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Winchester School of Art

Shaping Shadows: A Practice of Expansion Painting

by

Cheng-Chu Weng

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Shaping Shadows: A Practice of Expansion Painting

Contents

Abstract

Introduction	1
Structures of Ambiguity	14
Research Aims	21
Experiencing Shadow	25
Thesis Overview	38
 Notes on Practice	 47
 Chapter 1: Painting in the Expanded Field	 249
The Expanded Field	251
Painting in the Expanded Field	258
An Expansion Painting	267
Figuration, the Line through Space and Painting as Multiple Objects	285
<i>Figuration</i>	287
<i>The Line through Space</i>	308
<i>Painting as Multiple Objects</i>	314
 Chapter 2: Structures of Ambiguity: Grid, Frame, Screen and Stage	 325
Geometrical Shape and Tableau	331
Practice of Grid/Frame/Screen/Stage	351
Theatrical Art and Structural Film	359
Flouting Surfaces	364
A Sense of Painting Space	380
 Finish: A Practice of Expansion Painting	 389
Finishing School: Situating Structures of Ambiguity	391
Unfinished: A Contemporary Practice	395
Finish: Im/materialities of a Sense of Painting Space	398
 Bibliography	 403

Abstract

Shaping Shadows: A Practice of Expansion Painting is a practice-based doctoral thesis. It centres upon a sustained art practice, offering a body of new work as a means to extend an understanding of painting in the expanded field. The practice in question is defined as a 'sense' of painting space, which operates through painterly compositional methods but developed through site-specific considerations of architectural spaces, bodies, and differing levels of consciousness when interacting in such spaces. The artworks range in scale from small punctuations in a room to large installations that fill and resonate with a defined space. The works are typically constructed out of unobtrusive materials, notably Japanese tissue papers, fabric, MDF board and wood, but crucially they are also 'made' of the immaterial elements of light, air and shadows. In differing ways, the works are experienced and *completed* by both artist and viewers, so establishing a set of conditions in which one's individual thoughts and space-body dynamics are in play.

Rather than simply presenting the work as further examples of painting in the expanded field (i.e. as a discursive, conceptual re-categorisation of painting), the thesis explores *through* its art practice a form of 'expansion painting', by which it is meant the artist's *sense* of painting deliberates upon an expanded awareness of spaces, the in/visible materialities of light, shadow, air, and memories that accumulate from inner, private imagery and external shapes, patterns and forms. As a key element, medium and metaphor, *shadow* is at the heart of my practice research. It is both a component of practice and a metaphor of ambivalence (being both of and outside of an object, and suggestive of both distinctive and indistinct forms). Shadow becomes an ideal term and site of practice to build and examine subtle as well as alternative systems or structures, often ones that echo or 'shadow' existing dynamics of space, so that a 'relief' of images emerge, and/or are activated (as experienced physically in the space, and in the mind while engaging in the work). As such, the resulting artworks seek to provide an awareness of 'being' through what is referred to as 'structures of ambiguity'.

The thesis is brought together through both its practice and a written component. The latter offers an Introduction, setting out the main themes and concepts as well as 'Notes on Practice', which presents a 'catalogue' of the artworks produced. These opening components are followed by two main chapters. Chapter 1, 'Painting in the Expanded Field', establishes the historical and theoretical debates of painting in the expanded field and draws upon more recent literatures specific to the expansion of painting. It then considers the artist's own work in relation to a series of examples of historical and contemporary practice (including remarks on the influence of minimalist art, as well as three specific case studies of contemporary artists whose works explore similar themes and material practice). Crucially, through 'practicing' a sense of painting space – defined as expansion painting – a phenomenological reading is undercurrent, which in turn enables a critical consideration of 'structures of ambiguity', which is the focus of Chapter 2, 'Structures of Ambiguity: Grid, Frame, Screen and Stage'. This chapter offers an explicit account and contextualising of the mediums, materials and effects of the works. It leads to another way of seeing, as a deconstruction of space and in-between spaces. The thesis document concludes with 'Finish: a Practice of Expansion Painting', which draws together the key themes of the research through further contextualization of art history and theory. Expansion painting is not simply derived from historical, theoretical and philosophical debate, but must emerge through making and viewing the artwork as an *open-ended* experience. The artworks 'finish' at different moments of our being; they also respond to intellectual debates about the status of painting after the modern; and they are made of a very particular im/material 'finish' that is the signature of the practice. The underlying problematic of this thesis is the consideration of where objects and experiences begin and end, where boundary lines do or do not run. The 'shaping' of shadows is an attention to existing, spatial structures and their confluence with virtual structures of thought and experience. Thus, the medium of painting itself is pushed and pulled in this research, both expanding upon theoretical debates of the 'expanded field', as well as advancing its own practical inquiry. Indeed, 'painting' is presented as an exemplar of thinking *and* making.

Introduction

This practice-based thesis centres upon my fine art practice. I define my practice as a 'sense' of painting space, which is to understand painting in terms of an expanded field. My reading of an expanded field of painting is covered at length in the first main chapter, 'Painting in the Expanded Field'. However, in short, I can describe my approach as drawing upon painterly compositional methods but developed through site-specific considerations of architectural spaces, bodies, and differing levels of consciousness when interacting in such spaces. To give an immediate sense of the kind of work produced for the research, two examples are provided with Figure 0.1 *Untitled (After Donald Judd)* (2016) and Figure 0.2 *Divide IV* (2016). However, a survey of all the work produced is provided in 'Notes on Practice', which follows this introduction.

In *Untitled (After Donald Judd)*, the systematic repeating element and a well-lit corridor structure enable the viewer to enter a 'painting space' both physically and mentally. In particular, light and shadow effects draw in the viewers' physical bodies to become part of the work. On the other hand, the almost weightless and transparent nature of the fabric in *Divide IV* makes 'traces' of the people passing it. Both works, then provide 'interacting relationships' with *Untitled (After Donald Judd)* making specific use of light and structure, and *Divide IV* operating through the medium of air. *Divide IV* only 'works' when people contribute to the surrounding airflows. In other words, the movement of the fabric becomes 'evidence' of the interaction of space that must occur beyond the single space of the work itself. It could be said that *all* artworks offer such interactions with the viewer, as we cannot avoid the 'physics' of spectatorship. This thesis would largely agree with such a statement; however, as a practice-based enquiry, my approach to making work is explicitly concerned with these various effects of light, shadow, airflow and materials, as they are made to operate within specific spaces. There are particular judgments that I make in my work, on the one hand, informed by 'minimal' aesthetics (though, as I examine further on, there are distinctions to be made from the minimalist movement of the twentieth century), and on the other hand, by my own private reading of space, materials and subjecthood.



Fig. 0.1 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Untitled (After Donald Judd)*, 2016, MDF board, dimensions variable.



Fig. 0.2 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Divide IV*, 2016, dowel, screen print silk, dimensions variable.



Fig. 0.3 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Relocation Celebration*, 2012, oil colour on board, 224 x 141 x 3 cm.



Fig. 0.4 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Zoo*, 2012, oil colour on board, 122.2 x 103 x 1cm.

The latter is in part informed by my cultural upbringing in Taiwan, which brings to the fore specific philosophic and aesthetic considerations, which I have also sought to expand upon through my research. Underlying all of which is a consideration of a practice of painting that I argue informs my work as a conceptual medium, offering a way of seeing, and as an operative in the composition and *making* of work.

Before working on this research, I was painting in the more traditional sense, working with paint, canvas and boards. For example, I produced a series called *Blurring* (Figure 0.3 and Figure 0.4). The theme of the series is love and missing, absence and loss, and related to my use of Skype to keep in touch with my family back home in Taiwan. The paintings were made through a systematic process. It starts with creating a smooth surface on an MDF board and the marking out of a 1 x 1 cm grid with pencil. A figurative outline is then traced, in response to various imagery of an absent family. Following this, in order to maintain a sensory experience, I considered it important to *blur* the images that I created. These stages are repeated a number of time on the same picture plane until the painting presented what I considered to be a well-balanced relationship between gestures and images. The paintings were inspired by being apart from my family (as I was abroad for my studies at the time). Skype is considered a positive means for one to keep in touch, but for me the experience only reinforces the feeling of loss, of distance, of missing a person. I am able to see and hear my family through the computer screen, but its 'digital framing' was not able to give me the *feeling* of them. The screen images of my loved ones are reconfirmed through the data and pixels, but which update frame by frame, scattering ourselves in ways we cannot fully comprehend. My paintings, then, by enacting the continual process of appearance and disappearance provided a form of 'meditation' upon my situation. In one sense, by repeatedly focusing on the very site/sight of loss I was actually able to distract myself from the sadness I felt.

The paintings can be understood as a precursor to my current practice. Themes relating to physical and psychical space and a more performative and process-led approach to painting are nascent in my works. The virtual exchanges of Skype led me to consider ideas about physical bodies, distance, proximity and 'togetherness', as well as issues relate to imagination, images and memory etc.. However, I have gone onto develop a more sustained theoretical reading of the 'spaces' of my work (as it relates to physical spaces, to

memories, and to the body) and its relationship to painting in the expanded field (discussed in Chapter 1). I will also return specifically to the philosophical concept of visibility in Chapter 2 of this thesis, which considers ideas of in/visibility in the works of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jacques Derrida, as developed through a consideration of trace. There is a parallel relationship between my practice and philosophical reading, but I would maintain that *through* practice I seek to understand and present *another* kind of philosophy. This claim draws upon Merleau-Ponty's account of painting space. Thus, the debate of 'painting space' in my thesis begins from a 'practical' endeavour and is drawn to and through a 'philosophical' account. Nevertheless, with respect to my earlier paintings, and due to the dialogue of making and philosophical reading, I found it necessary to re-orientate my practice and to substantially 'expand' the notion of painting as I engaged in it. In my earlier painting, in order to address the problematic relationship between the feeling of absence and the screen image, the series is built up by a construction of five elements – blurring, pixels, squares, lines and layers. Each of these elements, in addition to other key elements including light, space and shadow, continue to inform my work. As suggested in the title of this thesis, 'shadow' is of particular interest, not only as a component of practice (as a key compositional element and device), but also metaphorically as 'ambivalence', being both of and outside of an object, and suggestive of both distinct and indistinct forms. Shadows (in terms of their umbra) can be well defined and explicitly indexical, yet equally (regarding their penumbra) they can be more fluid, 'greyer' and harder to define in terms of boundaries. When something is referred to as 'shadowy', this can suggest something that is hazy, uncertain or not fully disclosed. My interest in the shadow – as a trace of something else, as its own visible entity, and something immaterial – remains a central preoccupation in my work. However, it is worth noting that the research was initially prompted by an interest in the psychological symptom of body dysmorphic disorder¹, which can be taken to test the boundaries of visual experience (in particular, in relation to my earlier work, with the experience of screen images or computer images). This interest in body dysmorphia can be understood to relate to my ongoing interest in the work of Merleau-Ponty, who comments on phenomenology through the extreme case of aphasia in *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945:144). Where aphasia relates to a disorder of speech and language, body dysmorphia

¹ Body dysmorphic disorder (BDD), or body dysmorphia, is a mental health condition where a person spends a lot of time worrying about flaws in their appearance. These flaws are often unnoticeable to others. (cited from NHS choice, 2012)

relates to visual experience; in this case a misreading of and obsession with one's own body. Ideas about how we associate with our own image and how this can become distorted have been of interest to me while tracing my own shadow (even as a method to explore ideas about the symptom), see Figure 0.5 and Figure 0.6. However, this is only an initial point of entry. My practice does not seek to respond directly to this psychological and sociological issue; instead, the research focuses on more art-specific questions of materiality and immateriality that work through my personal situating of space, shadows and the body, and which are taken to underline more general considerations of 'being' as the combined experiences of physical and psychical space.

My interest in shadow can also be understood to link to certain cultural influences. A key device and primary scene (as discussed below) is a shadow that forms upon a sliding shoji panel in my home in Taiwan as a child. I borrow the phrase 'the original scene' [*genkōkei*] (cited Leo Rubinfien, 2004:12) from the Japanese photographer Shōmei Tōmatsu, who uses it to indicate the *traumatic* surroundings of the Japanese city in 1945, following the devastation of the war. For him, then it is the sense of a ruined city. In my case, it is an interior scene of the house, but as shaken by an earthquake. It is a specific time and space, but also forms an enduring memory. I do not seek to represent it in my work, yet it remains a phenomenological experience of space, bodies and emotions that I have found myself referring back to even if subconsciously as a way of responding to and working with the light and air of spaces. My particular interest in the in-distinction of shadows also relates to my exposure to various Asian painting and ink practices. Chinese ink paintings rarely show specific, indexical shadows (as we find in many Western paintings, in which figures are typically modelled with careful and striking shadows to render their realism and evoke ideas, for example, of *enlightenment*). Instead, Chinese inks, notably with landscapes, will use varying layers of inks to generate 'deep', cascading landscapes of vegetation, or show fragments of objects and space emerging within ephemeral mist and clouds. In reference to the landscape painter Shitao (1642-1707), Hubert Damisch writes of the *gathering* together of elements, to 'undo' the distinctiveness of elements in favour of 'something' in-between:

[T]he sky and the earth, the mountain and the water, since, quite literally, the sky and the earth have no place in a Chinese landscape, which is established in between the two. The landscape must express the (antithetical) structure and... The rivers and the clouds assume a decisive function in such a work, for “in their gathering or their dispersion they constitute the link”, while the sky embraces the landscape with its winds and clouds and the earth animates it with its rivers and rocks, according to the rhythm that accounts for all the metamorphoses of the landscape, and all the reversals and inversions of signs of which it is both the product and the place. In other words, cloud, in these circumstances, does not signify any kind of transcendence. Its function is not solely to emphasize the height of the mountains and the depth of the forests; for it also constitutes one of the elements through which the mountain communicates with its contrary... (2002:219-220)

This sense of ‘gathering’ and a communication of one element through another (and vice versa) is an important idea that underlines much of my work. A parallel relationship can be made, for example, between Damisch’s interest in the cloud and my interest and use of shadow in my practice, both ways of thinking about the activation of space and non-space, forming an in-betweenness (more of which is discussed in Chapter 2).

Damisch goes on to articulate the importance of using cloud to create ‘recapitulation’ (2002:219), by which he means – through the echoing, or blurring of both sky and land – offering viewers a space for contemplation and providing a sense of emptiness, openness. Recapitulation is a technical term in Chinese ink painting; it is a matter of presenting a ‘vague view’ giving rise to ‘mountains of clouds and seas of clouds’ (Jie Zi Yuan cited in Damisch, 2001:201). My interest in these in-between spaces, where it is not easy to define where they begin and end, is constantly at play in my thinking about the ‘problem’ of composition, and in how we choose to handle components of light, shadow and air in different spaces. Overall, then, for the thesis shadow works as synecdoche for a range of concerns for what lines in and outside of composition (in and outside of a drawn line, in and out of the ‘artwork’ within a space), all relating back to *painterly* considerations regarding the ‘suspension’ of compositional elements within a medium, but which this thesis offers in an expanded sense.

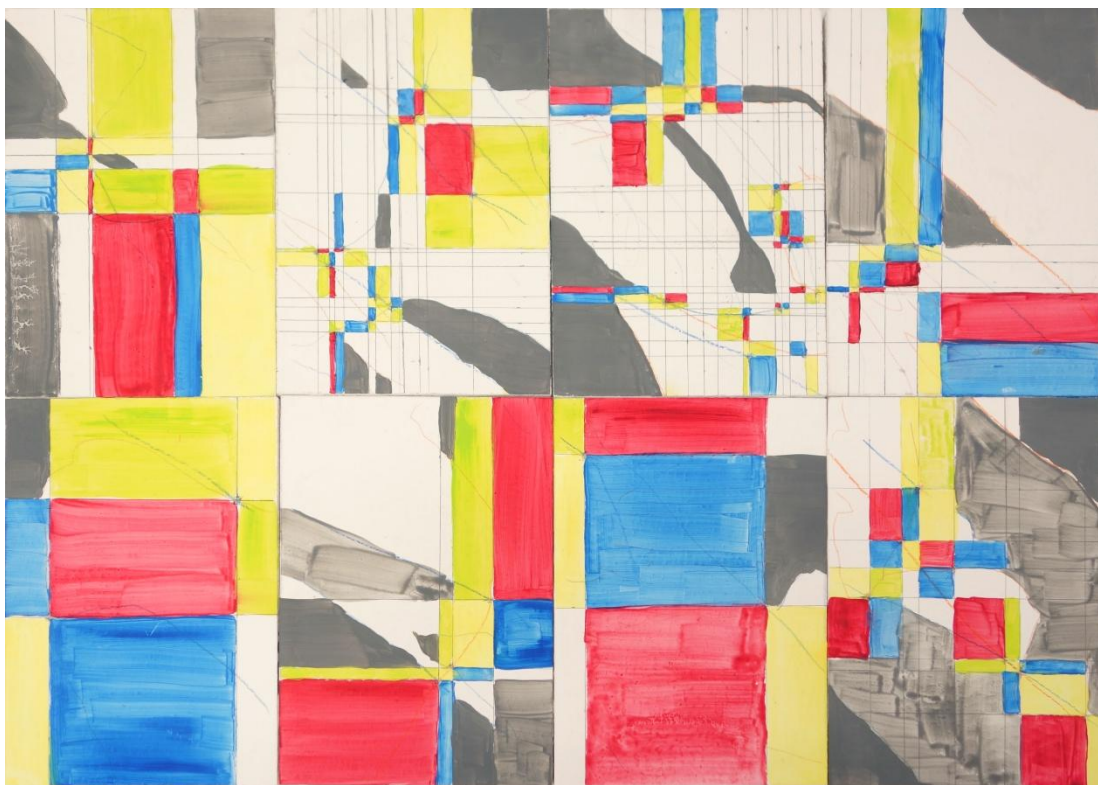


Fig.0.5 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Practice V*, 2014, oil colour on board, 45 x 25 x 0.9 cm.



Fig.0.6 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Cylinder II*, 2014, oil colour on self-adhesive covering films, dimensions variable.



Fig.0.7 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Sticky Note VII*, 2015, sticky note, dimensions variable.



Fig.0.8 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Around*, 2017, dowel, garden fleece, dimensions variable.

Structures of Ambiguity

In *The Remembered Film* (2004), Victor Burgin gives examples of images that come through what he calls 'involuntary associations' (17). The images 'occur' as he travels on trains, they are prompted by a combination of visual cues (such as the landscape beyond the train) and remembered scenes. Like word associations, he moves from one element to another to arrive at a specific image of interest, or he explains that behind the sequence of images he describes is a particular remembered image. He goes on to refer to these as 'sequence-images'. Unlike the image sequence we think of in film, he suggests, '[t]he elements that constituent the sequence-image, mainly perceptions and recollections, emerge successively but not teleologically. The order in which they appear is insignificant (as in a rebus) and they present a configuration – "lexical, sporadic" – that is more "object" than narrative'. He goes on to note that '[w]hat distinguishes the elements of such a configuration from their evanescent neighbours is that they seem somehow more "brilliant"' (2004:21). In my own work, I associate closely with Burgin's interest in the engagement in both material and virtual images, in the physical and psychical; offering a reading of how I associate with spaces, materials and memories. However, it is important to mark a point of divergence. Burgin refers to elements of 'brilliance', of the image that emerges more strongly or forcefully. We might relate this to Roland Barthes' (1993, originally published in 1981) notion of the punctum, as the pin prick, the image that emerges – if idiosyncratically – for a viewer above and beyond all other potential configurations of meaning. Arguably, Burgin's own account is drawn more 'purely' through image, not a 'system' or lexicon of images, but a *sequence* of images. He describes his two examples of associative images from the train journeys as a 'concatenation of images' that raise themselves 'as if in *bas relief*, above the instantly fading, then forgotten, desultory thoughts and impressions passing through my mind as the train passes through the countryside' (2004:21). The reference here to *bas relief* can lead us to consider a stamp-like effect, that one set of images emerges as more prominent. Burgin adopts this kind of approach in his film to offer a 'concatenation of images' (ibid) that might seem somewhat perplexing at first sight. They are fragments and made to form a 'sequence-image' rather than necessarily an image sequence. Yet they are strong images that impress themselves upon us, and as such they form a 'system' of meaning (albeit one that destabilises established systems of meaning). As I note, I draw inspiration from Burgin's work and

particularly his account of the real and the virtual. However, a key difference in my practice is that I am not seeking to work with the 'brilliant' image. Instead of working with specific emergent images, as if in *bas relief*, I am interested in establishing alternative systems or structures, often ones that echo or 'shadow' the existing dynamics of space, so that the 'relief' of images (both real and experienced in the space, and psychical as experienced in the mind while engaging in the work), i.e. the *means* of images to emerge, is activated. In watching viewers attend to my work, I am often struck with how they start talking about other images or experiences and often try to ask me if that is what I meant. Although I cannot easily answer them, it is in that moment that the works can be thought to have shifted our way of seeing. In viewing my work at The Brewery Tap (in Folkestone), for example, one viewer starting talking about the sensation of sliding in a bath to make the water rise, back and forth, just high enough before it might spill over. The people around laughed. It seemed a rather private image, but it soon 'spilled' over into the group together talking about sense of equilibrium and the playing with boundaries. All of this dialogue occurred immersed in the middle of my work, *Around* (2017) (Figure 0.8), which quietly swayed with the people's movements. This may only be momentary, easily lost to the waft of the fabric or paper I use, but like *haiku* as a brief but distinctly formed meditation, a concatenation of images, thoughts and memories, I consider the work to have enabled a more 'open' or fluid concatenation. It is in this respect, as I will go on to discuss, that I am interested in the production of 'structures of ambiguity', which offer the possibility of significations, but which are not specified, and which are not brought into particular 'relief' above others.

The original Latin root of the word 'ambiguous' is from *ambi* (meaning 'both ways') and *agree* (meaning 'to drive'). This can suggest of a pivotal, oscillation force between just two terms. However, the Latin *ambiuere* means to 'waver, go around', and this leads to the word *ambiguous*, meaning 'doubtful', which is much closer to the modern spelling and meaning of 'ambiguous'. In common usage, stemming from the 16th century use of the English term (which adds the '-ous' ending), we tend to refer to something as ambiguous when it is 'indistinct' or 'obscure'. It is the sense of uncertainty and indistinction that I seek to invoke by the term of 'ambiguous'². In this regard, I do not emphasise the Latin root 'ambi'

² The etymology of the word 'ambiguous' discussed here is based on entries from the Online Etymology Dictionary. < <https://www.etymonline.com/> >

(as in ambidextrous), but perhaps rather more think of the French ‘ambient’ and ‘ambiance’ which gives us the fluid, open term to describe atmosphere and surroundings. Thus, when I refer to the haiku (as a concatenation of images), for example, and equally note that I am not seeking to bring to the fore any *distinct* image or set of images, I am wishing to emphasise the means, not the ends. In this case, how the haiku is a ‘structure’ that is enables us to form image and thoughts. These never quite fully form, and in fact the pleasure of haiku is often that we can keep going back to them to be affected by their effects. It is the ‘structure’ that allows something to form that I enquiry into, and which I take to be both an ambiguous form (the haiku, for example, is an enigmatic form of writing) and is a means of accessing ambiguities (in my work seek to foreground many qualities such as light, the play of bodies and shadows, and airflow, which otherwise typically remain indistinct, outside of our general consciousness). I am interested in a certain fluidity of structure that can enable meanings between ourselves, objects and environments. It is indistinct as to whether the images and sensations that form are external or internal to ourselves, but what is definite is that it must come from the fact that we have entered into a specific space or configuration. This, then, is my reading of ambiguity. Further below (and elsewhere in this thesis) I refer in passing to range of examples that I take to pertain to ambiguity, including, for example, Bataille’s reference to formlessness and Mitchell’s writing on the metapicture, which he illustrates with the duck-rabbit illusion or Magritte’s painting of a pipe. These are not all immediately compatible examples, which some seemingly more binary than others, but what underlies is a recurrent ‘operation’ of indistinction, the unclassified, and in-betweenness. We could read Mitchell’s case of the duck-rabbit illusion ‘ambidextrously’ (as duck on one side and rabbit on the other). However, I am not focusing here on there being one term over the other, but rather on the simple phenomenon to move from one term to another, and to query what might lie between. Interestingly, it is almost impossible to see both duck and rabbit together at once, but what remains pertinent is what happens between the two, despite that fact we cannot easily access this moment. It is this in-between *space* that I consider to be ambiguous (whether to occurs between two terms or many). As a ‘space’, it is arguably more in the vein of an ambience than an ambidextrousness, but which nonetheless interest me as a site of indistinction and wavering.

In the pursuit of such ambiguity, I have continued to work consistently with elements such as shadow, line, pixel, and grid, but configured in varying ways and through different materials. A particular shift in my practice early on in my current research came from working with, the elements of pixel and line, in 'paintings' that come out from the limit frame and surface we typically associate with paintings (Figure 0.6 and Figure 0.7). In seeking to make work that is based upon an 'unlimited' frame or surface is to evoke a long standing tension of spatial experience in vision and physicality which, for example, relates to authority between the pictorial painting and gestural painting. Therefore, the unlimited frame provides an underlying problem of the optical and physical experience evoked in my work. More specifically, however, the elements of grid and shadow recall the primary scene, referred to above, stemming from the childhood memory, I hold of the experience of an earthquake. Importantly, the point is not to present this scene in any representational sense, nor even to refer to it in any abstract sense in individual works.

