strange social, the curtain, the veil, the projection screen, or even the tablet on which you serve the community the food, or the stage on which the community can assemble. Or if you look at painting as this social stage where different spaces exist next to each other. (retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=scYj-bDEaKI&t=2137>)

I am interested in the term *host* to describe how a painting functions, as it is a space between a fixed meaning and open-ended ambiguity. A host can have intentions, send out invitations and set a mood, but ultimately requires the response of those attending. It essentially sets the stage for various conversations to exist while still allowing for emergence. Verwoert critiques the heroic end game of action painting, a model from post-war that is about finality. He seeks out ways to describe painting that are not about this end-game scenario. One of his propositions is to replace this end game scenario with lateral movement, like a crab walking back and forth between settings. Using artist Mary Heilmann's painting *Save the Last Dance* as an example, he describes how the pink rectangles create a continual lateral movement, like a crab walking back and forth between the discotech and the studio. Rather than creating fixed connections, one moves between them. Describing the painting as a host opens it up to the interactive quality of painting.

In an interview with Toronto-based artist and professor at the University of Guelph, Monica Tap, she described her approach to teaching painting that allows for both personal interactions with the painting and social interactions beyond the canvas:

I often use the word conversation to describe art to my students. What I'm trying to do, and what I'm hoping students will come away from the classroom with, is a sense of painting as a conversation, not as a thing, where you just make objects and sell them. I want them to understand that these paintings are phrases that are uttered. They are parts of a conversation that extends beyond you. That's what conversation implies. It's not just the conversation you have with the canvas but it's the conversation that came before this that allows this painting to exist.

This painting may help to move the conversation a bit even in a tiny way but it doesn't exist on its own and it's that kind of generosity that I think is a necessity at the heart of art making.

As I listened to interviews, I looked for ways artists describe the process, that highlight the active quality of art, as an ongoing process. Tap's comment about art as conversation was an entry point to begin examining painting in this interactive way. Thinking back to when I studied art, I considered the continual use of the word *conversation* to describe interactions with paintings, between paintings and between artists. As I analyzed the interviews, I examined how artists use qualities of conversation to describe their process.

I am drawn to the term conversation because it reveals a variety of types of interactions, at times calm and stimulating, while at other times tense or oppositional. Some of the words that alluded to types of conversation that emerged in my interviews were: encounter; interrogation; interruption; improvisation; negotiation; breaking the ice; chatter; speaking; confrontation; yelling; silence; relationships; lying; hosting. For example, when discussing how she constructs a painting, Carol Wainio said she wants to see what elements in the painting will say to each other, or Sandra Meigs said, her recent work is a party of all the parts hanging out together. Allyson Clay described how text in her work interrupts a reading. Dil Hildebrand said we need to listen to what the painting is trying to tell us and Jennifer Carvahlo expressed how she needs to spend time with an image to understand its mood. When I commented about how the painting sitting behind him during our interview was contributing to our conversation, Ben Reeves said that the paintings are telling their own stories. Monica Tap explained how she was told by another artist that he knew a painting was done when it stops yelling at him; this statement resonated with her. Artists often talked about how their work was in conversation with other artists, or in dialogue with theoretical discourse or current events. What I find interesting about the way that artists frame these conversations, is that the language used highlights the variety of types of interactions and encounters one can have through painting. These terms reveal that conversations can be performative, provocative, improvisational, loud, quiet, one-directional or interactive. They reveal that

conversations can be highly influential and meaningful, or small and momentary. Furthermore, they reveal how conversation is a material process. They engage in material conversations with the paintings; the process, the space, their everyday lives and experiences, their embodied experience in the world, and with other artists and their work. These conversations bring intentionality into painting without limiting its possibilities. Describing painting as a conversation highlights the process rather than object. Furthermore, it highlights the emergent and responsive quality of art making; a conversation is not a pre-planned encounter, but rather one that emerges through the process. Lastly, it highlights the way the meaning is active rather than fixed and the relational quality of painting.

In a recent essay about artist studios, art theorist Lane Relyea (2010) challenges the myth of the isolated space of the artist studio. Relyea instead addresses the relational quality of art making and describes the studio as one of networks:

No longer does the studio appear as an ideological frame that mystifies production, a space where realities of social or mass production are supposedly held at bay in favour of an antiquated craft model that showcases the individual artist's creative genius. And no longer is the studio seen as belonging to a 'system' . . . as a space characterized by box-like enclosures, of 'frames and limits,' each assigned a discreet place in some rigid, stable, and all-determining structure or order. What system or structure does exist today is more properly described as a *network*. (Relyea, 2010, p. 220)

Relyea (2010) examines the art studio as well as the art school within a larger network of interlocking functions in society, within a web of connections and distributions. Relyea describes these spaces as locations of change, rupture, multidirectional movement, mobility and transmutation (p. 220). Furthermore, he highlights the connection between practice and everyday life. According to Relyea, the new studio integrates rather than retreats (p. 222).

I embraced this conception of the studio as network as a way of describing the vast connections one makes through art practice, between ideas, people, materials and experiences. It acknowledges how art is never 'about' one thing; it usually engages with several layers of meanings and connections. I view

this network as both something that exists within the studio as each artist makes a multitude of connections through their work. And I view it as a network that connects artists and communities of practice. While this description of a studio as network continues to resonate with me as a way of highlighting the active and multiple connections within art making, Monica Tap's description of art making as conversation extended my understanding to address the qualities of these networks. Rather than simply highlighting a connection, a conversation highlights an interaction, a relationship. As the words described above reveal, a conversation takes on many forms, and by emphasizing the language one uses to describe these conversations, it not only signifies a connection, it signifies an intent, an attitude, and an ongoing responsiveness. Conversation is an emergent learning process wherein one brings their own histories, ideas and experiences, but responds as the conversation develops. Within painting, this conversation occurs with the canvas as one engages with materials, however it also occurs as a way of connecting the understandings that emerge through the making with the social networks outside of the studio that informs the decisions in the studio. It reveals a complicated relationship between our engagement with the painting, and as Tap describes, all the conversations that allowed it to emerge. In the next section, I expand on how painting is a conversation through describing ways that painting is an encounter between the artist and the painting.

Painting Proposition 6: Painting as an encounter

This proposition draws on the previous one as artists engage further with how one creates conversation through an encounter with the painting. I discuss ways that artists embrace the painting process as a ‘call and response’ or ‘setting the stage for encounters.’ Through the works of Eliza Griffiths and Carol Wainio, I propose that by engaging with painting as encounter, artists become open to the inventive qualities of learning through painting, as the emergent characters, stories and conversations allow for new connections to emerge. I extend these ideas further as I discuss how Ashleigh Bartlett personifies her paintings as she learns about how she relates to people on her daily encounters. Lastly, I discuss Janet Werner to examine how through the encounter with the painting, the painting is continually transforming and explore how painting is a way of feeling.

Eliza Griffiths: A process of call and response

In my visit with Montreal-based artist, Eliza Griffiths¹¹ (figure 56-57) she described her paintings as armatures for psychological explorations. Her work explicitly engages with art making as encounter, as she calls the paintings partners in dialogue, between herself and the painting; they engage in a process of call and response. Through this dialogue, Griffiths explores thought, gender, power dynamics, trauma and desire. She explained how these themes are explored as the figurative imagery in the paintings transform through her conversation with them; genders may change, costumes change, and the gaze shifts. She says the paintings proliferate possibilities that can't be predicted, because the medium is really active, it's hard to control, and you can't visualize the unquantifiable possibilities of each move. As with characters in an improvised play, Griffiths explained that they needed to take their time building up the character: “What's going to finish it is not obvious, because when I rush and try to complete them, I think they are getting a bit smothered. They don't breathe. And what's important to me is that they stay active.” As I looked at her

¹¹ Eliza Griffiths is an established artist living in Montreal, QC. She holds a BFA from Concordia University and an MFA from Carleton University. She is an Associate Professor at Concordia University. We met twice in her Montreal-based studio. <http://www.elizagriffiths.com>

work I was particularly drawn into an image of a women sitting on a psychiatrist's couch, which she explained emerged in response to comics in the New Yorker. She explained how the woman's face had been the element that had changed several times throughout the process, the character going through several emotions throughout the creation of the painting as if the painting process performed the psychiatric session it depicted. If I moved around, I could see the various layers peering through at me.



Figures 56-57. Eliza Griffiths' studio, Montreal, 2015

Describing her process as material philosophy, it is her way of thinking while creating marks.

When I think about the finished thing, the object, I have a very different relationship to that, because I don't really care about it as a picture really. The reason I'm interested in doing this, and the reason for my interest in psychology, is that I'm interested in human brains and conversation and experiences. I like the idea that these are triggers for people to have that back-and-forth with. But at the same time, I hope it is a bit beyond their comfort zone, to be slightly disruptive. It's like I'm being Dr. Frankenstein.

Griffith's process reveals how she came to understand psychological processes through her engagement with the characters in the painting. By comparing painting to an improvisational play, she reveals the performative engagement as one learns in conversation with the painting, in this case as the characters within the painting were created themselves.



Carol Wainio: Setting the stage for encounters

In Ottawa, Carol Wainio¹² (figures 58-59) described painting as creating a scene and allowing something to happen. She explained how she'll start out with intentions but then something will happen: "It's part of that play of intent and non-intent." There has always been a narrative component to her work, but it is not telling a story. Instead she describes them as propositions.

¹² Carol Wainio is an established artist living in Ottawa, ON. She has an MFA from Concordia University. She received a Governor General's Award in Visual Art in 2014. We met once in her Ottawa-based studio.
<http://www.carolwainio.com>

She began being interested in fairy tales when she read them to her young children. However, how she approached this subject emerged out of reading Walter Benjamin and his discussions of pre-modern modes of experience. She developed her interest through observing her children's first experience with visual images. "I was fascinated with that process, interested in how both of my kids' experience of them was almost echoed and paralleled pre-modern society's apprehension of early images. They were scarce, rare and powerful, as they are for children when they first see them." What began within this context snowballed into Wainio seeking out older versions of fairy tales, seeking out earliest versions of the stories, and looking at earlier illustrations.

It was ongoing for 10 years. It's such a rich area that I'm still finding stuff along those lines. First finding what I could in local libraries, then to online archives, then to Europe and going to the real archives or historical illustration. Then finding out that Walter Benjamin, whose writings had sparked that interest, had a children's book collection he had preserved in Frankfurt. There were a number of full circles like that. It was a collection of children's books that he managed to keep despite it being in Nazi Germany and he had to flee. I went to look at that collection twice. And I saw how early illustrations were hand copied from one to the other. So, I could literally see how this is copied from this one and it's flipped and it's hand copied, then it's mechanically reproduced. So, what does that say about Benjamin's work about mechanical reproduction or narrative?

She explained to me the story of *Puss and Boots* and how this tale was told and retold. She explained that it is a story about impossible transformation that was set in a time when there was no social mobility. This cat then became a salesman for consumer products in the 19th and 20th century. She talked about coincidences that would occur and parallels that she would see between these stories and contemporary life. For example, she'd be reading about a Puss and Boots meeting a 17th century farmer and find parallels in a newspaper article about contemporary farming practices in India. Through painting, Wainio could bring those connections together. I asked her how she brings these concepts into her paintings in the studio.

They start with a place for something to happen, sometimes I know or think I know what's going to happen, who is going to be meeting who, or what might transpire, or what kind of space I want.

I'll have some sense of that, but there will be changes. But to say they're narrative is somewhat of a misnomer. In a sense, they deal with issues of narrative, but they are not narrative in the sense that you can read them. I don't think there's a possibility for a fixed reading anymore. I don't think that the conditions for reading narrative painting exist anymore. So, what happens in them, is that there's a space that gets created, then elements are put into the space to see what they say to each other, or how they can inform each other.

Looking around the studio, another painting with characters that appeared to be *Hansel and Gretel* were combined with images of a 7th grade students' drawing of the greenhouse effect. She explained how she'd combined images from children's books and children's drawings of oil rigs.

I asked Wainio why she makes art:

Why make art? I wish I could stop. It's my way of working through some of this stuff. I want to know what happens when I make it material. I find images interesting, even the most banal. I'm fascinated by choices when there are a million choices. It's like the multiple universe theory in physics. Every step of the way you could go in so many different directions. That's more pronounced in paint. There's something about the accidents that happen that might take you somewhere else.





Figures 58-59. Carol Wainio's studio, Ottawa, 2014

Wainio's work reveals how artists perform and use research in their work for the purpose of invention as they combine disparate sources of research that unfold on the canvas to produce new connections. This interview reveals the way one learns through engaging with imagery through the process of painting in a way that responds to both the painting and our experiences that influence our responses. She also reveals the way artistic research emerges often through moments that trigger questions that lead to new curiosities. Wainio explained how a particular moment in her life (reading to her children) sent her on a curious path of discovery, as the scenes and the characters in the paintings do not simply represent the stories from the illustrations, but instead draw connections between multiple paths of investigation. Through this process she reveals the inventive potentials of learning through painting.

Ashleigh Bartlett: Summer friends

I visited Ashleigh Bartlett's¹³ (figures 60-61) studio twice, once in Calgary and once at an artist residency on Toronto Island. What struck me both times was the life-like quality of her abstract work. In the first visit, the room was filled with pieces of fabric hanging in clusters on the wall and paintings of abstracted, anthropomorphic figures. She talked about how she had been a figure skater as a child. She said these childhood experiences with performance influenced her current interest: "I'm not interested in nostalgia, but thinking about things I spent a lot of time doing and looking at and wondering why is it that we have these systems for doing things, whether it's dramatic costuming or the theatricality." She talked about how she had always been interested in female artists that responded to Abstract Expressionism¹⁴. On my second visit, I saw Bartlett at a studio in a residency in an old school on Toronto Island. The works had expanded beyond small pieces of fabrics hung on the wall and were now cut up paintings hung on the wall, like life-size puppets. We discussed how she had begun cutting up old paintings over the course of the past year, as a new exploration and means to generate ideas and forms from existing paintings. She also told me that as someone who had grown up on the cusp of the digital revolution, she was interested in a particular kind of flat cartoon imagery.

Between our two visits, Bartlett had moved to a new city and was travelling a lot, and she said she spent a lot of time observing people because she spent so much of her time alone. Once on the island she said it prompted a more figurative language, reminiscent of hands and body parts, claiming: "I do think that comes from a sense of observing people." When she first started these works, she called them

¹³ Ashleigh Bartlett is an emerging artist from Calgary, AB, currently residing in Boston, USA. She received a BFA from the Alberta College of Art and Design and an MFA from the University of Guelph. She was a finalist in the RBC Painting Competition in 2014 and received a Lieutenant Governor's Emerging Artist Award in 2016. We met once in her Calgary-based studio on a second occasion at an artist residency on Toronto Island.

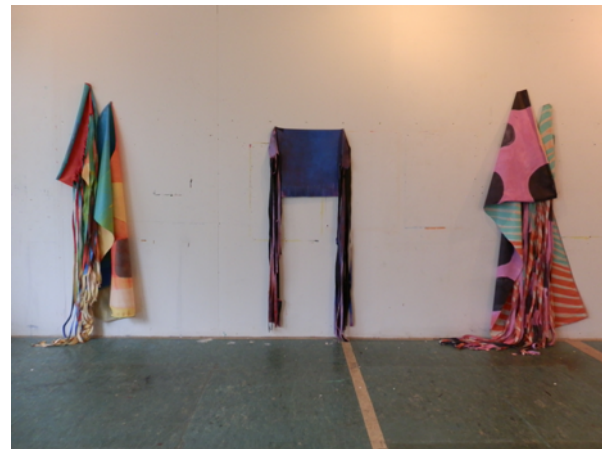
<http://www.ashleighbartlett.com/>

¹⁴ Abstract Expressionism is a post-World War 2 American art movement. Some significant artists included in that movement were Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Willem de Kooning and Barnett Newman and it was developed largely through the promotion of Clement Greenberg (retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abstract_expressionism). This movement had a large impact on art that followed from conceptual art, through postmodern critiques of painting which also framed art education for the later part of the 20th century. Artists continue to discuss their work in conversation with Abstract Expressionism (sometimes referred to by artists herein as Ab Ex) as exemplified within many of the interviews.

her “Summer Friends” because they started taking on human attributes. She explained she was interested in recreating the small pieces into larger figures to explore the physicality of them. “I think they act as characters.” She reminded me of a conversation we’d had the previous visit that had stuck with her:

Last year we talked about two things I remembered that were really important to me. One was about postures. That was something you offered. I think posture is interesting because it attributes to the body and the figure things you observe about people. These are things I’m actually aware of. It comes from my experience with dance and skating. But there’s also this other way of thinking about the posture of an object.

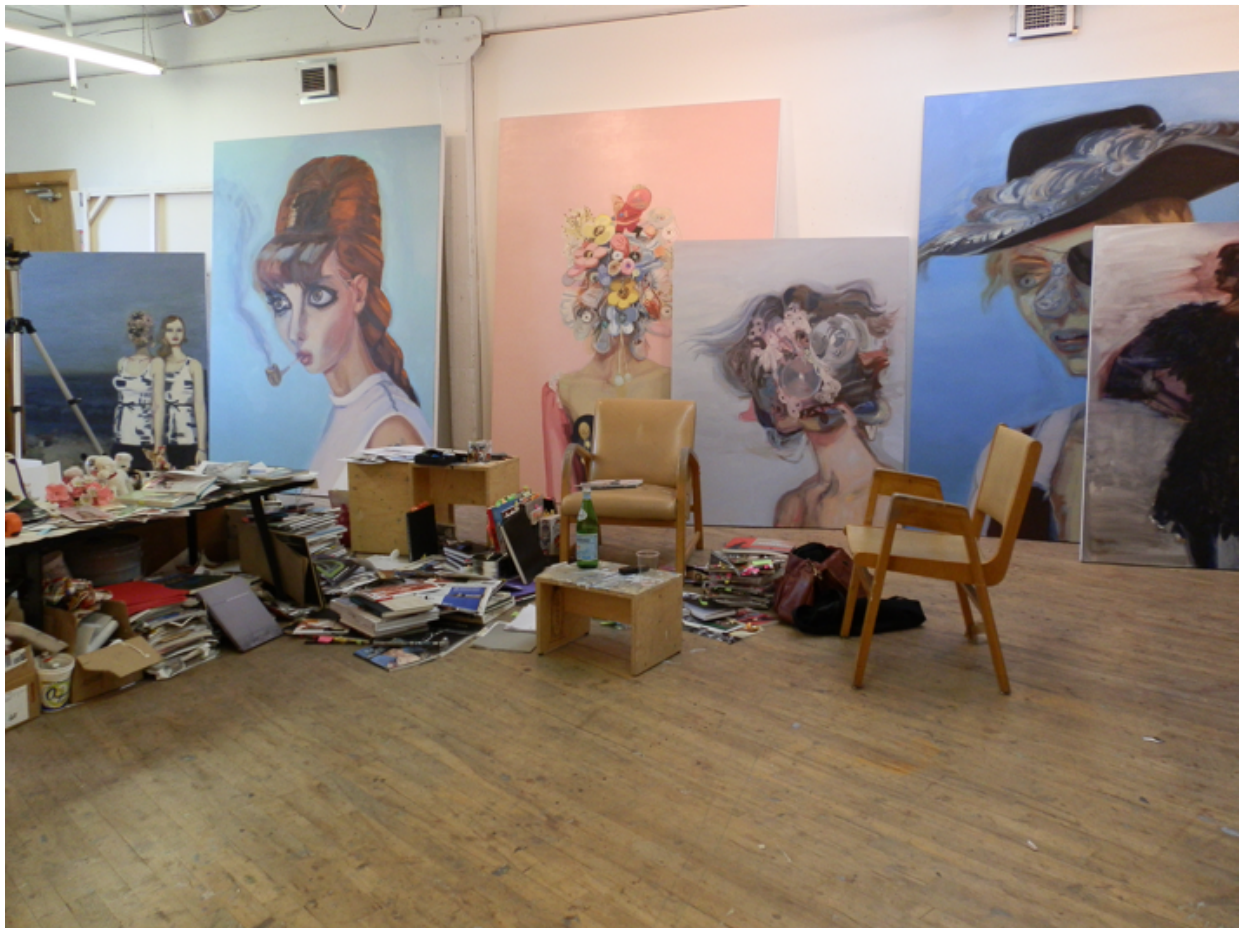
We discussed the term posture at great length, wondering what that means to assign postures to objects and considering how postures animate these objects. My visit with Bartlett revealed how one may engage with art objects through projecting human-like qualities onto them. She revealed how it prompted consideration of how painting allowed her to learn about how she engages with others in the world. She explained that it made her aware of how by moving to a new city and not knowing many people, she began observing others from a distance. She suggested that these new behaviours were revealed in how she engaged with the paintings as ‘friends’ in her studio.



Figures 60-61. Ashleigh Bartlett’s studio, Calgary, 2014, Toronto, 2015

Janet Werner: I like a view but I like to sit with my back to it

My two visits with Janet Werner¹⁵ (figures 62-64) in Montreal brought us into an exploratory and generative conversation about ways that artists *think through painting*. Through our conversation, we dissected the learning and thinking process of painting. This conversation revealed not only how Werner thinks through her process, but also the ways that conversation, like painting is an emergent process, wherein we came to deeper understandings of painting through our dialogue. As such, this conversation was significant in revealing the generative and creative process of conversation.



¹⁵ Janet Werner is an established artist living in Montreal, QC. She received a BFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art and an MFA from Yale University. She is a Professor at Concordia University. We met twice in her Montreal-based studio.



Figures 62-63. Janet Werner's studio, Montreal, 2014, 2015.

Werner compared the creative process to digging a hole and trying to find your way out. She explained that the work goes from the beginning point to some other endpoint, and during this time, something happens that transforms it into something else. And she expressed that this process is fraught with feelings of inadequacy, failure, hopelessness, but she keeps going because she loves the game. We spent time talking about her complicated relationship with portraiture:

It's interesting, lately instead of painting portraits, I'm obliterating the face most often. So, I'm wondering why: 'Am I trying to not paint portraits and if I am why don't I just not paint portraits?' I have this really nice quote from Gertrude Stein who says 'I like a view but I like to sit with my back to it.' So, I think about that in terms of faces. I like the face but I like to not be able to see it. Because the face is such a revealer, it's such a locus of meaning and communication and terrible honesty. So, why the portrait? For starters it's not so much about portraiture as it is about encounter. It's not portraiture because it is not specific people, whereas I still think a portrait suggests that it's of someone. And these aren't, because they're invented, because they're composites.

She explained that she believes that she is actually going against the idea of the portrait, the historic image of a portrait or a specific person. We discussed the comparison between historical portraiture of iconic people, and how I interpreted her work in a similar way, drawing from glamour magazines that elevate these figures to a similarly iconic level. We discussed those parallels.

I guess that's what they do have in common with the portrait is the formal framing of the figure. It's a solitary figure. So, it's somewhat within that convention, but it also works against it. It's subversive in some ways, because it is not about wealth and glamour. I've always been fascinated with very primal direct things and nonlinguistic experiences. So, the eye to eye communication that happens is preverbal or happens on another level is inarticulate. I'm really interested in the inarticulate. And all that communication and experience is very real and very true but we don't have language for. So, that is sort of my attraction to the portrait. And I like that it is non-narrative in general, that it's not a story. However, the story is contained in the person, and I'm interested in how you can talk about your interior life through external appearances.

She explained that through her process she would introduce complications to the painting as a way of manifesting the interior onto the painting. Some of these complications might be: distortions, costuming, gesture, covering the face or masking.

Why do you use the glamorized and idealized beauty images?

A couple of reasons. One is because it's available. And two, its generic. They're not portraits of specific people, usually. They're models and models are there to be anyone, so they lend themselves really well to the idea of projection and transformation. For me, the issue is to remove them sufficiently from that source so that you don't find yourself thinking about fashion and glamour primarily when you're looking at the work. But that somehow they've been taken somewhere else, so they can be claimed as being less perfect and troubled, a different kind of narrative.

So, what happens through the process of painting? You talk a lot about transformation, and say that painting is about transformation. So, what is transformed through the process? Or how do they transform?

Well going from the generic to the specific for example. I hope that through the construction of painting, and this is what the creative process is about, hopefully I arrive at something that's more specific and less generic. Usually when I look at the source material I find it really boring, I hate

the source material most the time. But the idea is to move from the generic to the specific through the process of painting. I believe that color is this language that can create meaning, even though it's nonverbal. It can create a mood and meaning in that sense, like communication of some kind, just by the physical effects of the color. So, what is transformed? It might just be a dramatization of something that's already there but taken to a different extreme. It usually involves an exaggeration of some kind. And how is often through scale, through color, through drawing, through mis-drawing, through accidents, through the time-based process of drawing and painting.

You described them earlier as empty. Do you feel like through the process you are giving them personality, do you feel an empathy towards them?

Yes, definitely. Mostly when I'm disgusted by this image it is because they are so shallow and they don't have a depth, and they want something from you. They want your money. Whereas the painting doesn't really want anything except for you to engage with them as objects, and ideas and images. So, it removes the instrumental aspect.

Have you always only painted women (since painting figures)?

It's always woman or animals. Sometimes there's a guy but it's rare. Guys are very rare.

Why do you think that is?

I think woman function better in our culture as vessels of the imagination. If you look around at all the images that are produced in our culture it's mostly images of women, and one of the reasons is because, as someone once said 'men look at women and women look at women.' Not to say we don't look at men, but men tend to have a very stereotypical role in the image world. It's interesting, masculinity and images of power are often associated, and when you see images of men they are usually trying to project some sort of power, which is not that interesting. Whereas woman project all kinds of things. Sometimes it's a vulnerability, sometimes it's power, sometimes it's beauty, all kinds of things. Whereas guys are very limited in visual culture in terms of what they're allowed to do, how they like to be seen. And even in real life, there are a lot of prohibitions on how men are supposed to behave. Women are more free in a certain way and also more tied. It's also because I identify with women. But I also try to invest the figures with some sort of power and vulnerability at the same time. It's hard to do that with images of men.

Do you feel like you see yourself in them, or are these characters that you're creating?

Yes, they're characters. They're always projections on some level of something that's in your mind, so in a sense they can be interpreted as self-portraits. I usually have to be able to identify with the characters. Or like them on some level. If I don't like them then I change them.

So that's one of the things that propels the constant transformation of them?

Definitely.

Werner and I talked about the phrase 'making as thinking.' This phrase had been used by several artists and curators in recent years. She explained that she makes these things as a way of thinking. "They are like experiments, which is a form of thinking." But through our conversation, she moved away from that phrase to propose that in fact "thinking is making." The inversion of the phrase she proposed reveals the generative and creative process of thinking. As we delved further, she took this a step further to propose that "making is feeling." She was interested in these experiences that elude or escape language.

I think that is the power of painting. If it has any power and if it has any meaning that isn't in words, it would be that you can feel it. Maybe that's true of any art but I think it's especially true with painting, and maybe poetry. It is that you feel it.

Through our conversation, Werner revealed a significant quality of learning through painting that is challenging to articulate in words: painting is a feeling process.



Figure 64. Janet Werner's studio, Montreal, 2015 (this image stared back at me throughout our interview)

Painting Proposition 7: Painting as absorbing our experiences in the world

The discussion from the previous proposition regarding feeling and its role in learning through painting, is extended into this proposition as I discuss how this sensory and affective process of painting allows artists to understand themselves and their experiences in the world. Garoian (2013) begins his book discussing the prosthetic space of art by remembering a painting class years ago. He remembers standing behind a canvas and remembers being encouraged by a painting teacher:

The creative impulse for difference, the curiosity and desire for seeing and understanding the world and others differently, in new and compassionate ways through art research and practice, was first introduced to me by that painting teacher, who suggested that the unknowing, fear, and anxiety that I experienced before the empty space of the canvas constituted opportunities for transformation. (p. 5)

Garoian emphasizes the ways that painting may allow for impossible associations, connections, and relationships to emerge (p. 4). He believes that “artists create and open spaces into which existing knowledge can extend” (p. 6). Thus, through art making, we create extensions and connections through the act of looking, seeing, making, thinking and reflecting. He uses the prosthesis as a metaphor for embodiment and lived experience that challenges the “utopian myth of wholeness and normality in art and the human body” (p. 19). The prosthetic is embodied knowing and being, and allows for divergent interconnectivity (p. 19). Furthermore, he argues that ambiguities and indeterminacies are an essential part of art making.

O’Sullivan (2010) describes contemporary art as an excess, as more than signification. He describes two ways that art may operate, firstly through dissent or criticism, and secondly through affirmation or creativity. Noting that through the 1980s and 90s artists worked through the ruins of representation, he now seeks out the affirmative, stating that through art the goal is the “production of worlds rather than critique of worlds” (p. 197). He notes a return to object based work, a re-engagement with painting as subjective subject matter, and a turn (back) toward the aesthetic potentials of art practices noting “art is more than just an object to be read” (p. 190). O’Sullivan describes how art may produce a

new subjectivity through creating an affective response. O'Sullivan discusses contemporary art as assemblages and he argues that it isn't simply about creating new assemblages, but rather creating a new subjectivity (p. 192). This assemblage process allows for new understandings of acting and being in the world (p. 196). He describes these affective assemblages: "Artists offer up new compositions of affect, new affective assemblages that are different to those we are more familiar with. It is this that differentiates art, as specific form of thought from mere opinion... Indeed, the active production of subjectivity – our processual self-creation – is in general an aesthetic business" (p. 199). According to him through our affective responses, art brings forth a new subject rather than simply reinforcing what is already there. "Art is not just made for an existing subject in the world, but to draw forth a new subject from within that which is already in place." (204). While in this article, he refers largely to the viewing of art, this perspective also applies to the making of art. He argues that through creative work in the world, we may produce an 'auto-enriching' subjectivity (p. 206). This processual subjectivity and self-creation that may occur through art making, I propose is the way ones learns about ourselves through painting, and in turn allows us to engage in the world differently.

Barrett (2013) argues that art making absorbs everyday practice. She states that knowledge gained through everyday experience in the world is recreated through artistic practice (p. 66). Barrett argues that within the process of making, our experiences in the world may be transferred through the work. However, she also argues that the work might simultaneously reflect back onto the artist perspectives or understandings of the world that may not have been apparent prior to the making (p. 67). This encounter, this potential for a work to reflect back to the artist something that may not have been understood prior to the making reveals the dialogic quality of art making. It is a conversation between the artist and the art work, and between the materials and the process. Arguing that making is embodied, affective and experiential, the knowledge produced through the performance of making is particular, indeterminate and subjective. This process that Barrett describes whereby work reflects back something that they may not have been aware of shifts an understanding of reflection from simply mirroring sameness toward causing an effect. Within this discussion, reflection actually becomes a diffractive process. I propose that rather

than represent something that is already known, this diffraction process allows new understandings and potentials to emerge.

In his book, *The Object Stares Back* James Elkins (1996) describes vision as forever incomplete and uncontrollable. He describes the potential for art works to affect and transform us:

If we imagine the eyes as navigational devices, we do so in order *not* to come to terms with what seeing really is. Seeing is like hunting and like dreaming, and even like falling in love. It is entangled in the passions – jealousy, violence, possessiveness; and it is soaked in affect – in pleasure and displeasure, and in pain. Ultimately, seeing alters the thing that is seen and transforms the seer. Seeing is metamorphosis, not mechanism. (p. 11-12)

Through the following examples I discuss how artists engage with their experiences in the world. I firstly discuss my interview with Ben Reeves who dissects ways that painting allows him to understand his place in the world. Next I discuss Sandra Meigs who addresses how we learn about ourselves through painting and how through this process we may engage with ways our experiences may be understood universally. Through our interview, Meigs reveals the ways that paintings both receive effects and create effects. Lastly, I discuss John Brown who uses the term “painting’s leakage” to express how experiences become embodied through the act of making. Through these artists, I exemplify the ways that the painting process embodies and expresses our experiences, thus drawing a connection and a relationship between the inside and outside of the studio. Through this process, I propose artists may learn about how they engage with the world they inhabit.

Ben Reeves: Art as a vehicle for understanding the world



Figures 65-66. Ben Reeves' studio, Vancouver, 2014

“Tangents in the studio are a natural part of it” Ben Reeves¹⁶ (figure 65-66). responded when I apologized for taking him on a seemingly unrelated trail of conversation during our Vancouver studio visit. I first saw an exhibition of Ben Reeves’ work in 2010 when I visited an exhibition in Toronto entitled *Oil and Water*. The title, I interpreted as alluding to the phrase ‘oil and water don’t mix,’ while also referencing the subject of the painting, that of rainy days, and the material of the painting, oil. Upon

¹⁶ Ben Reeves is a mid-career artist living in Vancouver, BC. He received a BFA from the University of British Columbia and an MA from the Chelsea College of Art and Design. He is an Associate Professor at Emily Carr University of Art and Design. We met once in his Vancouver-based studio. During the course of my research, he also visited me in my studio, an experience which extended our conversation and allowed me to bring our conversations back into my own studio. <https://www.benreeves.org>

walking into the gallery, I was first struck by the materiality of the paint on the canvases. The paintings were made up of large, dripping blobs of paint, and thick brush marks. The rain drops themselves which dominate the paintings are thick, drippy blobs of paint often as large as the size of a hand and protruding off the canvas. Upon closer examination, it becomes clear that these are in fact representations of people walking on the street in the rain. The obvious and exaggerated presence of the paint confronts the viewer with the fact that they are looking at paintings. The work addresses how a painting is simultaneously both representation and material, image and paint. We can shift back and forth between the representational image and the materiality but cannot see both at the same time. In this exhibition, Reeves' work both reinforces this theory through its exaggeration of the materiality while simultaneously complicating it. Through the use of thick, drippy paint, Reeves puts the materiality of the paint to the forefront of the painting and breaks down the illusion of its representation. The fact that the materiality of the paint takes precedence over the imagery within the painting makes the viewer question preconceived notions about objective viewing of representations in paintings. Through moving back and forth between materiality and representation, the looking becomes an active process.

In our interview, we talked about the relationship between thinking and making as we engaged in conversations about why he paints.

Why do you make art?

Well there are a lot of answers. I don't know if it's a hard question, but there are just so many answers. I think for me, the first way to think about it is that art is probably one of the most, if not the most useful vehicle for me to think about things, and for me to understand my place in the world. That's essentially what it is. So, it's a way of investigating things. It's a speculative way of thinking, theorizing, philosophizing and exploring things. So, a lot of my work about how perception functions to generate understandings of things, and my work often, when they're representational, they take sources that are just really close to home, highly regional, local, from my every day and start to pull that experience apart. So, they're about the world in that sense, and about trying to understand that. But they've also become really self-conscious about the lens that they offer for understanding as well. So, they start to pull themselves apart too. So, the picture

starts to become a subject as a device for understanding the world which is also a subject. So, they really offer me a way to think about things. Thinking about things is a compulsion.

Thinking or making is a compulsion?

They both feed each other. I make things and then I think about them and then I make things in order to think about them, so yes, the pictures become the subjects. But also, I'm reflecting on it. Reflecting is another word that is useful, reflecting on things. But it's weird because just as I'm talking about thinking and how it's thinking about the world, I'm thinking about myself, thinking about my work. I'm thinking about meditation too. Where you're trying to evacuate thought. And that also oddly has a place in the practice where it is an immersion in a moment and in a place. And I think perhaps, that's also why when they're representational, they're very local subject. As I'm saying it, it sounds contradictory, but in the work it doesn't feel contradictory at all because thinking and being are part of the same thing.

Do you tend to separate that thinking/analyzing moment from the making/intuitive moment?

I think they're woven together. I think there are times when one is emphasized over the other and it maybe shifts back and forth a bit, but it's hard to say there's a clear line. Language is such a useful tool, but I always have a lot of difficulty with it because language often wants to supply definitions to things. It starts to draw boundaries between this and that and often definitions are created through oppositions. So, there is a sense that the analytical is not the material or not the intuitive and I think, sitting here talking, that makes perfect sense. But in actual doing, I don't think that makes any sense. So, I think they're not so divided and defined and separate. I think making a mark with a brush and paint on a surface can be incredibly analytic. There are different ways of using language. And typical academic language is trying to define or make a point and it wants to be readable and understood in a particular way. There's other ways of using language that are more poetic, and I always think of that as when language starts to escape itself, which is a different moment.

Reeves articulates a struggle that was described by many artists, the limits of language in accounting for the embodied way one understands our experiences through the materials of painting. Furthermore, he complicates and challenges binary ways of examining thinking and making, analytic and intuitive, as he explains how they become interwoven through the act of making. Through complicating dichotomies between thinking and making, or thinking and being, my conversation with Reeves began to unfold an

ontology of practice, and painting as a way of being. This ontology, as described by Reeves is a complex interweaving of intuition, analysis, feeling and thinking.



Sandra Meigs: A Strange Loop



Figure 67. Sandra Meigs' studio, Victoria, 2015

“I think art in general, and most good artists are after the unknown. They’re after discovery in some way.” This was how Governor General Award winner, Sandra Meigs¹⁷ (figures 67-70) in Victoria, BC, described the artistic process. I was immediately taken in by the eloquence and thoughtfulness with which she discussed her work as well as her vulnerability in bringing her personal experiences into the conversation. She explained that she had looked at my website and was intrigued by the fact that I had entitled an exhibition “A Strange Loop” (figure 68). She had had an exhibition by the same title that was based on a book *I am a strange loop* by Douglas Hofstadter (2007). This coincidence allowed me to consider how my thoughts about painting had changed in the years since I had had that exhibition. For Meigs, the strange loop represents the relationship between our inner and outer world, this interaction that

¹⁷ Sandra Meigs is an established artist, currently living in Hamilton, Ontario. She received a BFA from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and an MA from Dalhousie University. She received a Governor General’s Award in Visual Art in 2015. She recently retired as a Professor from the University of Victoria. We met twice in her Victoria-based studio. <http://www.sandrameigs.com>

occurs through art making. Regarding this exhibition at Carlton University Art Gallery, Meigs stated: “The idea of this loop around the microcosm that we understand as the ‘self’ and the macrocosm that is the world is an important realm for the artist to explore. I believe that, within this loop, the imagination takes form.” Curator, Diana Nemiroff (2009) addresses the title *Strange Loop* in an exhibition catalogue of Meigs’ work. She explains Douglas Hofstadter’s (2007) description of a strange loop: “In his book *I am a strange loop*, he describes in detail the emergence of a reflexive symbolic structure in the mind that continues to develop throughout our lives, producing ‘an extraordinary deep and tangled self-model’” (p. 13). Meigs created paintings of 19th century mansions as metaphors for this loop that is generated through the interaction between the outside world and the mind. She went to Newport Rhode Island twice to draw from these stick and shingle mansions, and, according to her, the mansion paintings reflect this projection of our inner self onto an outside world.

When I met with Meigs, I asked her about her choice of this book and she explained that she was interested in the relationship between the mind and reality and how we project the inner workings of the mind through to the outer world. We discussed how we were interested in the book in terms of the philosophical and psychological content but it fell short when it brought in art as examples because it didn’t get beyond representation. Meigs revealed her evaluation of his writing: “I found the use of some art models like Escher as corny, because you can take it further with art. This is true of many philosophers. They can’t get past art more than a stereotype of representation. So, it’s flat symbolism. Whereas his thought has potential for art as a model of the viewers looking at the art and it influencing them at the same time.” In a sense, she was discussing this ongoing material conversation artists engage in with the work; work transforms the artist as the artist transforms the work. This back and forth effect, I interpret as a diffractive process wherein this back-and-forth generates ongoing effects.

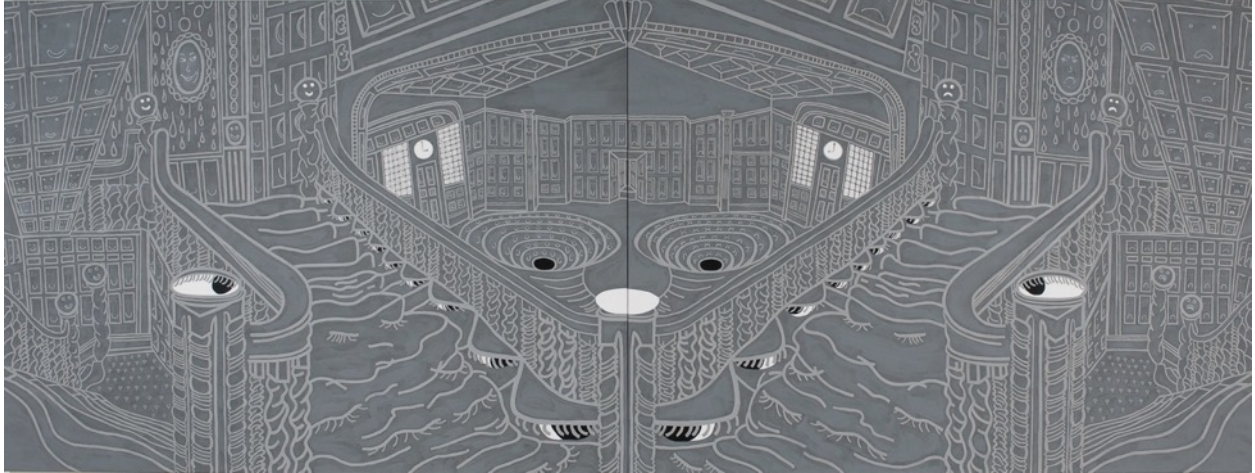


Figure 68, *System Watch*, 2008, Acrylic on linen, 190 x 508cm. A painting from the exhibition “A Strange Loop”

Meigs explained how this body of work came about when she had been doing research into architecture and began visiting mansions. She explained the interaction between herself, the space and the art-making process through the embodied engagement with space: “In the act of drawing you’re projecting your mind onto the surroundings at the same time as the surroundings are influencing what you are drawing. So, I saw that parallel as a model in the way I was thinking of the world and the relationship to it.” This interest in how we can project our internal world onto spaces led to work about basements. She visited her sister’s basement in Pennsylvania and made drawings from photographs of the basement. She then went on a trip to see a famous mural by Orozco, an old muralist from the 1930s at Dartmouth college. She went there to see how it might influence her own panorama making. She spent a week in that library, and said she projected on those spaces, but it was a different process than sitting and drawing. This experience led her to paint basements: “And that was the start of discovery and encountering all these basements in my journey.”

Her husband had recently passed away and she said she realized she could project that grieving process onto more personal spaces. She explained that she created four paintings that helped her work through the grief about the death of her husband. She began working from a crawl space in the house they

had shared. She said she had strong feelings about those spaces, having to crawl on her stomach to access them. But they became a space on which to project her feelings about grieving:

Each one became a stage. So, the first one, the red one, is when death announces itself and is titled *Mortality*. And you realize you're mortal. And the second one was from when I went on a retreat on Gabriola, called the Haven, and I went there for a week and did a program called "Come Alive." A lot of people are there because of trauma and they teach you to communicate with yourself and others. One of the lessons they teach, is how to breath. So, that became very vital to getting reintegrated...So that became the subject of the blue painting. Then the yellow one was that state when you can't really settle. Your mind is all over the place. I call that one *Insomnia* (figure 69). And then finally, I felt really good about everything, like I was lucky to have met him and he taught me so much. And I felt, reborn or transformed. And wanting to live every moment. So, that was the grey one, the exposition of life and death and meeting in the middle.



Figure 69. *Yellow. 435 Longmeadow. (Insomnia)*. 2013, acrylic on canvas, 72" x 569"

Her candidness and vulnerability discussing the personal experiences and how it affected her paintings was something I hadn't seen in painting in a long time. She said she had always used personal experience

in finding content to make work about. But she also realizes there is a reticence to making work that is emotional in content. At the same time, she realizes that expressing herself in these visual forms is a way of communicating with others about experiences that others can relate to. She believes these works resonate with people because these are experiences everyone can relate to and she tries to find the proper avenue for things to become universal. She explained her belief that artists have that talent to reveal those experiences:

How do we access intuition? Artists have visual talents, a closeness to that part of experience... Intuition is not irrational thought, but it's a kind of thought that is beyond the world. Because we all have an unconscious mind, that's what intuition is, and it's tapping into that and allowing it full credit. Because it's so huge. But in our culture, it plays a much lower value. You can look at dreams and how important they are to living our lives. And visualization. When you imagine, when you start a painting, it doesn't come from stuff you know, because if it did you probably wouldn't want to do it. In a way, you almost have to define what you mean by intuition, because it can mean subjectivity which in an academic institution is not that well regarded. It can mean acting impulsively which isn't that well regarded. But it's a side of our existence that is really essential.

In our second visit a year later, her work had greatly changed. She now filled the studio with hundreds of circular paintings, balls, several clocks, etc. She described how she wanted her upcoming exhibition to feel like going to a party with an overwhelming abundance of visualizations. She had also been reading about quantum physics and meditation. "So I decided to generate with as little planning of outcome as possible, a multitude of pieces with the only thing in common is that they are round." She described how through meditation she found she could indulge in other worlds. Explaining the use of the circle, she said she was thinking abstractly about physics, space, time and matter. The traditional vertical (portrait) and horizontal (landscape) and square (abstraction) have a different relationship to scale than a circle that can be big or little, subatomic, particle or planetary. Our interview veered off onto a tangent, discussing a book she was reading about Einstein:

I started reading Einstein's biography. Einstein's relationship with intuition interested me. He lived in Zurich and got a job as a patent clerk. And he would walk from the apartment to the

office through a train station, and the train station had clocks everywhere, and railroad tracks. The model stands in for space and the clocks for time and then the lights on trains for light. And his big discoveries about time and space and light, and particles of matter. So, he put all that together as a model for what would happen if this train was in outer space and there were two trains crossing and there was a person on each train and they were going at the speed of light. And would they be in the same time. And things like that would come to him in split seconds and they would lead to these enormous ideas that of course required hours and hours of work and scientific studies to get them to turn out. Also, he kept a notebook. They found piles and piles of paper. It seemed so important as a way of living life and following your path to whatever knowledge you were going to bring to light. Then I started being interested in quantum physics and quantum worlds and possibilities and black holes and things like that. Because we are, I think at least in our daily lives, Newtonian in our thought. We are still tied to the Cartesian idea that we are a body with a mind. But post-Newtonian physics has kind of disproven all that. And so, quantum possibilities. That got me thinking about the idea that everything is an illusion, so what you think you see is really just data organized in a certain way.

How does that come into painting?

I think it's a huge ideal, but I think that art is a transportative place. And if you were to go into the world's best ever art show you would be transported to an actual different world and I think that's what the artist strives to do, is to take the imagination there. I think there are those moments where your whole self is transported to someplace else.

Sandra Meigs' exhibition in Toronto later that year was different than any other exhibit I'd seen. It was an immersive experience, being transported into this world of circles, clocks and colour. Her work reveals how through art making our ideas and experiences become merged and re-generated through the process of making. They are an act of invention that allows viewers to be immersed in another world, an experience that both resonates with their lives but also takes them elsewhere. I asked Meigs why she makes art:

It's a pursuit of knowledge, a different kind of knowledge. It's a visual expression. What kind of knowledge? I think it's knowledge outside of daily everyday life. It's for discovery. People go to the Gobi Desert to discover what that landscape is like, so I could go to the land of Pink to

discover what pink is like. Or if I do a huge yellow painting that is 47 ft. wide, I discover what it's like to dwell in yellowness.

This description about dwelling in yellowness captures the ways in which painting functions as a material on the body. This yellow painting, while examining her own grieving process and the insomnia that followed along with her desire to connect with universal feelings of grief, reveals how she proposes that these experiences and emotions may be embodied in a material, in this case, one colour. She explained how being immersed within an evocative and affective space may prompt a sensory and bodily experience. In this way, our capacity to project ourselves onto our paintings, is not simply a process of reflection where our experiences are mirrored, but rather an embodied, sensory diffractive process (Barad, 2007) wherein the material qualities of the painting cause effects on the body allowing a new experience to emerge in that moment. Meigs furthermore articulated and explained the significance of intuition within the painting process as the artist uncovers something unknown through making.

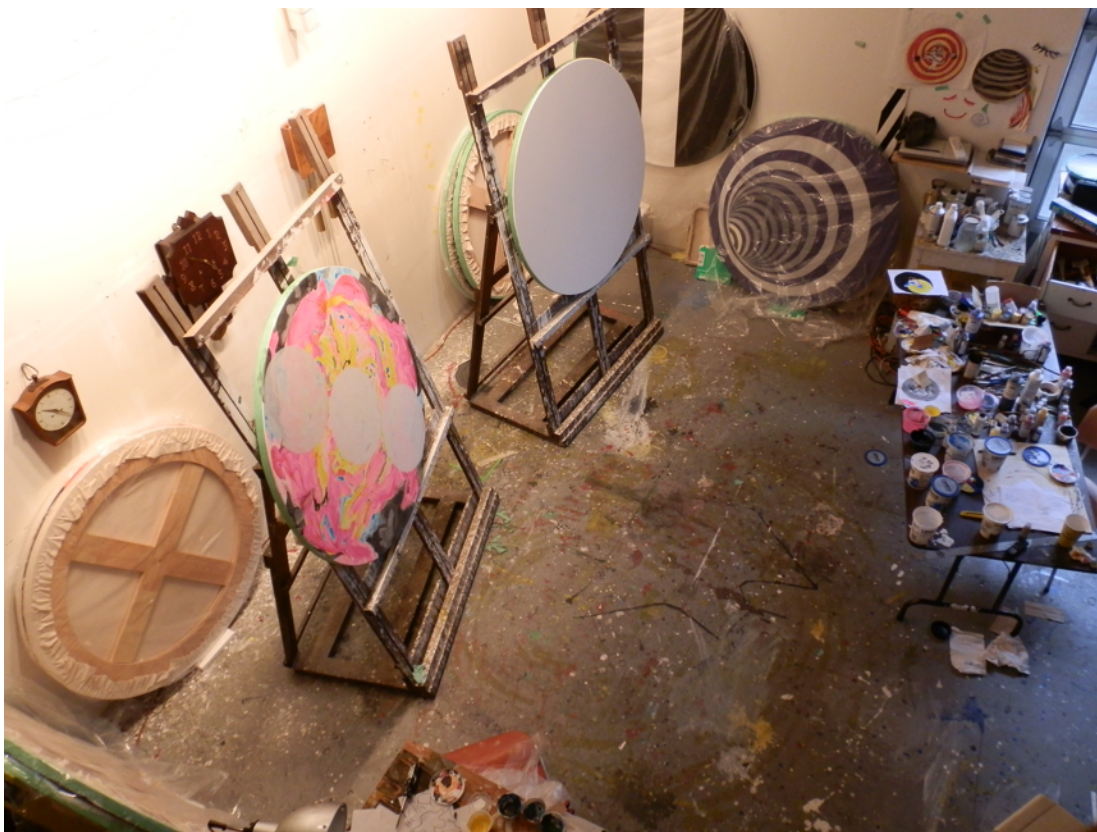


Figure 70, Sandra Meigs' studio, Victoria, 2015.

John Brown: Painting's leakage



Figures 71, 73-76. John Brown's studio, Toronto, 2014

My studio visit with John Brown¹⁸ (figures 71-76) in Toronto revealed ways that art making becomes an ongoing exchange between our internal life, the process of working with materials and our responses to the world. Painting becomes a site through which we may address larger themes, provoke projections onto it, while always weaving through own personal experiences. Garoian (2008, 2013), describes how through art there is always a surplus and O'Sullivan similarly describes an excess, that remains beyond representation. When John Brown discusses the photographs he draws from, he explains that he does not create a representation of that image, but instead, the process of painting allows the work to exceed that image, and let other things seep in. Brown calls that process "painting's leakage." I first became aware of Brown's work several years ago when I went to an exhibition by him in Toronto. I was

¹⁸ John Brown is an established artist living in Toronto, ON. He studied at the Ontario College of Art and received a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Guelph. I first encountered his work at Olga Korper Gallery in 2010, while pursuing my Master of Fine Arts. We met in his Toronto-based studio.

drawn to the gritty, raw look of the work wherein layers and layers of painting had been scraped away, leaving only traces of the image that once appeared. At the time, I was working on my Master of Fine Arts work, and he made me consider the actions of the body in working with and through an image that are embodied within the painting, and the effects produced by that painting onto the viewer. While mine was an additive process, and his was a subtractive process, his work greatly influenced my work at the time. The work encouraged me to spend time with a painting, allowing it to emerge slowly.

We began our studio visit talking about working from the photograph. Over the years he had been drawn to photographs from a variety of sources. Most recently he had been working from photographs of the military. He said it came from a dismay with the rising militarism everywhere: “And the portrayal of war as heroic and honourable. Selfless and brave acts occur in combat but that doesn’t mean war itself is noble. It was also a reaction of the attempt by the Harper conservative government to try and engender a jingoistic nationalism based on a worship of the military.” He also explained that this work emerged around the time the G20 and the protests that ensued around it in Toronto in 2010 and that took place in the neighbourhood of the studio.



Figure 72. John Brown, *Prince Albert*, 2012

This revelation exemplifies the ways that events outside of the studio leak into the painting process within the studio. He explained that he wanted to draw parallels between his frustration with the military and the Keystone cops, a silent film group from the 20s, to trace the evolution of police and military since then. He created “two paintings of armoured cars that looked like absurd World War I era vehicles.” He describes how for him, the imagery of police riding around in combat gear was as absurd as it was disturbing.

His process which has evolved and morphed over the years involves painting images and then scraping them off until only an abstracted image remains. Sometimes the whole painting is scraped away, while other times the image is clearer. Regarding this work and other work drawn from photographs, he explains how they fall between abstraction and figuration. We discussed the way his paintings are made through adding paint and then scraping away:

I’m not wed to scraping. It just allowed me to make the paintings I want to make. This painting was one of the first ones where I started to consider having this military thing. So, to me these were like stealth bombers. They’re very matte as well. And this is kind of a scene with water. But then there is just the painting, the thing and getting involved with that. I guess it’s a balance of getting caught up in the process and wanting to make something that has meaning.

How and when did you get into this scraping process?

Really early on. To me it’s a form of drawing. Really early on I had to make a painting for a show. And I’d been using tempera with whole egg and oil when I got out of school. And I ran out of that stuff and didn’t have a lot of money, but I had some oil paint someone had given me. And I did all this stuff and I didn’t like what I did, because I didn’t know what I was doing with the oil paint. So, I scraped it off. And they were figures. And I liked what that did. So, it went from just the kind of scraping, where you could see a lot of them, the layers of paint coming through, to almost where it was all scraped off. And now it’s starting to come back around.

I asked him if the process of painting, the scraping and building up is working through things he’s frustrated with. He explained that while he addresses turmoil and frustrations in the world, the painting process is not emotional, and said in some ways it is quite controlled. “I used to think about time and

labour and what that meant. And maybe that's one thing that's different about painting that makes it closer to editing. The way I paint is really about editing. The scraper is really an editor. So, I edit things out." I asked him why he makes art:

I think people get into it because they want to say something, because they want to have a voice. I like making paintings more than I used to. I used to say I like paintings more than I like painting. On the one hand, I'm impatient but on the other hand I have to be patient. The thing I love about painting is I look at them and I say to myself, "I made those," but then the next thing I think is "I don't remember how." I don't remember how they come about. I sometimes wonder if how they do come about is that I'm trying to remember the image or the painting and it's kind of on the edge of my consciousness.

Why do you think it is hard to talk about painting?

It's because it's one of the ways of making art that can be very improvisational. There's all these things coming in from the side all the time. Sometimes you'll do something and realize later why you did it. And not even what you were thinking about, but something you had seen kind of leaks into it. Paintings have a lot of leakage in and out of them.