Nonetheless, it underpins my approach to a conceptual consideration of how bodies are mediated through both the tangible and intangible elements of space – the latter, for example, relating to matters of light, air, and fleeting temporalities. I shall return more fully to the scene of this earthquake, below. However, at the heart of the scene is a moment in which I witnessed the silent shadow of my parents through a *shoji* sliding panel at the threshold of my bedroom. It is a fleeting moment that – in turning to consider my practice – has led me to examine painting (in the expanded sense) beyond modernist accounts, and instead to return to an earlier consideration, going back to Pliny's *The Origin of Painting* (also referred to as a story of *The Maid of Corinth*). It is a myth given in Pliny's *Natural History* (circa 77-79AD). *Natural History* is a book about painting techniques within a human history. As Hagi Kenaan notes in 'Tracing Shadow: Reflection on the Origin of Painting' (2006), Pliny's account of the Corinthian maid is the retelling of the Greek myth of Butades (600 BC). This myth is considered in more detail below. In short, however, the story told is how the maid of Corinth traces her lover's shadow upon the wall before they are divided apart. As a play upon Pliny's myth, my own painting/practice might be said to be founded upon myth, in this case, a personal memory that becomes the myth of my practice. We generally classify memory as being of past experiences, which are 'stored' in the mind. This we suppose creates the background or stories of each person, constructed by the subjective fragments of events. As such, memory is often referred to as being

unreliable, as something we cannot necessarily trust or draw upon as evidence. In Semir Zeki's (1999) neuroscientific research he points out that still today, the process of how a human brain stores visual memory is a mystery. The complex relationship between memory and brain is not the focus of this research, but the still elusive phenomenon of memory. Memories stay with us; we can hold onto them, or at least attempt to lest we forget important events in our lives or memories can persist even when we do not want them to. They can 'haunt' us, returning to us involuntarily, sometimes even persistently. Thus, memories are not simply a matter of truth or evidence, but rather based upon specific experiences *and* cumulative in terms of how we continue to live with them. In this way, they become formative of ourselves. Therefore, memory is not just a place to store information in our mind, but rather alters the way we *experience* the environment. In this receipt, I consider memory to lie somewhere between inside (an individual body) and outside (the environment), and it is this relationship that I am interested in when producing my work.

In thinking about how we access memories, particularly in relation to the artworks I produce, it is hard to ignore Marcel Proust's account of 'Involuntary Memory' (2002). In his well-known account, the involuntary recall of memory appears to come from just a simple sip of tea with a piece of a madeleine. This famous example emphasises how memory is often not graspable, nor does it hold, but quickly fades – yet such memories keep tickling us. Memory, then, is a moment that breaks the connection between the inside and outside, it is the moment that the human body lives in *both* past and present. This is a deconstructive notion of 'origin' that we can relate to Jacques Derrida's (1994) hauntology, whereby we are to consider how ontology is composed of its own undoing, being both there and not there; presence is replaced by 'the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive' (Colin Davis, 2005:373). Of course, people may argue that memory can be recalled consciously, with the consequence that it is graspable. It is certainly true that one has an ability to recall memories to varying degrees, yet still, in the process of recalling the memory we are making memory fall apart, since it is only possible to recall memories if they then fade (otherwise, memories would be no different to our conscious thoughts and perceptions of the present). And each time we recall a memory, it is another version, another moment in time, which we might think of as layering of memories, one upon the other. One of my works, *Brush* (2015) (discussed

further in Chapter 1 – ‘Painting in the Expanded Field’) is a video piece in which I record the repeated act of marking out my shadow. Through this process one version blurs with the next until it is seemingly a single body of marks. Like the function of looping a film or soundtrack, the quality of the film or soundtrack gradually decreases in the process of looping. We might think, for example, of Alvin Lucier’s well-known work, *I Am Sitting in a Room* (1969). A performance piece that begins with Lucier recording himself reading a text on a tape recorder, and then playing the recorded voice back into the room as he repeats the same words, so recording his live words and those of the previous recording. This repeated at length until the speech becomes ‘pure’ sound. Thus, the original voice is lost to the numbers of re-recordings. The point to be made is that one cannot determine the recalled memory as a ‘pure’ memory (as with Pliny’s origin *myth* there is no original, but only repeated versions and gestures or desires towards an original). Similarly, in my practice, the viewer is unable (and not required) to grasp my own ‘original’ story or scene (of the earthquake experience) but, nonetheless, a consequence is that my memory becomes a kind of origin or medium. As I will go on to consider below, I relate this approach to making work to Pliny’s origin *myth* of painting, which both extends the reading of myth and memory, but also opens up specific ideas about painting, leading to my interest in painting in the expanded field.

It is important to note that the connection between my art practice and my personal experiences is not evoked here for any representational or thematic purposes, but rather to preface my attempt to identify and access what I refer to as structures of ambiguity. Thus, my works are not about representing the earthquake experience; but what is consistent about them can be related back to this scene, which provided a means for me to think about the physical and psychical ‘dynamics’ of such an experience. In particular, I have been interested in such movements as a form of transformation, which is a matter of ‘gathering’. A moment, then, of intangible elements that combine within the moment, triggered in some way (as Proust describes). However, the moment(s) I am concerned with are not to be ‘drawn’ out as a definite image (as with Burgin’s idea of the brilliant image), nor, as will be discussed further below, are they about the directness of action we see with Pliny’s account of the Corinthian maid, with her literal method of tracing memories upon a wall. I prefer to work with a term such as gathering, as it refers to a less directed or hierarchical sense of the image, and also equates to the type of materials I use, particularly

my use of light fabrics and Japanese tissue paper that provide a certain 'floating' responsiveness to those who view my work. This creates a contrast with work that focuses on images – whereby the images become frozen, or are fixated upon. Thus, my works are not seeking to model figure and ground through using light and shadow. Instead, my approach can be understood as 'imagine', i.e. an act or task. It is image as a verb, or its 'operation' – a term that Yves Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss pick up from Georges Bataille in their account of formlessness (which is discussed in Chapter 2). Bataille's interest in Édouard Manet's *Olympia* (1863) 'is neither the "form" nor the "content" ... but the operation that displaces both of these terms' (Bois and Krauss, 1997:15).

Something similar might be said of Nicolas Poussin's drawings, whereby light and shade not only help us to 'perceive' the pictorial view, but also remind us of the importance of holding all the things together on a surface. As Oskar Bätschmann describes:

The painted shadow and the paper turned into light counterbalance each other. They make objects appear but continue to manifest themselves as pure contrasts. The things they create – figures, their actions and their space, architecture and the natural world – all remain bound to the surface and to the dialectic of light and shade unfolding through them. (1982:3)

While light and shade are of course key elements in representation, we can also consider this operation of counterbalance, or 'unfolding through'. As E. H. Gombrich notes, in *Art and Illusion*, 'methods of representation were [at one time] the proper concern of the art critic' (1960:4), but questions of perception range more widely than art. In fact, illusion is difficult for us to describe even when we are intellectually aware of the case; 'we cannot, strictly speaking, watch ourselves having an illusion' (1960:6). Gombrich gives an everyday example of seeing ourselves in the bathroom mirror:

... the experiment I urge the reader to make succeeds best if the mirror is a little clouded by steam. It is a fascinating exercise in illusionist representation to trace one's own head on the surface of the mirror and to clear the area enclosed by the outline. For only when we have actually done this do we realize how small the image is which

gives us the illusion of seeing ourselves “face to face.” To be exact, it must be precisely half the size of our head. [...]... despite all the geometry, I ... would stubbornly contend that I really see my head (natural size) when I shave and that the size on the mirror surface is the phantom. [...] I cannot make use of an illusion and watch it. (Gombrich, 1960:6)

Our ability to conceptually understand, yet not see past an illusion is also neatly demonstrated by the famous ‘duck-rabbit’ illustration, which must be one or the other as we look at it: ‘it is easy to discover both readings. It is less easy to describe what happens when we switch from one interpretation to the other’ (Gombrich, 1960:5). W. J. T. Mitchell (1994:35-82) refers to the duck-rabbit illustration as a ‘metapicture’ – a picture that is about picturing itself. Furthermore, he argues, it is our ability to see and not see at the same time that is constitutive of what an image is – i.e. that an image is both real and virtual. Art does not solve the perceptual questions raised by Gombrich and Mitchell, but nonetheless it can offer us rich examples. Along with the duck-rabbit, Mitchell also refers to René Magritte’s *La trahison des images* (1929) and Diego Velázquez’s *Las Meninas* (1656) as two significant metapictures, which have long fascinated viewers. In keeping with these accounts of illusion, my work attempts to blur what we might mean by figure and ground. I am not seeking to illustrate one thing over another, but rather I am more interested in the ‘hyphen’ (as in ‘duck-rabbit’), the space between figure and ground. It is the oscillation between them that I seek to operationalise: this is the site of a structure made ambiguous. Thus, the ‘moment’ that I wish to engage with interrupts the fixed image. In doing so, it is a moment of ‘being’ together. My reference, then, to gathering is one in which figures can as much become a grounding, and ground as much a matter of figuring.

Research Aims

My research makes a certain challenge to the traditional Western culture. Indeed, in Western culture ‘The Origin of Painting’ myth is a matter of a romanticist view; it is related to love and loss (*eros* and *thanatos*) or presence and absence. However, in keeping in mind the deconstructive ‘origin’ of memories, of being in and outside, and of past and present, my interest in the story is not about love and loss, but about the *construction* of these

themes (and other matters of memory) in space. I take a more phenomenological interest; everything (people, light, shadow, line, air and space) is content, together. The case of the Corinthian maid can be viewed as a breaking of 'human' time. Corinthian maid is seeking to stop time as she draws the figure of her loved one, before he must depart for war (and likely his death). What is significant about this origin myth is that it is about painting, not photography. It is more than an empirical occasion. It is an expressive act as much as it is a recording of a moment. Thus, phenomenologically the 'moment' is layered. It is not the single instant of photograph, but a spatial and temporal, gathering, that is 'auratic' and ungraspable. The reference here to the auratic is to take note of Walter Benjamin's (1936) account of the artwork. Aura is a matter of sensation, of experience that is a unique consequence of an artwork. The term is an invitation to mark a difference between the experiences of an artwork and of a non-artwork, to act phenomenologically in ways that other means cannot. Nevertheless, it is also equated with religious and spiritual perspectives, whereby the 'artwork' plays a more theatrical and even alienating role.

As a parallel phenomenological 'moment', but arguably associated more readily with critical engagement, we might think of the haiku poem. The haiku gives us access to a fleeting, seemingly ungraspable yet richly imagined phenomenon. As Roland Barthes puts it, the haiku is 'not a rich thought reduced to a brief form, but a brief event which immediately finds its proper form' (1982:75). Barthes' interest in the haiku is evident in a number of his late writings. In trying to encapsulate both the power and brevity of form, he reduces his use of terms until in the end simply referring to the haiku as that moment we point to something as if to say no more and less than simply 'so!' (1982:81). Although Barthes makes various references to photography in relation to the haiku, it would appear he is more attuned to the poem than to the photograph. Or at least, haiku represents a photograph taken with a camera without film. There is something 'else' about its ability to render a moment that the adverb, 'so' as a linguistic term, helps define. The 'flash-like' view (and memory) is what the poem indicates. It is vivid, like a photograph, yet fleeting like Proust's involuntary memory (though in the other direction, it quickly fades involuntarily). However, it is worth marking a distinction between Barthes' 'so!' and Proust's madeleine moment. The latter more readily evokes a sense of loss and nostalgia. It is very much about the recovery of the past. For Barthes, however, the revelatory 'so' is more evidently an action and *interaction* with an event, whether a poem, a sight or a

sensation. It is one we can *produce* through writing and art-making. Barthes' account takes us towards a phenomenological experience (it points as it were into the 'present'), while Proust's account more conjures study of memory. As we shall see, in the chapters that follow I take this designation of 'so!' to be operative in the works I produced, and it indeed informs my thinking (and research towards) my practice as a whole.

My practice, then, is concerned with, as noted, fundamental phenomenological experiences and capacities of experience. I work with elements primarily related to painting and memory: shadow, light, space, and line, and also involving use of the grid as a compositional 'space' or domain (and which is, I will examine in the final chapter, a reference to painting's history of grid and tableau). While the outcome of working with these elements might appear to echo minimalist and modernist art forms, the practice has to be understood with regards to contemporary practices, focused on what I have referred to as 'structures of ambiguity' (of both the physical and the psychical). My work is contemporary beyond the mere sense of it being made 'now'. Rather, echoing Arthur Coleman Danto (1997) description of contemporary as essentially postmodern as 'a style of using styles' (10), I have to understand my practice within the context of pluralism (which incorporates numerous styles, and is bound up by both the everyday art market and complex of museums and other sites of display). As Danto remarks, '[a]rtists today treat museums as filled not with dead art, but with living artistic options' (1997:5). On the other hand, this resource of the museum (and art history more broadly) is frequently drawn upon for or at least used as the backdrop to one's 'thesis' or philosophy of art. In my own case, there are moments in which my works might be said to look like minimalist art and/or in the twinkling of an eye like formlessness or theatrical art. There are debates I work with (and around) – as is discussed in more detail in Chapters 1 and 2. On the other hand, however, my practice can be understood beyond the confines of art movements and debates. The work I create is also reflective of my experiences of contemporary society. Here, Danto's phrase 'living artistic options' (ibid) is worth emphasising. It evocative of a need to make choices; to engage in art making as a form of 'ethics'; to question and propose the 'good life'. I would want to suggest my work is intended as a direct, deliberate critique of our complex and technological society but, nonetheless, my interest in and 'building' of structures of ambiguity can be seen as in some way a response to or bound-up in contemporary circumstances. I am particularly interested in my work as a means to an

awareness of 'being' – within a 'moment' and as less technologically mediated (outside of the massive messaging and information data of the Internet). With respect to narrative about 'mindfulness', my work is about becoming aware of oneself in the context of one's surrounding. More specifically, I intend a certain peace and calmness in my work to be in marked contrast with the overcrowded phenomenon of contemporary living. Underlying questions regard the boundary between interpersonal and intrapersonal, and how we experience (and share) indistinct or ambiguous instances. The interpersonal is to be understood as the relations between people, which for my purpose includes temporal and spatial relationships as much as any direct communication. My works, which both respond to existing places and also create spaces can become sites into which more than one person enters. The play of light and shadows, or the movement of materials that I use in my work, can all become shared, whether implicitly or explicitly. In some cases, as with my work 'Around', people can deliberately interact with each other to effect the play of materials of the artwork, perhaps making it billow in certain ways or creating specific sets of shadows. In other cases the interpersonal might be more implicit, so that the sharing of a space is understated, but nonetheless part of the experience of the work. The intrapersonal relates to one's own private 'dialogue' or experience with thoughts, bodily sensation and time. Again, some of this can be explicit. As with my distinct memory of the earthquake scene, viewers of my works can readily enter into specific thoughts, whether connecting my work to that of others or other situations, or perhaps evoking certain personal memories. The intrapersonal can also relate to sensations, which are not necessarily articulated, but felt, including for example bodily sensations that arise from specific light, shadows or airflows etc. As an underlying interest, I have in mind a certain contemplative quality or mindfulness that my works can precipitate. Thus, a significant boundary line or oscillation between interpersonal and Intrapersonal can be said to emerge in my practice. It is a line that can be seen in Pliny's *The Origin of Painting*. The action of the Corinthian maid tracing her love's shadow outline is realising an interpersonal relationship – a moment of gathering one from the other. On the other hand, the shadow outline is not a simple line but a line tracing through a set of inner thoughts and emotions. The tracing of the shadow is a way for the maid to deal with the difficult fact of her lover leaving for war. It is a meditative moment, in which she reflects and is mindful of the situation. Following this, the question that arises always 'where' we draw the line, where the inside and outside of something lies. The social dimension of Pliny's *The Origin of*

Painting will be analysed further below, but, in terms of formal considerations, in thinking of the inside and the outside, I am also concerned with what makes a painting a painting. More immediately, however, the research aims of this thesis are concerned with questions of process, phenomenon, context and critical debates of contemporary painting.

The four main research aims or problems are as follows:

- To engage practically in painterly methods of composition, whereby the thesis seeks to offer a critical understanding of the recursive process of making work, operating with key underlying materials (such as wood, paper, fabric, air, light and shadow), and methods relating to surface, grid, movement and site-specificity.
- To develop a body of work concerned with space, bodies and the bringing to consciousness of the interactions of space-body dynamics, which is developed through ‘painterly’ compositions using not traditional methods and medium, but rather painting’s fundamentals of light, shadow, and line.
- To situate the practice within current debates of art theory and history, and within the philosophical frameworks of both post-structuralism and phenomenology.
- To contribute a new perspective upon ‘painting in the expanded field’, which reference to a practice of ‘expansion painting’, which draws back further than modern and postmodern debates, to consider the current practice in relation to painting as an act, pertaining to its ‘origin myth’ as a means of marking out both composition and signification.

Experiencing Shadow

In our day to day, we do not necessarily pay attention to the phenomenon of shadows. From a scientific point of view, we know the shadow contains umbra and penumbra. While, culturally, we might speak of the shadow as giving people an uncanny feeling (the use of shadows, for example, is a recurring device in thrillers and horror films), shadows can equally be playful. Children can delight in the play of shadows and shadow puppets. As already indicated, for me personally, the shadow comes to stand for a particular view or memory of my parental love. Love is arguably communicated in quite ambiguous ways in

the context of a traditional Asian family. In Asian culture, as compared with Western habits, one does not so readily show his/her emotions, especially the elder members of families and society. It is not necessarily that emotion is suppressed as such, but nonetheless it is underplayed. In my own family, we do not show explicit signs of family love. For instance, there is no hugging or complimenting. The kinship is close and not close at the same time; a situation that can be difficult to read, especially for a child. When I was a little girl, I always doubted my parental love towards me, until the experience of a horrifying earthquake in 1999. As I remember this, my brother, sister and I were sharing the same bedroom, with an adjoining study room. These two Japanese-style rooms were separated by *shoji* panels (Japanese-style sliding door made up of a wooden lattice and translucent paper). If anyone wanted to access the bedroom, the only entrance was through the study room. The process of accessing the bedroom was to slide the small sliding door to enter the study room. From here it was possible to see the *shoji* panel, which led to the bedroom. In the bedroom were a window, a wall, and two cabinets. Structurally, there was a visual echo, as the cabinet, built into the space, was similarly designed with *shoji* panel doors. So, with the cabinets closed it could be difficult to tell the structures apart. In the event of the earthquake, the 'secret chamber' of these cabinets were the safest places to hide. The earthquake happened before dawn on 21st September 1999. Although my parents' house was not located near the epicentre of the earthquake, the effects were strongly felt, as if the structure of the house was coming apart. While we measure the intensity of an earthquake on a seismic scale, the information is merely abstract to the lived experience of an earthquake. I still recall, during the earthquake, that the shaking made everything tremble in front of my eyes, and my body seemed to follow the wave of the movement itself. In the dark, my eyes became sensitive to the wobbling objects; they not only caught my eyes in the dark, but also created violent crashes. After the strongest shakes, my parents lit candles and came to check on us at risk to their lives. The tiny candlelight cast through the *shoji* screen. And then, at that moment (so!), I saw my parents' shadows cast upon the *shoji* screen. This is the moment, the first time, that I saw my parental love³.

To analyse the above narrative, it is a story about love and fear: the love towards and of my parents and the fear of the non-love in the day-to-day nature of our kinship, as well as the immediate situation of being in a life-threatening situation. The materials and the

³ This thesis is not going into psychological analysis.

mediums of light, shadows and airflow, were all part of the atmosphere of the love and fear I felt. This is not to suggest a need to represent these themes; it is only a story that tells of an experience, or more specifically the conditions of an experience, which now I can only recall vaguely through its memory, despite it being a fully embodied and dramatic experience at the time. This experience is transformative of creating, which is a matter of an embodiment. Embodiment is a phenomenological term, which in particular can be seen in Merleau-Ponty's writings. In his final essay, 'Eye and Mind' (1964), he argues that the process of making a thing visible is a matter of embodiment, which can be seen in art, especially in painting. Thus, a painting is not about the representation or abstraction of a view or an experience, but rather a view 'embodied' by the painter's mind/physical body and materials. Furthermore, it is an interpretation of space that is able to bring viewers to awareness of themselves. Crucially, embodiment relates to both production and reception. Merleau-Ponty writes: '[v]ision is not a certain mode of thought or presence to self; it is means given me for being absent from myself, for being present at the fission of Being from the inside – the fission at whose termination, and not before I come back to myself' (1964:186). Following this logic, my works are providing both myself and viewers with an awareness of 'being' through what I refer to as structures of ambiguity. As a consequence, all my works offer an implicit critique of the relationship between individual experience and knowledge; the research is interested in the phenomenon of the moment, which is sensation. However, it is not to recall this simply as a visual scene, but as a set of conditions in which a series of thoughts and space-body dynamics can be inter play. In this way, as I will demonstrate in Chapter 1, 'Painting in the Expanded Field', the immaterial elements of light, shadow and airflow allow me to work between interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. Thus, the shadows upon the screen suggest of both the fixed and unfixed, of an image and a thought.

The sense of the unfixed image and/or signification through the action of painting could also be related to notions within post-structural writing. The various versions of '*The Origin of Painting*' (Figure 0.9, Figure 0.10, and Figure 0.11), for example, can be viewed as the repetition of an 'origin'. As the Corinthian maid traces her lover's shadow, we can ask whether the line she draws is the origin or outline of the man's portrait itself. Neither can take hold, one without other. In my own practice a sense of instability is *structured* in the works, for example in the movement of Japanese tissue paper. This shows that my works

deliberately evoke the unfixing of images, spaces and their interplay. In doing so, the works seek to echo the instability of both myth and memory. Nevertheless, there are comparisons to note between the moment of the maid tracing the young man's shadow and the moment that I 'saw' my parental love. They share various similar structural elements, of the candlelight and shadow, and through the action of tracing or checking, we can suggest of the locating of an ontology of love. In the examples of actual painting of the origin myth (Figure 0.9 to Figure 0.11), the light, the lovers, their shadows and illusion spaces are *constituted* in the painted surface, but in each case the outline of the lover's shadow must always come beside him – displaced, distracted even (see Figure 0.10 and Figure 0.11). The outlines are incomplete, or an abstraction – it is as much the process as the outcome of the line that is significant. In David Allen's, *The Origin of Painting* (1775) (Figure 0.9), which is perhaps closest to the scene described by Pliny, the lovers are positioned almost face to face, their eyes able to meet. Although the maid of Corinth is concentrating on marking the shadow outline upon the wall, she is also lightly touching her lover's face, as if to trace his physical outline. There are two 'parallel' lines within this version. In Figure 0.10, Jean-Baptiste Regnault's version of this origin painting, we have a complete change of setting to the original story. The lovers are now outside, with the outline a shadow of the sun, not candlelight. There is more distance between figures, both physically and perhaps emotionally. The young man is not looking at his lover, but instead appears lost in his own thoughts, and equally clearly visible to the viewer of the painting. By contrast, the maid sees only the shadow, and the v-shape between these figures presents a sense of tension rather than a loving bond. While the maid is again concentrating on her drawing, she is also seemingly working hard under the heat of the sun, observed only by the dog that looks upon her. In Figure 0.11, Joseph Benoît Suvée's painting, the setting is again, inside and under candlelight. The two bodies are more dramatically positioned than in Allen's painting. The maid is again concentrating hard on the lines she is marking. She is not looking at her lover, but at his shadow. The young man, by contrast, is trying to look up to his lover, but appears to struggle to see her properly. And hovering above, or even haunting, both these figures is the shadow of Corinthian maid herself. While the man clasps his lover, she places her free hand upon herself, not the man. These three paintings each render the scene in complex ways, each drawing out different dynamics. Thus, the action of tracing in these paintings not only shows painting as being an action (i.e. as the origin of painting), but itself also suggests that the sense of love (or

desire) only exists through this action.

Therefore, we might suggest the act of painting is the ontology of love – which is to say that love is as much a form of looking away than looking upon the loved one. W. J. T. Mitchell refers to this ‘origin’ of painting as the ‘fundamental ontology of the image’ (2004:68); again it is the problematic of fixing the unfixable image, which recurs in Western canon. In my case, with the shoji panel revealing the sight of my parents, it is again this ‘action’ of tracing (which must come and go) that is the sight of love, or at least the site of an embodiment that must equally be ‘let go’ in order to grasp. Thus, this way of reading the origin of painting presents a dilemma between life and death of ‘being-there’ and ‘not-being-there’. Moreover, a painting is able to work through the painter’s body, especially, for example, in abstract expressionist painting. The gestures not only present the painter’s movements, but also his/her bodies. As presented here, the work seeks to extend the body relationship further to offer a phenomenological reading of body. As noted above, a painting not only presents a painter’s body literally, but also embodies his/her being. This embodiment also relates to the viewers when they interact with a painting.