It does seem from how you talk like you're thinking about politics through your painting.

I don't know if anyone else sees any of this in it, I don't think they do.

But it seems like, how you've been talking, there is a cynical or anxious feeling about the world that you're addressing?

Probably more anxious. And being disappointed. But then I have other friends who are very activist. But my work is not. I haven't figure this out. I grew up with a default to-the-left stance. If I was more activist, I wouldn't do such a solitary activity. But I like that about it, that it doesn't have to be beholden to the external world for its images. You can still make images that aren't. You can play with that a lot more. And then there is the sheer pleasure of paint.

For me seeing your work I felt like it allowed for a lot of projection onto it. The scraping away is very psychological. It made me think about erasure, then attempting to get back to it.

It maybe has something to do with being gay too. Yes, I think so. I had a hard time coming out, growing up in Sudbury. I think there was a thing about making something and then covering it up and then removing it all the time. I think the early work was all about the inside of the body. It

was partly about that, about this hidden body and the scraping is about that. It's kind of about hiding something, then revealing it, then freaking out about revealing it and then hiding it again. But that's embedded in the process. That's a part of what the work is, but I don't know if it's about that. Artwork has a lot of complex meanings and that's its real value. There's no one way to do it anymore, you can't teach people one technique on how to paint. People who become good artists invent a way of working that allows them to say what they need to say.



Through describing the ways that his approach to mark making has developed in response to personal, social and material concerns, Brown reveals the complex ways our bodily experiences become embedded in the process of painting. Garoian (2008) uses the term prosthesis to explain what art does. He describes the relationships between a thesis and antithesis, and synthesis that resolves the tension between

the two. Alternatively, Garoian argues that art functions as prosthesis. Rather than synthesizing ideas into a singular meaning, art making functions prosthetically, extending outward in multiple directions. Through this prosthetic quality, artistic practice, disrupts a desire for a whole. He explains that artistic production is characterized by continuously producing an excess and surplus of understandings. Through this process of extending outward, previously dissociated and contradictory ideas become interconnected and more complex. He describes this indeterminacy: “[It is] constituted by disjunctive, incongruous fragments of images, ideas, knowledge, and understandings, whose complex, irreducible slippages of meaning resist synthetic closure similar to the way in which collage narrative has resisted concreteness” (p. 226). I propose that Brown’s term ‘painting’s leakage’ alludes to the diffractive process by which our experiences produce effects on the painting process. Furthermore, as I related to Brown my own bodily response to his works from years earlier, I reveal how different effects are continually produced through each engagement.

Visual Interlude 3

The materiality of the studio 3: The studio as an assemblage

The studio is an assemblage. Images, objects and ideas sit next to each other, creating an odd juxtaposition and tell an unexpected story. Painted images on photographs reveal a conversation between two artists responding to each other's works. Photographs next to paintings reveal a story of the making of a painting. Paintings of windows create new spaces within the studio. Piles of paintings reveal relationships between a variety of sources and imagery. Objects are stacked and hung around the room like puzzle pieces. And paintings on the wall tell their own stories. Garoian (2008) explains how art making is an “improvisational dis-assembling, exchanging and re-assembling of images, ideas and objects in ways that they were not originally designed” (p. 221). The following visual essay reveals this ongoing re-assembly, juxtaposition and assemblage of the learning space of the studio.



Figure 77. John Armstrong's studio, Toronto, 2015



Figure 78. Alexis Lavoie's studio, Montreal, 2015



Figure 79. Kym Greally's studio, St. John's, 2015



Figure 80. Patrick Cruz's studio, Guelph, 2015

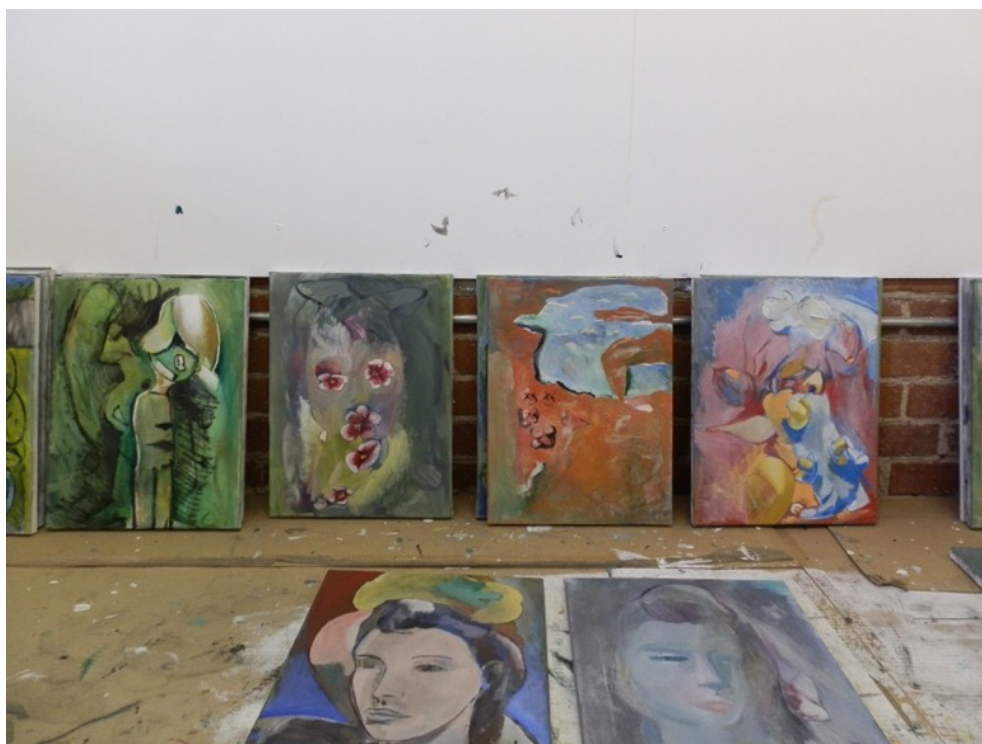


Figure 81. Katie Lyle's studio, Toronto, 2015



Figure 82. Erica Mendritzky's studio, Winnipeg, 2015



Figure 83. Rebecca Brewer's studio, Vancouver, 2015



Figure 84. Vanessa Maltese's studio, Toronto, 2014



Figure 85. Robert Taite's studio, Winnipeg, 2014



Figure 86. Mark Neufeld's studio, Winnipeg, 2014



Figure 87. Mathew Reischertz's studio, Halifax, 2014

Proposition 8: Painting as assemblage



Figure 88. Art Green's studio, Stratford, 2015.

In the previous proposition, I discussed the affective and sensory qualities that become embedded and revealed through painting and how these intuitive qualities allow artists to learn about their experiences in the world, within this next section, extending on the imagery presented in the visual essay, I discuss artists who use assemblage as a vital and generative approach to painting. Through this section, I describe artists who explicitly connect and assemble multiple ideas and images to reveal the ways that learning through painting involves drawing connections between multiple sources. Charles Garoian (p. 2013) describes the process by which working with materials situates the artist's subjectivity into the making:

Our bricoleur's fancy improvising, jerry rigging incongruous images and ideas, adding and subtracting, attaching and detaching, gluing and nailing, leaning and propping, in order to extend

and expand their presumed functions prosthetically, linking the present with the past, the familiar with the strange, to see and understand the one through the other, back and forth, and again (p. 3). Garoian describes the physical act of piecing together things while making and alludes to the thought processes that emerge through making. Furthermore, he situates the art maker within the process. He describes how memories and experiences become linked together, and how concepts and ideas already known may become joined in an unanticipated manner. Through processes inherent within making, such as exploration, experimentation and improvisation, previous knowledge, experience and memories become embodied and connected.

Simon O'Sullivan (2010) similarly explains that through art, we continuously and deliberately move between sense and nonsense, continually scrambling existing codes to create new more complex systems of understanding and meaning. As such art making becomes a production of assemblages. Making art allows for a continuous mixing up and reconnecting of ideas to create new connections, like a puzzle that has no final image, but can instead be continuously reconfigured to create multiple new formations. Rather than a linear production of knowledge, O'Sullivan (2010) argues that art may more aptly produce a diagram that opens up in multiple directions. This openness to what is not signified or multiple forms of signification allows for unintended outcomes, new connections and multiple meanings to emerge. He describes art as having the capacity to produce new worlds. As such, the act of making constructs rather than represents. He describes diagrams as fictions that produce thought. Art making thereby leads toward thoughts, ideas and meanings rather than simply illustrating them. Within this section, I firstly discuss Andrea Kastner who embraces drawing connections from multiple sources, drawing connections as she interprets the world around her. Next I examine David Elliott, who similarly cuts and pieces together from diverse source material to reveal the inventive quality of painting.

Andrea Kastner: Connecting the dots

Andrea Kastner¹⁹ (figures 89-96) describes herself as a code breaker, a detective, an observer and inventor of fictional worlds. Discussing these metaphors for making art, gave me a better understanding of how Kastner thinks and learns through making. Her paintings are collages of different images brought together. Explaining how ideas all form and merge together in her mind, Kastner describes her brain as a garbage truck.

You know when you see a garbage truck pull up and the men throw the garbage in the back of it and then the truck itself mulches it, the thing comes down and all the bags break apart and all the garbage mixes together and you have the old things and the new things and the important things and the not important things mixing together. That's how I picture my brain working. All of these thoughts from different levels of importance and different eras would just go whoosh... and mulch together and turn around and become so much more abstract. That is how I picture my brain working.



Figures 89-96, Andrea Kastner's studio, Kamloops, 2014, Hamilton, 2015.

¹⁹ Andrea Kastner is an emerging artist from Montreal. She received a BFA from Mount Allison University and an MFA from the University of Alberta. She currently teaches at Binghamton University, NY. We met in her Kamloops-based studio and twice in her Hamilton-based studio. <https://www.andreakastner.net>

Andrea Kastner began our first studio visit by showing me two things: a postcard she got in Newfoundland and a mysterious piece of mail. She explained that when she was in St. John's she got this postcard of a house being pulled by a boat. She said she had constructed a narrative that that's how people used to move in Newfoundland, but was not sure if that was true or if she had made up that narrative. Kastner also showed me a mysterious printout that she found in a neighbour's garbage that she mistook for a connect-the-dots. She explained: "It's from a thing I found in someone's garbage. One of the little papers that was there had all of these dots with numbers on them. And I thought it was a connect the dots and so I started making the puzzle and it turned out to be a zigzag that made no sense." She described the mournful moment when she attempted to connect the dots, and realized that it was not in fact an image, but was just a random assortment of points on a page. While unable to apprehend the meaning of this document, she held onto the letter and used the nonsensical assortment of lines and dots for a future painting. While a connect-the-dots has a pre-defined image, that is completed through following the plan and connecting the dots, Kastner instead looked toward this assortment of dots and created a new unanticipated image, thus creating a new meaning. Kastner's process presents a significant quality of artistic processes, that of invention.

Throughout her undergraduate Bachelor of Fine Arts, Kastner began making pictures of the



alleyway where she grew up. She had found a "bag of bags," a bag in which her mother had saved years' worth of old grocery bags. Looking at the buildings constructed of old bags, you could see the identifying store logos hidden amongst the imagery; labels such as LCBO, Home Depot or bookstores scattered

throughout the images of local houses. In other areas of the images, transfers for Metro stations time-stamped give the images a journal-like quality. She explained how she saw alleyways as a metaphor for how she thought our minds work:

I started thinking about it and I called the alleyways the anti-façade. So, I thought of the front of the building as being our social presentation, the way we are in our formal selves and the alleyways as being our informal selves in which the garbage and left over things thrown in the back of our house that we are not thinking consciously about presenting to the world. So, if there is the façade and the anti-façade, I later on developed a project about trash and that was the unconscious. It wasn't the informal side that you are around people who you're comfortable with, but the uncomfortable side we don't want to even show ourselves, that would be the trash.

Kastner then moved to Edmonton for Graduate School. She said that when she moved to Edmonton, the city scape was nothing like what she had known. It was very suburban, and flat and everything was spaced out and she found it hard to get a good grasp visually. So out of frustration of not being able to make work about the landscape or alleyways, she ended up noticing the garbage cans and taking the garbage cans into the studio. Eventually, she just took a bag of garbage into the studio and dumped it out. She described the garbage like a cityscape or old maps.

I was thinking of them as maps in some ways. They were like mind maps. I was thinking of them as these secrets of the subconscious or unconscious. Things that you don't know that you own or have owned or possessed and the way you put them in a bag and put them on the sidewalk and expect them to be taken away, but they still exist. I was thinking about them as secrets or embedded codes. Somebody once told me in the critique once, that I'm an anthropologist of the bowels of society. I was living in a world of poop and pigment, and they all bled into each other. And garbage was an excrement because it's what the household doesn't need. So, I was interested in waste, diapers, garbage and paint substance.

I started looking closely at a photograph and could see old movies, parking tickets, mystery books, old chewed tobacco. In her time in Kamloops, Kastner continued to wander the streets looking for interesting architectural moments. She had always liked to go for walks and explore the neighbourhoods and imagine what the people that lived there were like. This had become even more exaggerated as she

had moved so many times and often felt like a stranger. She described how her paintings merged several photographs to create surreal and invented places, however every once in a while, she would find a surreal place that already exists in the world. She described her process: “I’m looking for bits where the surreal, the kind of mind map collage thing happens in real life. Or where it happens because I make it happen. But the ones that I paint that are not collage are because the real world had already done the work for me.”



I met Kastner almost two years later, and she had moved once again, to Hamilton, Ontario. We continued to discuss her interest in codes and symbols and how this relates to how she thinks about painting and creativity, particularly her interest in finding symbolism in the things that surround her.

I think I go through phases of getting very involved in codes or code breaking or symbolism. I have an innate tendency to assign meanings to different things and care about them a lot. I really

do love making connections between things. My brain does that a lot. I assign secrets. I think that my own interpretation of my work is secrets, and I think of the things I'm painting as people's secrets. So, codes or secrets are the way I think about the world. I think I would have been at home in a world where spying was a part of everyday life. Like during the Cold War, or like I would have learned Morse code and I would've heard it when birds sing.

Kastner talked to me about her new series that she was calling *Everything is pregnant with its contrary*. She explained this phrase related to a quote someone had written on the wall of her studio in Edmonton and credited to Karl Marx. She had jotted it down in her sketchbook and it stuck in her mind. For her the quote means that within everything there is a seed of the exact opposite of that thing and that there is a balance when something goes too far toward one thing and then returns. With her interest in architecture and cities, she was thinking about it in terms of how cities swing from desolation to regrowth and then back again. This was occurring in Hamilton at the time and she would walk the streets taking photographs around demolition and construction sites. Specifically, Kastner applied this concept to photographs of ghost houses, where evidence of a previous building that had been torn down was imprinted on the wall. She explained: "So this house, the neighbor's house left that mark, the brick is different, because of sun. Then it gets torn down and the other house next door remains, but that ghost house is still there." She showed me images of these ghost spaces: ghost door; ghost factory; ghost chimney. "So basically, I'm going into those secret spaces and inserting its contrary. I'm going to take images of places in the neighborhood and make that cycle of construction and deconstruction be manifest."

Kastner researches through her lived experience of exploring the people and places that surround her. However, rather than represent those worlds, she invents new ones, based on connections she makes and inserting her own interpretations and projections onto it. It is this power of invention that opens up a space to consider painting practices beyond representation, and at the same time to consider how

invention is a significant quality of learning through making. We discussed these ideas about creativity and connecting ideas through making.



It's respecting the way ideas take a really long time to percolate and become ideas, take a long time to infuse themselves into your thoughts and into a coherent narrative or image. I suppose what we're trying to do is make other people make those connections. But I think we [artists] spend a lot of time living in that world, trying to make other people see differently or seeing the different thoughts in our minds. We spend all our time coming back to the studio, doing that little pinball where all of our connections are just lit up for us. I think that it's because we are visual.

This need to take time, at the necessity to creativity as she describes, is a significant point about learning through art. This conversation prompted consideration of how we can make space for time in learning. One of the reasons my conversations with Kastner have stuck with me so closely is because her curious energy is contagious. There is a genuine fascination in the way she seeks to discover, invent and explore through painting. We shared a similar curiosity towards exploring meanings in spaces and trying to understand people through these explorations; hers was within cities, and mine within studios.

David Elliott: Painting as a believable parallel universe



Figures 97-100. David Elliott's studio, Montreal, 2015.

David Elliott²⁰ (figures 97-100) similarly addressed how through assemblage, artists may create imagined worlds through the painting process. Elliott's home-based Montreal studio is filled with small boxes filled with collages of imagery from a variety of sources. These small boxes had been recreated as large scale paintings. He began our interview by telling me that his work has always explored his interest in space. As I talked to Elliott, he explained his background in painting and moving to Montreal in the 70s when figurative painting was not visible, in a painting scene dominated by neo-expressionism and

²⁰ David Elliott is an established artist living in Montreal, QC. He received a BFA from Queen's University and an MFA from Concordia University. He is Professor at Concordia University. We met once in his Montreal home-based studio.

“surface/support” abstraction. He explained that in a sense his exploration of collage was a way of teaching himself how to paint.

I was interested in the notion that those of us who went to school in the 70s weren’t trained. There was no technical training in terms of how oil paint worked, there was no model, so you made it up as you went along. A lot of my work in the early 80s was from making use of the how-to-paint books. This one is from a book about how to paint a clown. Or how to paint a portrait. So, they were from different sources, and they were about learning. Several other artists did that too, like Schnabel, or Salle had things on their paintings that indicated they were schematic. So here is a lesson on painting in my painting. It became a forum to explore. So, on a big painting like that you can use spray paint, you can use acrylic, oil, dry brush. So, I was using these paintings to make art, but to train myself as a painter.

He showed one painting and explained that by doing this painting, he was trying learn how to do several things, such as a starry sky, a mushroom in the foreground and a boat in the middleground. Through teaching himself how to approach these subjects using different techniques, the paintings became collages of these explorations. On one painting, he would mix many languages, such as spray paint, palette knife, dripping. “So there is a sense of different languages in a single painting, but striving for a totality of space in them.” He showed me one painting, titled *Vacation*, and explained that it used the mythology of going somewhere, “whether its Alice, or Pinocchio or Aladdin.” He explained that he would like his paintings to be deep spatially, while simultaneously shallow and he achieves this apparent contradiction through using different languages to render the 3-dimensionality. This effect is also achieved through inflating something to a much larger scale. “I like that the bird is a 500lb bird. The disjuncture that happens with scale is more of a performance, a three-ring circus. Like a carnival or a theatre.” Going through different source material, he explained he used to enjoy warehouse sized used book stores. He particularly liked to use textbooks from the 50s, 60s and 70s as source material. He pointed at one image and said the grapes were from a Russian Encyclopedia. These various source materials were merged into these small boxes that, when painted on a large scale, create a trompe l’oeil effect. He explained his interest in creating these boxes: “I like to make a shrine-like structure to things. I’m interested in still lifes. And I’m

interested in Beckmann²¹ and de Chirico²². I'm interested in how they mix animate and inanimate, still life and figurative together." I asked Elliott why he paints:

When it comes to art, painting specifically, I like the notion of a parallel world. I live in this world, I have kids, I have a dog, etc. But I like the notion of a parallel space. Whether it's the space you visit when you dream, a space you imagine, a space you feel when you're in love, whatever that enriched world is, it's that kind of heightened reality, that is like a parallel space.... It's that kind of heightened reality which is like a parallel space, it's above or below or sideways, I'm not quite sure, but it's not of this world. Even though it's using components of this world, it's something different. And when I look at painters who I admire who have managed to paint that parallel world, I'm at my happiest. So, I hope in some small part, I'm able to do it. It's partially *trompe l'oeil*, but I don't think it relies exclusively on that. But it's really that you can look at a painting and totally be seduced and buy into it as a believable parallel universe.

He explained this notion of a parallel universe by referring to a quote by Max Beckmann referring to a 4th dimension.

He says when you compress space, when you take the 3D world and try, in whatever language you want to use, to put it in 2D space, he says it's impossible. So, in that transfer of 3D to 2D, something is going to break down. There's going to be holes, there's going to be fissures, there's going to be gaps, there's going to be cracks in the reality. And in those cracks, he says you can enter the 4th dimension. You enter a space where time and space begin to dissolve and you're out of the concrete world into another world. So, he might say, let's say in this one, where this flower meets this flower, meets that background, and meets that telescope, the mind has a hard time judging where those are. He says when the mind is faced into that kind of decision-making, when the mind is put in that position, it pushes you into another dimension because you can't resolve it. So, by setting things so that they are not necessarily readable in space, so that there is a questioning of where things are located (like where are these, what's in front of what?). When these things are fractured, when there is a confusion of space, your mind is pushed and forced somewhere else. For me, that is one way parallel universes get structured.

²¹ Max Beckmann (1884-1950) was a German painter, printmaker, sculptor and writer who was associated with New Objectivity in the 1920s that responded to Expressionism (retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Max_Beckmann).

²² Giorgio de Chirico (1888-1978) was an Italian artist and writer. His work, influenced by Surrealism addresses metaphysical themes (retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giorgio_de_Chirico).

Painting proposition 9: Painting as iterative

Through the process of invention as described in the previous proposition, painting is a learning process that allows artists to imagine new possibilities. Within this section, I propose that painting is an iterative process wherein ideas, images and understandings emerge from each other. In this way, images and ideas mutate, reform and generate new connections. Colin Dorward explains this iterative process by describing how the vast array of images we encounter become fertile ground for paintings to emerge. Next, I exemplify this iterative process as Ufuk Gueray explains how one idea may prompt multiple iterations. I then examine the process of John Kissick as he reveals his complicated relationship with art history, his art education and own desires to paint. Through his process, he reveals how through metaphor, he draws connections between histories of abstract painting, popular culture, and I suggest this allows for new iterations to emerge.

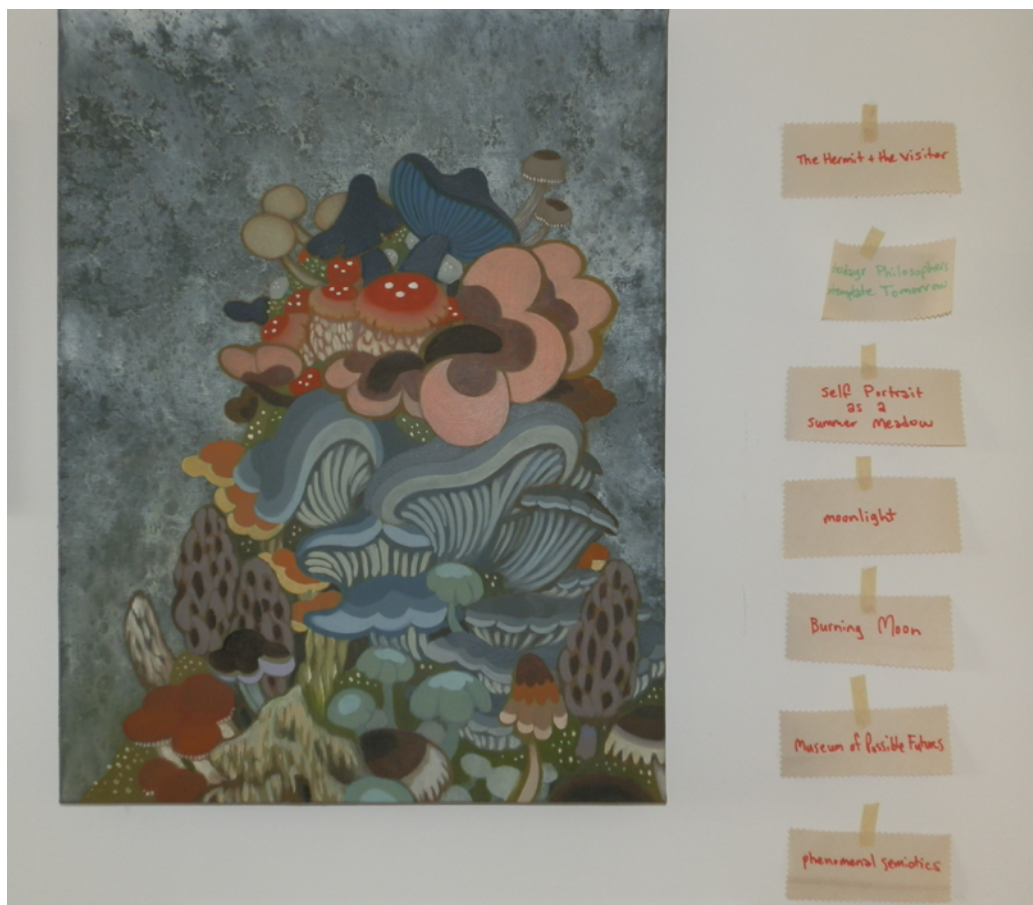


Figure 101. Rick Leong's studio, Victoria, 2014

Colin Dorward: Images are viral entities that parasitize and inhabit the mind

Regarding the depth and multitude of influences on his work, London (Ontario) based artist Colin Dorward²³ (figures 102-103) exclaimed: “That’s the thing I love about painting, it trickles into that part of the brain that thinks about visuals a lot and it’s sometimes so behind the scenes that we can’t sometimes know what our own influences are until... it takes years sometimes to notice what it was that triggered you to do something.” Describing images as viral entities that parasitize and inhabit the human mind and propagate across the mind, Dorward argues that painting provides a basis for their continuation. As described by Dorward, images take on a material quality within our minds. This materiality of images that can produce effects long after our first encounter explains how these experiences become materialized as new iterations within the studio.



²³ Colin Dorward is an emerging artist currently living in London, ON. He received a BFA from Emily Carr University of Art and Design and an MFA from the University of Ottawa and at the time of submission of this dissertation he was a doctoral candidate at Western University. He received an honourable mention at the 2013 RBC Painting Competition. We first met at his temporary studio at the William and Isabel Pope NSCAD Painting Residency in Halifax, NS, and a second time at his London-based studio.



Figures 102-103. Colin Dorward's temporary studio, Halifax, 2014

Ufuk Gueray: Taking one small idea and seeing how fertile it can be

I went to a recent artist talk at the University Art Association of Canada annual conference by Winnipeg-based artist Ufuk Gueray²⁴ (figures 104-108) with whom I had previously shared two studio visits. He described being in a transition period. He began the presentation stating: “This presentation will discuss how Kazimir Malevich’s²⁵ 1928-1929 painting *Head of a Peasant* joined me on my current path towards an uncertain artistic future. This charming but awkward piece has become my personal guide to overcoming boredom, nihilism, and artist’s block in the studio” (Gueray, 2017, np). He remembered being introduced to this work in 1995 while beginning to develop an interest in art. He also remembered hating that piece, and recognizing that it was not representative of Malevich’s most renowned work, the

²⁴ Ufuk Gueray is a German-born and Winnipeg-based emerging artist. He received a BFA from Concordia University and an MFA from Glasgow School of the Arts. He received an honourable mention at the 2014 RBC Painting Competition. He currently teaches at the University of Manitoba. <http://www.ufukgueray.com/>

²⁵ Kazimir Malevich (1879-1935) was a Russian artist and art theorist. His work had a large influence on abstract art in the 20th century, particularly in relation to the Suprematist movement, following the Soviet Revolution (retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kazimir_Malevich).

Black Square Paintings. Still, he explained that this work followed him around for the past year. He discussed how he researched Malevich and Socialist Realism amidst the politics of the post-World War One USSR. He also explained how the figure of the peasant in the painting allowed for a reflection on how he navigates his way around Western art history, having grown up in Germany with Turkish parents.

Ufuk Gueray's work reveals an approach wherein he repeatedly dissects one image to examine several artistic, historical and social issues. The subject of study thus becomes an allegory for his process of examination. He explains the deliberate imposition of one motif:

In creating these images, I was consciously working with a narrow, repetitive inventory of motifs. I did so in an effort to use self-imposed limits as a way to generate stylistic freedom; in the studio, painting often happens in a responsive way, through improvising, going along with textures, forms and shapes, and responding to ideas that get carried over from one piece to the next and morph into different things. Each idea potentially carries within itself the seed for the next one. (Gueray, 2017, np)

He began our first visit in Winnipeg by giving me a piece of cut, fake sausage. He had ordered it from a specialty food replica store in Germany. He explained that he first became interested in the sausage as a motif after reading an essay by John Berger in which there was a passage about a struggling painter, who couldn't make money from selling his work, so he painted shop window displays. In this essay, the artist was pictured as so poor and hungry that he was driven by a desire to make food that looked real. This passage stuck with Gueray and planted a seed for this body of work, what came to be called the *Market Series*. We first met in a current exhibition in a shipping container in downtown Winnipeg. In it there hung a large green painting with four hanging sausages. Back in his studio, I saw a painting with several circular pieces of sliced sausage, which he described as literal deconstructions (cutting the sausage). This led to using these formal elements to create hard edged abstractions, but within these hard edges was the space to explore gestural abstraction. There hung four oval paintings with expressive abstract marks that referenced pieces of sausage, and another with a long rectangular strip along the bottom with a similar fleshy expressive mark. The work simultaneously referenced abstract

expressionism, hard-edged abstraction, and minimalism, several significant 20th century art historical moments. He explained that the sausage became a way of exploring masculinity and the expressionistic mark of 20th century art history, as well as art as commodity. He also explained that working from this very specific restriction (the sausage) freed him up to explore all these other subjects: “Even though this work is limited in its formal elements. Like it's a very similar colour palette from painting to painting, it's usually very toned down except for these pinky tones. But within those restrictions I felt like I had a lot of freedom, and somehow working within these restrictions in place made it easy to come up with the parameters for the next painting.” The paintings appeared to be iterative; each one informed the next iteration.



Figures 104-108, 110-112. Ufuk Gueray's studio, Winnipeg, 2014, 2015.

Alongside this work he had another series that intersected this one. He had been looking at manuals on paint, how to create “proper compositions.” He discussed how these manuals on how to paint seemed absurd. “I do think it's an absurdist exercise, because the other way would be to just make art and see whether it works or not. It's just recipes. If you do something according to a recipe, then where is the

creativity in that? I think trying something out and seeing how it works and then assessing it is far more exciting.” These works alongside the other works informed the way I understood his thinking process. It revealed how Gueray engaged with an analysis on the process of painting.

The second time I visited Gueray, he was working on a new series. He explained how the market series informed this new series: “The series consisted in taking one small idea and seeing how fertile it could be, doing new reformations of that one motif. I could have done that forever. All these derivations from that one motif. I had to come up with something new that was informed by the conceptual form of this work, but was something new that kept my interest alive.” His new works were based on the motif of lithography. He had taught a course in lithography that past year which led to research into this art form. He explained how he dove into this subject matter:

The way it works is that it's a very specific limestone from one quarry in this area that is essentially near exhausted at this stage. And it was a very popular medium starting in the 1880s and it was popular well into the 20th century. In the 1970s you were still taught it in art school. They would break, and every time you put on a new motif, you'd draw on it, then you'd have to grind it down, so they'd lose 1/20th of an inch each time. I became interested because I liked that they are all from this one place but now are all over the place right now, so there is something biographical linking them. I also liked that whenever you grind the surface it becomes super smooth and clean and becomes a brand new surface that no one has ever laid eyes on, but when you look at the edges, there are people's names on it, numbers, bits of tape, ink and gunk. I thought that contrast is interesting. You're seeing the stone that has this X layers of images on it but gets pulverized away over the years. And they were these objects I could put in a painting but I liked that they were about process. Particularly in painting, the death of painting keeps coming up with this constant regularity, and it's not like it really ever really dies, but then there's a medium that is really on its way out. So, I thought this is a medium that is actually going to die out just because physically the material is going to die out. So, I thought maybe this is an interesting series about death and art and death and mediums. Or obsolescence.

He had also received a book from his father-in-law who had studied stone lithography in the 70s. Within this book, there were hand written notes by his father-in-law. He ended up recreating these notes through blowing them up and creating a carbon copy onto a large canvas. This process worked in relation

to these other works through revealing those connections and ways of learning passed down. Furthermore, he explained that he saw these handwritten notes as another almost obsolete form of mark making.



Returning to the more recent work of the peasant, he explained how he made drawings and paintings of this peasant, as he imagined him as a “real-life companion.” Through this relationship he formed with the figure from Malevich’s painting, he continuously took him apart, re-imagined him and re-configured him.

I have created bodies of work that reference a variety of Western art historical movements and styles such as 50’s Abstract Expressionism, Spanish Bodegón paintings, Minimalism, text-based paintings, etc.—in part because I have no roots, no allegiances, and I feel OK about moving in and colonizing Western art history. That’s one way of looking at it, anyway. Sometimes, though, when I’m painting I have a mental image of myself at an awkward party where I don’t know who to talk to, and so I have to be ready to switch topics of conversation swiftly. Maybe I like the peasant because he seems kind of awkward, too—he’s kind of a weirdo, a bit too avant-garde for his rural milieu, but not exactly at home in Western art history, either... In painting peasants, Malevich decided to take on an old, common, sentimental and politically proscribed subject, and he found a way to make something personal, new, and subversive. He showed that art can be simultaneously regressive and avant-garde; that an image can be both awkward and cool. Rediscovering this image made painting feel like a party I wanted to attend. It helped me get past the things that were blocking my artistic progress, and made being in the studio something to celebrate again. (Gueray, 2017)

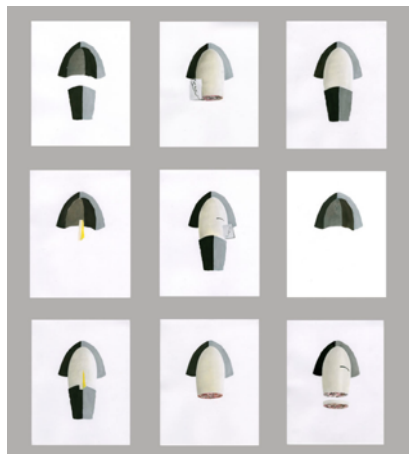
Through taking one idea and seeing how generative it could be, and finding the multiple connections created through this process, Ufuk’s work reveals the iterative process of painting, how each mark, work, discovery and new understanding leads to the next. Furthermore, he reveals how the subject of the painting becomes an analogy to examine other subjects and processes. As we concluded our interview, he explained the necessity of this way of working for him:

When I think about conceptual work that’s all planned out, they don’t need to do it, it’s not about the materiality of the piece. What that way of thinking does not take into account is the process of going through the trial and error, the failure, the success, that is a very active part in what the piece is about in the end. And I think it is an illusion to think the process is not important, or that the process doesn’t have an influence, is not a creative part of it. Particularly in painting, you do something on the canvas and whatever you do gives you an idea of what to do next and what to do next and what to do next. And for me, the process and the creative part of making something

feeds into it. Things happen that you can't predict, and if you try to predict everything in terms of the making of these, then basically you're taking out that whole area of chaos in the creative process.



Figure 109. Kazimir Malevich 1928-1929, *Head of a Peasant*



Figures 110-112. Gueray's reconstructions of Malevich's *Head of a Peasant*

John Kissick: My paintings are winking at the viewer

I visited John Kissick²⁶ (figures 113-114) in an old elementary school in Elora, a small town outside of Guelph, Ontario. Through his work, he similarly explains how he materially engages with influences and legacies of art history. He explained how becoming an artist who paints in the 80s and 90s made him constantly question the act of painting, particularly painting abstraction. He said that this self-critique led to works that are self-conscious of themselves as abstract paintings. Kissick describes the complicated relationship between our art education background that is shaped by art history and theory, and the intuitive process of working in the studio, as he simultaneously engages with and disrupts codes of representation within abstract painting.

My whole painting practice has to do with trusting notions of expressions. I'm interested in language and the problem of how do you make an abstract painting anymore. I think that's a generational thing. Younger painters aren't worried about making abstract paintings. I'm constantly fretting over why I'm doing it. And that the paintings have to have an edge to them. They have to walk that peculiar line between the viewer not sure if they are totally ironic or serious or half-way in between. I like to say that when my paintings work, they are winking at the viewer.

During both of our visits Kissick talked about the challenges of being a mid-career artist, and he reflected on his practice and how his education shaped his painting practice. He talked extensively about how in graduate school he learned how to deconstruct a painting, to think about art practice as ideological. During this time, students were pushed to consider whether there is room for abstraction anymore. At the same time, Kissick felt that abstraction was a good place to talk about language and tropes. He said: "I wanted to get to the core of the language and the problems with abstraction." For that reason, he says he doesn't make abstract paintings, but rather paintings of abstract paintings.

²⁶ John Kissick is an established artist living in Elora, ON. He received a BFA from Queen's University and an MFA from Cornell University. He is a Professor at the University of Guelph. I first encountered his work when he was a visiting artist during my Master of Fine Arts. We met twice at his Elora-based studio.
<http://www.johnkissick.ca>

Kissick grew up in a subdivision in Scarborough that was built in the late sixties, which was at the same time as the historical collapse of abstraction as it made its way into popular culture and architecture. “So initially I figured if I was going to start talking about abstraction, I’d have to go back and look at those tropes and to what I call those ‘dead moments.’” At the same time, however, he explained that he found that when talking about studio practice and his process, the best thing he ever did was look outside painting to come up with metaphors for the process of abstraction. Through doing so, he was able to better understand his relationship to abstraction drawn from his own experiences.

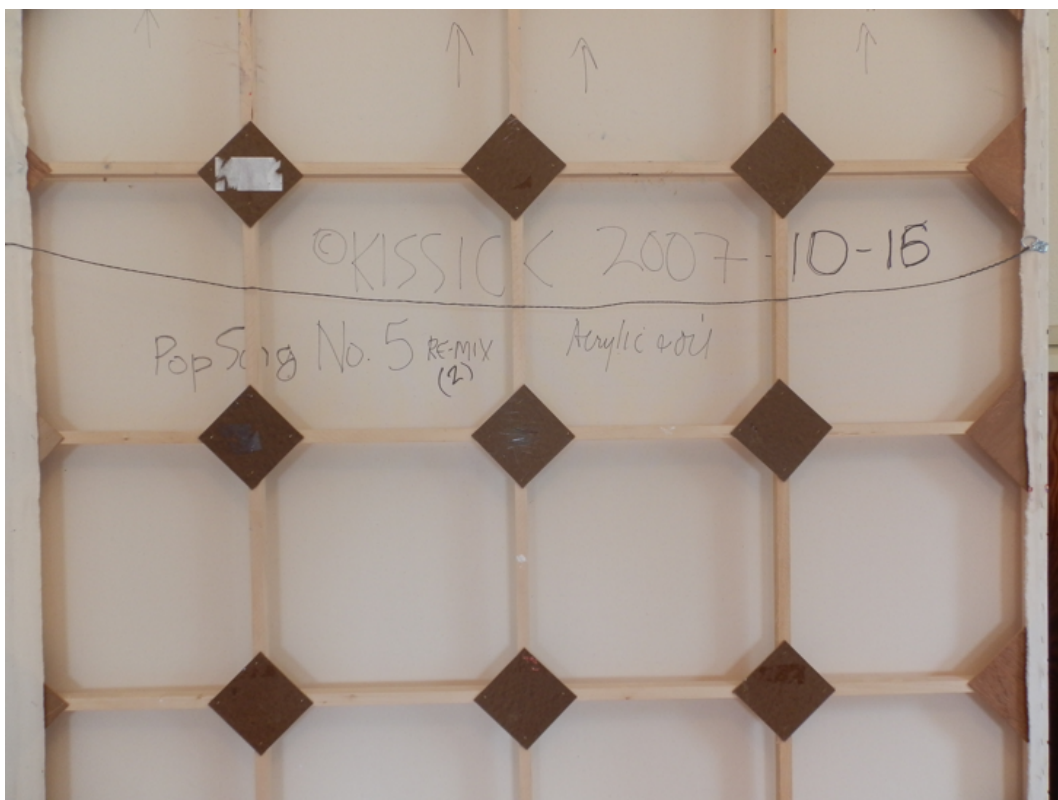
I wanted to figure out what tropes I’m using. I use super graphics because it throws me back into the 60s and 70s. I wanted to look at psychedelic patterns because that was also kind of a dead movement. I was really interested in these kind of kitschy dead movements, and my own experience with them. I read this book called *Faking it: The quest for authenticity and rock 'n roll*. It goes through different periods, and the one I really love is the discussion of the 1970s. This book was basically about the polar movements in the 70s: punk and disco. And I initially started looking at disco because disco was overproduced, plastic, and kind of glittery and very, very kitschy. Whereas music scholars and critics really loved punk because it was the embodiment of basically Expressionism; it was considered real, hyper subjective and de-skilled. But the point that was made in this book was that if you actually look historically at the period, punk music, because of its de-skilling and because it was tied into fashion, was very easily co-opted. So, within six months of “Sex Pistols” opening, there could be a punk band in every garage. So, that hyper subjectivity or authenticity actually became a mockery of itself almost immediately.

And you were thinking the same thing about Expressionism in painting?

Exactly! Whereas disco was supposedly so kitschy and over the top, and devoid of content. But because it privileged dance, it privileged the collective, it wasn't about hyper subjectivity, it was about the mass. In retrospect, it became the only real political music of the 70s. It became the calling card for the black and gay experience. It was where those communities pollinated their politics. And when I read that, I thought that is the metaphor I’ve been looking for. So I decided I was going to look at my gestures which are hyper subjective and authentic and I was going to decorate them, I was going to flatten them out and co-opt them. And, at the same time I was going to take my super graphic stuff and I was going to paint them as earnestly and interestingly as I possibly could. I’ve often said “I was punking my disco and discoing my punk.” So, at the

end of the day these paintings go through series of constant inversions about what's happening. That was a really, really important discovery for me, because it became something that was really tangible to me.

Kissick discussed how because of his education, he had a hard time discussing the pleasure in painting, because he had learned to deconstruct the language of painting. At the same time his paintings are very visually appealing, colourful bright, and high energy. Our interviews presented ways that metaphors can be used to discuss painting as a responsive and connective learning process. Through this conversation, Kissick expressed the complexity of engaging with codes embedded within the history of painting. However, he also prompted consideration of how our understandings of theory and art history become disrupted, confused and complicated through working with materials. Through seeking out metaphors for that process, he learned how to develop a painting language that connected his own experiences with his engagement with art history. He reveals the complexity of engaging with aesthetic and material choices in the studio within the context of art education which is always framed within a particular theoretical discourse. Furthermore, by drawing out these connections between how he learned about painting and his popular culture that informed his upbringing, he came to a deeper understanding of his making process.



Figures 113-114. John Kissick's studio, Elora, 2014, 2016

Painting Proposition 10: Painting as an ongoing tension between solitary and social



Figure 115. Jordy Hamilton's studio, Vancouver, 2014

Throughout these propositions, I began first by discussing the ways artists engage with the painting process, next discussed how it formed a relationship between their work and their experiences. While already addressing the relationality of painting to a certain extent, within this proposition, I address how while often a solitary practice, painting always exists within a multitude of social and relational systems. The socialities of painting are revealed through relationships formed with peers and professors through education, through ongoing engagement with art works, and with the ways painting addresses the larger social context in which it is produced.

Studio practices, specifically painting practices, are often very solitary practices. My interviews with artists revealed that many painters intentionally seek out this solitude, as essential to their practice. The premise of Barad's (2007) materialist theories is that ongoing interactions allow new processes and iterations to be continually produced. As such the social interactions that occur outside the studio have effect, shift thinking and continuously interact with that which happens in the studio. Drawing from this premise, I propose that this tension between solitary and social inherent within painting practices is

generative and productive. Throughout my journey, six artists that I interviewed used the phrase “Have my cake and eat it too” in our conversations. I was curious about the meanings behind this repeated phrase. While there was not one meaning behind the use of this phrase, I came to realize it was largely used to describe the tension between the solitary and the social aspects of studio practice.

Professor at Upsala University in Sweden, Jenny Sjöholm (2013) performed a study of studio-related knowledge. She describes the studio as a “microcosm of an artist’s work in progress, creativity, knowledge, thought and expression” (p. 2). Comparing the studio to a personal laboratory, she describes the knowledge produced in the studio as investigative, experimental and drawing on the following knowledge practices: “contemplation and elaboration, critical thinking and bodily engagement, instruction and improvisation” (p. 2). In addition, Sjöholm (2013) addresses the interaction between isolation and sociality, which she describes as existing in an ongoing productive tension (p. 6). Arguing firstly that an overemphasis is placed on knowledge and learning as a social activity, she advocates for a recognition of the value in self-directed practices within the close, intimate and personal space of the studio. She emphasizes the contemplative nature of studio practice. On the other hand, she argues that the studio is always culturally embedded within its context, within a community, a city and a nation. Within this community, the studio and the artist is situated within a web of social connections. These connections are explicit, through mechanisms such as research outside of the studio, exhibitions, teaching practices, studio visits, and other social practices. In addition, she describes “invisible socialities,” which situate artistic practices within wider beliefs, conventions and artistic references that are always present within an artistic process (p. 6). It is these “invisible socialities,” I propose that allow for a more complicated social network to exist between studios and studio practices.

In one of my first interviews, Vancouver based artist, Jordy Hamilton (figure 115) stated: “You hope that the work encourages other people to reevaluate the way they think about art or think about their own activities. So, through an examination of my own desires, I’d like other people to think about their own desires.” He discussed how as an artist he finds himself in a really contradictory position, when examining his own desires as an artist verses how art is distributed and deployed in the art market and

institution. He concluded his interview by addressing the contradictory position that he feels by expressing his desire to “have my cake and eat it too.” In a much later interview, in Ontario, John Kissick similarly used the phrase “Have my cake and eat it too.” He described the tension between his desire to paint the gesture, and his inner voice telling him that it must be in an ironic, deconstructive or critical way that came out of his education as an artist in the 80s and 90s.

The more I talked to artists, the more I understood the meaning behind the phrase, “Have my cake and eat it too.” It describes tensions that exist as artists try to situate themselves within a larger conversation. They expressed their struggle negotiating these tensions: between drawing from their own experiences, inclinations and desires while resisting romantic tropes of self-expression; between articulating in words about painting while acknowledging the inadequacies of language to describe their process; between acknowledging the beauty and pleasure of painting while addressing the postmodern critiques of painting; and between painting from one’s own unique position while situating oneself within contemporary and historical discourse about painting and the multiple worlds of art discourse from commercial to academic to public. At first this phrase bothered me, as I felt as though people were somehow playing a game, or filtering their words, or presenting work the way they thought it needed to fit in with a particular art discourse. But as I continued to meet with people, I began to see the tension as an ongoing process of thinking and working, and I realized that perhaps this tension is necessary. It highlights the ongoing tension felt by everyone as people try to situate themselves within the world they inhabit. I now propose that this tension is a necessary negotiation, and that this ongoing negotiation may actually be a generative force in painting, one that allows it to continue to move.

Perhaps one of the first exemplars of this tension came upon meeting with Toronto based artist Laura Millard (figure 116). She described how growing up in Calgary and summers in Banff with an artist mother, she always felt conscience of the romanticism that could creep into her painting practice from learning to paint in the beautiful Rocky Mountain landscape. When I asked her about assumptions that

were challenged going to art school at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD)²⁷ in the 80s, she said: “It was a real challenge to this romantic attachment to a landscape. If I could have had it surgically removed, I would have it expunged from myself, but it was hard having spent so much time in Banff. I suppose we have our own core responses and personalities, but I quickly learned that it was very wrong, so I think that was it, having the romantic beaten out of me.” She described a defining moment at NSCAD when she came into the painting studio and somebody had taken a big can of spray paint and had sprayed in large letters across everyone’s work: “Painters, forget your visions.” Instead of being angry, however, she said she thought “Wow, that’s amazing.” As she talked about her work that draws from the marks left behind by jet planes, ice skaters, snowmobiles, I felt both a removal of the artist’s hand, while at the same time an appreciation for the beauty of the marks. She admitted that she now feels a tension between being drawn to the landscape and her criticality. She excitedly showed me her new art tool, a drone, and I felt this tension exemplified when she showed me a video she took with the drone that is gradually rising into the sky above a frozen lake revealing the marks made by snowmobiles on the frozen water. She admitted hesitantly that it also made her think about her father’s recent passing and his spirit leaving his body.

On the other side of the country, in Vancouver, I met Allyson Clay who came out of a similar generation at NSCAD. Working as an artist in Vancouver in the 80s, which was dominated by conceptual photography, Clay, described the challenges of finding her place as a painter in Vancouver. Clay talked about how Vancouver had changed over the years and discussed how influential Elizabeth McIntosh had been as a painter and instructor at Emily Carr University of Art and Design. I continued that discussion with Rebecca Brewer, an emerging artist in Vancouver. She described how she felt the “hangover of

²⁷ Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD) art school in Halifax Nova Scotia, founded in 1887. Led by artist Garry Kennedy, appointed president in 1967, it received international recognition through the 1970s as an internationally renowned art school, thought of as the best art school in North America, specifically focused on Conceptual art practices (retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NSCAD_University). NSCAD had a lasting legacy on art education within Canada. Many artists whom I interviewed went to NSCAD during this period and then went on to teach in universities across Canada, continuing a particular legacy of art education. This influence cannot be completely examined within the scope of this dissertation, however its influence is a significant example of how education shapes the art discourse regarding painting in Canada.

photo-conceptualism” while at Emily Carr from 2005-2007 but says she’s grateful that she came at a time when there was a strong academic rigour around questions of what art should be. She talked about how Elizabeth McIntosh came in and “suddenly all of these forbidden things like pleasure in painting, colour and indulgent decorative ways of working became possibilities that were outside the dominant intellectual discourse that dominated art in Vancouver.” On the other hand, she discussed the idea of resistance to dominant discourse and states: “Sometimes it feels as if someone can’t be in control of one’s own output as an artist because you don’t know if you’re just reacting or if what you’re compelled to do is somehow determined. In a way, you can’t even know your own self because we’re all subject to the same influence in a way. And although we can resist, we may resist in a way that plays into the hands of the whole problem.” Brewer said one statement that really resonated with me as an approach to thinking about painting and radicality in the face of challenges from other mediums. She said: “Maybe something that comes up in painting is that the radicality is in the person and it’s in the personal. So there is something completely personal about not only making a painting, but looking at a painting, and that is often forgotten in the discourse that constantly derides its marketability.”

I met with Sandra Meigs in Victoria and was really drawn by her candidness about the death of her husband and how her grieving process comes through her work.

I’ve always used my personal experience as a way of finding content to make work about, so I’ve never really shied away from that sort of thing. In some ways, it comes through my sense of humour because life is so absurdly funny, and to bring in personal experiences, I think it enriches my art. But I understand there is a reticent to go to emotional content because there’s an attitude that it’s art therapy or not intellectual enough or not critical enough. There’s a difference between indulgence and expression in art. So, what I try to do is find the proper form where something can become universal.

This process of working through one’s own experiences, while contextualizing them within the multitude of connections outside the studio is an essential part of painting practices. These connections exist within art historical dialogues, and contemporary art discourse as artists navigate how to situate themselves. Furthermore, as Meigs points out, these connections develop as work resonates with others’

experiences. These conversations reveal the relational qualities of painting, as relationships are formed between individuals, histories and art works.



Figure 116. Laura Millard's studio, Toronto, 2015

Proposition 11: Painting as interwoven with its histories

As described within earlier propositions, artists' practices emerge out of their education which is set within particular moments, lenses and perspectives. Furthermore, artists are introduced to other artists that continually shape their painting choices, often influencing them in ways that cannot be articulated without reducing the complexity of the ways that artists are influenced by other artists. These influences are often internalized and embodied within the process of making. Within this proposition and drawing from specific examples, I examine how artists are affected by artworks in a way that is responsive, generative and inventive rather than replicative, as I argue artists learn from other art works as they re-investigate them through their own lens and context.

In my interviews with artists, many described memories of going to galleries and seeing art works that impacted them as young children through their careers. These images had stuck with them through the years and these influences wove in and out of their work. David Elliott explained how a Jack Chambers²⁸ painting in a library in London, Ontario had inspired him as a child: "I had never seen anything like it, I was like wow. That's where it began. The relationship between painting and other things, music, cinema, literature. In a picture, you can do the things Dylan was doing in song, Bergson was doing in a film, or poets like Ginsberg were doing. Or Margaret Atwood. I thought I could do pictures that involve the sense, the soul, etc." Kent Monkman explained how he was inspired by Spanish History paintings in Madrid that express the turmoil of the Spanish civil war. Thinking about that memory, Monkman asked: "Can a painting move you emotionally? Can it move you to some revelations about yourself and about our world?"

Regarding the ways she is influenced by artists from the past, particularly as an emerging female abstract painter, Ashleigh Bartlett stated:

I've always been interested in how abstract painting started, with Abstract Expressionism, and how another generation of artists responded to that material, specifically women. Like Mary

²⁸ Jack Chambers (1931-1978) was a Canadian artist born in London, Ontario whose style shifted from a surrealist-influenced toward a photo-realist influence (retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_Chambers_\(artist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_Chambers_(artist))).

Heilmann or Elizabeth Murray, strong women. And, they took too. Like they borrowed from Guston²⁹. So, I've been interested in the generations of abstraction. Or attitudes of abstraction. Or Amy Sillman³⁰ has been important for me. I think they are really important to me, particularly in response to Abstract Expressionism which was male-dominated. I've been thinking about why all the artists I was looking at were women. For example, Heilmann was so direct about referencing the Simpsons. She is just so blunt and honest about it, and so she paved the way for others like me.

David Blatherwick described not only how an art work can affect us, but how it can be reactivated and reimagined through merging it with current ideas and interests. He described recently going to an exhibition of Monet's³¹ haystacks and how it made him view the artist in a different way: "I realized he was a post-studio artist before it was even invented. He was outside. His routine was almost dogmatically outdoors. It's romantic to us now, but he was incredibly work and labour oriented. It's easy to look at it in a romantic way now, but he was very scientific and super systematic." Blatherwick explained how he learned that Monet would paint each painting, for a precise amount of time before moving onto the next one.

It was very conceptual for 19th century. When I started to realize stuff like that, it set a whole bunch of things spinning for me about a way to get out in the world. I think I'm a super romantic painter on one level, but getting out in the world and really looking at it deeply is what Monet was doing, and that's what I wanted to do. I'm not sure where I'm going, but I think I'm thinking about the relational aesthetics people and Monet at the same time.

These artists reveal how they are affected by works and how our understandings of these artworks become embedded within our process. Furthermore, Blatherwick's consideration reveals how his

²⁹ Philip Guston (1913-1980) was an American artists who became influential from the late 60s through introducing representational imagery into abstraction, become an influential artist in neo-expressionism (retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_Guston).

³⁰ Amy Sillman (born 1955) is an American painter. She was one of the contemporary artists most referenced within my interviews. She continues to be influential through ways that she engages in discussions about colour and the materiality of paint through her writings, talks and paintings. (see <https://www.amysillman.com/>)

³¹ Claude Monet (1840-1926) was a French artist and founder of the French Impressionist painting (retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claude_Monet).

engagements with art history and paintings allow him to continually reconsider how he engages with the world through painting. Within this section, I draw from examples of how artists not only reference but respond to art history within their work.