On the other hand, the aforementioned paintings (Figure 0.9 to Figure 0.11) show the importance of the composition in painting. Composition allows one to view spaces on the flat surface. In my own practice, the sense of space is constituted with the actual surrounding space rather than upon a single surface. This allows for the play of bodily movements in the architectural space and an unbounded or unframed ‘materiality’. The air, for example, in between the structures, or ‘compositions’ I make is not tangible in an obvious material sense, but it is nonetheless ‘charged’ within that space. The flexibility and mobility of my works might suggest of a sense of animation, which in particular can be seen in my works that engage with surrounding airflow (e.g. Figure 0.2 and Figure 0.12). The airflow becomes both material and medium in the work; it is vital to the work, yet equally, it cannot be guaranteed (the airflow is not manipulated, but simply flows according to how people move about the space and how these movements do and do not impact upon the work). In *Shoji* (2015) (Figure 0.12), for example, the invisible material/medium becomes visible – if fleetingly and over one’s shoulder – as it interacts with the layered squares of Japanese tissue paper. The relationship between the airflow

and tissue paper is mutual support. They create the 'live' tracing of a shadow; an effect we might compare with the haiku. Haiku is a form of Japanese poetry, which is short and limited to three phrases. In the process of reading the haiku, the image flickers briefly in front of the readers' eyes:

Full moon

And on the matting

The shadow of a pine tree. (Cited in Barthes, 1982:81)

As above noted, Barthes describes this fleeting phenomenon of the haiku as simply '*so!*' He writes:

It's that, it's thus, says the haiku, it's so. Or better still: so! It says, with a touch so instantaneous and so brief (without vibration or recurrence) that even the copula would seem excessive, a kind of remorse for a forbidden, permanently alienated definition. (1982:83)

The haiku contrasts with the fixing of images. As a contemporary artist, I seek to undo the fixed image, to allow for sensation, but also to bring out a questioning of being (which comes through our own being, or *being* with the work). Thus, through my works I seek to offer greater sensitivities about our bodies and thoughts as we enter into everyday spaces. Again, *Shoji* can be taken as a key example. The moment that people pass by the work, it is a 'moment', gathering their bodies with objects and space. It is a phenomenological moment, as above noted the moment of seeing my parental love or Corinthian maid tracing one's shadow. As will be discussed at the end of Chapter 1, I consider my works to echo in part the works of the contemporary artists Ann Hamilton, Gego, and Torie Begg. A dialogue with these artists draws out specific elements, in particular 'figuration', the line through space and painting as 'multiple objects'. As a conjunction of contemporary practices, these elements represent shared preoccupations, but also prompt dialogue about an expansion of painting more broadly.

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 0.9 David Allen, *The Origin of Painting (The Maid of Corinth)*, 1775, oil on Panel, 38.70 x 31.00cm (oval), frame 51.50 x 44.10 x 5.70cm.

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 0.10 Jean-Baptiste Regnault, *Origin of Painting*, 1785, oil on canvas, 120 x 140 cm,
France-Versailles, Greater Paris.

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 0.11 Joseph Benoît Suvée, *Invention of the Art of Drawing*, 1791, oil on canvas, 267 x 131.5 cm, Groeninge Museum, Bruges.

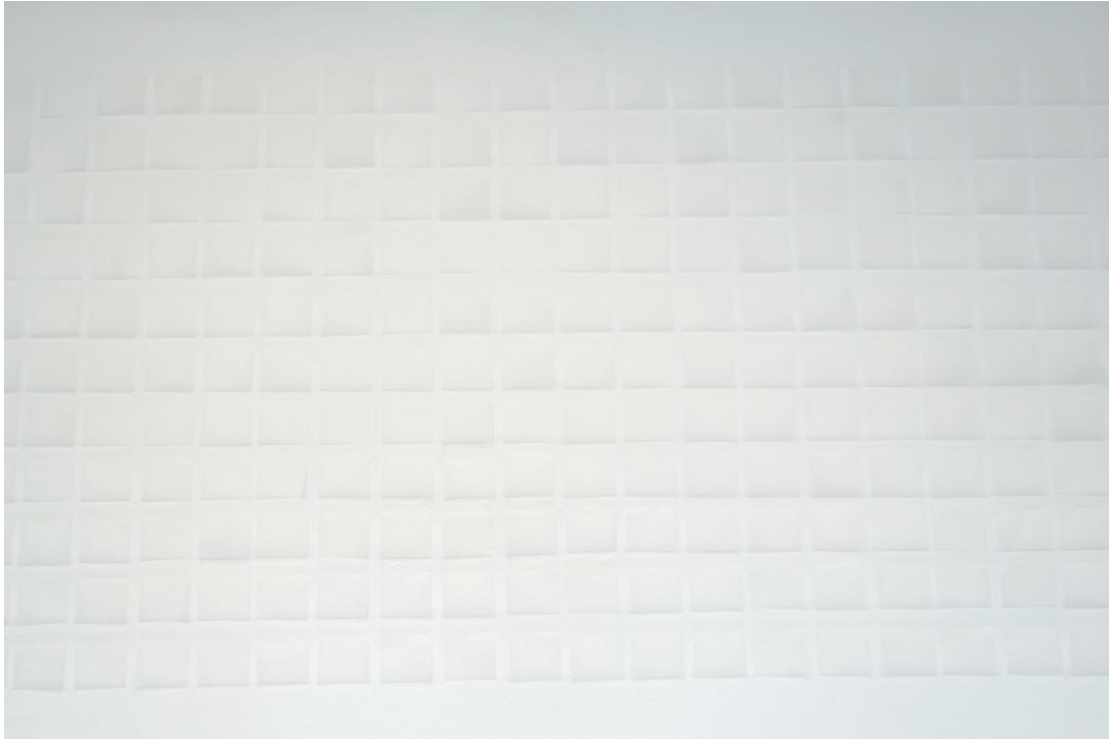


Fig. 0.12 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Shoji*, 2015, Japanese tissue paper, dimensions variable.

However, a theme that runs through much of the above, and might be taken as the contrast between the fixed image and one's imagination, is an association between the internal and external – which I also associate with the inside and the outside of a line. Where do we 'draw' the line that delineates a composition, an artwork and an installation? In 'After the Endgames' (2005), Jordan Kantor offers two accounts of drawing; one is internal, and the other is external. He refers to the work of Andy Warhol and Philip Guston to help illustrate and articulate these two terms. For Kantor, drawing as an internal act relates to the matter of the mind, imagination and desire, which can be seen in Guston's works. By contrast, the external is relating to the outside of the mind, notably of influences from media and consumer culture. Warhol is a clear example of an artist drawing externally, using as he did imagery from mass media as the main material and medium. In doing so, a distance between the artist and artwork were created. The significance of the external for Kantor is not only about the currency of images, but also the distance between artist and artwork. Kantor explains this with his analysis of Warhol's *Self-Portrait with Skull* (1978):

..., the self is presented as a skull, the ultimate symbol of death. The traditional Romantic notion of the artist as a thinking, creative individual is posited as something dead, a thing of the past. This theme of the death of the artist, or of lost subjectivity, is further underscored in this drawing through the artist's technique. (2005:16)

As Kantor suggests, Warhol breaks with the idea of an 'internal' imaginative process. In making use of photographic material and through reference to mass media imagery and forms, he offers a different view of subjectivity and indeed the position or status of the artist. As we shall see in Chapter 1, drawing out a connection between Roland Barthes' (1977, originally published in 1967) account of the death of the author and my works. In this context of the Introduction, I only explore Kantor's external account. However, if we follow what Kantor means by external, there are movements that particularly use the images from mass media, Dada, for example. Dadaists cut out not only images, but also text from the newspaper or magazine and display these randomly. Therefore, Dada art is a matter of the human unconsciousness, which, particularly, can be seen in Dadaist poems. Dada art contains a spirit of 'against everything', while Warhol, in terms of pop art, and seeks the 'freedom' of subjectivity. This new role and engagement of the artist as part of the external, social context is taken further with Joseph Beuys' (1988) social sculpture. The

idea that anyone can be an artist is truly realised, expressed strongly in Beuys and Warhol's works. However, a social dimension can nonetheless be related to Pliny's 'The Origin of Painting', which, as already noted, combines both the internal and external – the Corinthian maid 'draws out' an expression of love (and foreseen loss). For my purposes, I have focused on Pliny's version, but essentially it is the same. As already noted, in order to retain a memory or 'likeness' of her young lover, the Corinthian maid uses charcoals to trace the outline of his shadow upon the wall. The story continues, however, with the Corinthian maid's father (Potter) using the outline to model sculpture in clay, which is put in a temple. Thus, the story accounts for a movement from an internal, private emotion and imagination (of the two lovers) to the external reproduction and repetition of forms, which are placed into a social exchange (which eventually leads to the destruction of these models). The various stages of this story and the different interpretations that can be made, relate to my own research interest, which explores the relationship between internal and external experiences of space and memory. Reference here to the internal and external is another way of relating to the terms interpersonal and intrapersonal (outlined above). While different in tone and meaning, there is a parallel relationship between internal/external and interpersonal/intrapersonal – both sets of terms deal with inner and exterior experiences. The point here is not to analyse the differences necessarily, but again to evoke a boundary line as a problematic of what designated as inside or outside, as part of, or apart from, as shared or private, as composed (framed) or as that which surrounds (unframed). These structures of ambiguity will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 2 – 'Structures of Ambiguity: Grid, Frame, Screen and Stage'.

The sculpture that Corinthian maid's father goes on to make can be read as a replacement for the young man. While the Corinthian maid seems to want to keep the lover from leaving, perhaps she ends up more enthralled with the action of tracing his shadow. There is a tension, then, between the desire of keeping someone and producing a 'copy' or replacement. As Mitchell suggests:

The shadow is not itself a living thing, but its likeness and projection of the young man are both metaphoric and metonymic, icon and index. It is thus a ghostly effigy that is "fixed" (as in a photographic process) by the tracing of the outline and (in Pliny's further elaboration) eventually realized by the maiden's father in a sculptural relief,

presumably after the death of the departed lover. (2004:66)

The association with the photographic leads to the fixing of the image, to negotiate between life and death. However, in Victor Stoichita's *Short History of the Shadow* (1997), the shadow is not a projection but the doubling of a person; the shadow is taken as a soul of the person. As Stoichita puts it, 'this would indicate that the result of the collaboration between the Potter and his daughter was the symbolic creation of a "living" double, a surrogate figure difficult to understand without visualizing the ritual actions we exert over it' (1997:18). Nevertheless, both Mitchell's and Stoichita's accounts suggest that the action of the tracing equates to the action of the copying or fixing the image, and the shadow outline becomes an accompaniment for the Corinthian maid. In my practice, I cut across these accounts. Instead of thinking of the moment as copying the shadow or 'fixing' the young man's soul upon the wall, I am interested in this moment as the drawing out of an internal thought (and sensation), of both a past and a present.

In the manner of the Corinthian maid tracing her lover's shadow, I could choose to represent or 'capture' the moment of my parents holding the candles, *checking* on me and my siblings. In doing so, the relationship between the myth of painting and my memory is neatly echoed in the act of painting itself. However, as noted in the section above on *Structures of Ambiguity*, my practice is not about representing, nor even expressing ideas about particular experiences or emotions, rather it is concerned with the *structures* or conditions in which such moments of 'being' come together or emerge. In seeking to understand painting in the expanded field (which I examine in Chapter 1), the works are concerned with structures of meaning and experience, which when rendered through methods of (painterly) composition, offer the potential of new thoughts and experiences. The works might be described as blank haiku – not derived from specific contents as such, but a form presenting a 'moment' in which meanings can form, or the structure of a moment (however delicate or fleeting). Of course, unlike the haiku, composed of language, my work is composed of visual and spatial elements. As the beginning of this thesis highlighted, my practice draws upon painterly compositional methods, but developed through site-specific considerations of architectural spaces, bodies, and differing levels of consciousness when interacting in such spaces. Without understanding my work in this way it is possible to jump to the conclusion that I am merely making sculptures or

installations. Arguably, this is a problem with any art, which presents a 'way of seeing'. This thesis, however as both a conceptual reading and a making seeks to extend my practice and help contribute to the idea of expanded forms. The research question can be outlined as follows: in what ways and how can the expanded field extend from the expanded field that people already acknowledge? In order to answer this question, I have found it pertinent to refer to the different paradoxes in Pliny's account of origin painting. He presents paradoxes of drawing something while looking away and also painting becoming sculpture. Thus, Pliny's 'The Origin of Painting' can be understood as the first movement of painting in the expanded field. Along these lines, my own expanded notion of the expanded field, as 'practiced' in this research, will become clearer in the chapters which follow, and with the 'catalogue' of my work, 'Notes on Practice'.

Thesis Overview

This Introduction has outlined the key ideas, principles and interests of the research as they threads through the thesis – both in its written report and the practice work itself. Before turning to the two main chapters of the thesis a comprehensive overview of my art practice is presented in 'Notes on Practice'. Picking up on various references in this Introduction, the works are grouped according to four main themes: Airflow, Gathering, In-between, and Ghosting. Each section has its own introductory paragraph which develops an account of these themes, which are also echoed in the chapters that follow. Overall, the documentation of my work is intended to help balance between words presented here and the making of artworks themselves. As will be discussed in Chapter 1, rather than simply presenting the work as further examples of painting in the expanded field (i.e. as a discursive, conceptual re-categorisation of painting), the thesis explores *through* its art practice a form of 'expansion painting', by which I mean a *sense* of painting that deliberates upon an expanded awareness of space, the in/visible materialities of light, shadow, air, and memories that accumulate from inner, private imagery and external shapes, patterns and forms. As has been outlined in this Introduction, a key element, medium and metaphor is *shadow*. It is both a component of practice and a metaphor of ambivalence (being both of and outside of an object, and suggestive of both distinctive and indistinct forms). It is an ideal term and site of practice to build and examine subtle as well

as alternative or ambivalent systems or structures, often ones that echo or 'shadow' existing dynamics of space, so that a 'relief' of images emerges, and/or are *activated* (as experienced physically in the space, and in the mind while engaging in the work).

The use of the term 'expansion painting' is significant for this thesis. It remains an underlying problematic as pursued throughout my practice. It is a way of referring specifically to my practice in terms of form. Notably, the underpinning ideas need to be seen as organic, i.e. that they grow and develop *through* the practice itself and through the ongoing dialogue between my practice and ongoing 'practice' of reading and writing that has led to this written component. Expansion painting, then, is a term that helps me contextualise my practice historically and theoretically in relation to discursive debates on painting in the expanded field. The distinction between 'expansion painting' and 'painting in the expanded field' is that the former refers to a specific action or intent of making that opens up my former 'painterly' practice of painting. The latter, while representing an important historical debate (which I consider in more detail in Chapter 1), is more contained as an academic debate. Painting 'today' presents all sorts of opportunities and resonances. On the one hand, I am indebted to the debates of the 'expanded field', yet, equally contemporary painting presents or is placed within its own conditions of making and viewing work. I have sought to avoid what can be regarded as the 'disciplinary' effect of the Western historical and theoretical discourses on practice, and arguably the limitations this can have practice itself. My reference to structures of ambiguity is then to evoke a fluidity both with respect to the making of work, but also as a critical term, to suggesting an oscillating consideration of openness (ambiguity) and discipline or theorisation (structures). For example, as discussed further below, my work, *The Structure of Mist* (2018), ends up offering a consideration of open, ambiguous compositional "spaces" (e.g. Chinese ink painting and Japanese flower arrangement) but which are produced through my "structuring" practice, whereby I work through various way of responding to a space in terms of architecture, light and movements. Within which, my references do not necessarily follow the art historical timeline but, reflect upon my unfolding practice. Bound up within a questioning of structures (which is a form of looking for patterns and conditions of meaning) it is inevitable we cannot separate completely from past debates etc.. As such, I recognise my work in accordance Danto's thesis, suggesting 'a style of using styles' (Danto, 1997:10) and 'living artistic options' (Danto, 1997:5). This can be read negatively as an endless postmodern trap for the artist (conditioned to only make what has been made before), but equally Danto helps define a forward-looking agenda, whereby the artist is freed up to make work upon their own terms, albeit with an 'archive' to work within. My practice certainly combines both past and present in terms of art history, theory and everyday life. Although the origins of my idea of expansion painting clearly lie in the idea of painting in the expanded field, it has exceeded the given

parameters of the debates. This shift is recounted in the section on *An Expansion Painting* in Chapter 1, where I outline expansion painting as not a specific idea of an expanded 'field', but rather a verb, as a 'doing' or making of painting. Therefore, expansion painting provides a practical and crucially a spatial space of thinking medium; the 'medium' painting is expanded conceptually and applied in an expanded 'space' of composition (typically as site specific installation). The idea of the 'expanded field' is of course a particular reference to Rosalind Krauss' (1979) expanded field (see *The Expanded Field* and *Painting in the Expanded Field* in Chapter 1). I suggest a parallel relationship between my interest in expansion painting and Krauss' art historical and theoretical account of the expanded field; both give a sense of 'freedom' and 'imagination'. However, my interests and approach are not related to linguistic terms specifically, nor in challenging a 'field', but rather is something more practical, as art-making, in which making a 'space' allows us to make *and* think. My interest lies in 'practical' considerations of medium – in an expanded practice of painting and 'sense' of painting space. The approach is 'presented' in my catalogue – 'Notes on Practice' and Chapter 2. As part of my approach the 'affect' of my works is important. This relates to the greater sensitivities about our bodies and thoughts as we enter into everyday spaces, which suggests that my practice is not 'sited' as painting in the expanded field as an academic pursuit, but an exceeding of it by concerning an awareness of being in space (see in Chapter 2, which provides further development of expansion painting). For an understanding of affect we can draw upon Eric Shouse's (2005) account, who suggests affect is not a matter of emotion, but 'what makes feeling feel'. A tension between emotion and affect can be seen in Shouse's example of the infant who lacks language and biography. In consequence, an infant's expression is pure. Accordingly, one can see the difference between emotion and affect. Emotion is a product of life experiences. It is 'the projection/display of feeling' (Shouse, 2005). By contrast, affect is 'a non-conscious experience of intensity' (ibid). Moreover, affect relates to a direct bodily experience of one's surroundings. Hence, it is a useful term (in its general usage) to address the physical reception of my works, relating to the idea that my works evoke a complex sense of when and where the works begin and end. As a critical term 'affect' is borne out in critical and cultural studies and has been widely adopted in media and social media studies. It should be noted that, while I have sympathies with such literatures, this is not an area of research that I have turned to explicitly for my work. Instead, echoing how my works function with certain patterns, grids and structures, my critical reading situates around phenomenology, deconstruction and art history and theory. Ideas of mindfulness, proximity and togetherness are explored in structural ways, i.e. focusing more on form than content. I have been concerned about the qualities of interaction based on information data of the Internet (and the constraints, for example of tools such as Skype). Against which, I construct installations and respond to environments or architectures as a way of exploring the *possibilities* (or structures) of exchange rather than

focus on the specific contents exchange. In this respect, a particular work of mine, *The Structure of Mist* (2018) (Fig 0.13), offers a useful example of what I mean by the structures of ambiguity.

The Structure of Mist was exhibited at Five Years in London from 9th March to 11th March in 2018. One of the visitors of the work commented how they were enjoying 'being' there as part of the work, which is perhaps the best description of the work. Indeed, *The Structure of Mist* provides not only an immersive experience of a structured set of elements, but also a greater awareness of one's own being. It is a work that combines two elements: structures of ambiguity and the mist of Chinese ink painting. There is a parallel relationship here, since both evoke ideas or 'senses' of gathering, in-betweenness, emptiness and openness. At play in this work is the effect of both clouds (as in ink paintings) and shadows (as a key consideration of my work). Moreover, these are both important elements to draw out an 'open' space for contemplation. Importantly, of course, I am focused on my own practice as a specific means of attending to space, rather than seeking to comment on or add to a 'theory' of Chinese ink painting. Indeed, my research is a practice-led. I.e. where someone such as Damisch offers an account of clouds *after* the event of an artwork, my interests pertain not simply to an interpretation of works (of my works), but the ability to pursue lines of research when *making* work itself. It is as much about process as it is about individual artworks and their affects.



Fig.13 Cheng-Chu Weng, *The Structure of Mist*, 2018, Tangujo paper, projector light, dimensions variable.

Similar to my other works, *The Structure of Mist* works with the light, shadow, body movement and architectural space. In this case, the work makes particular use of projector light, rather than a spotlight or natural light, which might be seen as to ‘expand’ my expansion painting towards to structural film (see Chapter 2). The way that I used the projector echoes a key consideration in structural film. The projector is not projecting any images, but rather is projecting its blue light as structured by the device. This method – in the manner of structural film – produces a drawing out of the material of film or optics, rather than presenting a sequence of images (this is discussed further in *Theatrical Art and Structural Film* in Chapter 2). The projector light brings attention to the odd structure of the space at Five Years, which includes a pillar just off centre from the middle of the room. The location of the pillar divides the projector image, which becomes problematic for people who like to present their works by projecting onto a wall behind the pillar. Moreover, since the principle of the projector image is light, the distance between light, pillar and wall means the pillar casts a shadow onto the wall. Accordingly, one can see the difficulty of presenting images onto the wall by using projectors. This issue is, however, a ‘design’ of my use of the projector in the space. Through tracing the same width of the pillar shadow, I present an ambiguous structure between projector light, projector screen (the width of the projector light is the same length as the wall in the space), pillar, the pillar’s shadow and body movements. The widths and locations of Tangujo papers (Japanese paper) are crucial, and which result from a study of the in-between spaces. In order to create the same width of the pillar shadow, it requires making and experimenting with the size of paper and the distance between it and projector light. The Tangujo papers are loosely attached to the ceiling, similar to the way of making *Shoji* (2015) – with only one side of the square shaped Japanese tissue papers fixed on the wall. When approached their movement gives rise to structures of ambiguity, i.e. the ambiguous relationship or fluid relationship between objects, subjects and architectural spaces. Yet, *The Structure of Mist* is more complicated than *Shoji*. This can already be seen in the size and location of the papers. Furthermore, each of the Tangujo papers is not only situated to respond to airflow (as visitors walk by in the case of *Shoji*), but also in terms of a *haunting* of space. Indeed, the long scroll painting-like papers create a specific presence, which echoes patterns and motifs of Chinese ink paintings of a misty landscape and equally of Japanese flower arrangements. In each of these cases we ‘see’ intangible material – air is ‘sculptured’ through the arranging of flowers (or the almost transparent and thinness of papers). Accordingly, Japanese flower arrangements can be another way to understand *The Structure of Mist*. Similar to Japanese flower arrangements, *The Structure of Mist* presents a fluidity or ‘charged’ nature of the air (although in the case of my work, it is not that air is *contained* in the arrangement, as in the ‘figure’ of Japanese flower arrangement). As with other works of mine, air is given status, it is fluid, but also acknowledged. The fluidity is an important element with respect to structures of ambiguity.

As noted earlier in this Introduction, my understanding of ambiguity is that it is not a matter of choice – between of one thing or another – but rather a matter of hazing and blurring, as in the experience of being in the mist (which forms according to the structures and atmosphere already in place). Accordingly, structures of ambiguity present qualities of ‘mist’ by structuring within subjects, objects and architectural spaces. To draw a similar line to Roland Barthes’ (2005, originally published 1977-1978) account of the Neutral, there is also an interest in and use of somewhere ‘in-between’ as a method to break or escape the boundary between one thing and another. Against codified terms or categories Barthes refers instead to ‘intensities’, where the neutral ‘baffles paradigm’ (Barthes, 2005:6). Equally, what my practice of expansion painting aims at is a mode of thinking *and* making that is about intensities and in-betweenness, and of things *coming into* formation, rather than formed or de-formed. My practice, then, seeks to break with the binaries of artwork, theory, philosophy, language and everyday life. Indeed, what my works present is a ‘freedom’ outside of language, a visual ‘language’ or visual practice to enable new ways of thinking. Overall, structures of ambiguity can be understood as a literal and phenomenological description of my works. The structure of my work is ambiguous – an ambiguous relationship between subject, object and architectural space. On the other hand, the moment that one interrupts or engages with my work there is a drawing out of an affect that is itself a structure of ambiguity. Indeed, as outlined earlier, in contrast to Burgin’s ‘concatenation of image’ (2004:21), I do not consider my work as a single bringing together of elements, but rather it presents an alternative system or structure, often that echoes or ‘shadows’ the existing dynamic of space. Accordingly, one can understand structures of ambiguity as a ‘medium’ that is brought about through the ‘action’ of expansion painting.

Having given the above explanation of expansion painting and the structures of ambiguity, which act as the main currents upon which this practice-based thesis is based, an overview of the chapters and elements of the written thesis can be noted as follows: Chapter 1, ‘Painting in the Expanded Field’, establishes the historical and theoretical debates of painting in the expanded field and draws upon more recent literatures specific to the expansion of painting. It then considers the artist’s own work in relation to a series of examples of historical and contemporary practice (including remarks on the influence of minimalist art, as well as three specific case studies of contemporary artists, Ann Hamilton, Gego, and Torie Begg, whose works explore similar themes and material practice). Crucially, through ‘practicing’ a sense of painting space – defined as expansion painting – a phenomenological reading is undercurrent, which in turn enables a critical consideration of ‘structures of ambiguity’, which is the focus of Chapter 2, ‘Structures of Ambiguity: Grid, Frame, Screen and Stage’. This chapter offers an explicit account and contextualising of the mediums, materials and effects of the works. It leads to another way of seeing, as a deconstruction of space and

in-between spaces. I concluded with 'Finish: A Practice of Expansion Painting', which draws together the key themes of the research through further contextualisation of art history and theory. Expansion painting is not simply derived from historical, theoretical and philosophical debate, but must emerge through making and viewing the artwork as an *open-ended* experience. Indeed, metaphorically speaking, my work can be said to present a quality of mist – it is something we can enter into, it can become a part of us, yet it also disperses; we cannot be sure where it begins and ends. The artworks 'finish' at different moments of our being; and they are made of a very particular im/material 'finish' that is the signature of the practice. The underlying problematic of this thesis is the consideration of where objects and experiences begin and end, where boundary lines do or do not run. The 'shaping' of shadows is an attention to existing, spatial structures and their confluence with virtual structures of thought and experience. Thus, the medium of painting itself is pushed and pulled in this research, both expanding upon theoretical debates of the 'expanded field', as well as advancing its own practical inquiry. Indeed, 'painting' is presented as an exemplar of thinking *and* making.

Notes on Practice

My thesis is collected under the title of *Shaping Shadows: A Practice of Expansion Painting*. In brief, my research contributes to an account of expansion painting: to expand upon the theoretical debates of the 'expanded field' through its practical inquiry. Indeed, 'painting' in my case becomes an exemplar of thinking and making. This section presents specific examples of my work. In effect, it offers a 'catalogue' of work prepared as part of my thesis.