Monica Tap: Painting talks back to its own history



Figures 117-118. Monica Tap's studio, Toronto, 2014

In our interview, Monica Tap³² (figures 117-121), stated: "Painting always talks back to its own history." This happens both directly and indirectly. Referring to her paintings of the landscape, she stated: "For example, I can't escape Emily Carr³³ with these paintings but maybe I need to think about El Greco³⁴ and his twisty figures. So, that could be part of this social group as well." Referring to these art historical references as social groups further revealed how she views these engagements as ongoing conversations. During our interview, Tap took me on a trail of connections and references between her work and art

³² Monica Tap is an established artist living in Toronto, ON. She received a BFA and MFA from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. She is an Associate Professor at the University of Guelph. We met twice in her Toronto-based studio. <http://www.monicatap.com>

³³ Emily Carr (1871-1945) was a Canadian artist whose work adopted Modernist and Post-Impressionist painting style and was in response to the British Columbia landscape and her engagements with the Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest Coast. She continues to be a significant figure in Canadian art history, particularly in British Columbia (retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emily_Carr).

³⁴ El Greco (Doménikos Theotokópoulos) (1541-1614) was a painter, sculptor and architect of the Spanish Renaissance known for his dramatic and expressionistic style. (retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Greco).

history. While in some cases the work explicitly referenced artworks, in other cases, the art historical references hovered in the background or were starting points to a creative process. I also noted in our visit upon discussing her thirty-year trajectory of painting, that her work appeared to shift from a more conceptually engaged practice to a more experiential practice.

During her graduate work in the 1990s Tap's work responded to the paintings of Dutch 17th century painter Rachel Ruysch³⁵. Through this engagement, she dissects the marks made by the artist on the canvas by removing it from the image. In this work, she projects the paintings by Rachel Ruysch on top of each other. She said that through this process the paintings began to reference abstract expressionist marks while also subverting the masculinity associated with that mark. "They were sort of Abstract Expressionists flower paintings and that struck me as funny given the macho reputation of ab ex. So, I figured 'I'll make ab ex flowers.'" Eventually she said, she took the flowers out and ended up with just foliage. She explained how unintentionally her work increasingly moved into the genre of landscape while also resisting it.

Once you're into leaves, you're into trees. So, then my next move was a series of paintings on fabric which meant finding fabric that had leaves. That summer, I taught a landscape drawing class and I got really interested in what seemed to be a vocabulary of marks that were used by artists in the 17th through 19th centuries to help translate the giant space of the landscape onto tiny pieces of paper. There were marks for certain kinds of trees, for certain kinds of leaves, -- a kind of shorthand, as you can't literally draw every single leaf. Together the students and I, we made these little dictionaries of such marks. And then I just started using this as a starting point for my own work.

Tap's discussion further reveals the iterative process described above. While the work does in a sense seek to disrupt or re-appropriate narratives of abstraction coming down from Abstract Expressionism, she describes her intention with the work as not simply subversive. She also explained how this postmodern deconstruction of the painting set the context of how one made paintings at the time. Furthermore, she

³⁵ Rachel Ruysch (1664-1750) was a still-life painter from the Netherlands who specialized in flowers (retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rachel_Ruysch).

explained how through this process, she was allowing these different painting genres and art historical moments to be in conversation within the space of the canvas.



Figure 119. Monica Tap, *Panoramic: red & blue*, 1997, oil on canvas, 30" x 30"

Ideas about the death of the author and the death of painting both pretty deeply ingrained in us at this time. It's the anti-painting side, that you can paint but you've got to let audience know that you know it's dead. Everything's got to be deferred, so these were strategies that I was figuring out. On the one hand, by aligning myself with the Dutch female painter I could distance my own hand while on the other, it was like I was doing this feminist revival project. So, the whole time I was working with the old master landscape drawings, I was not thinking about landscape as a subject really. I was aware I was thinking of it as one of the genres but I liked the way in which the vocabulary was abstracting space. And the thing I was most interested in was bringing together these drawings from different time periods and making them cohere and have conversations with each other on the space of the canvas. This weird collapsing you can do because the canvas is something you see all at once. It's a synchronic space as opposed to a diachronic space of film or books.

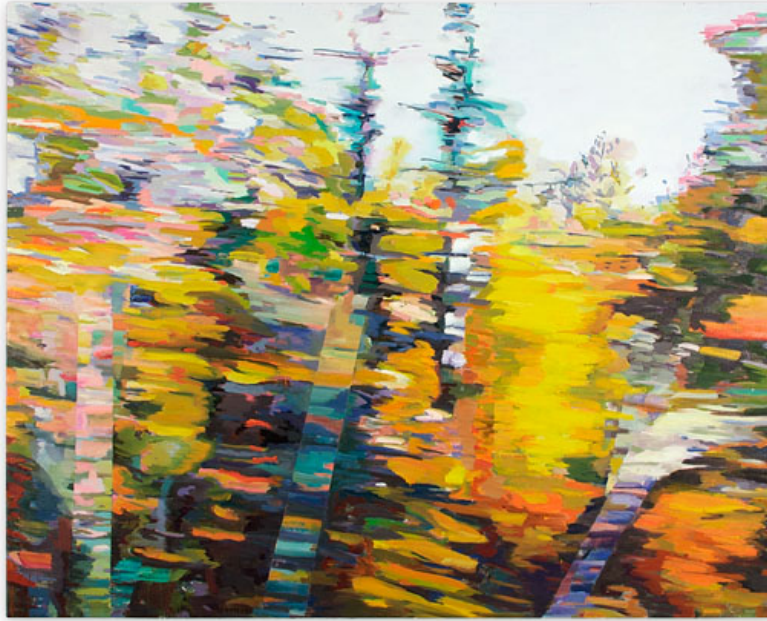


Figure 120. Monica Tap, *Polka*, 2010, oil on canvas, 66" x 83"

Her work shifted when she started working from video stills from videos she had taken out of the window of her car. "I kind of love that landscape sliding by the window. It's a contemplative space, an eternal present in a way... The landscape has a different kind of time inherent to it, geological time (the deep time) and also the cyclical time of seasons. And then there is this insanely quick capture of the video. So, there are all these layers of time that are inherent to the subject of landscape." She explained that in this work she was trying to make the painting speak like a video.

As I discussed her career with her, I noted that her work appeared to shift from more removed and disconnected from the experience in the landscape, toward a more personal lived experience with the land. She noted those shifts: "There have been these various deferrals and quite literal changes of pace." We discussed shifts in painting discourse over the past twenty years that may have contributed to a shift in perspective, from conceptual, to discursive, to her more experiential approach. She had recently hiked the Camino de Santiago de Compostella trail in Spain, travelling across the country over 32 days. Every day, she took a picture on the hour, one ahead and one behind her. She explained that it didn't initially start as a conceptual art project, but more as a way to pay attention. She walked across the country, and at

times she was walking in the mountains, other times in suburbs, and other times along the side of the highway. This work looked at motion and time and space similar to the video still paintings, but slowing down time. This slowing down the pace, as she experienced the landscape through walking, aligns with earlier discussions about mapping. For Bolt (2004) experiencing the land through an experiential and material engagement allows one to “feel the cold, or smell the salt air” (p. 27). Through her work, Tap continues to engage with the relationships between representations of the land, art history and the embodied material engagements with the land. Perhaps this shift allows Tap to experience the terrain rather than simply the map, as discussed by Ryden (2014, p. 47). She describes her newer work as examining her complex engagement with the world through both direct interactions with the environment and other sources. She explains how her process entails assembling fragments from “outtakes from painting’s history, elements from her own snapshots, colour notes, memory” (Tap, personal communication, July 11, 2018). Through this work she explores how landscape may trigger memory while also revealing how aesthetics have shaped our understandings and engagements with the landscape.



Figure 121. Monica Tap, *Gauguin's Dog*, 2018, oil on canvas, 45" x 66"

Allyson Clay: Irregular Lines

While visiting Allyson Clay³⁶ (figure 122) in her Vancouver studio, she described moving in and out of painting throughout her career. She explained how when she first arrived in Vancouver in the 80s, it was dominated by conceptual photography. She explained how at the time, with the intellectual critique of painting, and wanting to bring a feminist voice into painting practices, she struggled thinking about how to move painting forward. She showed me an artist book/catalogue for an exhibition where she had created a series of instructions on how to make a painting, but within that text she inserted seemingly random subjective phrases. In one instructional text, she showed how the subjective voice was inserted as vertical columns to reflect the stripes of the painting it referred to (that would have been hung across the gallery from the text in the original exhibition). One column reads: I/read/that/art/inspired/him/to/prove/he/was/in/charge/even/if/it/required/occasional/mutilation/or/penetration/of/the/surface/with/gentle/strokes. She explained that introducing a subjective feminine voice was a way of critiquing masculinity and the sexualized, masculine position in relation to the act of painting as a way to find her own feminist approach to painting.

Clay showed me a more recent painting which continues to use text. It combines language used in books about painting enclosed within shapes that she says represents “the constrictions of abstraction that are left over from abstract painting and Modernism.” She described coming back to painting and working through the steps to imagine it’s “ok” to think about painting again. She showed one work in which she uses text and shape to juxtapose ideas about suburban life and painting. Regarding this work, she made an interesting statement about the language she chose: “I want to talk about painting as poison. It can be very alluring too, and beautiful poison in a way, so I think that's how I think about painting.” She said she was speaking both literally and allegorically here, describing the “poison of pleasure.”

³⁶ Allyson Clay is an established artist living in Vancouver, BC. She received a BFA from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and an MFA from the University of British Columbia. She is a Professor at Simon Fraser University. We met twice in her Vancouver-based studio, however during the course of my research I also saw an exhibition of hers at the MacLaren Art Centre, in Barrie, ON. This exhibition extended what I learned in our studio visit, therefore it is also discussed in this section. <http://www.allysonclay.com>



Figure 122. Allyson Clay's studio, Vancouver, 2015

Sometime after my studio visit with Clay I visited the Maclaren Art Centre in Barrie, Ontario, to see an exhibition of hers called *Irregular Lines* (2016). In this gallery, there were large shaped paintings along one wall, and opposite hung a grid of photographs of reproductions of paintings from what looked to be a damaged art history book (figure 123). In a glass showcase, there was the actual book open to two pages, and a shape resembling one of the large paintings was painted in oil paint over top, obscuring a part of the image underneath. During my studio visit beforehand Allyson had explained her interventions into a classic art history book by Doreen Ehrlich, *Masterpieces of 20th Century Painting* (1989), and showed me the book, dry, but puffed, puckered and torn from water damage. As a commission for the Lethbridge University Art Gallery in Alberta, Clay had thrown the Ehrlich book in the Old Man River and photographed it as it floated underwater. The book of course was damaged in this process, and the gallery offered to keep it and dry it out. At Clay's request the Gallery then mailed the dried but altered book back to her. The Old Man River book drowning became the first part of her project with the Ehrlich book, where she attempted to apply a physical gesture of disruption in consideration of facing down a dominant western and masculine narrative of traditional art history.

Eventually, over top of various full colour spreads of the individual artworks in the book, she painted monochromatic shapes she had abstracted from other artworks by 20th century women painters.

She explained this disruption: “I am laying a map of leaking borders—traces from the spaces of women—across pages of a familiar and internalized art history” (Maclaren Art Centre, 2016, retrieved from <https://maclarenart.com/exhibitions/allyson-clay-irregular-lines>). The worn-out book with painted additions revealed her affective, material response to the art history that artists of her generation have internalized; Clay is taking up the task to restore some omissions from this narrative, in a decisive painterly gesture. She sees herself as one of many artists actively involved in re-compositions of otherwise normative and colonial historical narratives. I understood from my interview that Clay has always been drawn to how paintings are written about.

As Clay writes elsewhere about this work:

It’s a physical alteration of the material of the book and the progress of its time; re-ruining, replacing. It’s like a voice-over in paint. Paint is viscous. Oily halos form around the images I make. The paper is sucking the oil from the paint in the ruined book. Suck, suck, suck; Mondrian, Picasso, Baselitz. Oil seeps into O’Keeffe, Riley, Rothenberg, softening everything. I am laying a map of leaking borders – traces from the spaces of women – across pages of a familiar internalized art history. (Clay & Warland, 2015).



Figure 123. Allyson Clay, Maclaren Art Centre, Barrie, 2016³⁷

³⁷ On this page of the book, Clay painted shapes over top of a painting by 20th century Abstract Expressionist painter Robert Motherwell (1915-1991).

Elizabeth McIntosh: Improvising with artists from the past

Vancouver-based artist Elizabeth McIntosh³⁸ (figure 124) explained how as a teenager she went to an adult summer painting class and was influenced by her instructor's interest in artist Milton Avery³⁹. She said she would sit for hours painting, but wasn't trying to capture the scene. Instead she was looking for shapes in the landscape. She would look at the overall scene and try to simplify it to basic forms; perhaps she would make a bush with bright pink or use simplified shapes to represent things. She said "in a way, that's still what I do." McIntosh's practice encompasses several of the ideas previously discussed, particularly regarding emergence and improvisation. Describing her interest in colour and shapes, McIntosh explained how paintings come out of the process of making them, stating that while you make decisions as you go, sometimes the painting would suggest a direction or possibility for something else.

McIntosh explained that she had been grappling with questions about whether a painting is different if it is planned versus one that is conceived in the making. She told me she had been reading a book about Matisse where he talked about how a sketch has the most urgent and necessary information, as evidence of a process. "He talks about how a sketch is immediate and all the thinking is in the mark because it's being conceived as it's being made." She explained that Matisse would do double of most of his paintings, the first one being sketchier than the second. But she wondered whether the second one doesn't have that because something has been resolved. She wondered if a preplanned gesture was empty of expressive potential. She also thought about how the painting contains evidence of this searching, and the problem-solving and gesture that occurs through the making:

That way of thinking, that is a way of making. In the case when it's not planned, it's a kind of record, there is physical evidence because you can't actually get rid of it when you make a painting like that. It's all there in all the layers. It's not like when you're editing an essay. All the decisions are embedded in the paint.

³⁸ Elizabeth McIntosh is a mid-career artist living in Vancouver, BC. She received a BFA from York University and an MFA from the Chelsea College of Art and Design. She is an Associate Professor at Emily Carr University of Art and Design. We met once in her Vancouver-based studio. <http://elizabethmcintosh.ca/paintings>

³⁹ Milton Avery (1885-1965) was an American Modern painter (retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milton_Avery).

In a recent exhibition, she showed doubles of paintings, the first improvisational and the second pre-planned to examine these questions. In this way, her work examines the process of painting and the way our thinking process is embedded within the work. And she prompts viewers to consider a painting as a record of the performance of a process. She explained that she has always been interested in this process of improvisation because it allows her to leave herself open to move with what's happening and allow the process to lead her through, rather than start with a pre-determined goal.

McIntosh expressed that she continually makes direct references to other painters, often Modernist artists such as Paul Klee, Pablo Picasso or Henry Matisse⁴⁰. She described a group of paintings that came out of a sticker book she had found of famous artists, where kids were supposed to find the stickers to make the painting complete. This became a tool for her to abstract from existing paintings, as she would make paintings in response to shapes from these art works. I asked her about improvisation. Referring to an old artist statement of hers, she said:

My friend talked about how it's impossible to improvise alone because improvising is something that developed in jazz music and it's a kind of group activity. So, I talk about how I feel like I'm improvising with material from the past.

This concept of improvising with artists suggests a responsiveness to art history, a process that allows these old art works to remain active through an ongoing visual conversation. She described painting as an interactive and responsive conversation with artists from the past through her own studio work. This prompted a consideration of how these works are situated within the network or web as discussed by Relyea (2010). In this way, drawing from the artists from the past is not a static representation of their work, but instead re-animates the work and enlivens it through participating in conversations with the present.

⁴⁰ Paul Klee (Switzerland, 1879-1940), Pablo Picasso (Spain, 1881-1973) and Henri Matisse (France, 1869-1954) were all significant artists within European Modern painting in the early 20th century contributing toward development of abstract approaches to painting that were influential throughout the 20th century and whose influences continue today (retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_art).



Figure 124. Elizabeth McIntosh's studio, Vancouver, 2016

Proposition 12: Painting as speculative

As previously discussed, I propose that studios are assemblages of ideas, images, objects and experiences. They are spaces where materials are alive and active. They are spaces that are filled with stories. And they are spaces where fact and fiction collide through the material, inventive and imaginative process of painting. O’Sullivan (2010) uses the term Mythopoeisis to describe the “imaginative transformation of the world through fiction” as he states: “When we grasp the world as fiction in this way we begin to ‘see’ the limits of what is seeable/sayable and are thus able to gesture beyond these very limits” (p. 203). I propose that within studios this mythopoeisis process allows for a speculative process through the inventive capacity of painting processes. Through this learning process, artists may imagine alternative possibilities. Furthermore, through the work of artists Kent Monkman, Mark Neufeld and Sara Hartland-Rowe, I propose that this process allows one to learn about the past, present and the future, as new interactions are imagined and embodied within the painting.

Kent Monkman: A reversal of the gaze



Figures 125-131. Kent Monkman’s studio, Toronto, 2015

I visited Kent Monkman's⁴¹ (figures 125-131) large studio in Toronto. Within it was a mural-sized painting, with a smaller sketched version up close. And the image of the painting's reference, the 19th century painting *The Raft of the Medusa*⁴², by Theodore Gericault sat close by. His transformations of these iconic Western paintings retell the untold First Nations stories. They reveal our complicated relationships with art history, as well as how representations contain implicit meanings not only in the subject that is painted but also in how it is painted, within the materiality of the marks of paint. Through his work he seeks to complicate these meanings. My conversation with Monkman revealed the complexity of his relationship to art history as he explained how he could simultaneously embrace and critique historical Western European painting. Furthermore, Monkman prompted consideration about how our engagement with the landscape in our daily lives is shaped through the lens of images we have embraced and internalized. In my case, I considered how I learned about the Canadian landscape as a young child through paintings by Emily Carr or the Group of Seven⁴³. Monkman addresses how our material engagement with the landscape and with nature is affected by images of the landscape. This reinforces the relationship between materiality of paint, of art works and engagements with the world.

Through our conversation, Monkman explained the tensions he found addressing the way history has been told through a colonial perspective through taking up a Western history painting style.

Really it was a whole genre of work, paintings of the 19th century where you had American artists and Canadian artists like Paul Kane⁴⁴ and George Catlin⁴⁵ whose eyes were on indigenous people

⁴¹ Kent Monkman is a mid-career artist of Cree ancestry, living in Toronto, ON. He received a diploma from Sheridan College of Applied Arts. At the time of the submission of this dissertation, his work was in a solo traveling exhibition *Shame and Prejudice: A Story of Resilience* that has/will appear in public institutions across Canada. We met once in his Toronto-based studio. <http://www.kentmonkman.com>

⁴² *Raft of Medusa*, 1818-1819, by French Romantic painter, Theodore Gericault that is an "over-life-sized painting that depicts a moment from the aftermath of the wreck of the French naval frigate Meduse, which ran aground off the coast of today's Mauritania on 2 July 1816" and "147 people were set adrift on a hurriedly constructed raft" (retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Raft_of_the_Medusa).

⁴³ The Group of Seven was a group of landscape painters from 1920-1933 who developed a unique style of painting drawn from the Canadian landscape that came to define the Canadian landscape and were arguably the most influential Canadian artists of the 20th century (retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Group_of_Seven_\(artists\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Group_of_Seven_(artists))).

⁴⁴ Paul Kane (1810-1871) was an Irish-born Canadian painter. He was known for his paintings of First Nations peoples (retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Kane).

⁴⁵ George Catlin (1796-1872) was an American painter "who specialized in paintings of Native Americans in the Old West" (retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Catlin).

and basically giving us the authoritative version of history, so I realized that art history as it was and it how was perpetuated in the museums was very one-sided. And there were so many historical moments that had to do with history from an Indigenous perspective that had essentially been painted out. Then I realized I was tackling not just a deep vast technical challenge but it was also this going into this document of art history and all the museum practice that still supports it. And that was really important for me too, because again as an emerging First Nations artist, you were instantly categorized and marginalized, because people thought: “Well shouldn’t you be painting this?” So, there were all those preconceived ideas coming at you from all parts of the art world, whether it was museum curators, commercial galleries or wherever. It’s less like that now but at the time it was palpable.

So what kind of assumptions do you think they had about the kind of work you should be doing?

Well, people just thought that if you’re a First Nations artist, your work belongs here, so it was more segregated, in terms of audience and, there was not as much room in the contemporary galleries. And then I went through a number of different experiences with public institutions where it was very palpable in terms of, how First Nations people were put in the First Nations gallery. But for me the most important thing was facing the creative challenge of really wanting to be a better painter and embracing a vocabulary of painting that was as deep and complex as symphonic music, but in the form of painting and that could still be relevant. Could I make it relevant and powerful today with my perspective being First Nations? They are two ostensibly opposing viewpoints, because there’s this Western classical European tradition of painting. But at the same time as I’m critiquing it I’m also embracing it. So, I think that has been a very interesting position to be in, because it’s loaded, that point of contact between cultures is very volatile. It’s exciting, there’s conflict, there’s exchange, so I think my practice was really invigorated by that, by that idea of embracing as opposed to rejecting. And I’ve heard different First Nations artists categorically dismiss anything European, any painting tradition, easel painting, or anything. It’s like you’re going to create work that only comes from one pure pathway of inspiration, and that doesn’t make any sense. So of course, European artists were looking at indigenous artists through that period of modernity, and that’s what’s important in a lot of my recent work, it’s how that period of modern art is confused by that outward perspective of Europeans looking at non-Europeans. So a lot of my work has to do with that reversal of gaze and that reciprocal relationship, that it’s never a one-sided thing, of course we’re being observed but we were also observing.



Mark Neufeld: Threatening to fall into a mythological or fictional space

To address the layering and intersection of ideas and influences, Winnipeg-based artist, Mark Neufeld⁴⁶ (figures 132-137) used a metaphor to describe intuitive knowledge within studio practice: “It’s like a stack of paper with holes in it, so it’s a sculpture and a collage and the holes might burrow from one piece of information to the other.” This metaphor greatly influenced the way I heard our conversation, as a trail of thinking, wandering and burrowing between ideas, from one reference to another, from one connection to another with such ease.

Neufeld’s work addresses mythologies, and in our conversation we explored how he navigates between fact and fiction in painting. Through the inventive process of art making, artists have permission to blur that line. Through doing so, Neufeld prompts us to question our relationship to history. He talked about one body of work he started when he was in Berlin where he learned of a German cowboy novel, and discovered their fascination with a fantasy of North America and the “wild west.” He explained how it is a fiction that is also trying to be authentic at the same time. He started making work about the West and the notion of the cowboy. He described how the history of the west was aligned with the invention of photography and film, so our memory is inscribed with these fictional devices. In one painting, he had translated a page from the book into English, using google translate, which greatly obscured the meaning and reveals the faults of translation.

So, I think that sets the tone of the work which is infused with fact, factual things, but always threatening to fall into a mythological or fictive space. And I think that comes through. I read all of the work as ‘factual’ in some way, as it’s rooted in some kind of objective observation. I think it reflects the presence of research in the studio, in a weird way. Because there is this play with objectivity, but then in the end it doesn’t necessarily resolve itself through the usual apparatus.

⁴⁶ Mark Neufeld is a mid-career artist currently living in Winnipeg, ON. He received a BFA from Emily Carr University of Art and Design and an MFA from the University of Victoria. He was the 2008 recipient of the prestigious Joseph Plaskett Award. He is currently as Assistant Professor at the University of Manitoba. We met twice in his Winnipeg-based studio. <https://www.markneufeld.com>

He pointed out a pair of paintings he thought of as history paintings, intentionally made large to reflect the original large-scale of history painting. He had been looking for pictures of a rodeo and came across a book in the library about the Calgary Stampede. Alluding to ways chance encounters with particular material affect his practice, he explained how he preferred to stumble upon something, rather than going through the archives: “I think it sounds corny, but I do need a flash of inspiration or something like that to happen in the process.” This book that he stumbled upon told the “story” of the Calgary stampede but between the lines of the text was a narrative about First Nations displacement.

He also discussed paintings made from a model of a fort near Lethbridge, Alberta, Fort Whoop-up. He explained how the painting became a copy of a copy of something. He showed me this series of works of hands handling sculptures, inserting the hand of the curator into the image as they move sculptures. Again, he questions the authenticity of representations through revealing the hands of the curator manipulating the objects. Thus, he reveals the translation involved in representations. He also reveals how histories are told and retold within the materiality and handling of objects.





Figures 132-133. Mark Neufeld's studio, Winnipeg, 2014

So, it's all about the model. It's a model of a fort, not a real fort, and the sculpture is a model, and so the paintings represent not the real confrontation with the European...I think this idea of capturing and containing something is really important to people, to our Western world view. You could frame it with a painting, coming back to the Renaissance painting, to the window, or to the grid.

We met for a second visit in his University of Manitoba studio. In this visit, looking at new and older works, he proposed parallels between the history of 20th century abstract painting and the rodeo. He proposed that the gesture of abstraction is something that can be traced back through different aspects of culture. He described the rodeo as an expression of "Vita Activa," active life over contemplative life, as a signal of modernism.

Thinking about abstract painting, and the gesture and treating it as a problem that can be traced through all these different aspects of culture. That's like the signal of modernism, modernism privileges the active life over the contemplative life and you can see that in Abstract

Expressionism. And you can see that in capitalism and the constant emphasis on dynamism and the constant emphasis on innovation and self-transformation through success. And I feel like I'm using that. I'm trying to use the painterly vocabulary to talk about painting but also to talk about these other problems of modernity... I think the easiest figure is Pollock and the idea that the gesture for the painting becomes a record of a performance... I was interested in linking that early Modernism and early Expressionism and thinking about how some of those things are transposed into the New World and colonialism. But it is hard to put into words.

Neufeld's work draws lines and connections between history, art history, contemporary art and events. He reveals how they are all interconnected, and through doing so he provokes viewers to question how representations fall into a space between fact and fiction. He also reveals how through focusing on a specific topic (in this case, cowboys, the rodeo and abstract painting) we can reach outward to larger social, political and philosophical ideas.

Neufeld had another exhibition that dealt with similar ideas around history, representation and the connections between them. The following reveals a trail of thinking that draws connections between art, philosophy, modernism, contemporary art, film and current events. I deliberately kept the wandering language to reveal the nonlinear way these ideas connect and become entangled for him. He explained that he was thinking about Vita Activa and film and how they are linked and created an exhibition in response to the great train robbery in the first Western film and a train robbery that happened in Kamloops.

They made a movie [about the train robbery] called the *Gray Fox*. It's like the only Canadian Western that was made in the early 80s, and it's based on this Kamloops train robbery from 1906. The funny thing is that this real train robbery that happened in Kamloops, which was Canada's first train robbery was inspired by the film the *Great Train Robbery* which was made a few years earlier. So, it was really interesting for me because it was this art and life thing, and it was in Kamloops. I was already thinking about these objects, which lend themselves to that kind of narrative. So, this is actually a tangential relationship, but you might recognize Van Gogh's boots. So, it's a photo I came across on the internet. It's at an auction or something and it has these hands moving the painting, which turned out to be really great for the show, because Heidegger

wrote an essay about Van Gogh's painting of boots⁴⁷ to talk about things. So, the curatorial premise of the show had to do with 'thing theory' which goes back to that Heidegger essay. The painting was not made because of the essay, but then at a certain point when I was sitting in the studio and I was already making work for the show, that's when I realized this, and thought it was so funny that the painting in my painting is the same painting Heidegger is talking about. And the painting is being treated as a thing because of the hands.

And you just came across that image?

Yes, I came across the image on the internet and it led from these earlier paintings that I had done of hands with objects, so it was an easy connection. And then a couple of things were taken from the Canadian film based on the Kamloops train robbery showing the character Bill Minor as he's watching *The Great Train Robbery* in an early 20th century movie theater. So, it's like the hand is playing with obstruction, especially in these projector ones. It's an earlier projector and I wanted to think of him as a kind of stagecoach robber and then he saw this movie and the movie transformed his vocation, because the movie convinced him that he should be a robber of train, not a stagecoach robber. And, so I thought of him also as a kind of Duchampian⁴⁸ figure who is part old world art and he has this epiphany where he decides to radicalize his practice. So, I thought of him as that kind of character, transformed by Cinema.

⁴⁷ Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890) was a Dutch Post-Impressionist artist. His painting *A Pair of Boots*, 1886, has been widely referenced throughout 20th century art history (retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vincent_van_Gogh).

⁴⁸ Marcel Duchamp (1887-1969) is a French-American artist who has been largely associated with Conceptual art and Dada. He is generally recognized as one of the most significant figures in 20th century art (retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcel_Duchamp).



Figures 134-137. Mark Neufeld, *A Film Adrift in the Cosmos*, Kamloops Art Gallery, 2015.

Sara Hartland-Rowe: Your paintings are full of chatter

Sara Hartland-Rowe⁴⁹ (figures 138-141) explained that she always grappled with her innate desire to paint figuratively throughout her career despite being told that it was prohibited in the art world. When I asked her why she held onto the figure, she said that as a child she moved a lot and so as an outsider she would look at people and think “what do you do?” and “How do you do it?” She said she would make up narratives as if they were avatars.

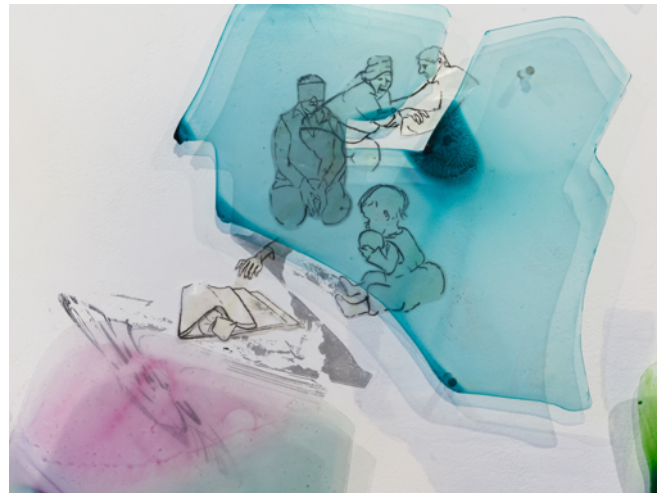
Rather than seek out answers or specific directions, Hartland-Rowe said she preferred thinking of her process as following hunches or whims. As, she was beginning to develop her approach to wall

⁴⁹ Sara Hartland-Rowe is an established artist living Halifax, NS. She received a BFA from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and an MFA from the University of Illinois at Chicago. She is an instructor at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. We met once in her Halifax-based studio. <http://www.sarahartlandrowe.com>

painting, she said she asked herself, “What do you want to look at? Who do you love?” And she thought about Giotto who she had looked at for a long time: “The figures in Giotto⁵⁰ were so endearing and tell such amazing stories in such a succinct way.”



Figure 138. Sara-Hartland-Rowe's studio, Halifax, 2015



Figures 139-140. Sara Hartland-Rowe, *Double Vision*, 2018.

I'd been collecting marginalia from manuscripts, looking at them for little tiny narrative interactions. One of the weights for me is that I've said for a long time that I'm a narrative artist, and I don't think I am. I think in order to account for my fascination with figuration, I had to have

⁵⁰ Giotto di Bondone (1267-1337) was an Italian painter and architect from Florence in the Late Middle Ages (retrieved from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giotto>).

a reason for it, and it couldn't just be that I'm fascinated with the way people look because then it would go very into portraiture which is not quite right. I'm not a portrait artist, that's not what I'm curious about. But I don't think I'm a story teller. They aren't interesting stories. I was told once "Your paintings are full of chatter." And I thought about that. What's chatter? It's the way women talk to each other over the back fence. It's non-consequential, yet it's around us all the time and we all love it. We love those tiny stories. So, I started to look for tiny stories, and the place I was looking for them was in these manuscripts. So, the wall drawing was a whole lot of these tiny moments between one or two figures and it was very scattered, but it broke the ice because the wall drawing was like the surface of the paper, both extremely material but also absolutely infinite, it could be anything, it could be any depth.

Hartland-Rowe explained that she doesn't believe in overarching narratives but instead believes in tiny narratives, tiny moments. She says there are common threads between stories but it's the particular way that people are in relationship to those things that make them the most interesting. For example, she says she could explain how her work is about big themes such as pain and suffering or love and kindness, but it's how these play out that is interesting. We discussed how I viewed my research journey in a similar way. There were common themes and explorations, but the journey into artist studios allowed me to engage with each artist's own stories and understand how these stories played out within the work of each artist. I similarly am not as interested in a grand narrative about painting practices, but in understanding the individual stories that while connected within a network of social conditions, each plays out in its own way. I similarly view this research as being made up of several moments and stories, each of which is implicated in my research story. The ways we implicate ourselves in others' stories is revealed in a work Hartland-Rowe discussed. She explained how this work was based on a story she had read in the newspaper:

I did a wall work called *The Prince*, which was based on a real story. And that was an amazing story I read in the newspaper because it is quite unbelievable. So, the real story is the Prince of Nepal who went to his father and asked if he could marry, so this prince is that guy and he has fallen in love with this woman. So, he went to his father and he said, "I must check with the soothsayers." So, there's the father and in between the two of them is the uncle, and this is the soothsayer. So, the soothsayer said to the king, "If you allow your son to marry this woman, you

will die.” And this is a true story, in about 1998. So, the king went to the prince and said, “No, you can’t marry her” and the prince was so upset and so angry that he shot his whole family and himself, and the only person that wasn’t there at the time was the uncle who was out of town, so the uncle came back and became king. So, it’s totally Shakespeare. I decided to use that as the basis for this wall painting. I set it up as if it was a revolving stage. So, this pink thing moves around, so it shows that the stage is revolving and there’s the audience. This is the uncle talking to the soothsayers and the king talking to the prince and now the uncle is talking to each of the king and the prince and stirring up trouble. Then the king and the prince are having an argument and at the end you just see the uncle. And that’s the woman who gradually turns away and disappears. It’s about 50 feet wide. So I told the story in three different ways. One is a text version, and then I did another version on these shaped canvases with myself playing all the parts. So, that’s me arguing with myself as King and Prince... I tried to tell it like a folk tale.

Through the process of retelling the story with her as the characters, Hartland-Rowe inserted herself into it. Furthermore, she created it on aluminum that can move around. She explained that the conceptual reason for this is that you can take the pieces and move them around, so there is not one story, but multiple stories. Furthermore, inserting herself into it, reveals that this is not an objective depiction of a story, but rather a story from her lens or perspective. I wondered, as she described this work, how through creating this narrative and inserting herself into the story, she created an empathetic response to the story.



Figure 141. Sara Hartland-Rowe, *The Prince*, Durham Art Gallery, 2006

I asked Hartland-Rowe why she makes art:

I think it's an interface between me and the rest of the world and for me visual production is a better interface than what we think thinking is, which is verbal and language-based. But the visual thinking is a better way for me to think. Because I can't think originally in words, and I don't think I'm inventing new stuff for the world, but that I can come much closer to the deeper questions I'm aware of wanting to answer for myself better that way.

The word interface suggests an interaction, a form of communication. She invites us to consider the ways visuals function as interface, as conversation. Furthermore, she invites us to consider all the small moments that makes up our lives and our stories, rather than focus on the big moments. These small interactions and their ability to create real effects reveals this diffractive process whereby each interaction causes a shift and creates the potential for something different to be revealed. Her recreation of these stories through presenting the multiple perspectives and re-creations reveals this potentiality. I propose that these fictional recreations allow the artist to engage creatively and speculatively and through this process they may imagine their relationship with both the past and present.

Painting Proposition 13: Painting as relational

Painting is a social practice and a relational practice. It exists within a web of relationships. These relationships are formed as artists engage with each other's work, with each other, and with art history. These conversations occur through verbal discussions with peers, mentors and teachers. These conversations occur through visiting exhibitions and through viewing and responding to art historical and contemporary art works. Relationships are formed as artists engage in similar issues and experiences in the world. Art making is relational. It responds to the context and to the interactions. Within this section, I return to the work of Fiona Ackerman who engaged with other artists' studios as a way of creating a relationship between her practice and theirs. I follow up this discussion through examining how Ehryn Torrell forms relationships through examining place. Through her work, I propose that art practices always exist in relation to others.

Fiona Ackerman: It's not me it's you

What does it mean to enter into someone's else's space? I see the studio as an intimate, personal, contemplative or private space. It is where ideas are developed, mistakes and failures play out, and one's experiences are revealed. It is also a place of work where the exchange between the world of the studio and the art world beyond the studio first develops. My examination of the generative capacity of the studio was first ignited in an exhibition I visited in Vancouver as I was beginning to conceive of this research. I went to an exhibition titled *It's not you it's me* by artist Fiona Ackerman, at Winsor Gallery in Vancouver in 2014. In this exhibition, Ackerman presented paintings she had made of visits to artists' studios.

In our first studio visit, we talked extensively about this project. Rewinding to two years earlier, Ackerman explained how she had begun to reflect on her own studio practices and make work in response to this. She said that she was feeling stunted, lost and uncertain about her painting process and that she "longed for moment of ecstasy when a mess of a painting, like a ship lost at sea, begins to find its way"

(retrieved from <http://www.fionaackerman.com/heterotopia-2012/>). She came across an essay by Foucault (1967) about Heterotopias which states:

There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places... which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias. (Foucault, 1967, as cited in Ackerman, 2012)

Ackerman began to reflect on her studio practice and create work that drew from marks made on previous paintings. She began to reproduce gestures and shapes from previous paintings to examine personal symbolism within them. She said that through this process the world of the studio began to reveal itself onto the canvas. She stated: "I began to realize these paintings have more in common with each other than with any physical place I have ever been. As my metaphorical ship came to shore, I found myself landing in my own heterotopia" (Ackerman, 2012). She said as she continued to paint these spaces, they became heterotopic spaces as narratives began to build and objects and spaces began to take on new meanings: "A piece of paper held by tape takes on an anthropomorphic presence or doorways breaking depth of field or symbolizing sails of a ship" (Ackerman, 2012). Through her process of painting her studio, she came to better engage with artistic processes within the studio. She realized that studios were similar to Foucault's heterotopic spaces as spaces where "incompatible realities play out." Through this work, she reveals the performative process of the studio itself, and how it moved and changed in relation to her paintings.

In these hidden think tanks, an artistic exercise meant to reflect something true or philosophical about the world outside its doors runs amuck. Tangents of association mix with struggle and play. The result is discovery and need not be more. (Ackerman, 2012)

While she began her exploration of studios turning inward to her own studio, she then expanded her exploration and visited others' studios. She called herself an art-thropological explorer and voyeur. I found this term interesting as similar to me trying to navigate my research methodology, she merged an artistic approach with social science research methods. Through bringing the two together she highlights that she is borrowing these approaches while inserting her artistic subjectivity into them. What differed for her is the invention that occurs through art practice. She usually visited the studios when the artist was not present. She claimed she was "not holding a mirror to the studio, but a distorting lens." This distorting lens highlights the diffractive, rather than reflective process she created. In the exhibition essay for the exhibition, *It's not you it's me* she explains that that is how she understands the relationship she developed with the artist, their work and her own. My conversation with Ackerman and my engagements with this work, have become simultaneously a metaphor, an embodiment and a performance of the relationship between solitary and social studio practices and the relationships formed between artists.

In our studio visit, Ackerman expanded on this project. She said she liked the idea of visiting someone else's studio and flipping it on itself. She also explained that the draw of this work was that she is not a very social person. But through getting to know their work, their palette, their approach and their materials through their studio, she came to know them, even without meeting that person, only visiting their studio. Through this work, Ackerman recognized how relationships with others is a part of studio practice. She maintained that she has an interest in developing this conversation with artists through visiting their spaces and exploring their spaces, but is always cognizant that it is through her own lens. Her examination of her process paralleled my own and as I began my own research journey, I considered her influence on my own research methods. The following images reveal two views of Ron Moppett's studio; figure 142 is the photograph I took in 2014 and figure 143 is the painting by Fiona Ackerman.



Figure 142. Ron Moppett's studio, 2014



Figure 143. *The Past is Prologue* (from Ron Moppett studio visit), Fiona Ackerman 2013.

Ehryn Torrell: Paralleling two different lives

Canadian artist, who is currently based in London, Ehryn Torrell⁵¹ addresses the materiality of space and place as her investigations about place and architecture took her all over the world. Richardson (2011) argues that the materiality of space must be considered to understand the complexity of human experience as he describes how places and images of places hold an echo from the past. Torrell's work, investigates this potentiality of space. Furthermore, the potentials of places to contain these echoes from the past were exemplified within the location of our interview. This interview was significant, both because of the depth of conversation I shared with Torrell, but also because of the studio space where I met her. I met her in a studio she shared with the ghost of the previous inhabitant, artist Doris McCarthy⁵². This studio embodied the ways we develop relationships with artists that came before us. Furthermore, this studio visit is an example of how artists often work in temporary studios, and how these moves to different studios shapes their practices.

During her MFA program at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Torrell began to explore her interests in place and architecture: "My core subject, was memory and longing and real attempts to articulate experience in space and experience in place and understand what that means." Her interest culminated in work about a house she had seen in the north end of Halifax. It was a house in a corner lot and so she could see the backyard and she explained that the house had the whole back taken off, like a doll's house. She said she saw it as a magical symbol that was both attractive and scary. A few months later, it was all boarded up. She started taking videos of herself walking in the space and compared this process to the making of the movie *Blare Witch*. She described the things that would happen as she was filming, people coming and talking to her, they shared gossip, stating it had been abandoned for 10 years,

⁵¹ Ehryn Torrell is a mid-career Canadian artist currently living in London, UK. She received a Bachelor of Arts from McMaster University and an MFA from Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. She was the 2006 recipient of the prestigious Joseph Plaskett Award. We first met at the University Art Association of Canada, 2015 conference in Halifax, NS, and shared a long discussion about painting. Following that, we met once in her London-based studio, and again at the Doris McCarthy artist residency in Scarborough, ON. <http://www.ehryntorrell.com/>

⁵² For more information about Doris McCarthy see <http://www.heritagetrust.on.ca/en/pages/programs/doris-mccarthy-artist-in-residence-program>

or 15 years or 30 years. They told her the last man that had lived there had murdered his wife. She started going regularly, touching the house, making the video but also looking at archives to pursue the research.

One day she went and a notice was stapled to the house. This reminded her of her fascination with ads in Berlin. “I liked the idea of the unwatched place, the unkempt place.” There were other aspects that intrigued her about this area. She explained that the area was also former Africville in the 60s. She reminded me that Halifax had been the end route of the underground railway. “It wasn’t about that really but there was something about all the potency and symbolism around architecture and when things stop and start and the fact that there were 13 other abandoned houses but everyone knew this one because it was pink.” She explained that the notice on the wall said something along the lines of: “Because it is dangerous and/or unsightly, you Maureen Littlefare, have to go to court because it is against bylaws.” Suddenly, she said, everything she’d been researching came to a head. She wondered why she was so attached to this place:

It’s not where I’m living, it’s not my history. But it made me think about a time in my life when the family cottage was under contest between my mother and brother, and had been left to go into decay. For 10 years, it was a contentious space. Being away, my interest in the pink house was my attempt to care about something, even if I’m not supposed to care about. It was none of my business but I was drawn to it and it became associated with my own past. There is an associative power, ascribing meaning to something that isn’t yours. Empathy became so important in this project.

This discussion of empathy as embodied and projected onto a place was a recurrent theme in our conversation. Everyday, Torrell would go back as it was being demolished. The house was like a stage set. She said you could see into the stairs, and people would come and take things. She explained how she heard a woman say “‘I’d love to take this banister.’...So suddenly things became valuable again.” Torrell started making paintings of it. One is a 19-foot painting of the whole block and the house being torn down.

It was like a few decades of neglect and history was exploding. But then interwoven within this wreckage were things, imaginative things that could happen inside rubble, for example, bits of a

wedding dress sticking out. Because anything could happen. I was tying together my experiences in Toronto, Berlin and grit in the city, like looking in a gutter and seeing pieces of balloon or gum wrapper, a bit of shoe lace, all those little subjects.

While on a microscopic and personal level these elements were brought in, Torrell also thought about events that were happening in the world and how they tied into the work.

The pink house felt like that but live, like a live drama of it. When I finished the paintings and I was getting ready to show, Hurricane Katrina happened and that made it suddenly be about disaster. I think about timeliness, on one hand, but it seemed too topical, too timely, too on the nerve... But the city was important to me, the city as the 20th century human project, the biggest human project of all history. Exciting, so human and problematic and political.

Torrell described how her experience with this abandoned house reveals all at once her intimate experience with this particular location, her personal experiences projected onto her engagement with this place, and the interwoven politics and histories that are embodied in every place. Furthermore, these ideas become materialized through her paintings.



Figure 144. Ehryn Torrell, *Amongst the ruins*, acrylic on canvas, 2005.

Regarding her interest in architecture, Torrell stated: “I felt like construction and demolition and building and unbuilding is a universal language.” A few years later, she went to Stockholm to visit her grandfather’s half-sister Ragna, her long lost relative. Ragna’s mother had left her to be raised by her aunt in Sweden while she emigrated to Canada. Ragna’s daughter took her on a drive to the house she had grown up in. It didn’t look the same anymore, but she showed her a photo of how it used to look. Torrell began drawing from this image of the old house, that she had never seen, and memories of her own childhood cottage as she remembered it before it was torn down. “And I called it *Two houses that no longer exist*. In a way it was an early memory, and about loss and grief, and paralleling two different lives.”



Figure 145. Ehryn Torrell, *Two houses that no longer exist*, acrylic and mixed media on paper, 2008.

On my second visit with Torrell, I drove up to her temporary studio at the Doris McCarthy artist residency in Scarborough, Ontario (figures 146-152). Walking into the cottage on the edge of the Scarborough Bluffs, looking out over Lake Ontario, you could feel Doris McCarthy’s presence. The house smelled like cottages I had spent time in throughout my summers in southern Ontario, everything preserved since Doris McCarthy’s death in 2010. However, mixed with that old cottage smell, was the smell of an art studio. This little house was at the intersection of these two spaces. Torrell explained that

Doris McCarthy had bought the land in 1939 against the wishes of her parents. Her mother had called her a fool, as a young woman moving into this home by herself, and she therefore named the land Fool's Paradise.

Throughout the house there continues to exist evidence of her life, preserved like in a museum: books, paintings, furniture, knickknacks. However, by turning it into an artist studio, it became something other than a museum. It became an active studio, where the memory of her continued to be re-activated by the artists now working in the space.



Figures 146- 152. Ehryn Torrell's studio, Fool's Paradise: Doris McCarthy Residency, Scarborough.

In the living room, there was a portrait of McCarthy. It appeared as if she was staring down at future inhabitants. She showed me McCarthy's book collection which ranged from Joseph Conrad, Virginia Woolf, *War and Peace*, Charles Dickens, to Toronto-based catalogs, to dictionaries and anthologies, to the *MLA Handbook for Writers* of research papers. There was also an album of "New

Yorker” cartoons from 1925 to 1950. Torrell said she was really drawn to a book from the 1940s or 50s about women in antiquity. It is written by a Cambridge Scholar who was saying that society wasn’t always patriarchal. She wondered whether this book was relevant still today.

Torrell gave me a typed-out copy of a “Handbook for Fool’s Paradise” written by Doris McCarthy before she died, explaining how the house had evolved over the course of the 70 years there. She introduces it saying:

This house grew by bits and pieces as I could afford to give myself more needed space. It is therefore unconventional in many ways and will be better enjoyed when its eccentricities are understood.



Torrell explained her connection to this place. Her parents had grown up around there and her mother was buried 2.5 km away along with grandparents and other family, so in a sense it really was coming home for her. She described her routine and how McCarthy became inextricably linked to her own work. Looking around the room, images made by McCarthy created an odd juxtaposition.

In the home, Torrell found an old book. In it, she found an image of an archeological dig, and realized that this image allowed her to view her work in a new way. Her painting similarly revealed layers of material. She also found an old 1920s Singer sewing machine and found that McCarthy had left behind a drawer full of bobbins, thread and fabric and Torrell watched Youtube videos on how to thread a bobbin. She hesitated using them at first as she didn’t know if it was meant to stay as part of the archive.

However, throughout the residency she began cutting up old paintings and sewing them together to created quilted collaged paintings. She explained that she had brought older work with her and did new works esponding to those. “I’m giving over to the fact that the process doesn’t allude to a subject and to just embrace the process of the back-and-forth between a painterly dialogue and the dialogue around the found image.”



In conclusion, I asked Torrell, how being at the Doris McCarthy cottage had affected her work. She talked about her cottage and how it brought her back to that. She said she was also now part of the legacy of Doris McCarthy.

So, there’s this legacy that I’m part of and that I can offer to, and that’s perfect and that sort of continues that legacy of her time. When I came, I wondered if I would find this visual material, and create my own collage material from the memory of the area. I didn’t know what that meant, but I wondered whether that personal subject matter would leak into this collage process. But what I found so interesting is that it’s been really about me re-calibrating with myself, making work. I find myself thinking about the advice I got 10 or 15 or 20 years ago from someone. Or I’ll be making something and I’ll be thinking it’s like I’m making a painting from when I was 23. So, it’s this dialogue over time. It’s that memory of that presence of making work in a space where you are hundred percent present with it. And that’s moved me to tears. I’ve been working and just felt like, this is where I want to be. That purely visual that purely present, so I feel like I’ve been given that great gift.

Torrell's ongoing interrogation of the ways buildings embodied memories, histories and personal projections created an ideal context in which to visit her in this historic site. My visit with her at the "Fool's Paradise" allowed me to embody the conversations that exist between artists. As creative spaces, the studio is at the core of my research, and this conversation prompted further consideration about the possibilities that exist within the materiality of spaces, and how they shape our work in ways that we may not be able to articulate. Torrell's vulnerable admissions of the ways she is affected by places, by triggering memories, by connecting ideas, histories and relationships, and by embodying these through painting, expressed the affective quality of studio practice I have been seeking to understand all these years. My conversation with Torrell revealed the ways that we learn through painting in an embodied, sensory, emotional and experiential way. Furthermore, it captured the ways we are always learning in the presence of others.





CHAPTER 5

Back in my own studio: An artistic engagement with data-in-the-making

In the beginning of my research journey, I thought I could keep my own art practice at a distance from this research project, allowing it to influence it from a distance. The intertwined relationship between my research and my art practice became apparent this past year, as I made a group of paintings of artist studios from the photographs I took. Painting the artists' studios as I listened to the interviews, allowed me to engage with the conversations in a more embodied way, as I brought these conversations into my own studio. As I read about data-in-the-making (Springgay and Zaliwska, 2015), I realized this was a way of immersing myself in the data and embracing it for its generative and creative potentials. This process also made me realize the entanglements that exist within practice-led research, wherein all of our influences and conversations become intertwined. Furthermore, this process reveals the ways artists may creatively engage with qualitative research data as a way of more deeply engaging with it, and to visually present this process.

The paintings were shown in an exhibition at Quest University Gallery titled *Studio Conversations*. The title alludes to the conversations that occurred within the studio visits, as well as the conversations I might foster between artists. Through these images, I seek to take viewers into my exploration as I have deliberately referenced my perspective exploring the studio through a photographic lens. Rather than create a complete image of the space, I explore the space using varied angles, close-ups and far away shots, and by holding onto distortions made through photography. Through this process, it is my intention that I highlight my own curious, exploratory and embodied exploration in the studios. It reveals not an objective image of the studio but rather the ways that I engaged with the space.

I am just beginning to understand the visual conversations revealed through these paintings, and I anticipate this project will continue to take shape and evolve over the coming years. Through examining this painting process, I have sought to understand my own learning experience throughout this painting

endeavor, rather than draw conclusions. Firstly, the painting process developed out of curiosity. Artists' studios are curious spaces, and painting those spaces allowed me to inhabit and explore those curious spaces further. Secondly, as I sifted through the photographs, I sought out images that reveal the material, assemblaged, and often confusing qualities of studios, and therefore prompt questions rather than reinforce preconceived ideas of painters' studios. Finally, I consider a comment made in our interview by Ben Reeves who described how copying another artists' work, is a way of spending time with that artist. Or, I consider how in another interview, David Blatherwick explained how working from a model was a way of building up a relationship with that person. In a similar vein, South African artist William Kentridge describes how through the drawing of a subject, one forms a relationship with that subject: "In the activity of making the work, there's a sense that if you spend a day or two days drawing an object or an image there's a sympathy towards that object embodied in the human labour of making the drawing" (retrieved from <https://art21.org/watch/extended-play/william-kentridge-pain-sympathy-short/>). I similarly felt that painting the studios was a way of spending time with the artists, getting to know them further, getting to know them beyond interview subjects. I originally became interested in studios, partially to understand that relationship between the private and the social that occurs through painting in the studio. Traditionally always thought of as a solitary practice, I always knew that it existed within a social network. These social moments, however, are quietly established, through coming to understand someone through their work, through quiet collaborations as one is influenced by that work while working alone in their studio, and through intimate moments of inviting someone into their studio. Through my desire that I then fulfilled, I realize that my process of painting studios reveals how I engage with painting as a social or relational practice. These paintings extended this relational practice as I continued to spend time with that person through the painting of their space.

The images selected present my lens as I explored the space, and were selected most often because they revealed something to me about the artist, captured my bodily experience within the space or aspects of the conversation with the artist that intrigued me. For example, in Laura Millard's studio, I painted the drone, as it was through this discussion that her vulnerability was revealed as she compared

filming as the drone rose above the lake, to a personal life experience. Painting Sean Weisgerber's studio, I focused on my lens looking up at the copper plates that hung from chains that surrounded the space. The chains and pulleys surrounding the room engulfed and overwhelmed me, however, the fact that the studio was on a stage complimented this feeling through playfully reminding me of the artificiality of the space. In Ashleigh Bartlett's temporary studio on Toronto Island, I was reminded of my experience a year earlier working on my own work in the same space as I engaged with her 'summer friends,' cut up paintings hung on the wall. And in Leah Rosenberg's temporary studio, I captured the theatricality of the way that she painted the studio a different colour every day to express her daily engagements in her temporary home.

In line with my own research process of visiting studios, I invited curator Rachel Ann Farquharson⁵³ to my studio during my artist residency at Quest University in Squamish, BC, to engage with the in-process works through conversation. I draw from that conversation because it reveals meanings evoked by the paintings while acknowledging that that engagement is subjective. Furthermore, it reveals how conversation allowed me to more deeply learn from my own process. Responding to the works, she said:

You're not trying to copy it or appropriate a style, but have a conversation in your language about what was there, how you see it. And that's what's interesting with research and pedagogy is de-parceling, and then considering and coming up with something new and delivering something you observed, which is how we learn and how we think. I think it is just as much a reflection of what your experiences have been as the artist as it is about who you're imagining. It is a really philosophical but also a tangible way of learning things... What I think is interesting, one of the most essential parts of this exploration is your participation. If it's a passive observation, then you're being an art critic. But that's not what this is. It is a conversation and an interaction in a way that fully implicates your presence in the work.

⁵³ Rachel Ann Farquharson is a curator, art critic and educator living in Squamish, BC. She has a BSc and a BA from the University of Toronto, an MLitt from the University of Glasgow/Christie's Education, and a Masters of Architecture at the University of British Columbia. We met on several occasions in my studio at Quest University.