In my practice, light and shadow are not represented by or made-up literally of paint, but constituted by the light sources and shadows of an actual space. It is a form of site-specific practice, with my painterly compositions becoming installations of light and shadow (and the bodies that intervene). Thus, the use of physical spaces is not only about material, architectural properties (the space as three dimensions), but also the light and shadow are infused in these spaces, which are present but less tangible. It is to these 'in-between' qualities that I give prominence. Junichirō Tanizaki's *In Praise of Shadows* (1933) offers a well-known account of this aesthetic and philosophical view of the light and shadow as/in the space. Accordingly, shadow is shown to be revered by the Japanese. Tanizaki writes: '[w]e delight in the mere sight of the delicate glow of fading rays clinging to the surface of a dusky wall, there to live out what little life remains to them' (1933:30). This is contrasted with Western views on shadows, which are sought to be removed by lighting or used for dramatic effect in horror films. In my work, I am drawn to the 'secrets of shadows' as Tanizaki puts it (1933:32), which is to praise sensitivity towards shadows. For example, in a collection of pieces, *Cheng-Chu at Corridor* (page 134 to 137), I focus on using the shadows to divide space equally. Placed within a long corridor, one can see two sides of the space, divided by doors and windows, and the blank walls divided by the electrical conduits. These elements become the feature within the pieces, but re-cast or sensitised by the installation of simple materials such as Japanese papers, pins and rubber bands. By incorporating the electrical conduits, we are led to question whether or not they are part of the work, which arguably extends or embodies space in ambiguous ways. Viewers gain a sense of being in the space, and in the process can question the dimension of the work; an effect, as it were, of painting space in an expanded sense.

As a collection of works, I consider, I am inviting viewers into the space of (a) 'painting'. Obviously, unlike traditional paintings, which we view from a vantage point outside of the painting, I am seeking to place the viewership internally, within the painting space. It is in keeping with this logic that I put forward a practice of expansion painting. The following pages present my works according to four main groupings or themes: airflow, gathering, in-between and ghosting. These groupings are not intended to divide up the works as such to suggest clear distinctions, since all of the works are rooted in a common approach or practice. However, the groups can help articulate the different elements and forces that are at play in my work in general. Airflow is one of the essential mediums/immaterials to produce the effect of 'structures of ambiguity' (as discussed in the Introduction). A sense of weightlessness is also pertinent in the next group, which highlights the effect of gathering containing studies of materiality and physicality. In-between represents a group of work that openly shows a consideration with space, bodies and the bringing to consciousness of the interactions of space-body dynamics. Following this, the catalogue presents works of ghosting, which is of a sense of painting in the expanded field relates to the expanded field of structural film.

Airflow

One's body, its movement and energy, arguably transpose with this collection of works. It is not a psychological relationship, but rather a play of medium, as if an immaterial medium. Airflow becomes apparent when handling Japanese tissue paper. And it is in the air, as much as a projection upon a surface, in which shadows populate. Shadow and air are complex elements in structures of ambiguity. Moreover, their immaterialities are contributed through the passing of viewers to work as much as the work itself.

In order to structure airflow, it is important to study body movements in architectural spaces. Thus, one can understand why many of the works are located in corridors. On the other hand, the relationship between Japanese tissue paper and airflow is complementary. The tissue paper makes the invisible thing (i.e. airflow) visible. This view is a 'trace' of body movements. Trace is a term that allows me to extend the study of materiality further to philosophical thinking. For example, works evoke the trace as discussed by Jacques Derrida, whereby mark-making is both before and after any 'event' of inscription. However, equally, the purpose of creating a connection with people is to approach a 'sense' of painting space. Painting comes before and after the event of its composition.



Shoji

2015, mixed-media, dimension variable.

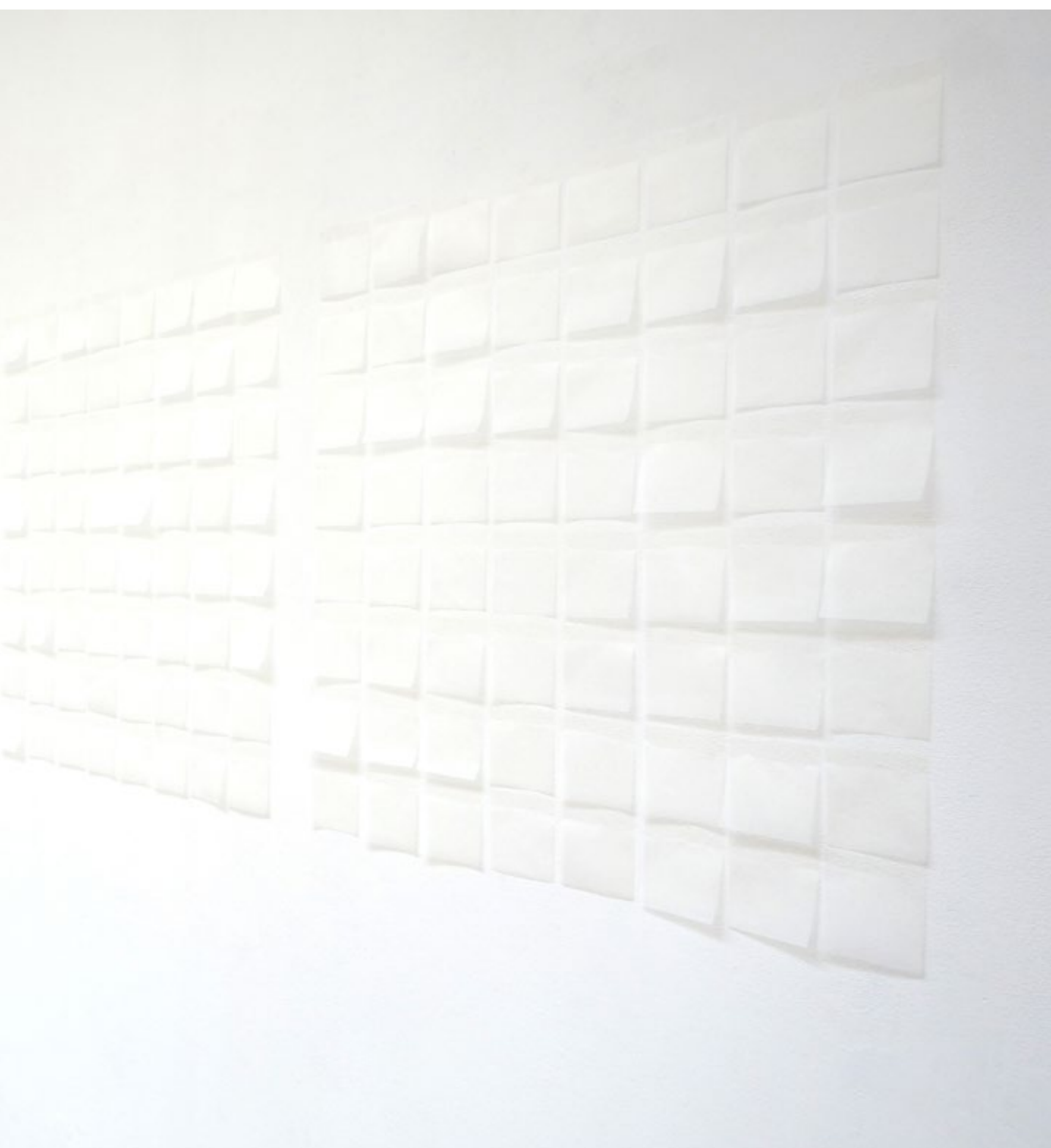


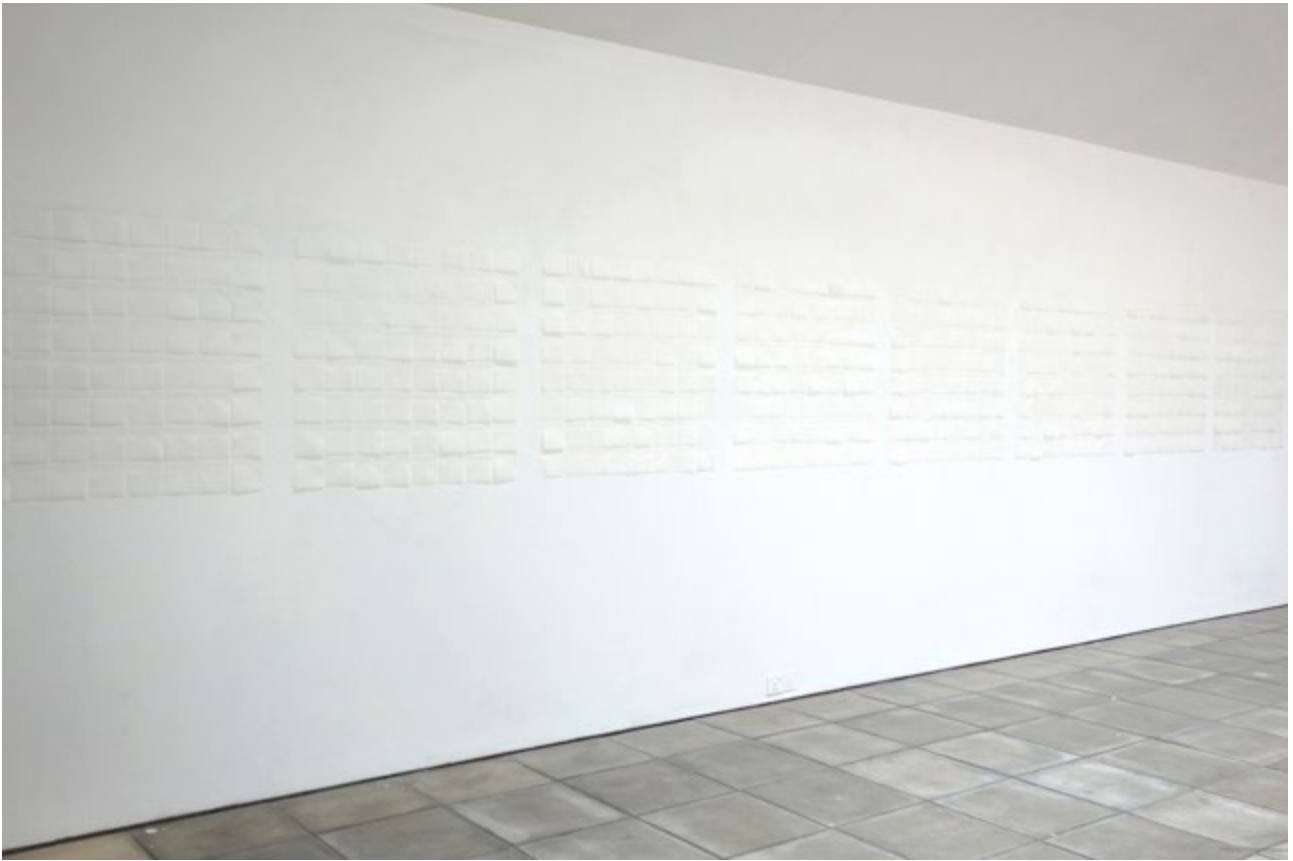


Shoji II

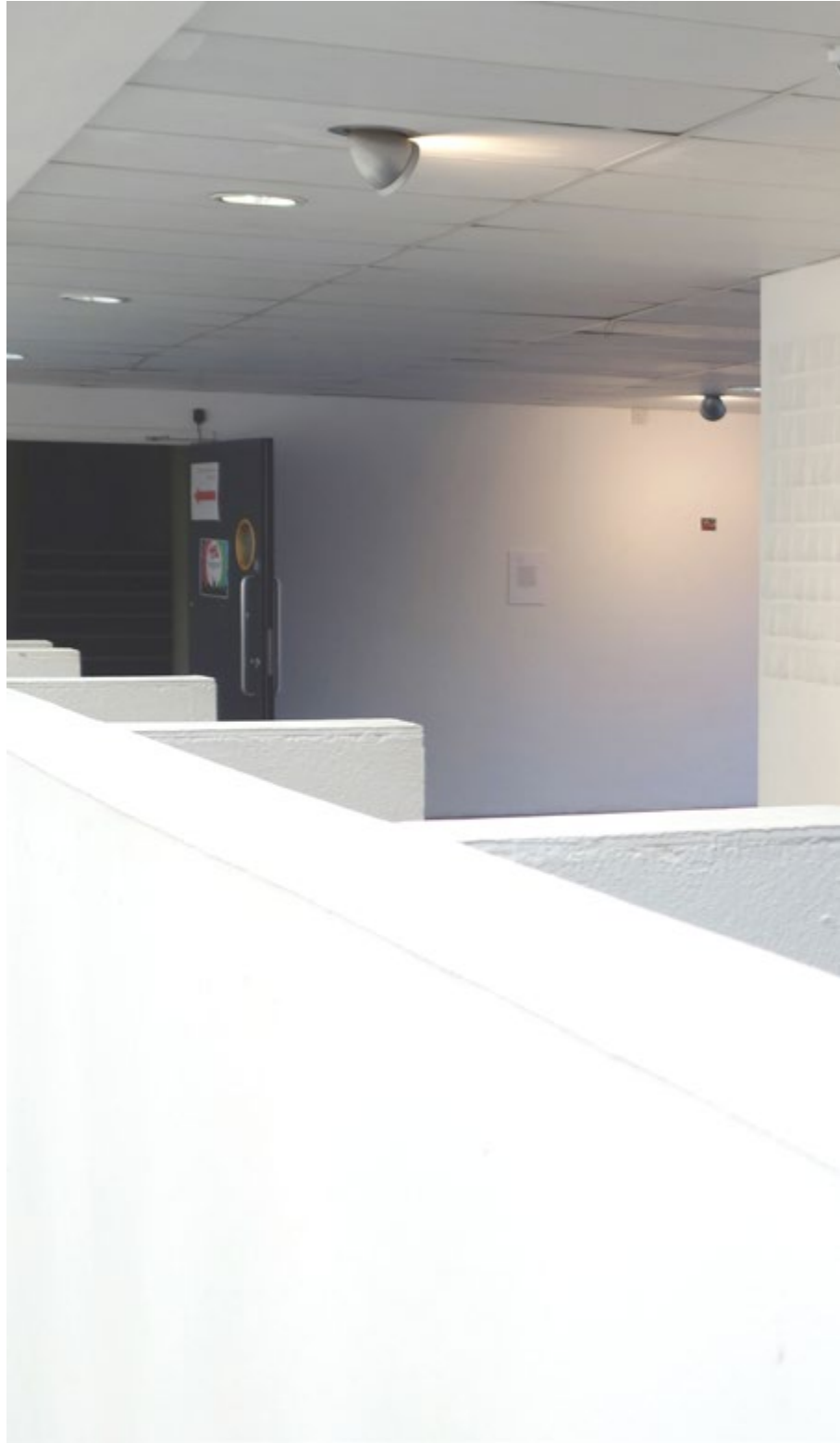
2015, mixed-media, dimension variable.

Shoji II exhibited as part of a group show, 'Coiling Forces' at Art Sway Gallery, Sway, UK.







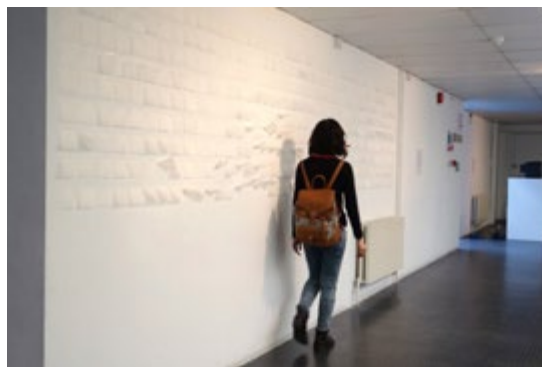


Shoji III

2016, mixed-media, dimension variable.

Shoji III is a re-making of *Shoji*, exhibited as part of the 'Minimalism: Location Aspect Moment conference and exhibition' at Winchester School of Art, Winchester, UK.









Grow II

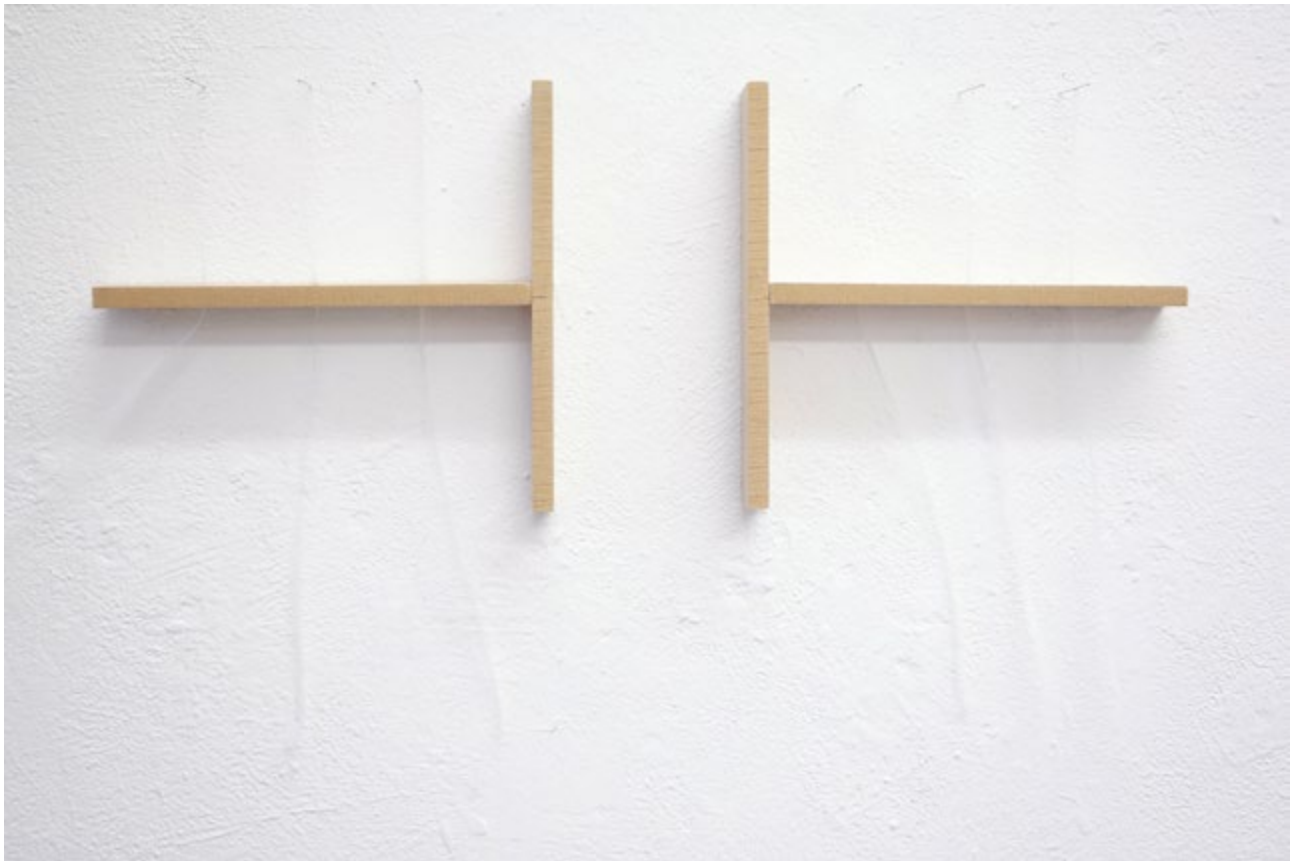
2015, mixed-media, dimension variable.

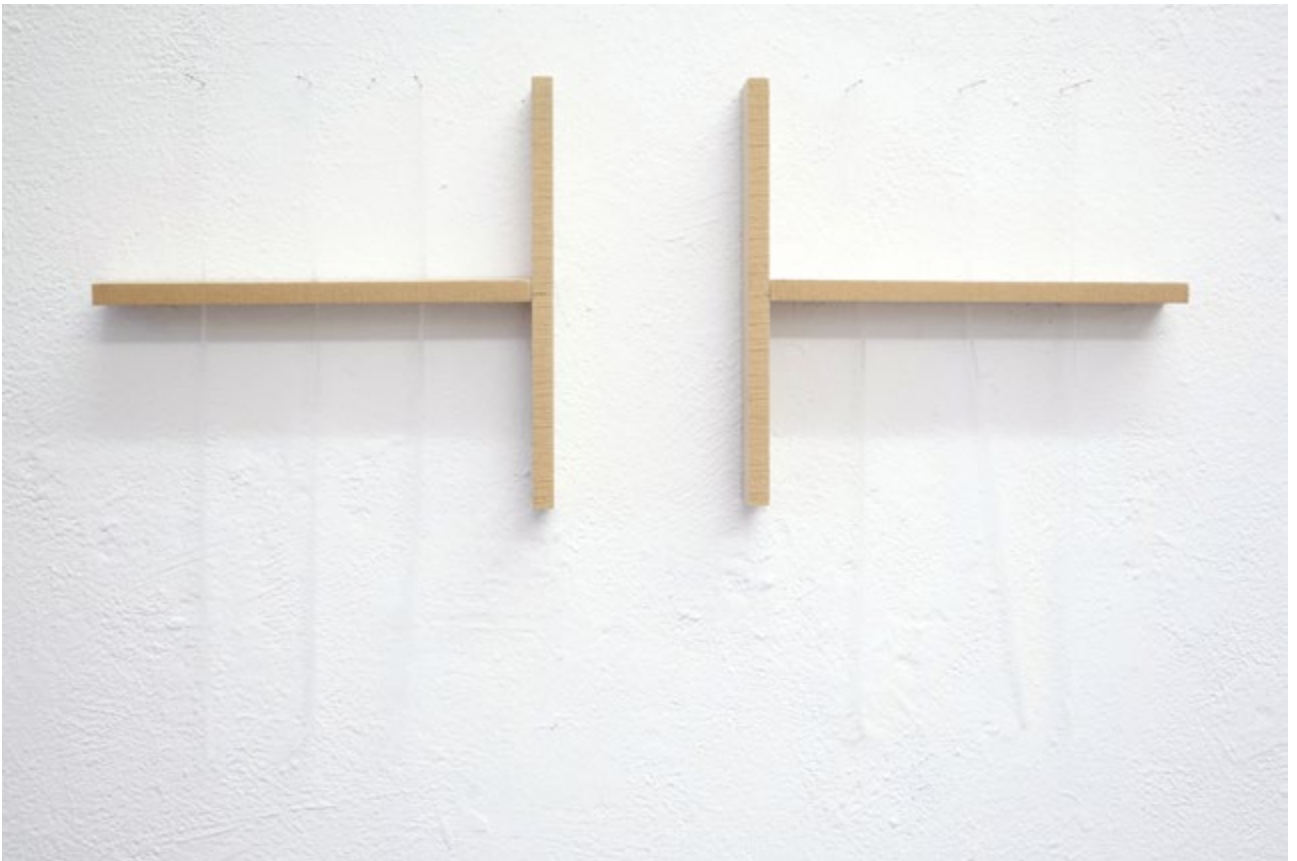


Cohesion

2015, mixed-media, dimension variable.



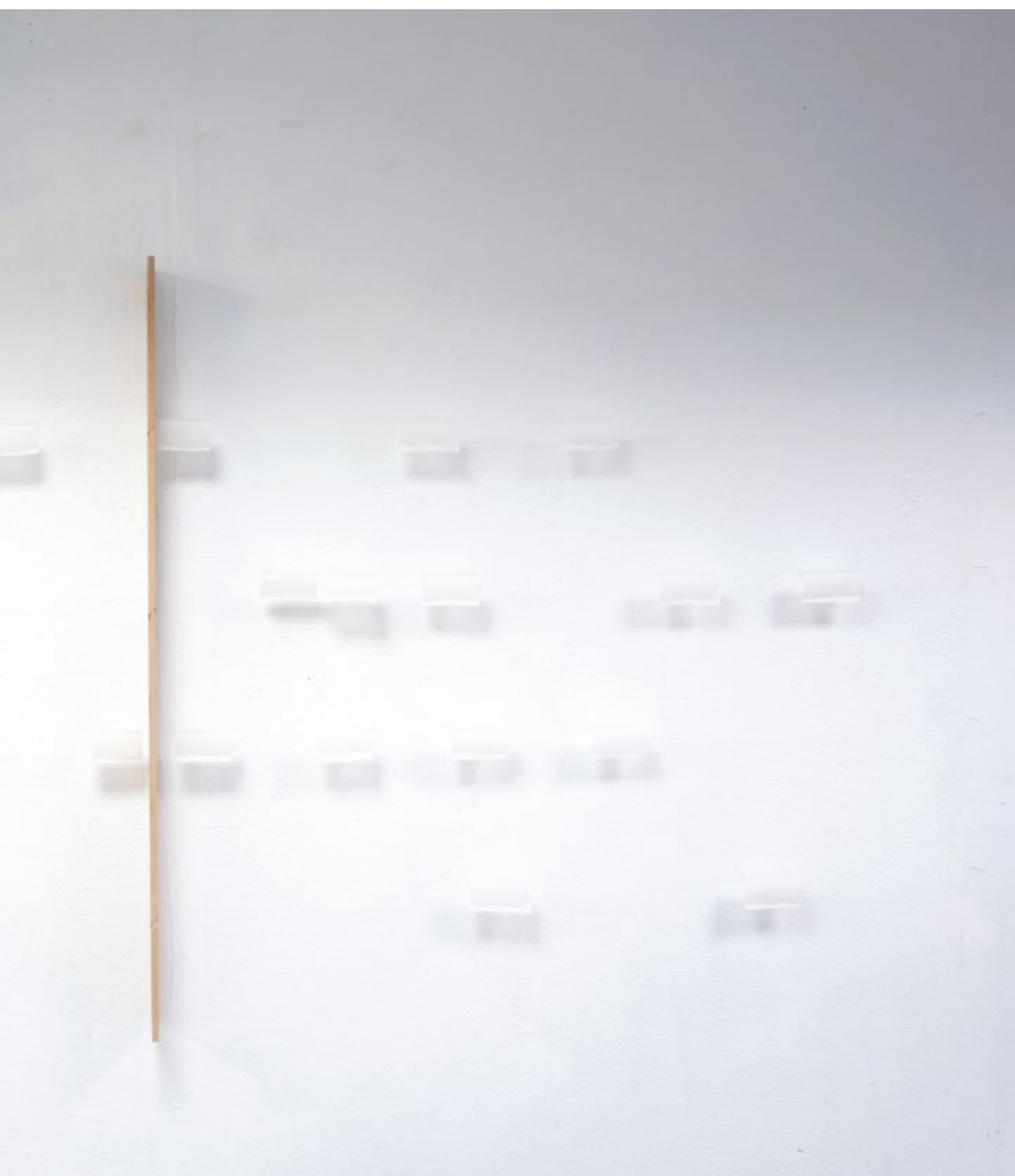






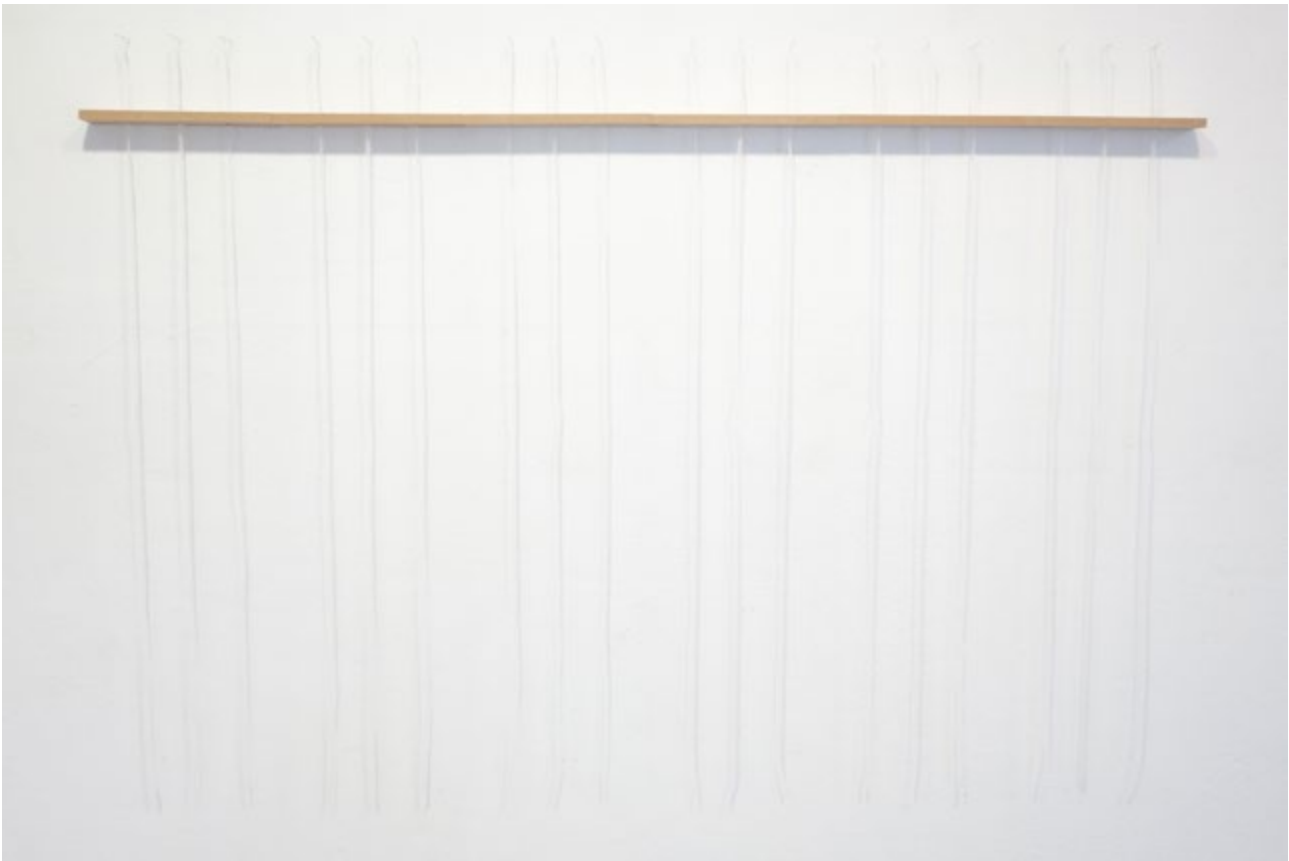
Divide lines

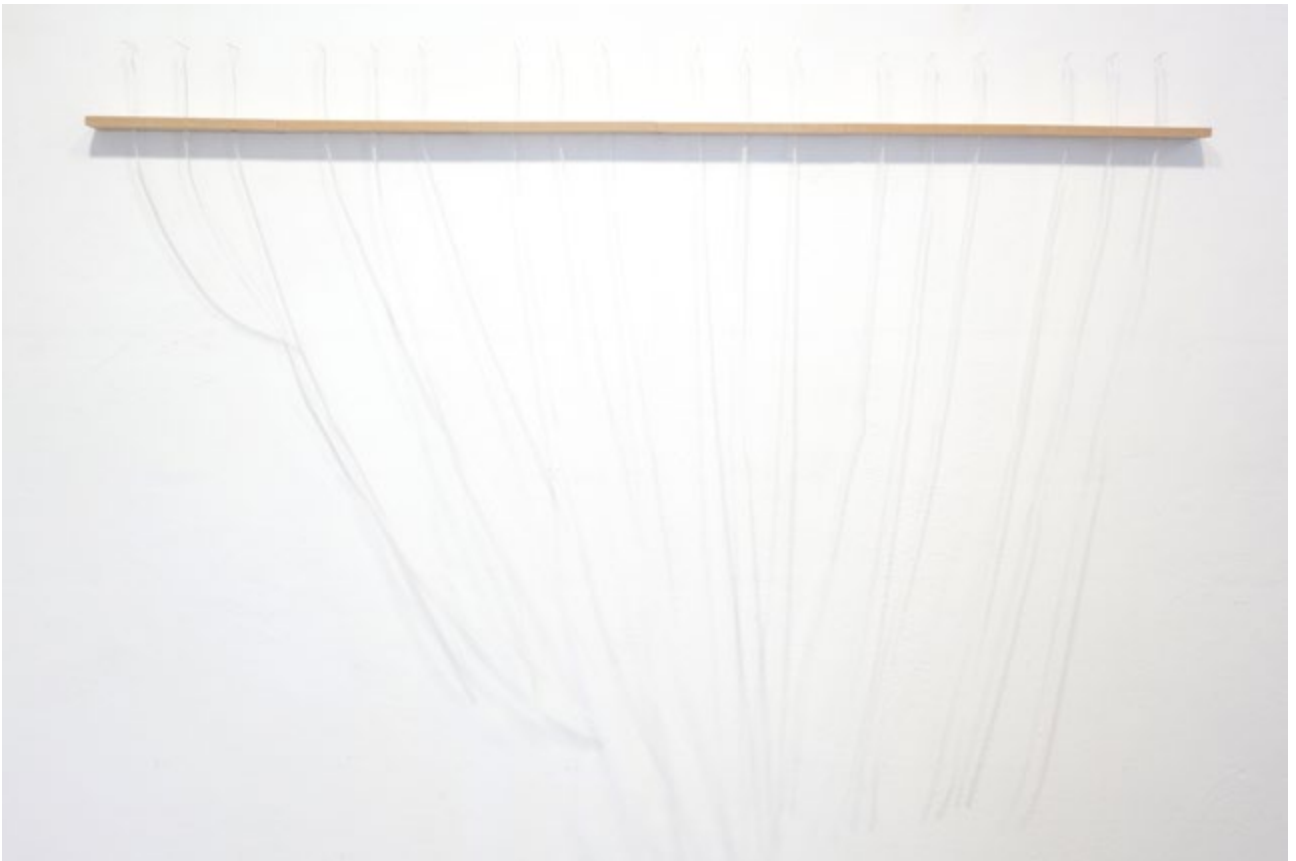
2015, mixed-media, dimension variable.



Drips

2016, mixed-media, dimension variable.







After Robert Morris' *Untitled* 1969

2016, mixed-media, dimension variable.

As the title of the work suggests a connection is made with Morris' minimalist work. The similarity can be seen in the outcome of the work. By contrast, however, *After Robert Morris' Untitled 1969* is built up by using Japanese tissue paper. The lightness of its materiality can be 'experienced' when physically approaching the work.







Three

2016, mixed-media, dimension variable.



Angle III

2016, mixed-media, dimension variable.



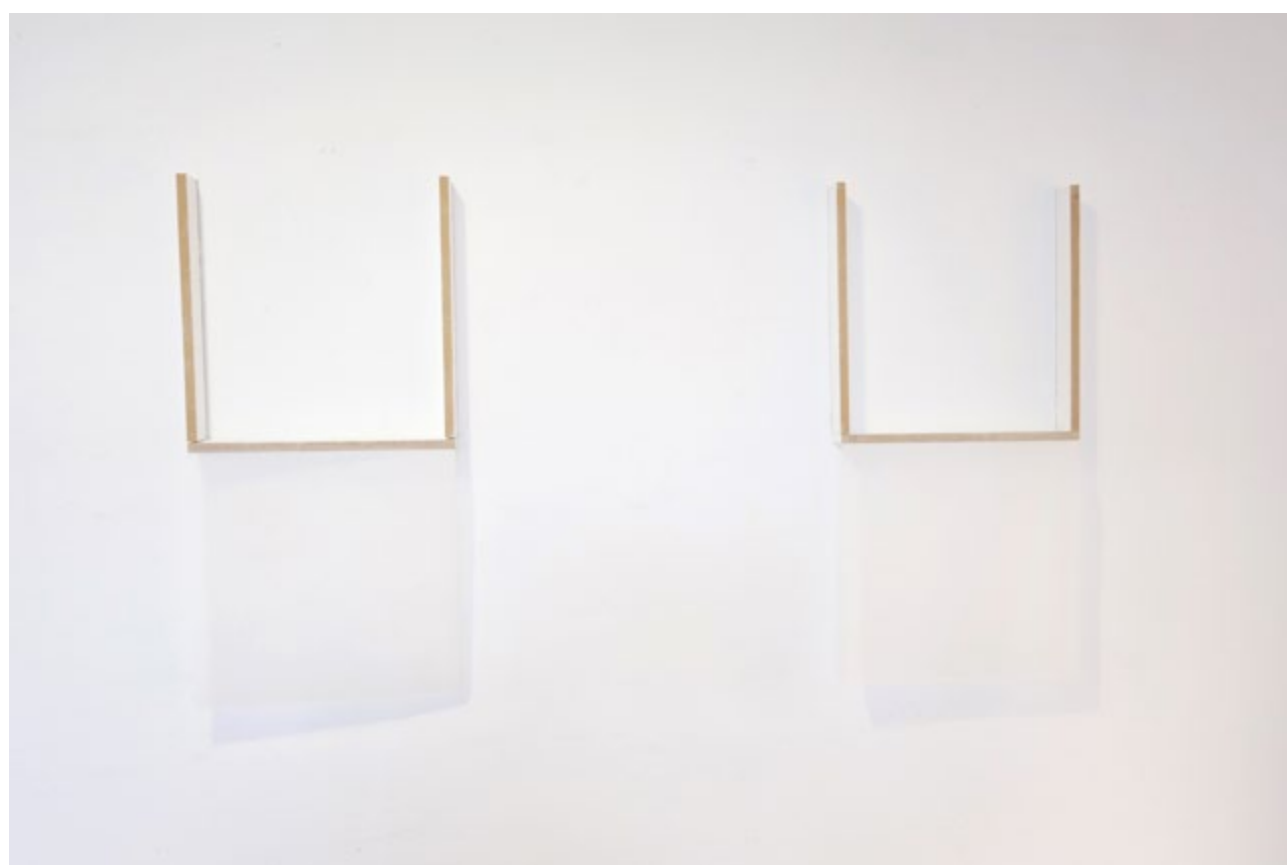


Mask
2016, mixed-media, dimension variable.



Mask II

2016, mixed-media, dimension variable.





Passing

2016, mixed-media, dimension variable.





Pillar and Stage

2016, mixed-media, dimension variable.

Pillar and Stage presents the trace of an unusual structural element particular to the location of the work. The distance between pillar, wall and stage are emphasised by a loose screen. When it displayed with a film, the moving images can be seen as a displaced screen.



Gathering

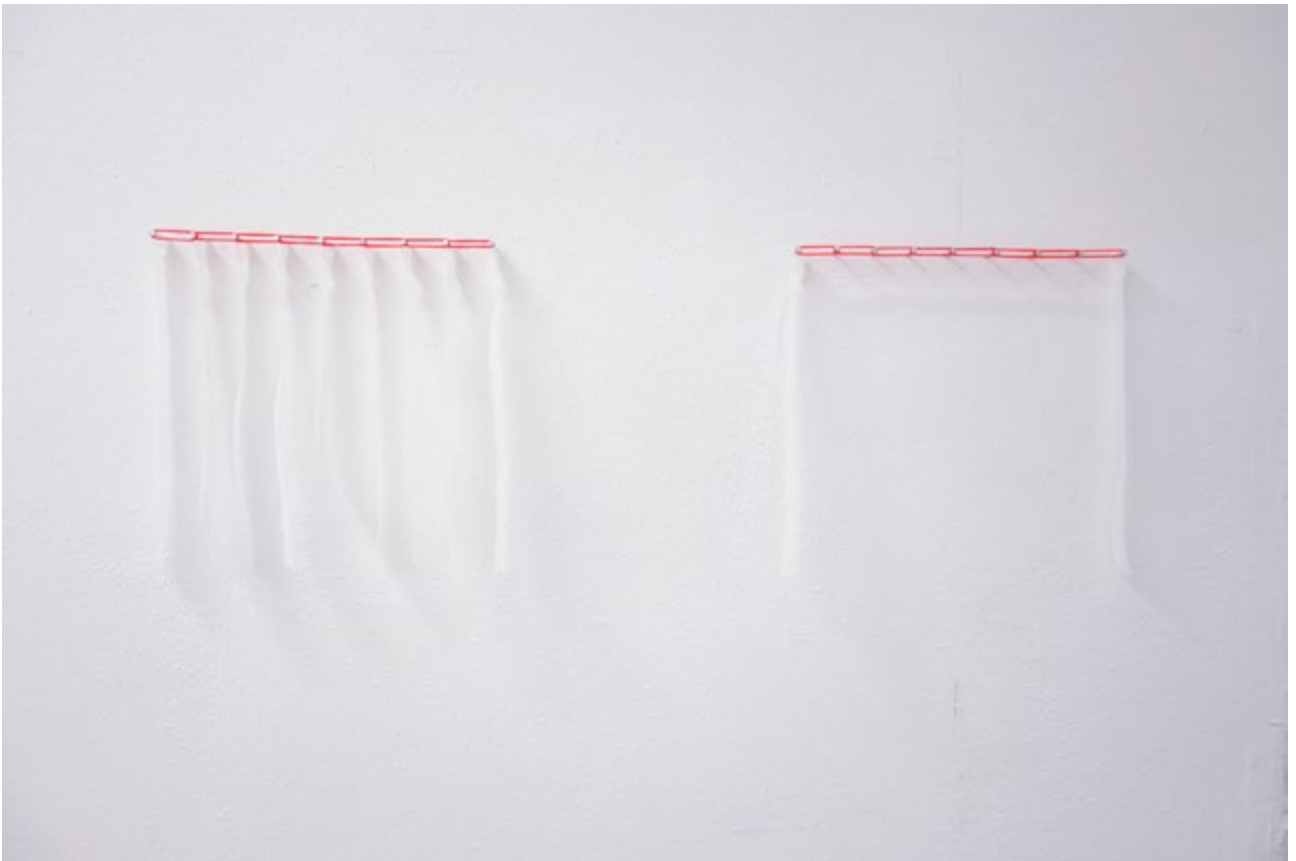
Gathering is a key term to describe the effect of most my works. However, these collection presented here provide an explicit view of gathering. It can be seen literally in the material use of the rubber band. The 'tension' that the rubber band provides gathers the relationship between one element and another. Considered more conceptually, the elasticity of rubber band provides both structure and its instability. It holds, yet will equally give way. Gathering in my work is never fixed or tightly defined. Indeed the word 'gathering', as for example when we talk about a gathering up of people or of cloth, tends to suggest of a loose coming together.

Nonetheless, in my works, the rubber bands are often structured with 'tension'. There is a 'pull' out or challenge to the elasticity of the material. Such tension provides a brief sense of 'changed' space, which gathers a certain relationship between the viewer and the object. Like a hyphen in a sentence, the rubber band placed into a space prompts a deliberate spacing and pause.

Importantly, the method of structuring is rooted upon a relationship of the body to objects and their environment. My own shadow, for example, is used as one measurement in the process of building up works. Accordingly, physicality and materiality are embodied in the works.

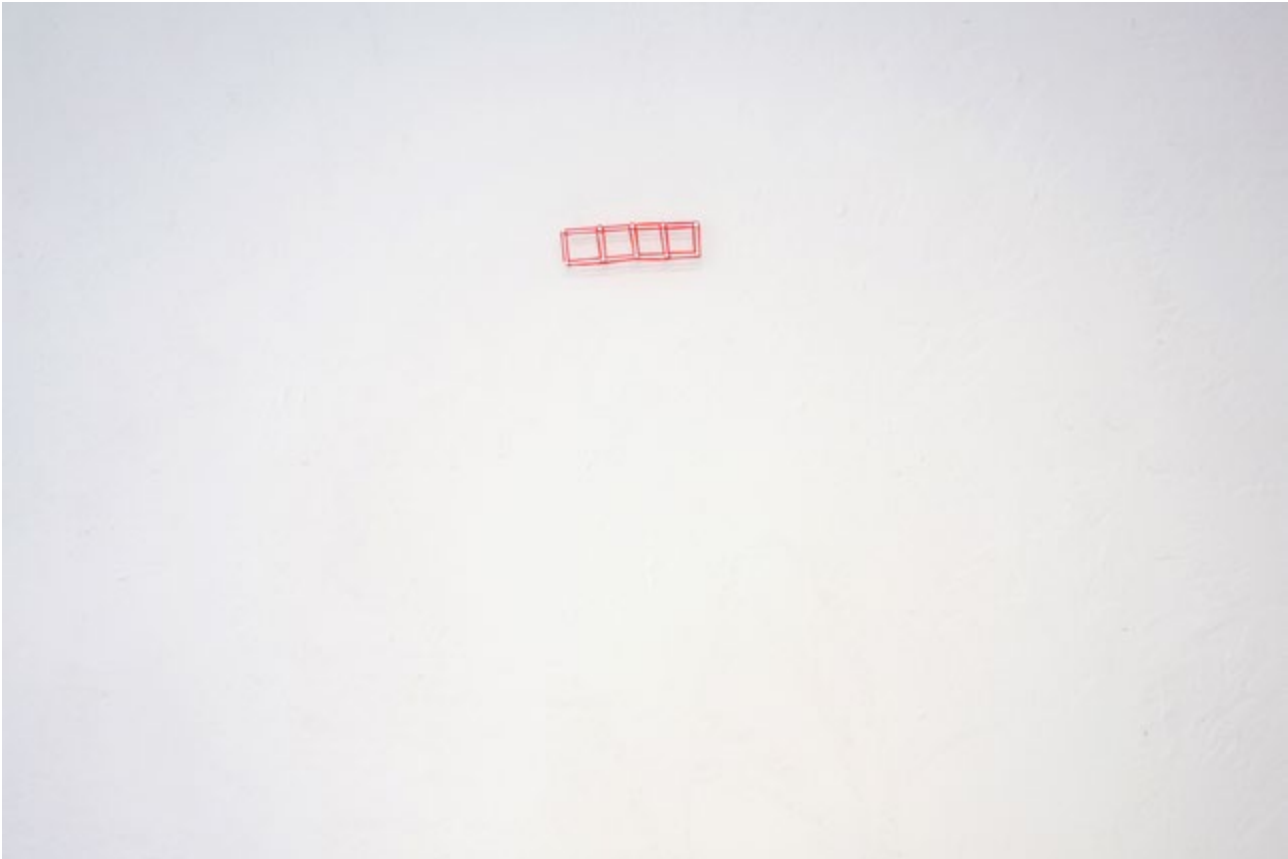
Head

2015, mixed-media, dimension variable.

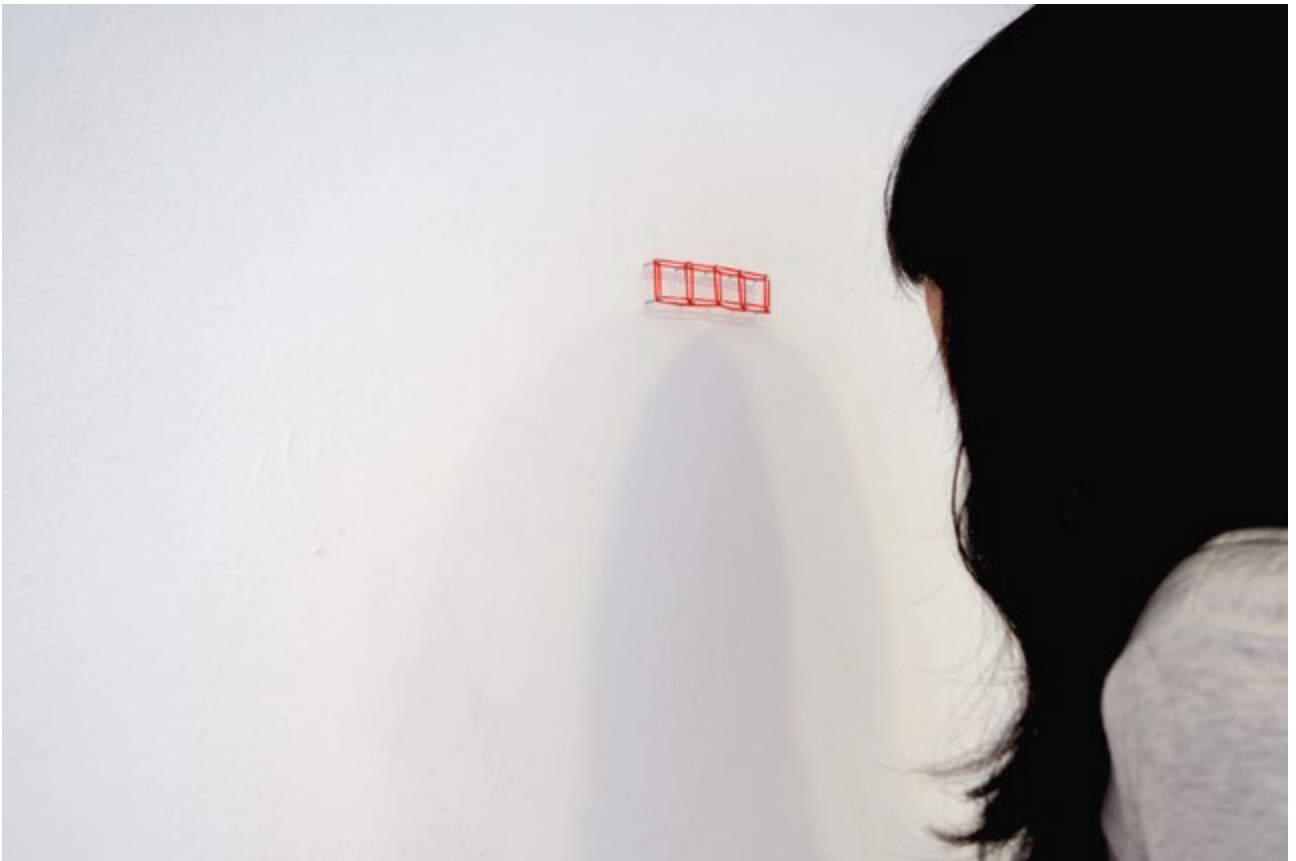


Height

2015, mixed-media, dimension variable.



Head and *Height* are two works that show an embodiment of dimension. using my own shadow as a measurement.



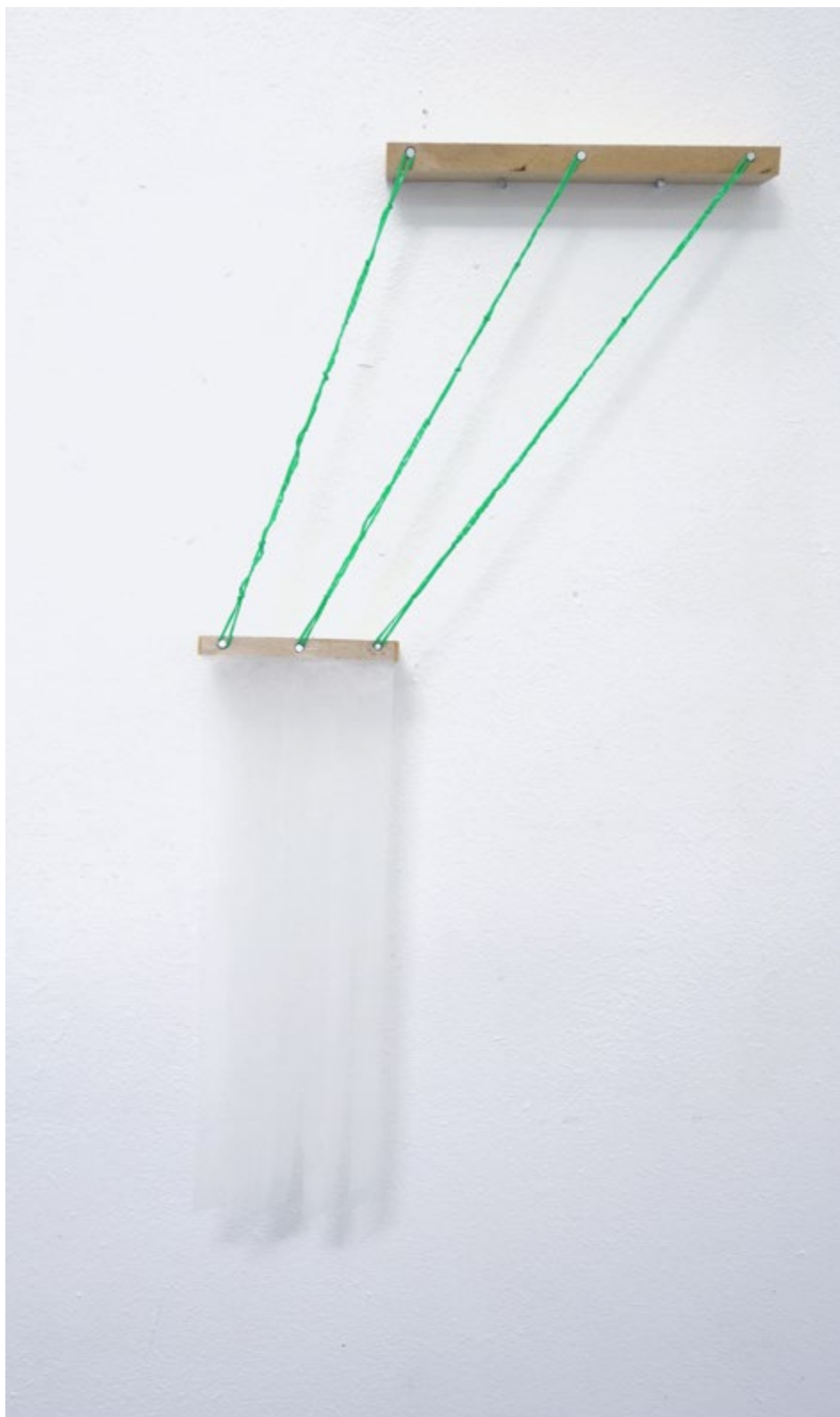
Red Grid

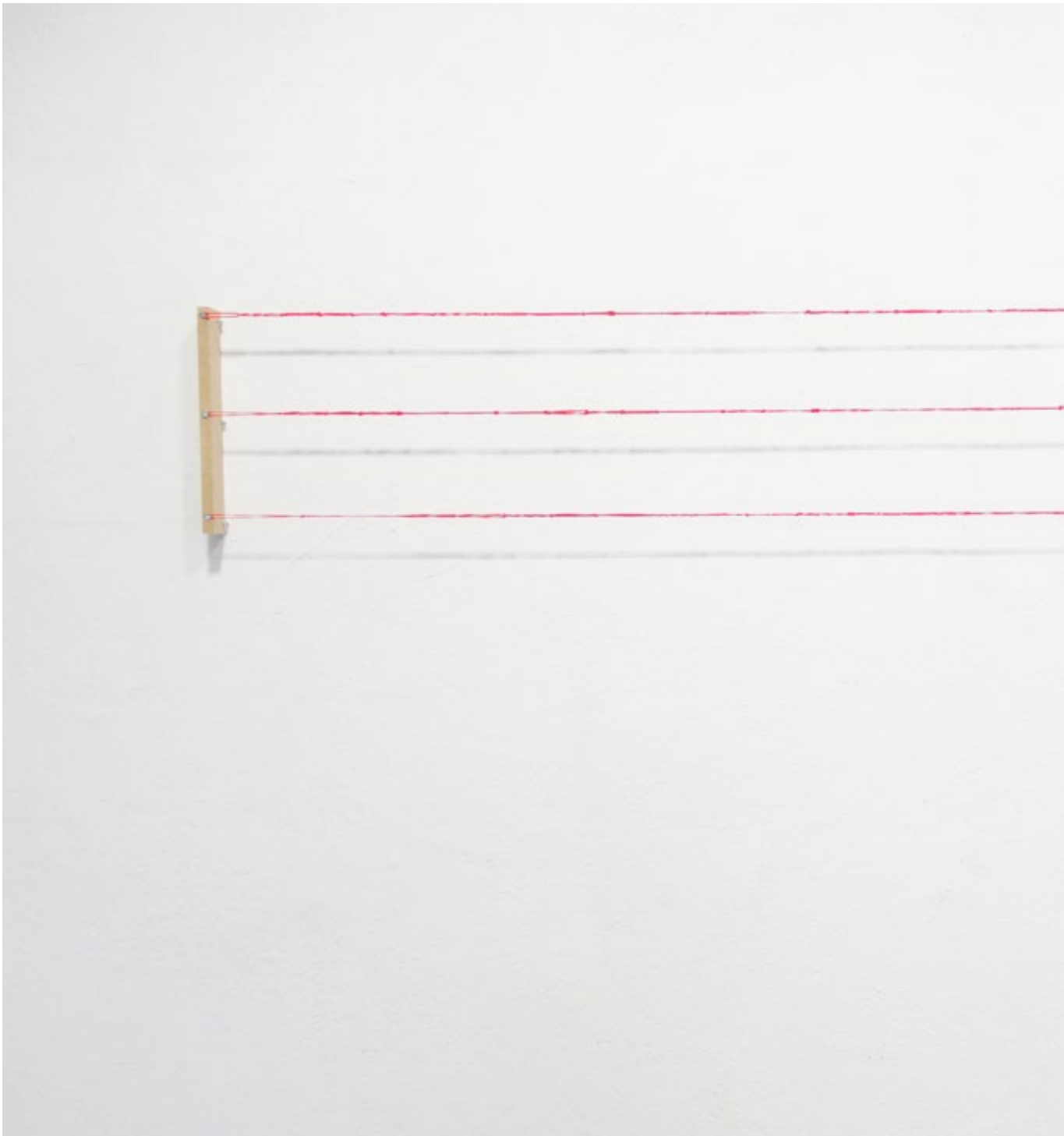
2015, mixed-media, dimension variable.



Tension II

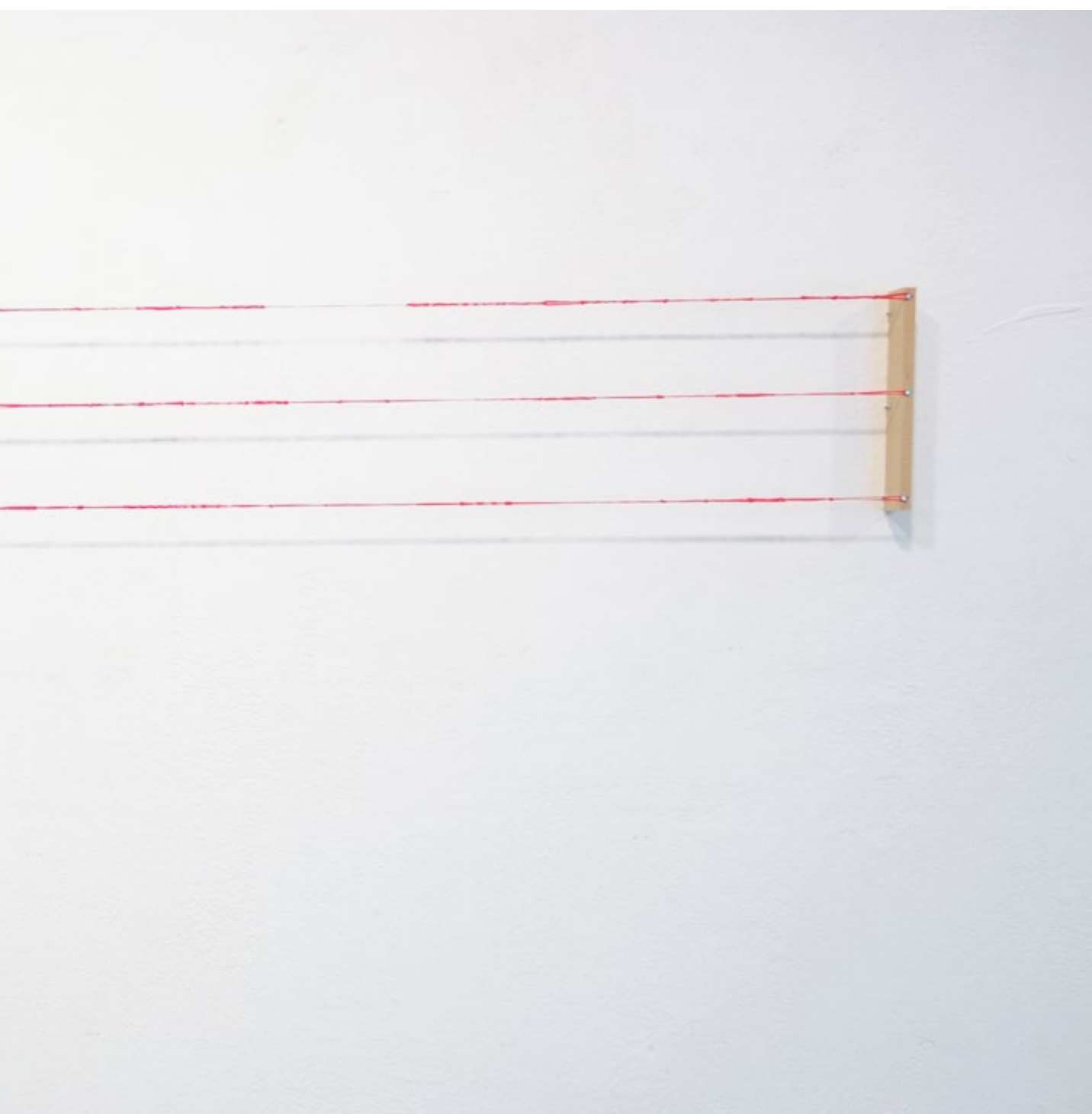
2015, mixed-media, dimension variable.

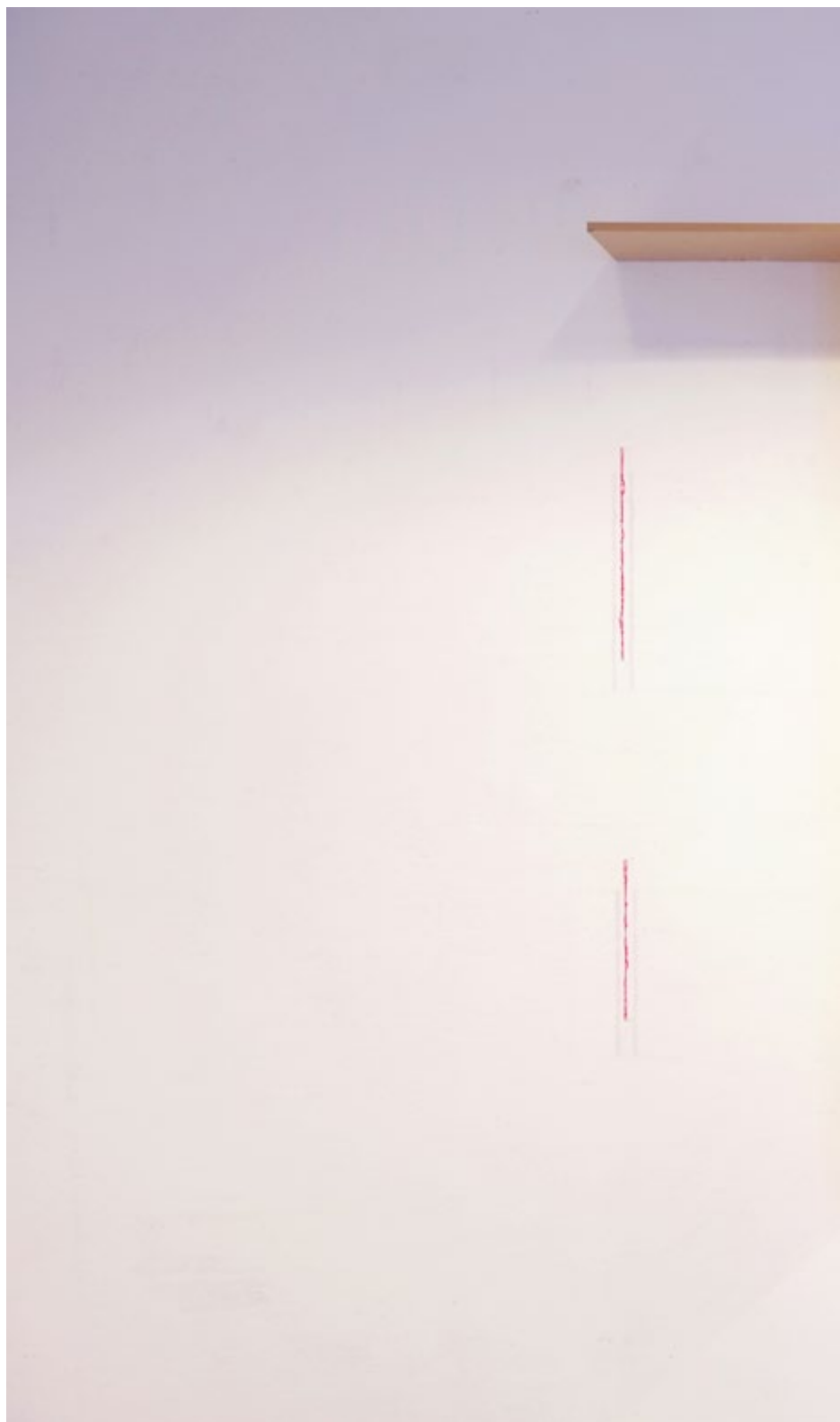




Tension

2015, mixed-media, dimension variable.





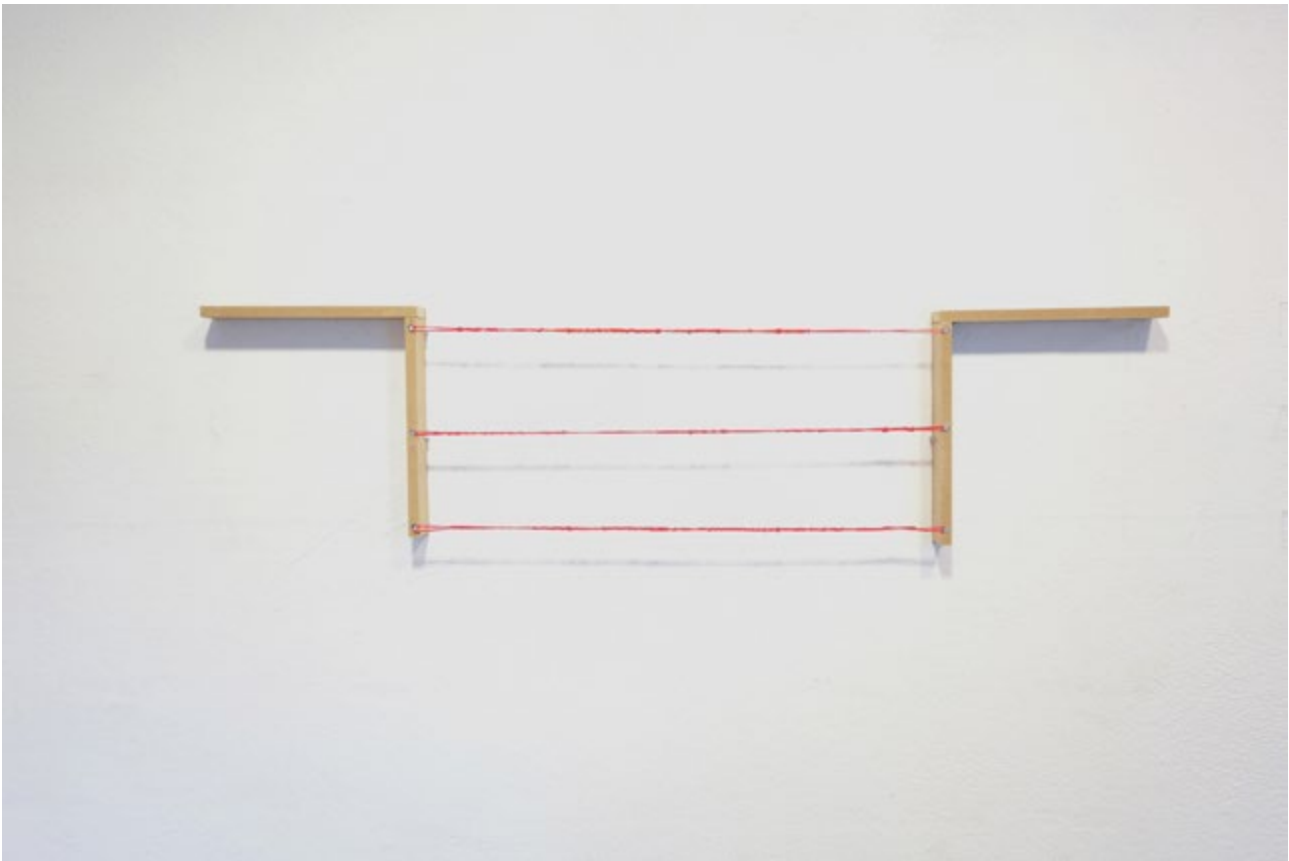
Tension III

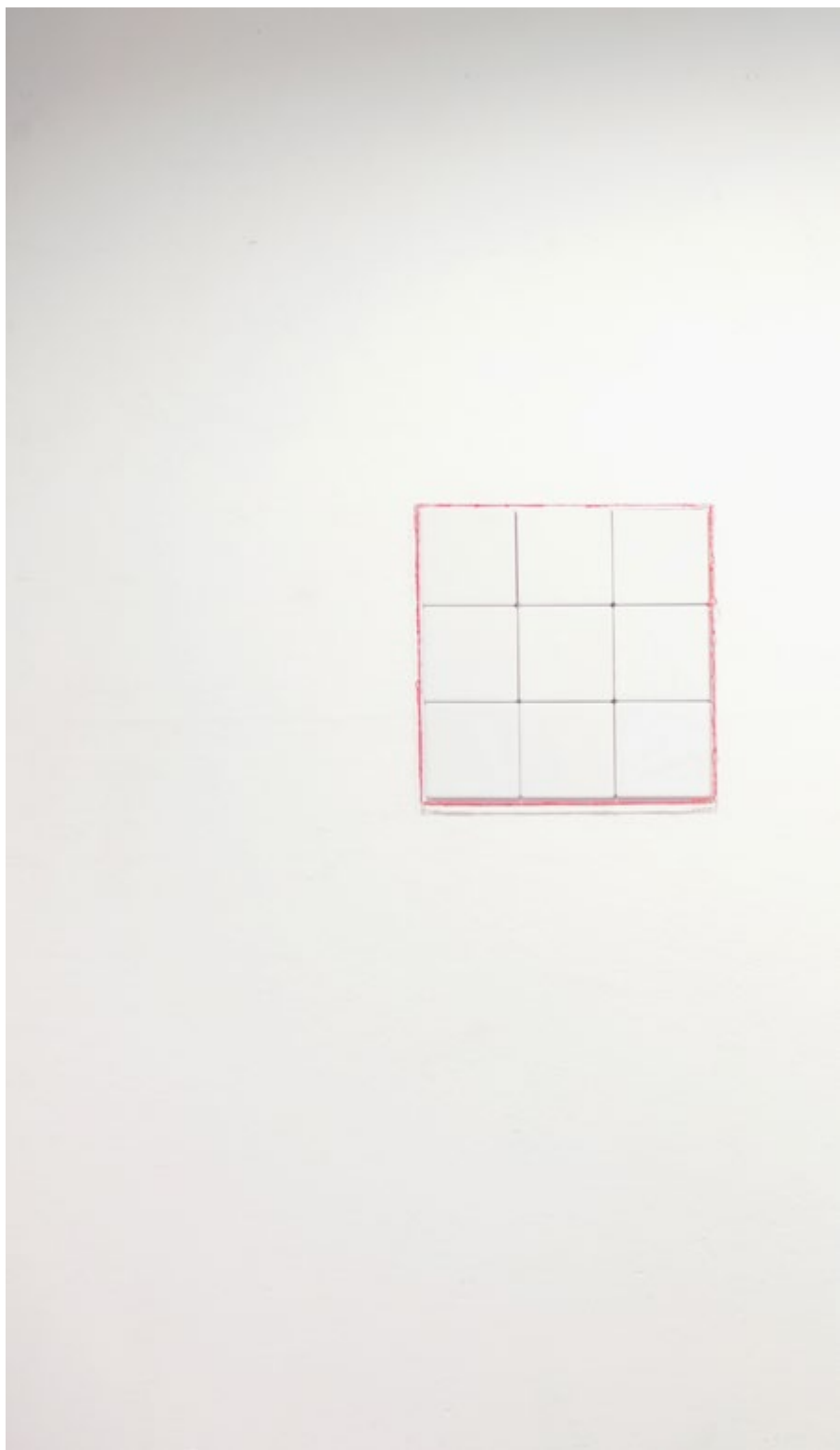
2016, mixed-media, dimension variable.



Tension IV

2016, mixed-media, dimension variable.





Tension V
2016, mixed-media, dimension variable.



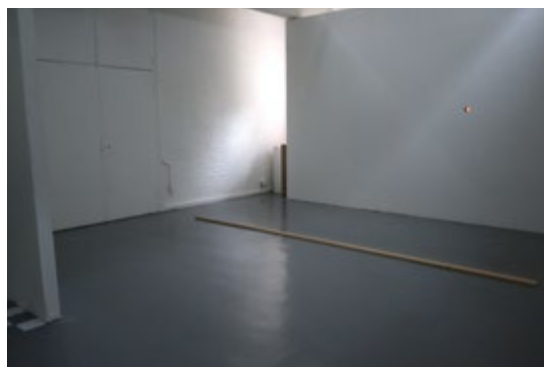
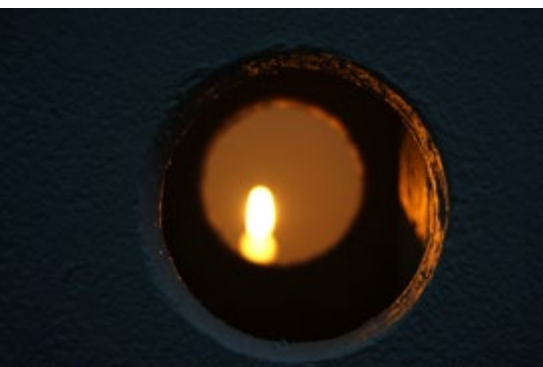
In-between

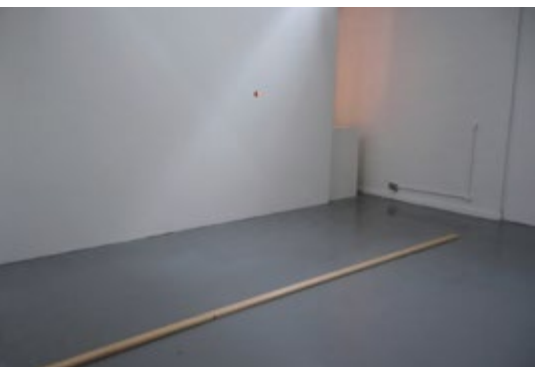
In-between: a group of the works that question position, relations, scale and frame. They evoke questions about grids, frames, screens and staging. Where do elements and boundaries begin and end? Thus, this group of the works explicitly shows the structures of ambiguity; of ambiguous relationships between subjects, objects and environments.

This group of the works also reveals an emerging ambition in my practice in terms of scale, including work of a more theatrical scale. The larger scale works come out of an interest to engage with spaces that already exist. These works aim to draw the viewers' attention to the original space, but activate different sensibilities. The 'views' that the works point to are real spaces rather than imaginative one. Yet, the journey of realising the works begins from an imaginative space or rather the means through my practice of 'composition' that seeks to open up a phenomenological reading of space; to engage with what I refer to as a space of 'emptiness'. Emptiness here is to be understood in terms of the aesthetic ascribed to Chinese ink painting technique and/or Zen writings. It is not to suggest of a blank, meaningless space, but rather to consider an expanded sense of the interconnectedness of all things and their environment as they already exist.









Experimental IV
2015 , mixed-media, dimension variable.

Line X

2016, mixed-media, dimension variable.





Untitled (After Donald Judd)
2016, mixed-media, dimension variable.



Through

2016, mixed-media, dimension variable.



Divide IV

2016, mixed-media, dimension variable.



Layers

2016, mixed-media, dimension variable.











Cheng-Chu, Weng at Corridor
2015 , mixed-media, dimension variable.

Walking by the long corridor, one can see doors and windows divide the two sides of the space, and the blank walls are divided by electrical conduits. Elements of lines, movements and shadows underline the phenomenon of bodies in both physical and psychical space. In responding to the space, it is unclear if the electrical conduits are part of the work, or not. What is inside and outside of the outline is made ambiguous.