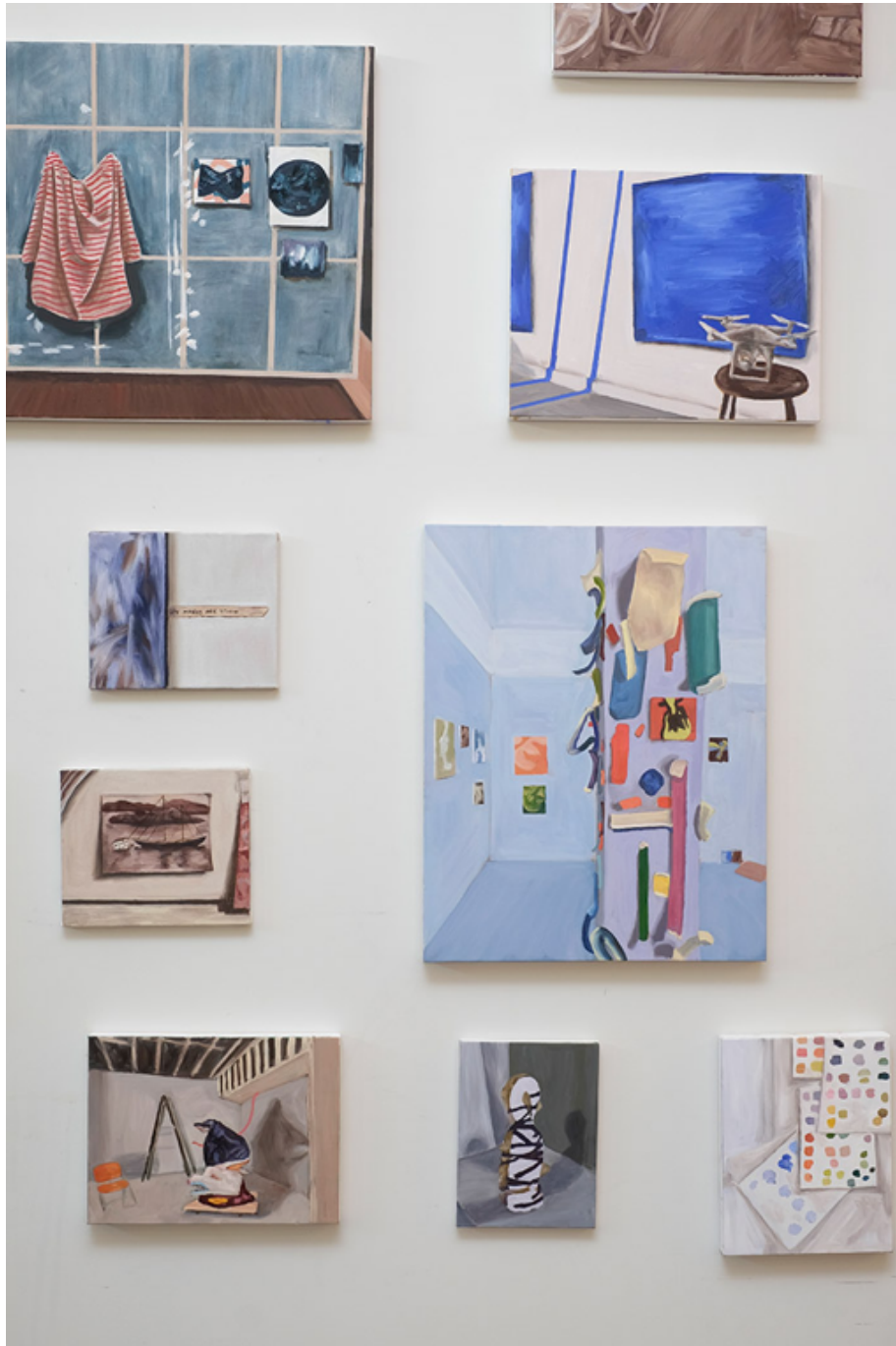
This studio visit was exciting because of how the images prompted further conversation about my research as she asked questions based on what she saw which would allow me to consider how I learned through my interviews, thus continuing the learning process. Her interpretations, aesthetic preferences and questions were not objective observations, but rather her unique lens of responding to the work which is framed by her personal experiences, her artistic and curatorial background. This conversation revealed how paintings may activate conversation may lead to new understandings about the subjects of my paintings and the process of learning about those subjects through painting. It revealed what I believe to be the potential of art, and the ‘never-ending’ learning process. I invite viewers to experience this curious, empathetic process of coming to understand artists’ practices within these intimate studio spaces through the following images of these paintings, displayed at Quest University, 2016 (figures 153-156).



Figures 153-156. *Studio Conversations*, Alison Shields, Quest University Gallery, 2016.







CHAPTER 6

The messiness of painting, the messiness of practice, and the messiness of learning

I return now to my research question as I discuss what I learned about painting processes through the interviews with artists and through my own practice to address:

How is painting a way of learning?

O’Sullivan (2007) explains that there is always an excess beyond discursive accounts of painting and Garoian (2008, 2013) argues there is always a surplus as artists create spaces through making. Fortnum (2009), similarly proposes that artists make work that continually exceeds their intentions. Throughout my interviews, painters describe the multiplicity of influences that emerge in and through their painting process. They explained that for them, painting is not usually about one thing, but rather a materialization of many ideas, experiences, feelings and processes that become embodied in the materials of practice. Similarly, the studio is a space that contains remnants and traces of ideas, experiences and art making. It is a space that is always in process, and constantly changing through the interactions between the artist, the materials, the objects, and the imagery. As such the studio as a space of learning interweaves many ideas and processes within the material process of making. Through my understandings of new materialism, and drawing from my interviews and my own painting practice, this process moves beyond simply the experimental and exploratory interaction with materials (which is part of it), and engages with the sensory and affective quality of painting wherein experiences, images, ideas and histories are activated within the studio. This interwoven process is revealed through the making of paintings. Karen Barad (2007) describes the ways our ongoing intra-actions and relationships produce entanglements:

To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence. Existence is not an individual affair.

Individuals do not preexist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of

their entangled intra-relating. Which is not to say that emergence happens once and for all, as an event or as a process that takes place according to some external measure of space and time, but rather that time and space, like matter and meaning, come into existence, are iteratively reconfigured through each intra-action, thereby making it impossible to differentiate in any absolute sense between creation and renewal, beginning and returning, continuity and discontinuity, here and there, past and future. (p. ix)

Throughout the painting propositions, I show the complexity of intra-actions that occur through making, by presenting how artists are simultaneously influenced by the material explorations, personal experiences, social interactions, theoretical lens, current ideas and issues, and contemporary and historical art. Furthermore, through the lens of new materialism, I propose that all of these influences become embodied and materialized within the affective process of painting. Thus, through the interviews with artists and the creation of paintings from these studios I propose:

1. Painting is an entangled learning process.
2. This process of learning embraces the entangled qualities of practice and fosters uncertainty, emergence, materiality, embodiment, affect and messiness.

Painting as an entangled learning process

Drawing from my studio visits, I propose that painting is an entangled learning process. Within the context of painting, I refer to entanglements as the webs of influences that inform the process of painting and I propose that these entanglements are integral to the process of painting. These entanglements are also integral to the reception or effect of a painting. These entanglements are the threads of influence, the bodies of matter, and the embodied experiences that emerge through the process of painting. The studio is the space where our experiences outside the studio collide with the materials through the process of painting. Diffraction highlights the ways that these ongoing intra-actions produce unique effects within every moment of painting. These effects produced through the process of painting are embodied within the painting which in turn becomes another participant in the patterns of interruption

that occur in and through art practices. Furthermore, I propose that these diffractive patterns highlight the particularities of the individual studio practice and the relational ways in which these practices are part of a constantly changing network. Through engaging with this relational understanding of painting, we may understand the multiple threads of influence that affect and effect the painting process. For example, an artist may simultaneously be responding to their educational background, art historical references, daily experiences, personal stories, mainstream culture, all the while working with materials and responding to the images, ideas and materiality that emerge through making. Furthermore, as the body engages with these intra-actions with materials in the studio, sensory and affective effects are generated. This relational approach highlights the embodied, affective, multiple and experiential qualities of painting, and, proposes that painting is an emergent, iterative and responsive process.

Through conversations with artists, wherein tangential discussions reveal the various webs of influence on their work, from life history, personal stories, to theoretical lenses, to educational upbringing, the necessity of acknowledging and embracing these entangled ways of understanding learning through making was revealed. Furthermore, the space of the studio (as revealed through photographs) further reinforces the multiple influences that are embodied in the space and emerge through the process. Within the context of painting, I propose the process of diffraction acknowledges and embraces the ways that these influences produce effects on our bodies, and on the paintings. This is the process of learning through painting that I propose is revealed and exemplified through this research.

I began my analysis of the interviews within the first set of propositions that set up the conditions for learning through painting. As described by Butler and Hildebrand, getting lost, and not knowing is a part of the learning process. They proposed that it is only through this openness, that they will learn or discover something new. Gardner proposed that his studio, as pressure cooker, allows his experiences to be activated by the materials in an emergent process, thus highlighting the role listening to the materials plays in learning through making. Ackerman offered a different lens of emergence that reveals the logic inherent to making and demonstrates the problem-solving processes within her painting practice. Other artists expanded on the role of the body and materiality of space, as Pratt and Evans both describe how

their body senses their environment (within the case of Pratt, it is the domestic space, and in Evans' case it is the neighbourhood homes and landscape). Through their interviews, they reveal the way that sensory responses are embedded within painting, and open up space to acknowledging the learning inherent within the sensing body. Finally, Hutchinson expands on these ideas by revealing how he learns about through painting as analogy, through finding connections between the sensing body in the studio and our embodied experience in the world.

Following these first propositions, I proposed ways that painting is a conversation. A conversation suggests a responsive process of learning. I firstly highlighted words artists used to describe ways that artists have conversations with the paintings themselves. These comments highlight the new materialist approach to engaging with painting as it describes an active engagement with materials and images wherein each interaction responds to the next. Tap, extended this idea further, but highlights the ways that these paintings engage in a larger conversation with art history. I believe these are important statements as they highlight the ways that visual languages participate in a conversation. Griffiths expressed ways that we learn through conversation with the paintings as characters emerge through the process, and Werner further explained the significance of feeling within the making process. From these discussions, we gain a better understanding of how this affective learning process is generated through painting, and the necessity in acknowledging this affective, feeling process within learning through making. Wainio extended these ideas about learning through conversation, as she reveals how through creating spaces of conversation within the paintings, she develops connections between her life, imagery from old children's books, and current events. Through this explanation, she revealed the way artists learn to make these connections through the inventive potentials of painting. As such Wainio proposes that paintings do not produce answers, but generate questions.

In the next set of propositions, I addressed how artists learn about themselves and the world they inhabit through painting. Reeves claimed that painting is a vehicle for understanding his place in the world. Meigs expressed how she examined her personal experiences through painting. Significantly, by examining these ideas through material, embodied and affective responses to space and colour, Meigs

revealed how triggering these affective responses allowed her to better examine her personal experience as well as engage others in theirs through prompting affective experiences. Brown similarly explained through the term ‘painting’s leakage’ how painting allows our experiences in the world to become embedded within the process of working with materials. And Kastner revealed how she learns about the world as a detective investigating her neighbourhood. Kastner explained how these investigations are always subjectively negotiated with her own, as she draws connections between her own experiences and her interpretation of her surroundings. This assembling and connecting of ideas as artists navigate their place in relation to their world is at the core of the learning process revealed by artists through their painting practice. Through the iterative process, as described by Gueray, I explored how one engages with ideas and images in an iterative way, allowing ideas to become fertile ground for other ideas.

Furthermore, through discussing how a single painting followed him through his studio and practice for the year, providing guidance and a critical voice, Gueray revealed, how interactions with art (in this case Malevich’s painting of a peasant) may have a presence for years until they inhabit our work and process.

In the final propositions, I addressed how through engaging with our own experiences in the world through the process of painting, we inevitably become part of social networks and conversations. Within this section, I highlighted how our educational background in painting, art history, as well as peers and mentors shapes the lens through which painting is made. I emphasized how this may be in direct response to art works, such as McIntosh’s description of improvising with artists from our past, or Tap subverting artistic practices as she responds to their work. Similarly, Monkman addressed the ways we have understood our landscape and our history through painting and draws from this imagery to provoke a re-consideration of our history. Many artists expressed that these influences are not often direct references, but instead, they have internalized the multitude of art historical images they have seen through their careers and explained how they become materialized within the studio and embedded within the work. These more complicated interactions reinforce how art making simultaneously weaves in multiple influences, meanings and responses. I conclude the final proposition to reveal how one artist, Torrell, was deeply affected through working in the space of artist Doris McCarthy. Torrell’s description

reinforces firstly how relationships are continually forged and developed through painting, and secondly, how these relationships are felt and experienced within the space of painting practices, the studio.

As I analyzed the interviews with artists, I learned the multiple ways that one learns about ourselves, others, our experiences, history, and the world we inhabit through painting. However, while I have exemplified the qualities in a series of propositions, these propositions are intertwined and diagrammatic, each connecting to the others. Therefore, more significantly, the complexly interwoven stories, explorations and theoretical discussions revealed the entangled ways we are influenced through working within the studio. This complexity was expressed by Hutchinson as he described this intuitive process within the studio as the bubbling up of everything we have ever seen, done or experienced that affects every moment in the studio in ways that we cannot fully understand. Through this process, he revealed the diffractive process of how each intra-action creates effects on us, and these intra-actions become re-affected, reactivated, reinforced and reimagined within the studio. However, more importantly, he revealed the ways these effects are entangled and impossible to fully unravel or define. I propose that these segments of interviews, performed a fragment of that entanglement. Furthermore, through this research, I argue that these interactions occur both inside and outside the studio, and the painting process forms a relationship between all these experiences. Many artists argued that to try to apprehend or define these entangled intra-actions would be to lose the potentiality of what painting can do. Thus, drawing from what I have learned about painting practices through this research, my research question shifts to: How do we embrace this entangled way of learning within art making?

Learning to learn: Embracing an entangled learning process and the messiness of making

In addressing this diffractive pedagogy, I ask, what do the uncertainties, emergent qualities, affective, sensory experiences, and ongoing encounters revealed within the painting process teach artists and students alike about *learning to learn* in a way that embraces emergence, affect and the unknown? Ayliffe and Mieves (2016) suggest it is the dirtiness of painting. Specifically, they discuss the dirtiness of the studio. They ask “to what extent the concept of dirt, often defined as ‘matter out of place’ proves to be

productive in artistic practices” (p. 55). They draw connections between this messiness of art practice and a refusal of mastery and an allowance for unknowing and unbecoming within education. They draw from a book by Trotter (2000), *Cooking with mud* and explain this connection between dirtiness and a connection to the world:

As he outlines further, mess here becomes not only a means to confront established order, but eradicates and blurs the subject/object distinction. Trotter compares in his discussion the idea of mess with the idea of “transitional object”, where the young child takes into possession an object, leaves marks and embraces this object gradually. Mess, disorder, staining can therefore be also seen as a way in which a person, or the artist, responds to the world, in a very individual way.

(Ayliffe and Mieves, 2016, p. 55)

Furthermore, they draw connections between dirty practices and the acceptance of messiness and failure within learning. They argue that messiness is an essential quality of the painting process, and this messiness has a subversive potential within the context of larger systems of education. Through their work they explore this messiness as the “quality of art as dirty and not adherent to an ideal system and its ‘resistance to precedent and academic template’, or failure.” (p. 55). Through their examination of the dirtiness of the studio, they draw parallels between art practice and a resistance to a particular way of knowing. They suggest instead a performative way of being wherein the messiness of art making allows one to embrace the uncertainties of practice. I propose that this messiness is the performative quality of practice wherein interruptions, interference and intra-actions are a productive, responsive and generative mechanism with in the process. Herein, I refer to messiness, as not simply the obvious mess caused by the materials of paint, but also the messiness of thinking, and knowing and being, wherein experiences, ideas and actions collide with the materiality of the process. Barad (2007) describes diffraction as a process of interference, and this interference allows for the potential of newness. This is the messiness of practice wherein the materials of practice become a site of interference. And within this site of interference, we are left with the unknown. Within this diffractive pedagogy, the messiness of matter is a productive, inventive and generative interruption. McClenaghan (2016) states:

Uncertainty and managing uncertainty are the companions to practice. The impression of certainty emerges in resolution and resolution comes at the end. It is the skin of a painting, concealing its underlying anatomy, its inherent evolution and embodied learned behaviours. This is part of the embedded narrative of practice. (p. 32)

Through an examination of the qualities of painting that were revealed through my painting propositions, I propose that painting is a messy practice, and through understanding the learning that occurs through the painting process, we may become open to the messiness of pedagogy. Through embracing the messiness of learning, I propose that painting becomes a way of being in the world, an ontology that resists representational thinking and learning, and fosters performative, embodied and experiential ways of engaging with the world. Furthermore, this ontology of being resists the need for certainty that has become so embedded within our systems of learning. McClenaghan (2016) states: “In teaching the practice of painting it could be said that we are supporting a learner engaged in the process of trying to find an obscure or at least obscured destination” (p. 33). He argues that through this process, students must learn to live with uncertainty and that is a part of the experimental process of making art (p. 34). Drawing from this metaphor, I ask, how is this destination obscured? As diffraction suggests, it is obscured by the ongoing interferences we encounter through the process. As suggested by McClenaghan, to live pedagogically, one must be open to these uncertainties, and to the generative potentialities of this process. Diffraction reveals the potentials of learning through every intra-action. Through the examination of a diffractive pedagogy as revealed through art making, I ask: If we view art making as an ongoing site of interference, wherein each of these interferences generates something new, as a way of learning, what do these interferences produce? I propose that they produce shifts in thinking, making, knowing and being.

Artist/Professor at Emily Carr University of Art and Design, Landon Mackenzie has guided me in drawing connections between my painting practices and teaching studio art courses. Reflecting on the connections between creative processes and a creative classroom, she refers to the “wild fire effect” as the way creativity spreads through art making within a studio classroom. As an emergent approach to

pedagogy, the “wild fire effect,” allows the creative process to emerge through interactions with others in the studio. The “wild fire effect,” I propose is the performative process within both individual studios and communal studio classrooms, wherein the studio becomes a performative space rather than a representational space. It highlights the generative and productive quality of the pedagogy of art making. The artistic processes occurring within the space continuously generates an effect on others. Barad (2007) describes this performative approach as “intervening rather than representing” (p. 54) and states that diffraction allows for the “processing of small but consequential differences” (p. 29). As a space of learning, the studio is a space that allows this process to flourish. These interferences occur through interaction with the materiality of the painting process, and through the interaction with others. Viewing interactions with artistic processes and with others as intervening, interfering or interrupting allows for a generative view of learning. I propose that it is through all of these interferences, interruptions and productive interventions that happen through the painting process that the “wild fire effect” emerges. It highlights the continual movement inherent in the art making process, particularly as it relates to a classroom of learners.

Throughout my doctoral work I have continued to see connections between my art practice and my teaching practice. A/r/tography gave me a lens and a mechanism through which to draw these connections between my teaching, researching and artistic practices (de Cossin & Irwin, 2004; Springgay, Irwin Leggo & Gouzouasis, 2008). Irwin (2013) describes how a/r/tography is not simply about learning to teach, but rather “*becoming pedagogical*” is a process of *learning to learn* (p. 203). Through this living inquiry, learners learn to recognize “moments of encounters” that allow for them to “consider other ways of knowing in the world” (p. 201). Similarly, while these propositions reveal the processes of painting, I more importantly draw from them as a way of understanding learning. They reveal that painting is a performative practice and a living inquiry. And through this understanding, I propose we may examine the diffractive qualities of an emergent, embodied and experiential pedagogy of making. Irwin describes the potential: “Pedagogy is no longer about what is already known but instead creates the conditions for the unknown and to think as an experiment thereby complicating our conversations” (p. 207). Triggs and

Irwin (in press), describe how a/r/tography has shifted from a focus on being teachers toward an understanding of our ongoing learning experiences. They discuss how “becoming pedagogical is a way of engaging with the world” and the “organizing of human experience in relation to other experience” (np). It is not simply about finding the connections between practices of teaching and practices of art making. It is rather about understanding a way of being and a way of learning through all of our everyday encounters. This shift aligns with my own way of understanding the pedagogies of diffraction that emerged through my examination of painting practices and in considering ways of art making as a way of engaging with the world pedagogically. Triggs and Irwin draw from Barad (2007) as they describe image-making as an embodied experience and a performative practice:

Barad claims that bodies and individuals continually undergo a performative process that involves bringing new potential into the world. A performative process generates an image that is an abstraction of the body to assist or teach the body and other bodies, in their forward movement. Making art images is a way of reminding ourselves of this work already underway in the world. (np)

Knowing, they argue doesn't happen at a distance but rather through engaging with the world. The creation of images is a way of materializing our experiences: “The image generated, however, is not a feeling or thought that has no impact on the world but is rather the learning body adding to reality by creating an experimental space to feel its relation to what is not known” (Triggs & Irwin, np). This process of engaging with the world in all its materialities sets us up for a messy encounter, one that cannot be predicted, but is filled with potentialities. Through this research, I propose that painting within the studio embodies this “becoming pedagogical” described within the a/r/tographic methodologies by Triggs and Irwin, as artists continually learn about themselves and the world through making. This lens for understanding the ontology of painting practice as a way of being allows for this ongoing learning process, as artists become pedagogical through painting. This ontology of practice embraces emergence, entanglements, movement and diffraction. Furthermore, I propose that we may draw from these understandings to imagine the studio, not simply as a room where art is made, but rather as a space of

learning that embraces this process of “becoming pedagogical.” Brennan (2016) describes this learning potential of a painting studio as a unique space of learning: “Nowhere else are ideas, thoughts, actions, experiments, result of discussions, the private and the social, successes and failures, methods and tools (and smells) of production made so democratically visible... Even an empty studio, awaiting new students, has potency” (p. 21).

Triggs and Irwin (in press) argue that a “performative understanding takes into account the fact that knowing does not come from standing at a distance and representing but from a direct engagement with the world” (np). Regarding artistic experiences, O’Sullivan (2006) similarly argues that “life when it is truly lived, is a history of these encounters” (p. 1). As a way of engaging with the world through the act of making, painting allows for this potential of experiencing the world through a pedagogical lens. Through this lens we come to view every action, encounter, conversation and interference for its learning potential, as each of the effects caused by these acts allows for newness to emerge. Payne (2016) describes this potentiality of painting:

Painting is about a form of questioning and whether that form of questioning is embedded within the materiality of the medium itself or stretched out from that medium across other spaces, whether of art or not, it is still and maybe more so than ever a vitally productive force that has an essential part to play, not just within the confines of art (or the nature of art and for that matter the extensive questioning of it) but also how painting impacts upon the world in a broader social and cultural sense. (p. 24)

Barad (2007) argues that diffraction patterns “make evident the entangled structure of the changing and contingent ontology of the world, including the ontology of knowing” (p. 73). Through viewing painting as a process of learning that reveals a performative pedagogy of practice, I also present painting as a performative way of being in the world. Through this ontology of knowing, we may view the generative potential of art making as a pedagogy of being in the world in a way that embraces curiosity, uncertainty, feeling, messiness and the entangled effects of ongoing encounters. Thus, I consider, “Why paint?”, by

returning to my conversation with Monica Tap, who first suggested to me that painting is about being a part of a conversation.

Returning to the earlier question, why do you make art?

Painting was the one thing I didn't know if I could do. I keep doing it because it's hard. It still seems interesting. It hasn't revealed itself yet...So, why do I continue? Because I remain curious.

Implications and future directions of research

1. While this research focuses on the learning processes within artists' studios, I propose that more research needs to address how these qualities of painting are fostered within the studio art classroom. This research suggests painting is a way of learning that allows for multiple ways of learning, such as experimentation, problem-solving, personal understanding and exploration. Furthermore, this research describes sensory, intuitive, embodied, inventive and affective approaches to learning and reveals the complex ways this process allows artists to learn about themselves and the world they inhabit through making. As schools and universities continue to develop approaches to pedagogy that engage with learning through inquiry and experiential learning, I propose more research needs to engage with how material studio practices within the classroom allow for this inquiry-based approach to learning, particularly because of its messy, unpredictable and inventive qualities.
2. Beyond researching the qualities of painting practices, this research revealed the ways that artists learn from other artists. As an artist, these relationships I have formed both within the institutional art education system and within community studios in the form of studio visits are an essential part of the generative, learning process of making. This research has shaped and expanded my understandings of painting and allowed me to consider the valuable role of conversations within the studio within my own learning process. I propose that more research

continue to engage with questions about how we learn through conversation within the studio and studio classroom.

3. As an artist, I propose that this research opens up spaces to develop new knowledges and new ontologies about the relationship between practice-led research and qualitative research. The interwoven creative practice that emerged through this research presents possibilities to draw from this connectedness, particularly as it relates to working with data for its creative and generative potentials. I propose this research contributes to new understandings of the connections and extensions within practice-led research as it relates to qualitative methods and demonstrates the potentials for new materialism to examine how these relationships are continuously activated and generated through the ontology of practice.

EPILOGUE

New Directions

Another iteration of a never-ending painting

It is not the artist who is the abstract machine, but the painting that paints itself as abstract machine. You ask what is the machine and how does it operate? Like a blind lizard that pulls you towards the water, like a wasp that refuses to return to the hive – the abstract machine is instinct-intelligence forever opening up to the new. It is at the edge of any given assemblage – the entry point onto the mecanosphere. You ask why painting, the abstract machine? Because experimentation is life and painting is where it finds its logic most keenly. This is painting accelerating away from painting. From within representation – from within the human – we twist and writhe, stammer and stutter, push our materials and languages to their limits, until, at last, we uncover the secret painting within painting, the stutters, the glitches, the lines of flight that are our highest form of hope. (O’Sullivan, 2007, p. 85)

Painting, as with practice-led research is an ongoing practice. It doesn’t have a beginning, nor does it have an end and it is always looking outward for new possibilities. Irwin (2013) similarly describes the productive and generative qualities of art practice: “Rather than asking what an art education practice means, the question becomes what does an art education practice set in motion do” (p. 201)? Thus, I conclude by describing the new processes that this research set in motion. This inventive possibility within art making and research is the openness for it to become something else. This is the performative quality of artistic research, wherein through the process, new ideas emerge and allow the production of something new. This often happens through putting it out to others to allow it to become something new through creating new opportunities for encounters. It is only fitting then, that I end this dissertation with these new directions. These new directions emerged through specific opportunities that were presented to me in my final stages of research. They also emerged through my desire to continue to

explore the relational qualities of art making through creating with others. I will discuss two current projects that are in-process, and have yet to be fully revealed. The first I will discuss, is a project I was asked to participate in that reveals the diffractive potential of conversation, encounters and relationships and the effects they cause. The second reveals my ongoing desire to create paintings that never end, in this case allowing it to evolve and re-form in relation to others. Through the revelation of these in-process paintings, I return to the 'never-ending painting,' and 'never-ending pedagogy.'

What began as a more general exploration of painting practices, also became of an examination about how we learn from others. Within this case, it is about how I learn through engaging with others' painting practice. Through this process, I came to understand for myself that relationship between solitary and social that has always been a necessity at the core of my painting practice. I was recently asked to be a part of a project with Christine D'Onofrio, artist and Instructor of Visual Arts at the University of British Columbia, who has created an online dialogue that showcases the ways we are influenced by the conversations with our peers, mentors, friends and other artists. Specifically focused on experiences of female artists, she asked artists to provide a story (in text, story, video, image, artistic forms) about a conversation with another artist (or several artists) that shaped them. That artist in turn would be nominated to contribute. The ultimate goal is to create a rhizomatic web of conversations that reveals the complexity and influential role of conversations and encounters in our lives. Regarding this project, she states:

An interest in the lineage and evolution of artistic conversations and influences between female artists can be seen in my practice as an underlying dialogue of feminist art and its representations. This has led me to cultivate a critical imagining of a way to purpose archives as activism. I have chosen an online data system as an ideal form for articulating connections between generations of female artists, curators and writers as it has always had the potential to enact a democratic domain. Over the years I have found that the conventional rules that dominate legitimized spaces are continually perpetuated online, such that unconventional forms and approaches to disseminating knowledge have not had the space to grow. As a result, I hope to create the online web-site in which a new type of knowledge archive will be imagined, in order to demonstrate the multitude of ways in which contributions, narratives, links and communication can be

understood. . . An online portal would allow all these contributions to work as a rhizomatic data web, comprised of visual connections as an overlapping web of stories, people, nominations, keywords and links taking on the form of an entangled archive of influences. (D’Onofrio, personal communication, July 11, 2017).