Hang II

2015, mixed-media, dimension variable

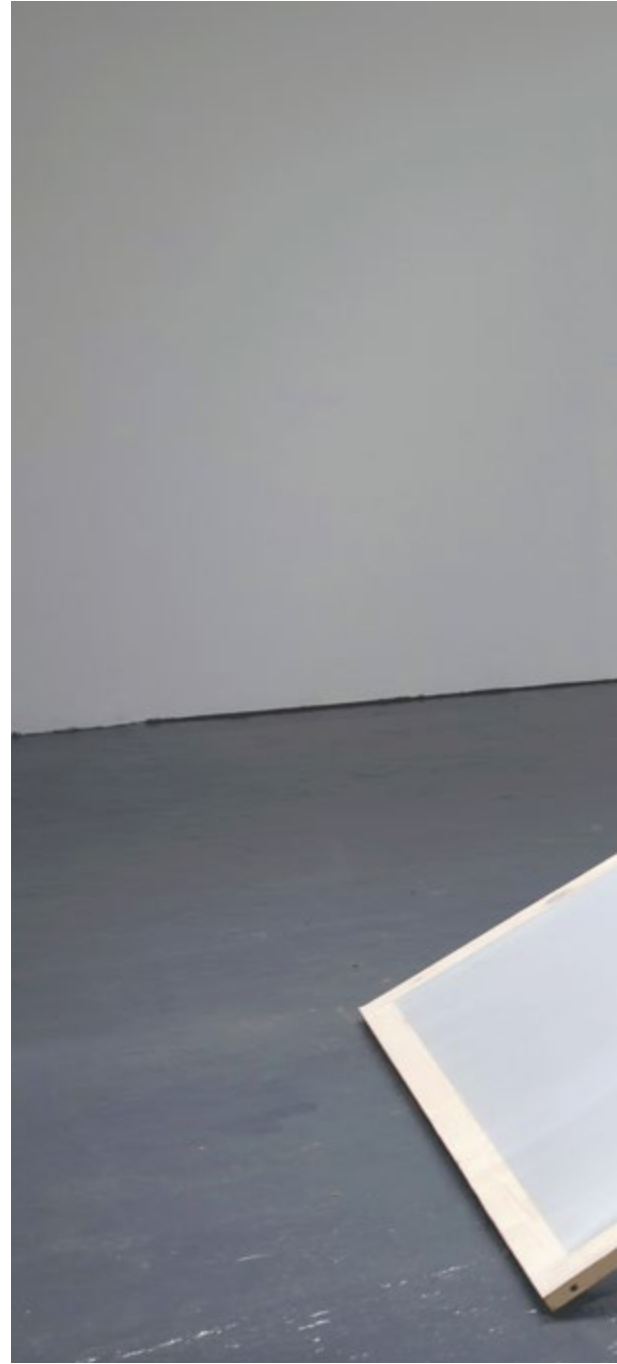
Hang II exhibited as part of a group show, 'In Dialogue: Material Imagination' at The Link Gallery, Winchester, UK.

'In Dialogue: Material Imagination' was an exhibition hosted by the Phenomenology and Imagination Research Group, based in Hampshire. This contribution for the exhibition was accompanied an article, 'What is Inside and Outside of an Outline?', made available in the exhibition catalogue. A panel discussion was held as a public event during the exhibition, with *Hang II* and accompanying essay being the focus of the discussion. *Hang II*, then, is a work particular to the gallery space. Similar to *Shoji*, the work is located in a busy corridor, awaiting the catch of visitors' airflows.









Screen

2016, mixed-media, dimension variable.





Screen II

2016, mixed-media, dimension variable.





Screen III

2016, mixed-media, dimension variable.

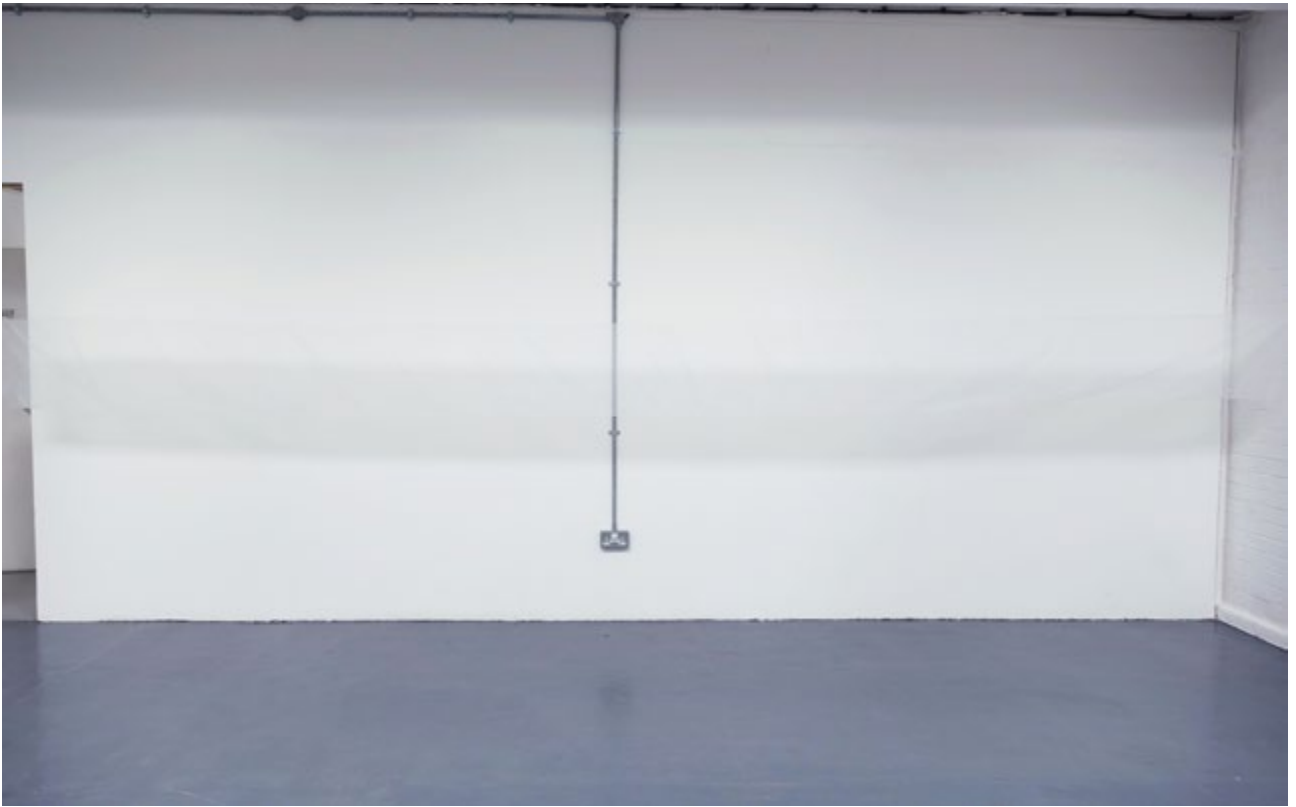


Through II

2016, mixed-media, dimension variable.







Cylinder III

2016, mixed-media, dimension variable.







Tube

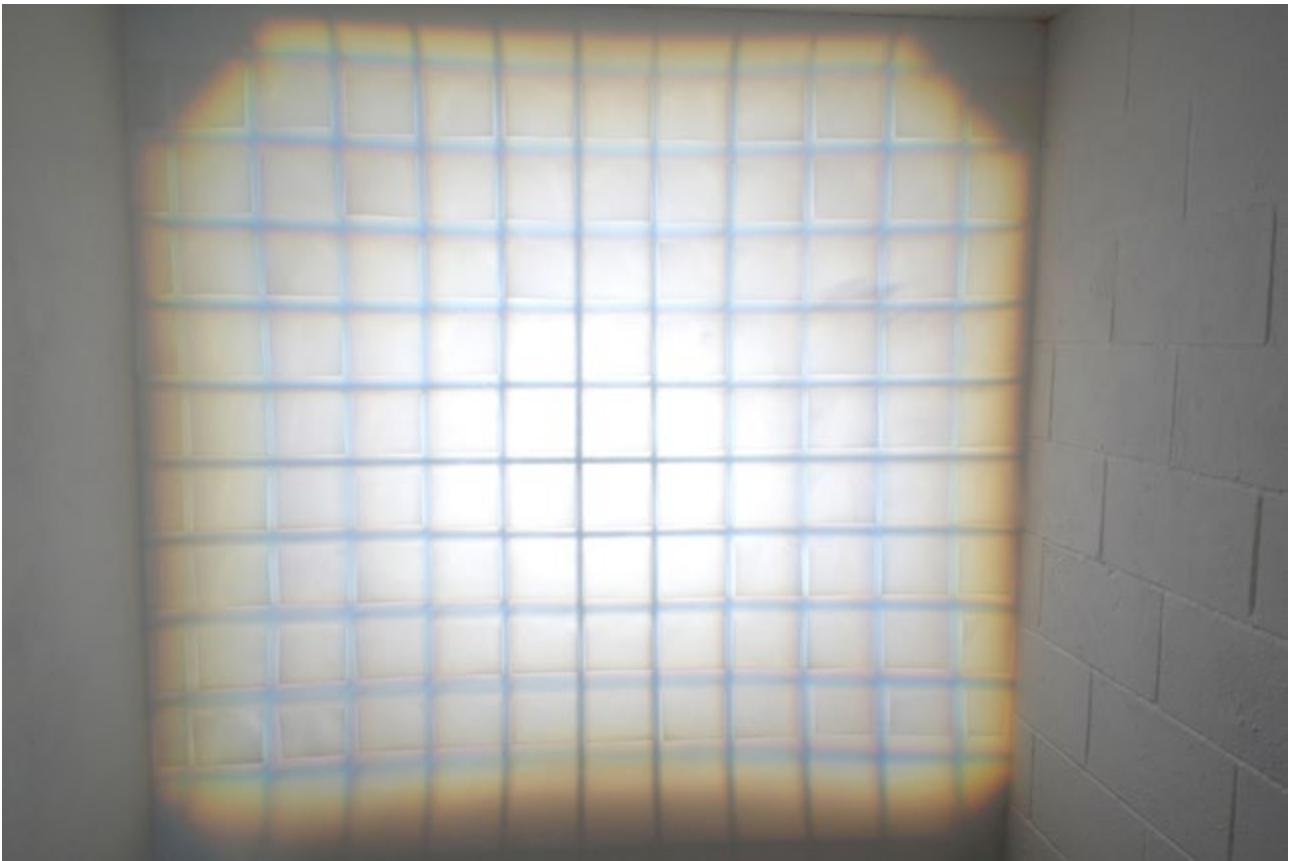
2016, mixed-media, dimension variable.



Grid

2016, mixed-media, dimension variable.

An echo of *Shoji* (2015) *Grid* presents the trace of a grid. The overhead projector creates unstable grid shadows, a trace of square shapes of Japanese tissue paper. The papers' shadows give *Grid* multiple shadow layers, evoking a persistent question of what is inside and outside of the outline of the shadow.







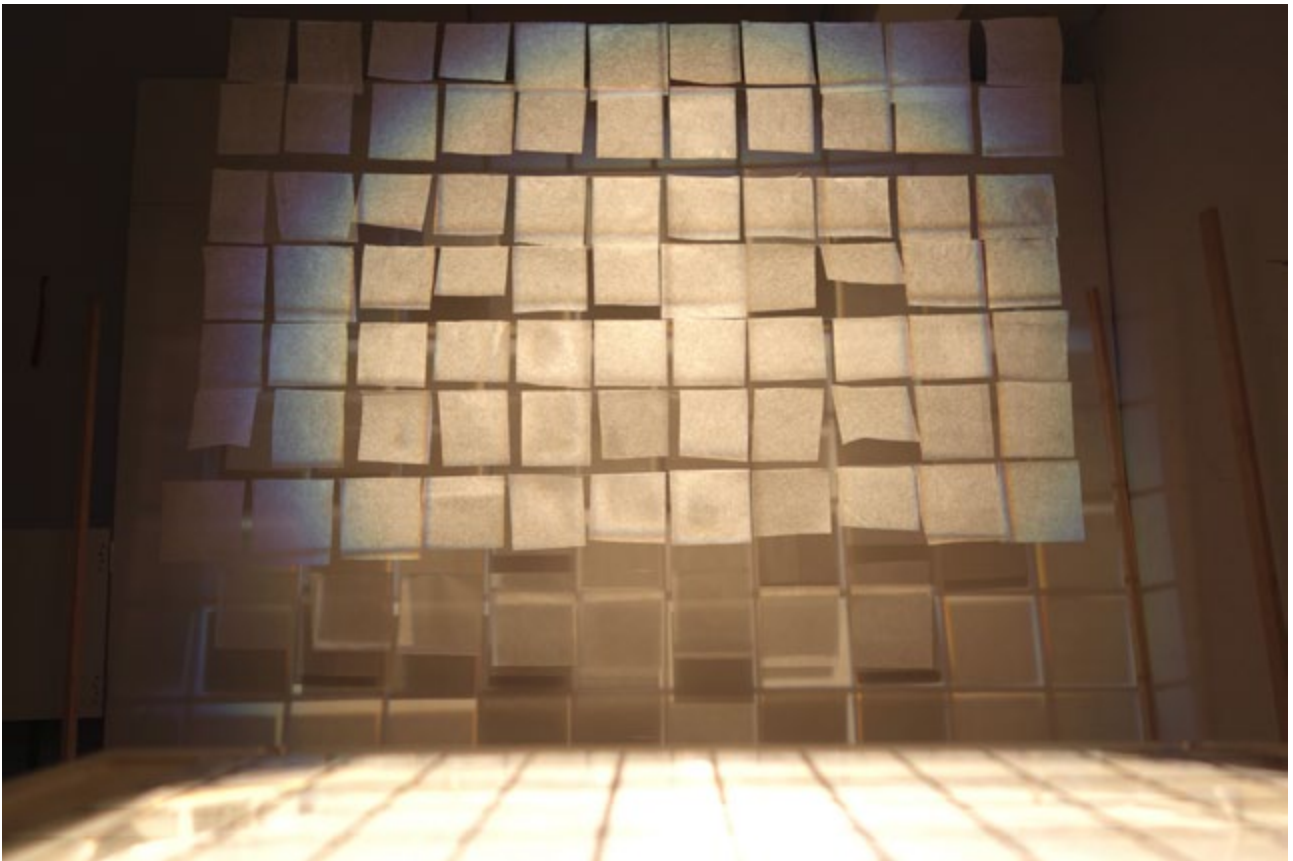
Screen XII

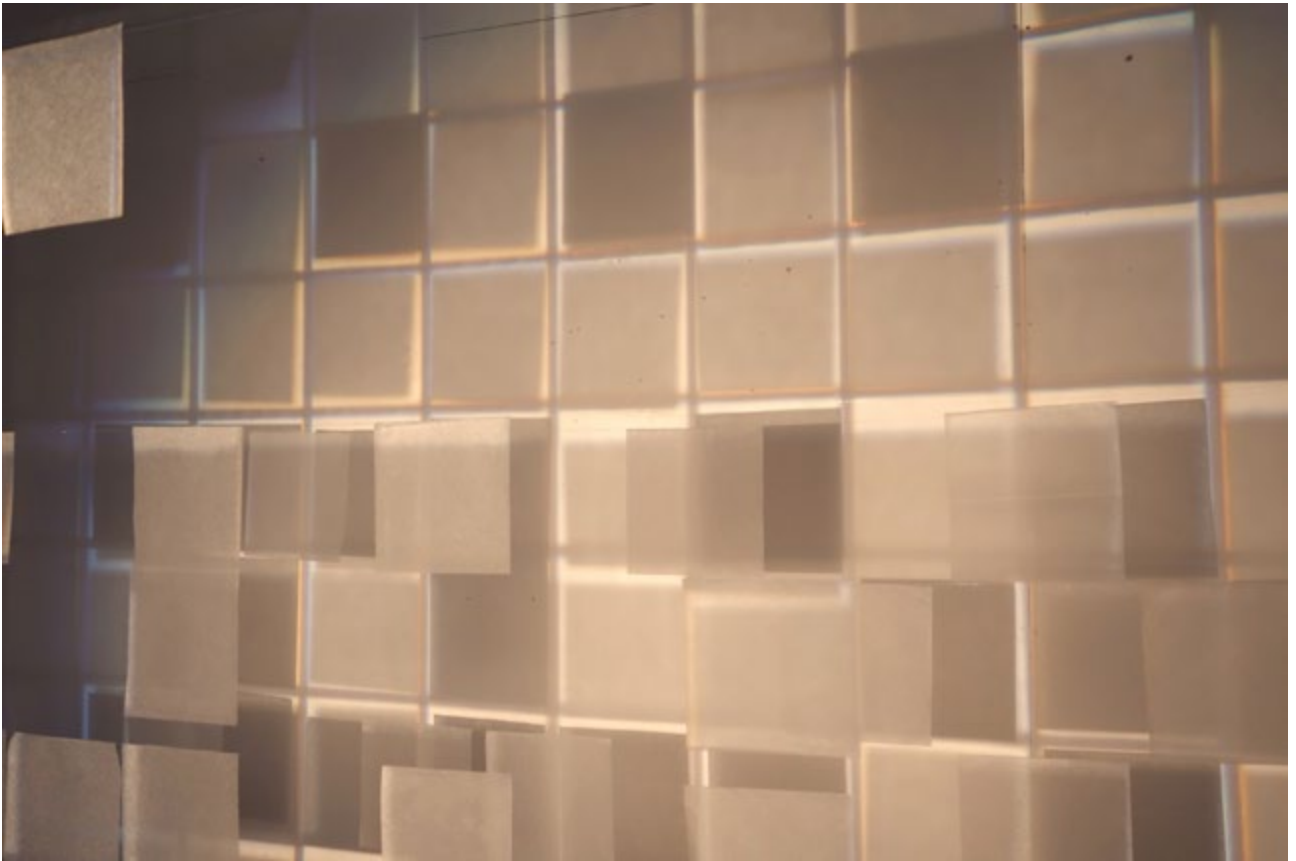
2016, mixed-media, dimension variable.

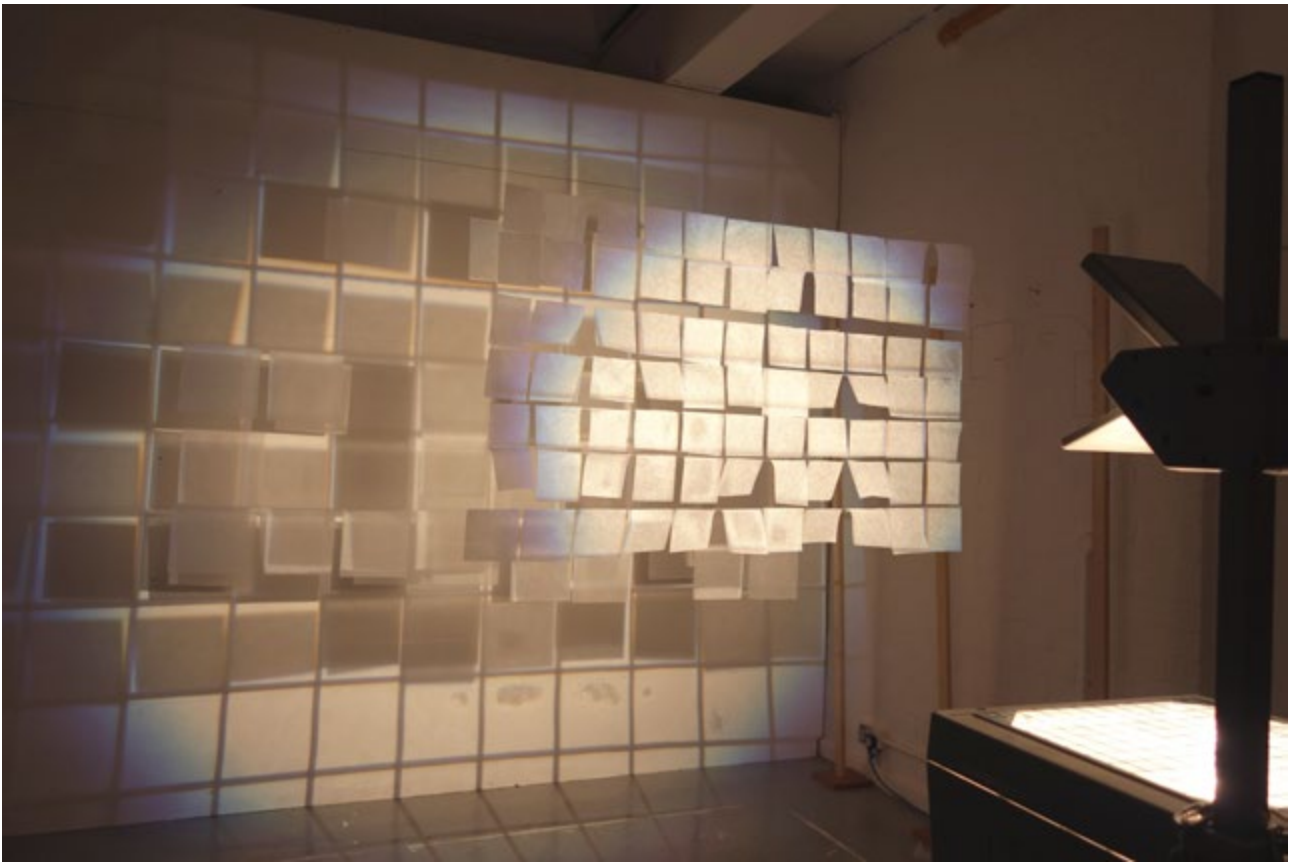


Grid IIII

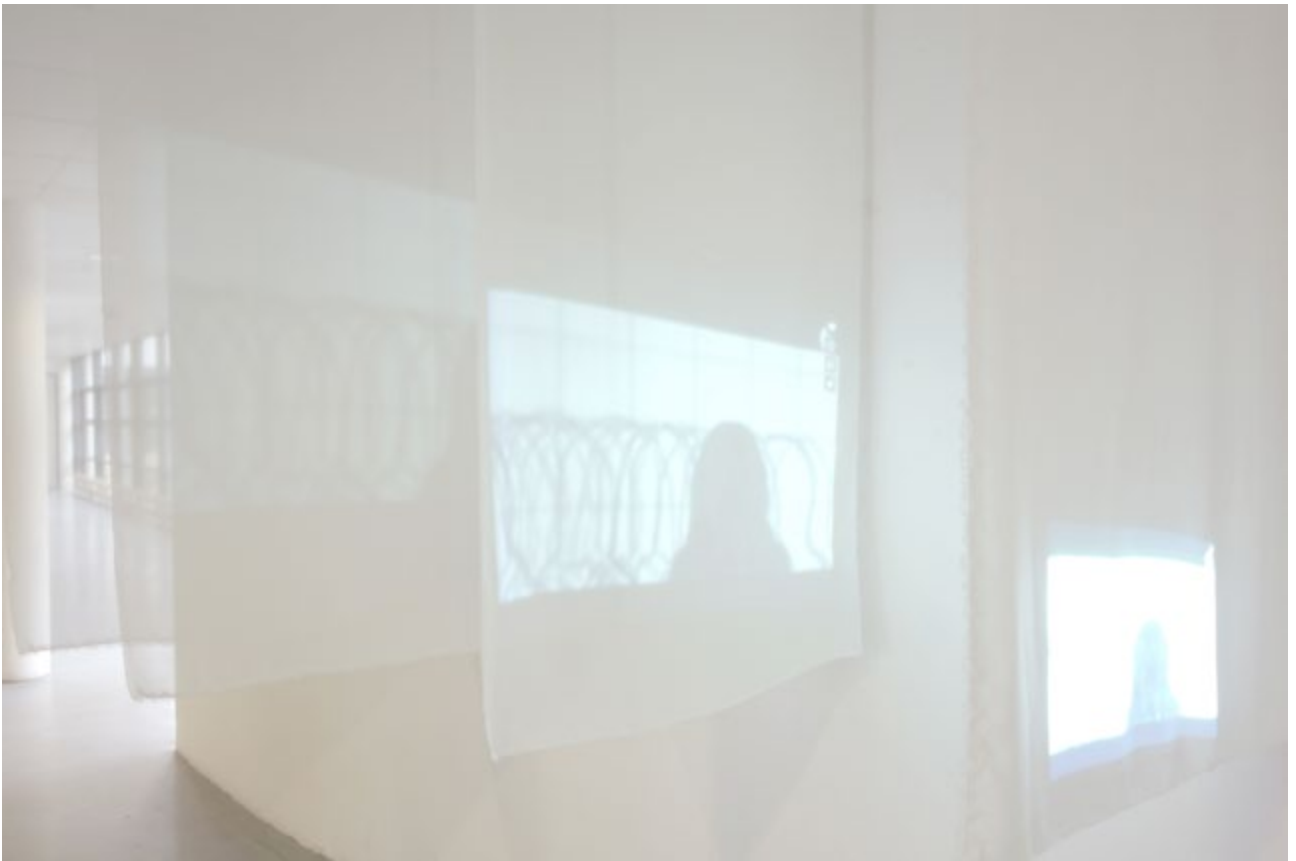
2016, mixed-media, dimension variable.







Tracing Shadows and Layers
2017, mixed-media, dimension variable.



Divide IIII

2017, mixed-media, dimension variable.



One Line

2017, mixed-media, dimension variable.



A Row of Line

2017, mixed-media, dimension variable.



Rectangular

2017, mixed-media, dimension variable.

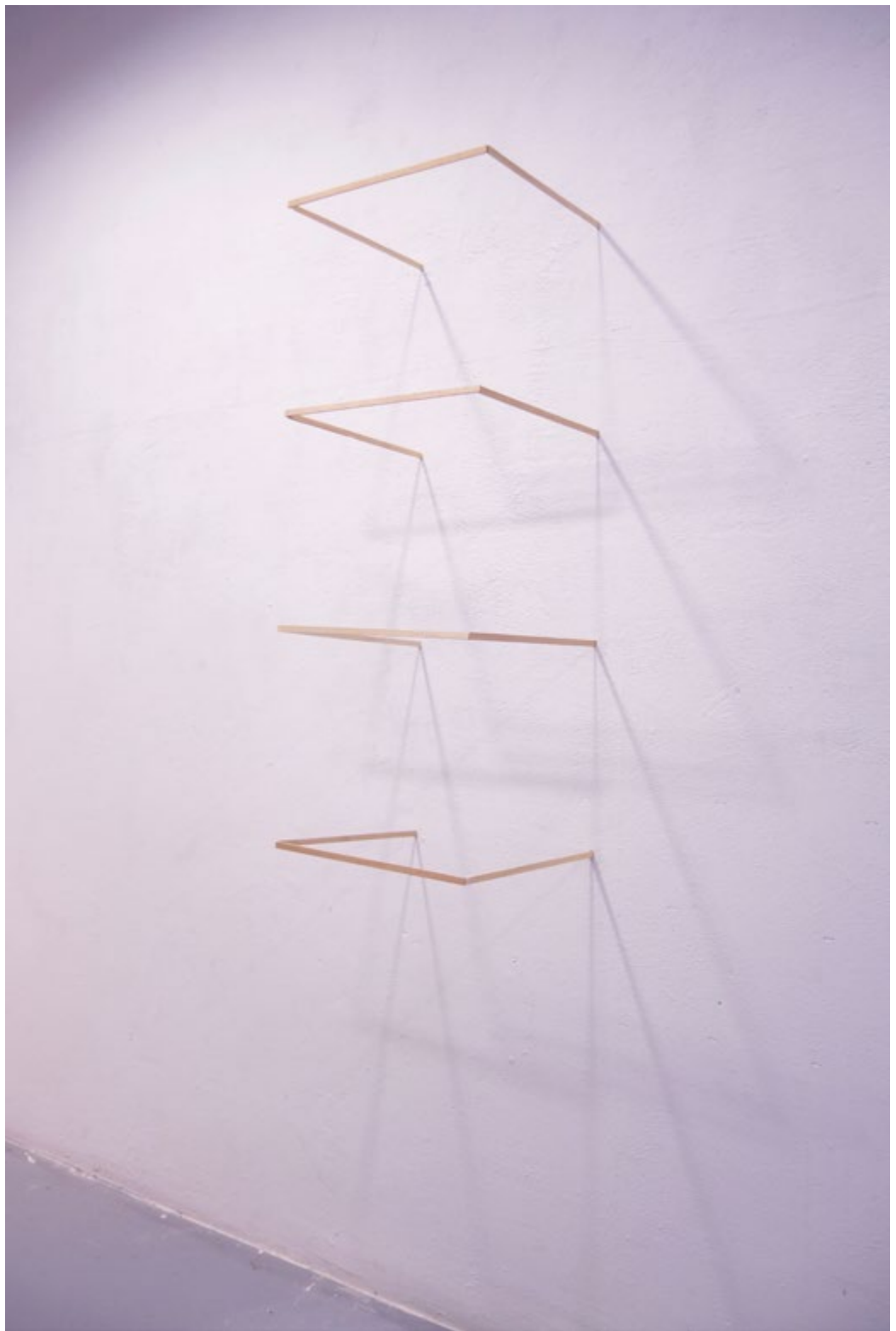


Door

2017, mixed-media, dimension variable.

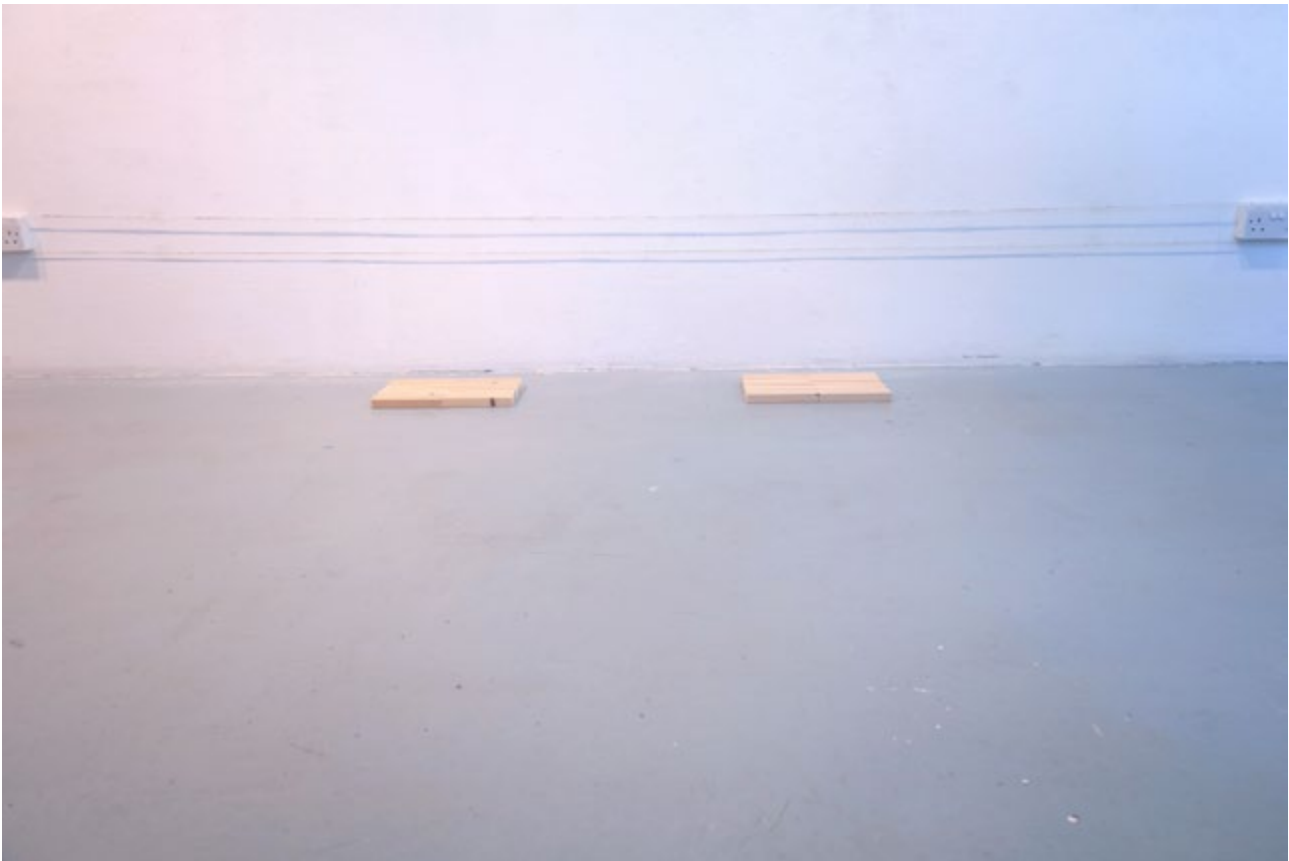


Untitled (After Donald Judd II)
2017, mixed-media, dimension variable.



Between Two Plugs

2017, mixed-media, dimension variable.



Between Two Plugs II

2017, mixed-media, dimension variable.



Between Two Plugs III

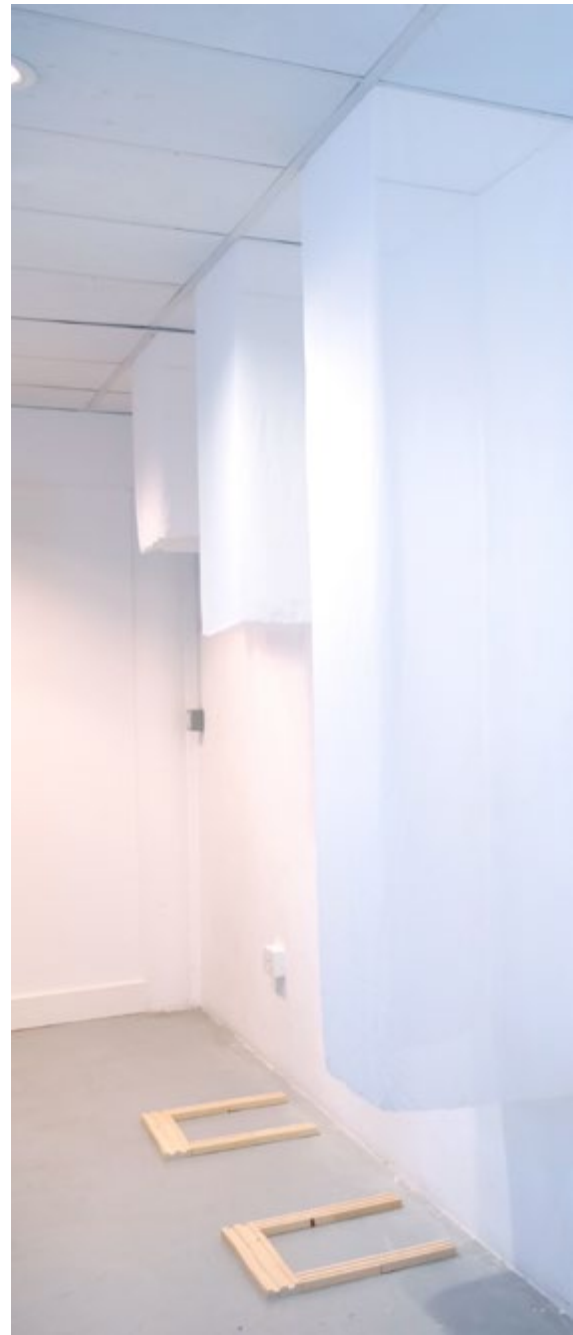
2017, mixed-media, dimension variable.



No 61 (After Mark Rothko)

2017, mixed-media, dimension variable.





Rectangular II
2017, mixed-media, dimension variable.





Between Two Pillars
2017, mixed-media, dimension variable.

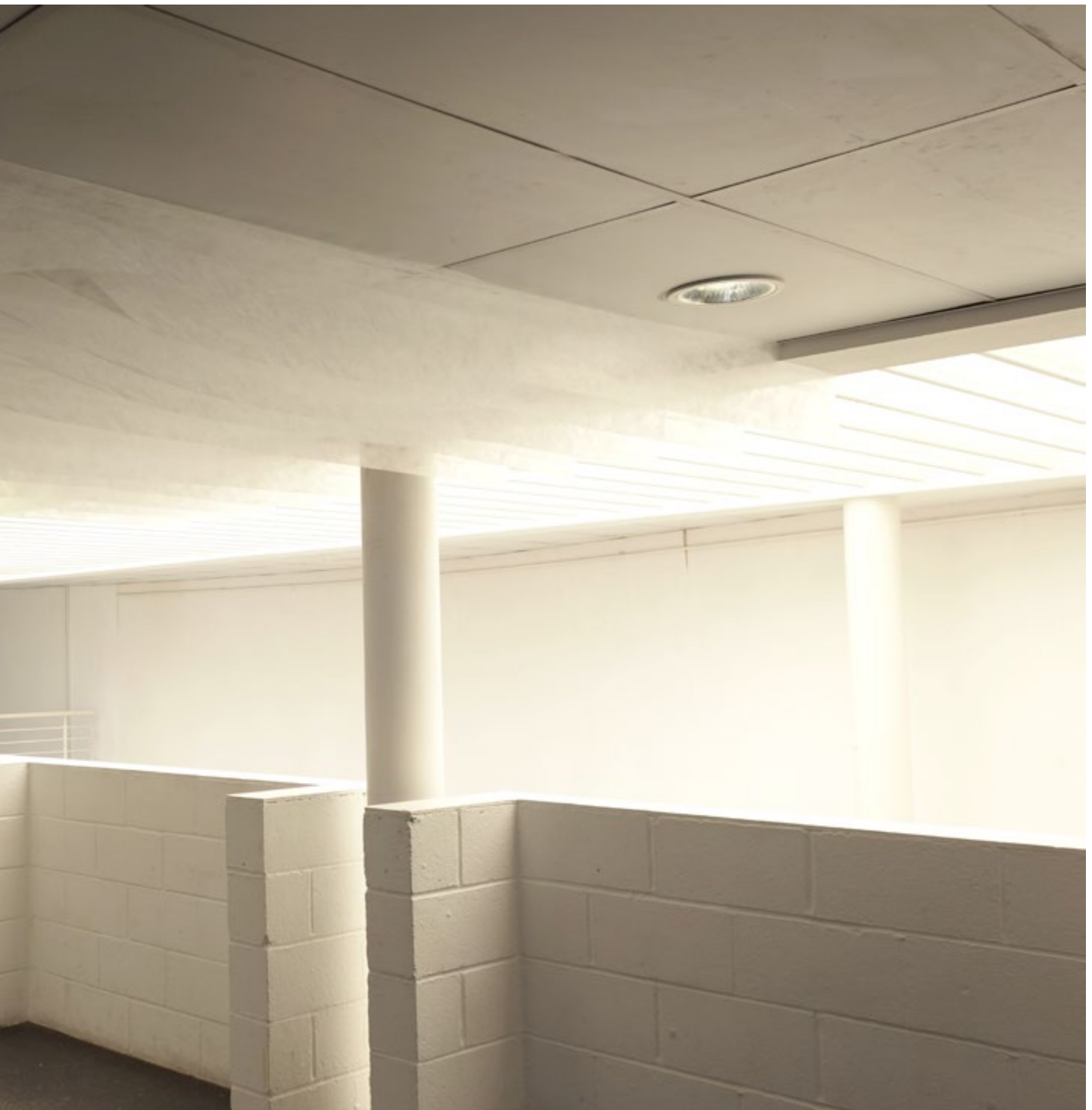




Ceiling II

2017, mixed-media, dimension variable.

Ceiling II is an installation along the length of the ceiling of a corridor space, evoking a relationship between the ceiling, the wall and those that pass through the space.





Around

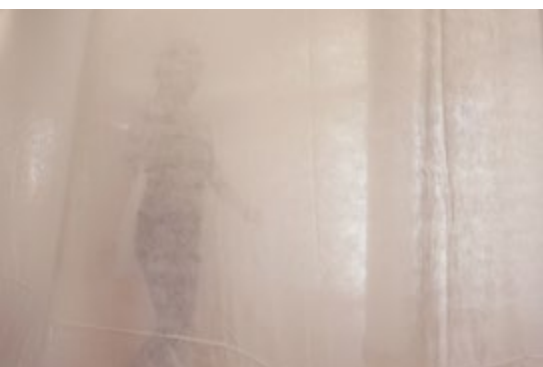
2017, mixed-media, dimension variable.

Devised for 'CHENG-CHU SOLO EXHIBITION' at The Brewery Tap UCA Project Space in Folkestone, UK.





"*Around* is a trace of the light source at The Brewery Tap UCA Project Space (Folkstone). In keeping with my wider practice, the work is of the structures of ambiguity, or rather is an 'ambiguous structure': In being between object and architectural space, the hanging fleeces gather together a relationship of objects, subjects and environment to evoke greater sensitivities about our bodies and thoughts as we enter into everyday spaces. The moment that people pass *Around* their body movement create airflows, which set the fleeces in motion. This connection, by no means an accident, is carefully structured, yet is hard to determine. Once in flow, the work generates another structure of ambiguity, that of the relationship between the maker and viewer of the work. Moreover, the materials themselves present a fluidity between artwork and everyday life, of the material and non-material, and the in-visible" Cheng-Chu Weng













Railing

2017, mixed-media, dimension variable.

Railing exhibited as part of a group show 'Here Time Becomes Space' at Crypt Gallery, London, UK.

Railing is an ambiguous structure, in being between object and architectural space. The moment the fleeces material is activated by the visitors passing by, they gather together a relationship of objects, subjects and environments. The work's temporal and 'sensitivities' create a sense of 'almost nothing' and 'emptiness', which echo the theme of the exhibition, with the curators' having taken inspiration from the Japanese concept of Mono no Aware (Japanese: 物の哀). Mono no Aware a matter of 'emptiness' and melancholy toward to things. *Railing* is the Mono no Aware of and within the space (the top of the tomb) and time (both the past and the present moment).







Ghosting

In this group of works, one can see an obvious difference or divergence in my works. As the title of the theme suggests there is a move away from physically, and there is less sense of an architectural space in which the compositions are staged. Instead the focus is upon virtual grids, frames and screens. The purpose of ghosting is the gathering of the real and virtual; of shadows without shadows. Taking on the logic of Jacques Derrida's term ghost, which again suggests of another kind of 'trace', this time in relation to the temporal-spatial specificities of audio-visual recording technology, this group of works are borne of and comment on the various relationships and viewpoints which arise out of making and recording screen images (or sounds).

The function of recording allows bodies to enter different timelines. The 'ghosts' from past arrive in the present and await the future. These, then, are ambiguous structures of time. Arguably, the sense of ghosting can *already* be seen in this catalogue, being both a recording and documenting of work, yet equally a *presenting* of the works, an offer to encounter that which has been. In order to catch the movement of the tissue papers or fabric, the images are set as a sequence of images. One can understand these sequences as film or, as suggested here, their ghostly movements.





Brush
2015, video, 7.51 minutes.



Brush is a video piece that records the repeated action of making out the artist's shadow. Soon the one outline blurs with the next until it forming a seemingly single body of marks. Like the function of looping a film or soundtrack, whereby the quality of the film or soundtrack gradually decreases, so the outline gradually erodes into a form. We might think, for example, of Alvin Lucier's well-known work, *I Am Sitting in a Room* (1969). A performance piece that begins with Lucier recording himself reading a text on a tape machine, and then playing the recorded voice back into the room. The process is undertaken repeatedly until the speech becomes 'pure' sound. Thus, the 'origin' of the voice is suffused through the re-recording. The point to be made is that one cannot determine the recalled memory as a 'pure' memory (as with Pliny's origin myth there is no original, but only repeated versions and gestures or desires towards an original). Similarly, in my practice, the viewer is unable to grasp an own 'original' story or scene, but, nonetheless, a consequence is that my memory becomes the 'sense' of an origin.





Making Grid
2016, video, 4.25 minutes.





Ghostly Grid
2016, video, 1.02 minutes.



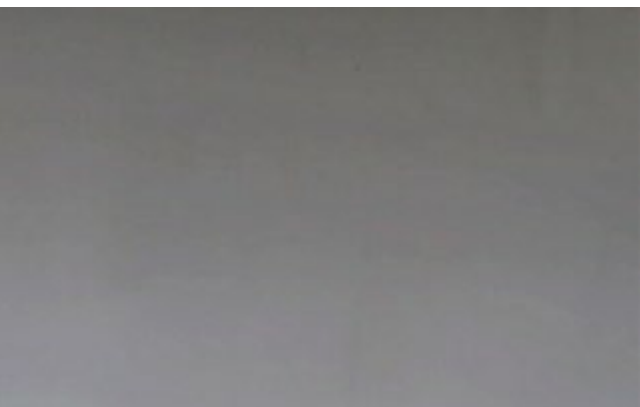


Ghostly Grid II
2016, video, 1 minute.

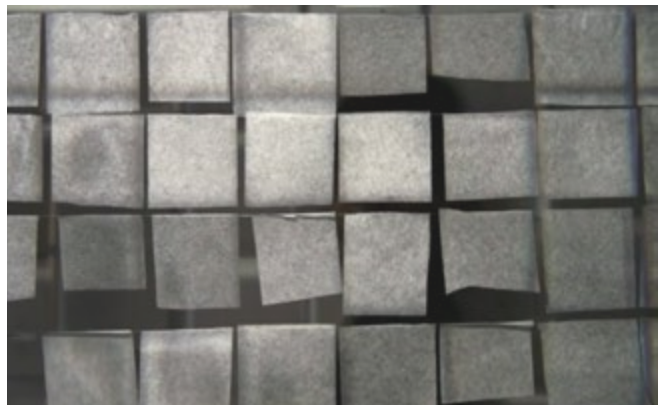
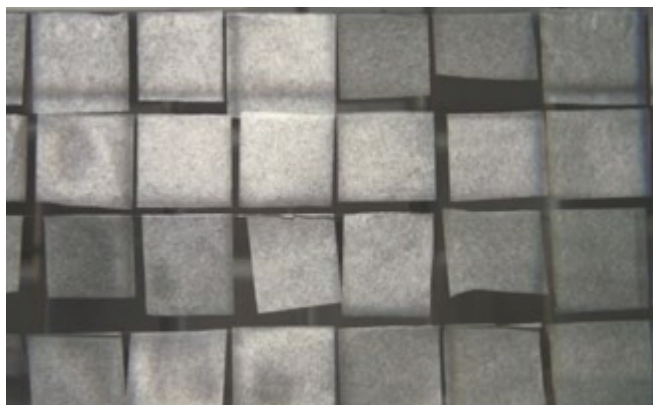


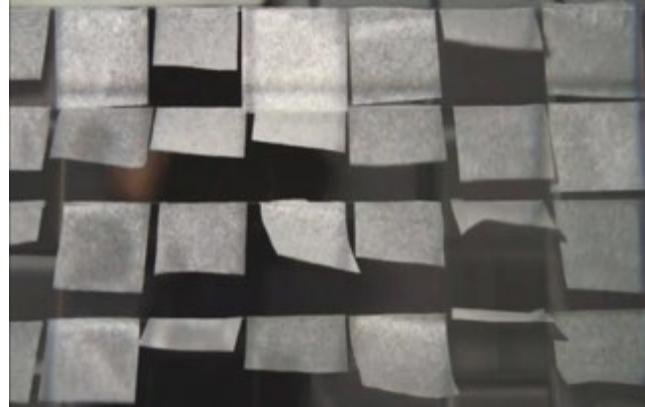
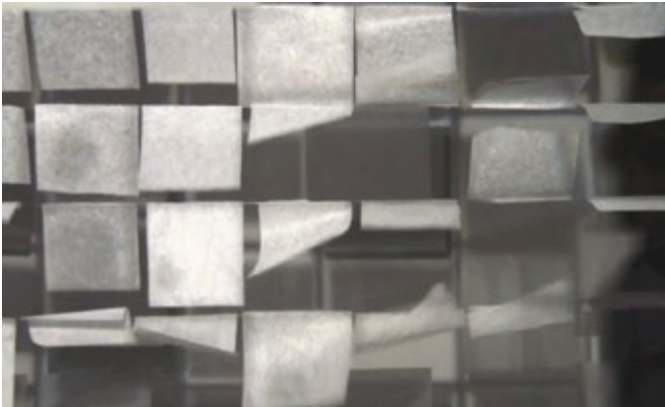


Window
2017, video, 11.16 minutes.

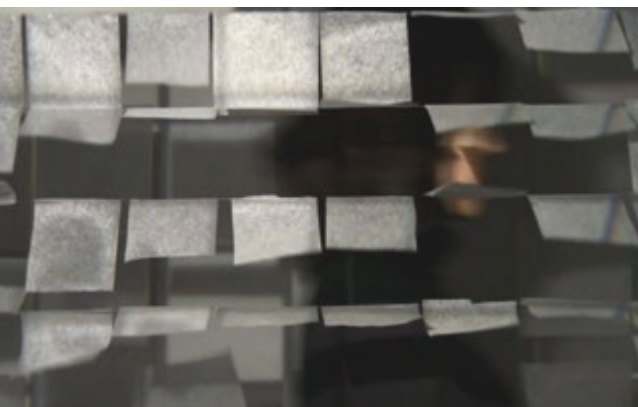


Window is a 11.16 minute video recording the natural phenomenon of sunlight and shadow effects. The light casts through square shape Japanese tissue papers within a window frame. The cloudy day creates an instability is an essential element in all the works presented here. Moreover, the instability is *already* encountered in the key 'material' of the shadow. Here again, the structure of *Window* present an ambiguous relationship between the artwork itself and everyday life. Also, the 'painting' or 'sculpturing' with sunlight and time can be said to echo Andrei Tarkovsky's *Sculpting in Time* (1986), in which the human timeline is broken.



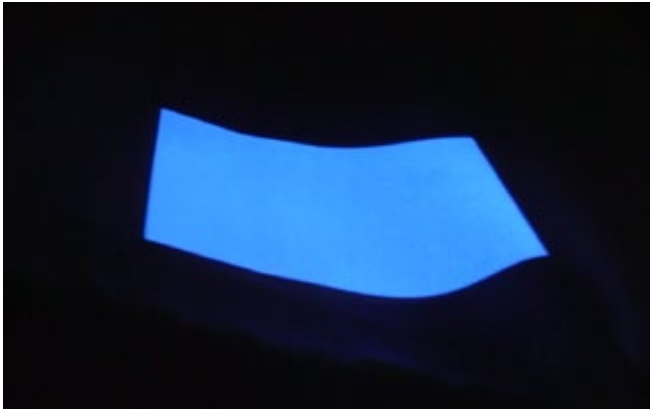


Running through Grid
2016, video, 1.49 minutes.



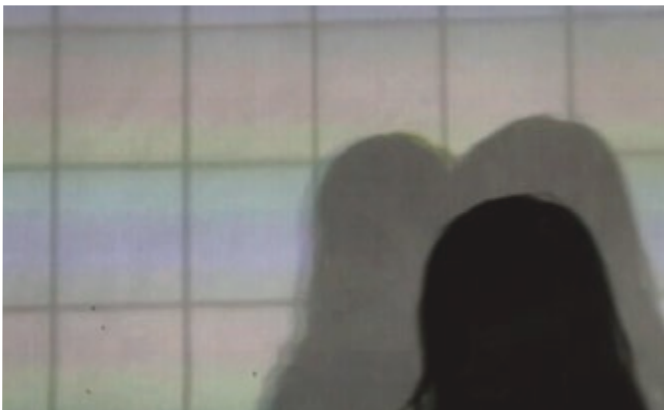
Running through Grid is a video piece, which records the moments of interrupting *Grid IIII* when running around the four-layered grid panels. This creates not only ghostly movements, but also a sense of breaking with the screen surface. The effect is of an unclear relationship between figure and ground, a vagueness the subject and object.





Blue Grid
2017, video, 1.09 minutes.