This work interests me in several ways. Firstly, she reveals the ways that these conversations shape how we view our practices, and how we live in the world. They reveal the pedagogy of conversation as a way of learning with others. Secondly, she reveals the ways that these conversations emerge through a web of connections. Thirdly, she creates a form of practice-based artistic research that reveals the effects of conversations. Her intentions, similar to mine are not to draw conclusions from the stories, but to instead embrace how each of our individual stories, experiences and perspectives, when shared with others extends and connects outward to help us grow as communities. I believe this is the power of art. In a sense, she has created a project that performs the conversations and keeps them alive through allowing them to be in dialogue with others. Still in its infancy, we have yet to see where this project will go, but I believe it opens up important new ways that learning happens through dialogue as well as how to reveal these dialogues through an artistic research approach. I submitted to her a short visual essay that includes images of artists’ studios and quotes from our conversations that shaped my thinking about art. Each of these artists will in turn be nominated to tell a story about an artist that influenced them, who in turn will be nominated to do the same. This project reveals the ways that conversations, like my ‘never-ending paintings,’ are another form of ‘never-ending pedagogy.’ At the time of submission of the dissertation, the site lives at <http://intuitioncommons.com>.

Lastly, I discuss another iteration of my paintings of artists’ studios (figures 157-163). As explained in the introduction, Bolt (2007) describes the complicated relationship between theory and practice within practice-led research. Research questions emerge from practice, and theory and practice become intertwined, as practice leads to theory, and theory always weaves its way back to practice. In the final months of writing my dissertation, as I arrived at new understandings about new materialism, I returned to my paintings of artists’ studios. I questioned whether these representations of artists’ studios

that had once emerged and performed my studio visits had become static, and unchanging. I sought out another iteration of this project that allowed for the ongoing emergent process that I discuss through this dissertation. Similarly, I sought out ways that these paintings might reveal the in-process quality of the art studios they present. The new materialist theory interfered with my paintings and demanded a new iteration that revealed the performative quality of the studio.

At the same time, I was invited to participate in an interactive art exhibition at the Tate Exchange Art Gallery in Liverpool.⁵⁴ Over the course of my studio visits, I came to view the studio as an assemblage; it is an assemblage of ideas, experiences, images, objects and art works. In one interview, the artist said the studio is full of “portals” that transport us elsewhere. In this most recent iteration, drawing from the new understandings of studio as assemblage and portal, I have cut up the paintings so that they can be re-arranged and re-assembled on the wall of the gallery. Visitors in the gallery were invited to use these pieces and install them along the wall to create new assemblages. Through this process they may re-imagine the studio as a portal; it is a portal into creative thinking and a portal into the imagination. I am particularly drawn to the negative space that emerges through the cutting up of the paintings.⁵⁵ Negative space, the empty space around the cut-out images, or the negative space that is left through removing imagery from the painting, reveals the negative space within art making, learning and research. I view this negative space as the space of uncertainty, as well as the space of potentiality. Through this project, I further embrace Irwin’s (2013) invitation to *Becoming Pedagogical*, as I create the conditions for not knowing, experimentation and relationality as I invite others to engage with my never-ending painting process. And through this process, they become participants in my never-ending pedagogy.

⁵⁴ The Tate Exchange Gallery, located at the Tate Liverpool Art Gallery is an experimental, interactive educational space. I exhibited my work alongside PhD Candidates from universities across Canada and Europe as part of the SSHRC Partnership Development Grant, *The Pedagogical Turn to Art as Research*, for which Dr. Anita Sinner is the lead investigator and Dr. Rita Irwin is co-investigator.

⁵⁵ These ideas emerged in conversation with Dr. Natalie LeBlanc who exhibited her work alongside me at the Tate Exchange.



Figures 157-163. *Studio as assemblage; studio as portal*. Tate Exchange Liverpool, 2018





Figure 164. Alison Shields, *Studio Conversations, Leah Rosenberg's studio*, oil on canvas, 24" x 30", 2016.

“When you find yourself somewhere new with an empty studio, nothing makes it feel like yours like painting it a different colour every day” (Leah Rosenberg, in conversation with Alison Shields, Vermont Studio Center, 2014).

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APPENDIX A

Artist Interviews

Adam Gunn, Halifax, August 21, 2014

Lives in Montreal, QC. BFA, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design; MFA, Concordia University

<https://www.adamgunn.net/>

Alex Livingston, Halifax, November 9, 2015

Lives in Halifax, NS. BFA, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design; MA, Chelsea College of Art and Design, London, UK

<https://www.alexlivingston.ca/>

Alexis Lavoie, Montreal, August 28, 2014, October 10, 2015

Lives in Montreal. BFA, Université du Québec a Montréal

<http://alexislavoie.com/>

Allyson Clay, Vancouver, June 12, 2015

Lives in Vancouver. BFA, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design; MFA, University of British Columbia

<http://www.allysonclay.com/>

Andrea Kastner, Kamloops, July 10, 2014, Hamilton, March 24, 2016

Lives in Binghamton, NY. BFA, Mount Allison University; MFA, University of Alberta

<https://www.andreakastner.net/>

Andrew Morrow, Ottawa, September 3, 2014, August 18, 2015

Lives in Chelsea, QC. BFA, Queens University; MFA, Ottawa University

<http://andrewmorrow.com/>

Angela Grossman, Vancouver, June 27, 2014

Lives in Vancouver. BA, Ryerson University; Emily Carr College of Art and Design, MFA, Concordia University

<http://www.angelagrossmann.com/>

Angela Teng, Vancouver, June 9, 2015

Lives in Vancouver. BFA, Emily Carr University of Art and Design

Art Green, Stratford, November 21, 2015

Lives in Stratford. BFA, School of the Art Institute of Chicago

Ashleigh Bartlett, Calgary, July 14, 2014, Toronto, September 28, 2015

Lives in Boston, USA. BFA Alberta College of Art and Design; MFA, University of Guelph

<https://www.ashleighbartlett.com/>

Ben Reeves, Vancouver, July 9, 2014

<https://www.benreeves.org/>

Bradley Harms, Vancouver, July 8, 2014.

Lives in Vancouver, Calgary and Los Angeles. BFA, University of Calgary; MFA, Art Institute of Chicago.

<http://bradleyharms.com/>

Brendan Flanagan, Montreal, August 26, 2014

Lives in Montreal. BFA, University of Calgary; MFA, Concordia University

<http://brendanflanagan.ca/>

Carly Butler, Halifax, August 22, 2014, November 10, 2015

Lives on Vancouver Island. MA, Central Saint Martins, London, UK; BFA, Nova Scotia School of Art and Design.

<http://carlybutler.com/>

Carol Wainio, Ottawa, September 3, 2014

Lives in Ottawa and Montreal. MFA, Concordia University

<http://www.carolwainio.com/>

Caroline Mousseau, Vancouver, June 6, 2015

Lives in Vancouver. BFA, Emily Carr University of Art and Design

<http://carolinemousseau.com/>

Chantal Dupas, Winnipeg, July 20, 2014

Lives in Winnipeg. BFA, University of Manitoba

<https://www.chantaldupas.com/>

Chris Cran, Calgary, July 13, 2014.

Lives in Calgary. Alberta College of Art and Design

<http://chriscran.com/>

Chris Millar, Calgary, July 15, 2014.

Christann Kennedy, Vancouver, June 27, 2014.

Lives in Vancouver. BFA, MAA, Emily Carr University of Art and Design

<https://www.christannkennedy.com/>

Christine Major, Montreal, October 18, 2015

Lives in Montreal. BFA, University of Ottawa; MFA, Université du Québec a Montréal

Cliff Eyland, Winnipeg, June 26, 2015

Mount Allison University; Nova Scotia College of Art and Design

Colin Dorward, Halifax, October 26, 2014, London, October 28, 2015

BFA, Emily Carr University of Art and Design; MFA, University of Ottawa; PhD Candidate, Western University

Colin Johanson, Montreal, August 29, 2014

BFA, Emily Carr University of Art and Design; MFA, Concordia University

<http://www.collinjohanson.com/>

Colleen Heslin Montreal, November 21, 2014, Vancouver, June 10, 2015

Lives in Vancouver. BFA Emily Carr University; MFA, Concordia University

<http://www.colleenheslin.com/>

Collin Zipp, Winnipeg, July 21, 2014

Lives in Winnipeg. BFA, University of Manitoba School of Art; MFA University of Lethbridge

<http://collinzipp.info/>

Corri-Lynn Tetz, Montreal, October 18, 2015

Lives in Montreal. BFA, Emily Carr University of Art and Design; NFA, Concordia University

<https://corrilynnnetz.com/>

Cynthia Girard, Montreal, August 27, 2014

Lives in Montreal. BA, Université du Québec a Montréal; MA, University of London, UK

<http://www.cynthiagirardrenard.ca/>

Daniel Hutchinson, Hamilton, July 25, 2014, November 20, 2015, April 15, 2016

Lives in Hamilton, On. BFA, Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design; MFA, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design

<http://www.dbhutchinson.com/>

DaveandJenn, Calgary, July 12, 2014

<http://theworldofdaveandjenn.com/wp/>

David Elliott, Montreal, October 15, 2015

Lives in Montreal. BFA, Queens University; MFA Concordia University.

David Hucal, Hamilton, August 5, 2014

Lives in Toronto. BFA, Emily Carr University of Art and Design; MFA University of Guelph.

David Blatherwick, Elora, August 4, 2014, July 21, 2016

Lives in Elora, BA, Ryerson University; MFA, Université du Québec a Montréal

David Kaarsemaker, Ottawa, September 2, 2014

BFA, Concordia University; MFA, University of Ottawa

Deirdre McAdams, Vancouver, June 30, 2014

Lives in Vancouver. BFA Emily Carr University of Art and Design

Dil Hildebrand, Montreal, August 25, 2014, October 19, 2015

Lives in Montreal. MFA, Concordia University

<http://dilhildebrand.com/>

Doug Kirton, Kitchener, August 4, 2014

Lives in Kitchener. BFA, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design; MFA, University of Guelph.

<http://dougkirton.ca/home.html>

Ehryn Torrell, London, UK, April, 21, 2016, Toronto, July 7, 2016

Lives in London, UK. BA, McMaster University; MFA, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design

<http://www.ehryntorrell.com/>

Eleanor Bond, Winnipeg, June 25, 2015

Lives in Winnipeg. School of Art, University of Manitoba.

Eliza Griffiths, Montreal, August 28, 2014, October 19, 2015

Lives in Montreal. BFA, Concordia; MFA, Carleton.

<http://www.elizagriffiths.com/>

Elizabeth McIntosh, Vancouver, March 2, 2016

Lives in Vancouver. BFA, York University; MFA, Chelsea College of Art and Design, London, UK

<http://elizabethmcintosh.ca/paintings>

Erica Mendritzki, Winnipeg, July 19, 2014, June 27, 2015

Lives in Halifax, BFA Concordia University; MFA University of Guelph

<http://ericamendritzki.com/bio/>

Erik Olson, Calgary, July 14, 2014

Lives in Dusseldorf, Germany. BA Emily Carr University of Art and Design.

<http://erikolson.ca/>

Fiona Ackerman, Vancouver, June 23, 2014, May 31, 2015

BFA, Concordia University and Emily Carr University of Art and Design

<http://www.fionaackerman.com/>

Frederique Ulman, Montreal, August 29, 2014

BFA, Concordia University; MFA Université du Québec a Montréal

<http://www.frederique-ulman-gagne.com/>

Gary Evans, Barrie, April, 13, 2016.

Lives in Orangeville. Ontario College of Art and Design

Gavin Lynch, Ottawa, September 1, 2014

Lives in Ottawa. BFA, Emily Carr University of Art and Design; MFA, University of Ottawa.

<http://gavinlynch.net/>

Gwenessa Lam, Vancouver, May 23, 2015

Lives in Calgary. BFA, University of British Columbia; MFA, New York University

<https://gwenessa.com/>

Holger Kalberg, Winnipeg, July 18, 2014

Lives in Winnipeg. BFA Emily Carr University of Art and Design; MFA Chelsea College of Art and Design, London, UK

Ian August, Winnipeg, July 21, 2014

Lives in Winnipeg

James Gardner, Toronto, October 17, 2014, August, 24, 2015

Lives in Montreal. BFA, University of Guelph; MFA, Concordia University (Candidate)

<http://jamesgardner.ca>

Janet Werner, Montreal, August 26, 2014, October 13, 2015

Lives in Montreal. BFA, Maryland Institute College of Art; MFA, Yale University.

Jared Peters, London, October 7, 2014.
Lives in New Brunswick, BA, University of New Brunswick; BFA, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design; MFA, University of Western Ontario
<https://www.jaredpetersart.com/>

Jason Stovall, London, November 17, 2015
BFA University of Alberta; MFA, University of Western Ontario
<http://jasonstovall.ca/>

Jeanie Riddle, Montreal, August 27, 2014
Lives in Montreal, BFA, MFA, Concordia University
<http://www.jeanieriddle.com/>

Jeffrey Spalding, Calgary, July 15, 2014
Lives in Calgary. MFA, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.

Jennifer Carvahlo, Toronto, August 2, 2014, December 7, 2015
Lives in Toronto. BA, McMaster University; MFA University of Guelph
<http://jennifercarvalho.com/>

Jennifer Dorner, Montreal, August 30, 2014
BFA, University of Ottawa; MFA, University of Western Ontario
<http://www.jenniferdorner.ca/#0>

Jennifer Lefort, Gatineau, September 4, 2014, August 21, 2015
Lives in Gatineau, Quebec. BFA, Concordia University; MFA York University
<http://www.jenniferlefort.com/>

Jeremy Herndl, Victoria, July 4, 2014
BFA, Nova Scotia School of Art and Design; MAA, Emily Carr University of Art and Design
<http://jeremyherndl.com/home.html>

Jeremy Hof, Vancouver, June 6, 2015
BFA, Emily Carr University of Art and Design
<http://jeremyhofstudio.com>

Jeroen Witvliet, Victoria, July 5, 2014
<http://jeroenwitvliet.com/home.html>

Jessica Bell, Ottawa, September 1, 2014
BA, University of Calgary; MFA, University of Ottawa
<http://www.jessicabell.ca/>

Jessica Groome, Toronto, September 17, 2014, October 24, 2015, Berlin, June, 15, 2016
BFA, Emily Carr University of Art and Design; MFA, University of Guelph
<https://www.jessicagroome.com/>

Jinny Yu, Ottawa, September 2, 2014
BFA, Concordia University; MFA/MBA York University
<http://www.jinnyyu.com/>

John Armstrong, Toronto, December 11, 2015

Lives in Toronto. BFA, Mount Allison University; MA, Chelsea School of Art, London, UK

<http://www.johnarmstrong.ca/>

John Brown, Toronto, August 8, 2014

Ontario College of Art and Design; BA, University of Guelph

John Kissick, Elora, August 5, 2014, July 21, 2016

Lives in Elora, ON, BFA, Queen's University; MBA, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY

<http://www.johnkissick.ca/>

John Will, Calgary, July 14, 2014

Lives in Calgary. MFA, University of Iowa, Iowa City, USA

Jordy Hamilton, Vancouver, June 25, 2014

Lives in Los Angeles, CA, BFA/MFA The University of British Columbia

<http://jordyhamilton.com/>

Julie Beugin, Berlin, June 12, 2016

Lives in Berlin, BFA, Emily Carr University of Art and Design; MFA, Concordia University

<https://www.juliebeugin.com/>

Julie Trudel, Halifax, November 8, 2015

Lives in Montreal, BA/BFA/MFA, Université du Québec a Montréal

<https://www.julietrudel.ca/en/>

Katie Lyle, Toronto, September 25, 2015

Lives in Toronto, BFA, Concordia University; MFA, University of Victoria

<http://katielyle.com/>

Kent Monkman, Toronto, November 24, 2015

Lives in Toronto, Sheridan College

<http://www.kentmonkman.com/>

Kim Dorland, Toronto, September 10, 2014

Lives in Vancouver, BFA, Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design; MFA, York University

<http://www.kdorland.com/>

Krisjanis Katkins-Gorkins, Winnipeg, July 21, 2014

Lives in Winnipeg

Kym Greely, St. John's, August 11, 2014, November 14, 2015

MFA, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design

<http://www.kymgreeley.com/>

Laura Findlay, Toronto, September 23, 2014

Lives in Toronto. BFA Concordia University; MFA University of Guelph

<http://laurafindlay.com/>

Laura Millard, Toronto, August 25, 2015.

BFA, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design; MFA, Concordia University

<http://www.lauramillard.com/>

Leigh Bridges, Winnipeg, June 23, 2015

Lives in Winnipeg. BFA, University of Alberta; MFA, University of Victoria

<http://www.leighbridges.com/>

Leslie Bell, Calgary, July 13, 2014

Lives in Calgary. BFA, Alberta College of Art and Design, MFA Concordia University

<http://lesliebell.ca/>

Linda Martinello, Toronto, August 8, 2014

Lives in Toronto. BA, University of Toronto; MFA, University of Waterloo

<https://www.lindamartinello.com/>

Lisa Wood, Winnipeg, July 22, 2014

Lives in Winnipeg. BFA, University of Manitoba; MFA, Yale University

<http://lisawood.ca/>

Maegan Harbridge, Guelph, September 26, 2014

Lives in Zurich, BFA, Emily Carr University of Art and Design; MFA, University of Guelph

Maegan Mehler, Toronto, December 9, 2015

Lives in Toronto. BFA University of Victoria; MFA, University of Guelph

<http://www.maeganrosemehler.com/>

Mark Knowles, November 10, 2015

Lives in Montreal. BFA, Concordia University; MFA, Nova Scotia University of Art and Design

<http://marcknowles.com/>

Marie Lanoo, Saskatoon, July 16, 2014

Lives in Saskatoon. BFA, University of Saskatchewan

<http://marielannoo.com/>

Mark Mullin, Calgary, July 12, 2014

Lives in Calgary. BFA, University of Alberta; MFA, Concordia University

<http://www.markcmullin.com/>

Mark Neufeld, Winnipeg, July 22, 2014, June 23, 2015

Lives in Winnipeg. BFA, Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design; MFA, University of Victoria

<https://www.markneufeld.com/>

Martin Golland, Ottawa, August 17, 2015

Lives in Ottawa. BFA, Concordia University; MFA, University of Guelph

<http://www.martingolland.com/>

Martin Pearce, Guelph, August 5, 2014. BA, Newcastle Polytechnic, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK; MA, Royal College of Art, London, GB

<https://www.martinpearce.com/>

Mary Pratt, St. John's November 12, 2015

Lives in St. John's. Mount Allison University

Mathew Reischertz, Halifax, August 21, 2014, November 8, 201.
Lives in Halifax. BFA, Concordia University; MFA, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University
<http://www.reichertz.ca/>

Matthew Brown, Toronto, July 28, 2014
Lives in Vancouver. BFA, University of Victoria; MFA, Concordia University
<http://www.birthdaycakeisland.com/>

Megan Hepburn, June 20, 2014, July 26, 2015
Lives in Vancouver, BFA, Emily Carr University of Art and Design; MFA, Concordia University

Meghan McKnight, Toronto, December 19, 2015
Lives in Toronto. BA, University of Toronto
<http://meghanmcknight.com/home.html>

Melanie Authier, Ottawa, August 17, 2015
Lives in Ottawa. BFA, Concordia University; MFA University of Guelph
<http://www.melanieauthier.com/>

Mitchell Wiebe, Halifax, August 17, 2014
Lives in Halifax. BFA, Emily Carr College of Art and Design; MFA, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University
<http://mitchellwiebe.com/>

Monica Tap, Toronto, July 30, 2014, September 4, 2015
Lives in Toronto. BFA/MFA, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design
<http://www.monicatap.com/>

Nam Nguyen, Berlin, June 12, 2016
Lives in Berlin. BFA, Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design; MFA, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University
<https://www.nampainting.com/>

Neil Harrison, Toronto, July 28, 2014
Lives in Toronto.
<http://www.neilharrison.ca/>

Neil McClelland, Victoria, July 5, 2014
Lives in Victoria. MFA, University of Victoria; MA, Athabaska University, AB
<http://neilmcclelland.com/>

Nick Lakowski, Vancouver, July 7, 2014
Lives in Vancouver. BFA, Emily Carr University of Art and Design; MFA, University of British Columbia

Nicole Collins, July 29, 2014
Lives in Toronto. BA, University of Guelph; Master of Visual Studies, University of Toronto

Patrick Cruz, Guelph, October 8, 2015
BFA, Emily Carr University of Art and Design; MFA, University of Guelph

<http://www.patrickcruz.org>

Patrick Howlett, London, August 7, 2014, November 17, 2015, April 14, 2016
Lives in London, ON. BFA, Concordia University; MFA, University of Victoria

Pearl Van Geest, Guelph, August 5, 2014
Lives in Guelph. MFA, University of Windsor
<http://www.pearlvangeest.com/>

Peter Dykhuis, Halifax, August 23, 2014
Lives in Halifax. BFA, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI
<http://www.dykhuis.ca/>

Philippa Jones, St. John's, August 12, 2014, November 13, 2015
Lives in St. John's. BFA/MFA, University College, Falmouth, UK
<https://philippamarie.wordpress.com>

Philippe Raphanel, Vancouver, May 30, 2015
Lives in Vancouver. BFA, L'Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Art Appliqué, Paris

Rebecca Brewer, Vancouver, June 15, 2015
Lives in Vancouver. BFA, Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design; MFA Bard College, NY

Renee Van Halm, Vancouver, June 2, 2015
Lives in Vancouver. MFA, Concordia University
<http://reneevanhalm.com/>

Rick Leong, Victoria, July 4, 2014
Lives in Victoria. BFA, University of Victoria; MFA, Concordia University
<http://rickleong.com>

Robert Taite, Winnipeg, July 20, 2014
Lives in Winnipeg. BFA, University of Manitoba

Ron Moppett, Calgary, July 15, 2014
Lives in Calgary. Alberta College of Art and Design; Institute de Allende, Mexico

Ryan Peters, Vancouver, June 25, 2014, June 1, 2015
BFA, MFA, University of British Columbia

Sandra Meigs, Victoria, July 3, 2014, June 18, 2015
Lives in Hamilton. BFA, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, MA Dalhousie University
<https://www.sandrameigs.com>

Sara Hartland-Rowe, Halifax, November, 10, 2015
Lives in Halifax. BFA, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design; MFA, University of Chicago
<http://www.sarahartlandrowe.com/>

Sara Robichaud, Nanaimo, June 19, 2015
Lives in Nanaimo. BFA, Queen's University; MFA, University of Victoria
<http://sararobichaud.ca/>

Sarah Cale, Toronto, December 7, 2015

Lives in Toronto. BFA, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design; MFA University of Guelph
<http://sarahcale.com>

Sarah Jane Gorlitz, Toronto September 22, 2014

Lives in Toronto. BFA, University of Waterloo; MFA, Malmo Art Academy, Sweden
<http://www.softturns.com>

Sasha Pierce, Toronto July 30, 2014

Lives in Toronto. BA, University of Guelph; MFA, University of Waterloo
<http://www.sashapierce.ca/>

Scott Bertram, Comox, July 5, 2014, June 20, 2015

Lives in Comox, BC. BFA, University of British Columbia Okanagan; MFA, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University
<http://scottbertram.ca/>

Scott Waters, Toronto, September 23, 2014

Lives in Toronto. BFA, Okanagan University College; MFA, York University
<https://www.scottwaters.ca/>

Sein Weisgerber, Saskatoon, July 16, 2014, Toronto, April 8, 2016

Lives in Toronto. BFA, Emily Carr University of Art and Design
<http://seanweisgerber.com/>

Stanzie Tooth, Ottawa, August 8, 2015

BFA, Ontario College of Art and Design; MFA, University of Ottawa
<http://www.stanzietooth.com/>

Suzanne Fennell, Halifax, August 8, 2014.

Lives in Halifax.

Sylvain Bouthillette, Montreal, August 28, 2014

Lives in Montreal
<http://www.sylvainbouthillette.com/>

Tiziana La Melia, Vancouver, June 21, 2015

Lives in Vancouver. BFA, Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design; MFA, University of Guelph
<http://tizianalamelia.com>

Ufuk Gueray, Winnipeg, July 19, 2014, June 27, 2015

Lives in Halifax. BFA, Concordia University; MFA Glasgow School of Art
<http://www.ufukgueray.com/>

Vanessa Maltese, Toronto, August 6, 2014, April 8, 2016

Lives in Toronto. BFA, Ontario College of Art and Design University
<http://vanessamaltese.com/>

Will Gill, St. John's August 12, 2014, November 14, 2015

Lives in St. John's. BFA, Mount Allison University

<http://www.williamgill.ca/>

Will Gorlitz, Guelph, September 26, 2014

Lives in Guelph. University of Manitoba School of Art; Nova Scotia College of Art and Design

<http://willgorlitz.com/>

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

May, 2014

Principal Investigator:

Dr. Rita Irwin

Associate Dean, Professor, Faculty of Education, Teacher Education Office

The University of British Columbia

103 – 2125 Main Mall, Vancouver, BC Canada V6T 1Z4

Co-Investigator:

Alison Shields

PhD student, Faculty of Education

The University of British Columbia

Dear potential participant,

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled **Mapping the Creative Process: The art studio, a nonlinear, embodied, dynamic and multidisciplinary site of research**. This project is being conducted out of the University of British Columbia by Dr. Rita Irwin and Phd student, Alison Shields.

Purpose of the study:

This research project examines the ways of learning, knowledge production and meaning-making within art studio practices. This project aims to address the following questions:

- 1) How do artists describe their creative process?
- 2) What is the relationship between thinking and making within studio practices?
- 3) How do artists' studio spaces and geographical region affect their art practices?
- 4) How do artists situate themselves within a community of artists within their studio space, current city and the international artist community?

The aim of this study is to examine the creative processes and ways of thinking/working of artists within studio-based arts practices in order to have a better understanding of the potentials of studio-based approaches to pedagogy and research. A further aim of the project is to foster a community or network of artists throughout North America. You have been invited to participate in this study because of your accomplishments as a painter through exhibitions, publications and awards.

Project Procedures: The researcher will set up meetings with artists throughout various cities across Canada and the United States. The meetings will take place in the artist's own studio. You will be interviewed for up to 2 hours at your convenience. You will be asked questions about your experience as artist and your working process. Throughout the interview, you may show art works as a way of exploring the questions. The interview will be video-taped or audio-recorded (depending on your choice). Photographs will be taken of the studio and selected art works.

The results of this study may be used for scholarly reports, several journal articles, conference presentations, and online resources hosted through a project website where artists, academic researchers and education professionals may be present to share their ideas. At the end of this letter, you can choose to allow us to use your comments, interviews, and images or not when reporting the research findings.

Confidentiality: There are no provisions for confidentiality in this study. Please be aware if you agree to participate your name will be revealed in scholarly reports, journal articles, conference presentations, and online resources. We feel it is important that you, as an artist, are credited publicly for your creative ideas and work.

Contact: If you have any questions about this research project, please contact Dr. Irwin. If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant you may contact the Research Subject Information line in the UBC Office of Research Services at the University of British Columbia.

Consent: This study does not anticipate any risk greater than normal life. Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to take part, you may choose to pull out of the study at any time without giving a reason without penalty.

Please indicate your participation by completing the consent form below. Please keep this description of the study for future reference. Thank you.

Consent: By signing this consent form I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Please check the box to the left indicating your decision.
<input type="checkbox"/> yes	I CONSENT to participating in the ' <i>Mapping the Creative Process: The art studio, a nonlinear, embodied, dynamic and multidisciplinary site of research</i> ' study as described in the above form.
<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent form.

Name of Participant (please print):

Signature:

Organization:

Date: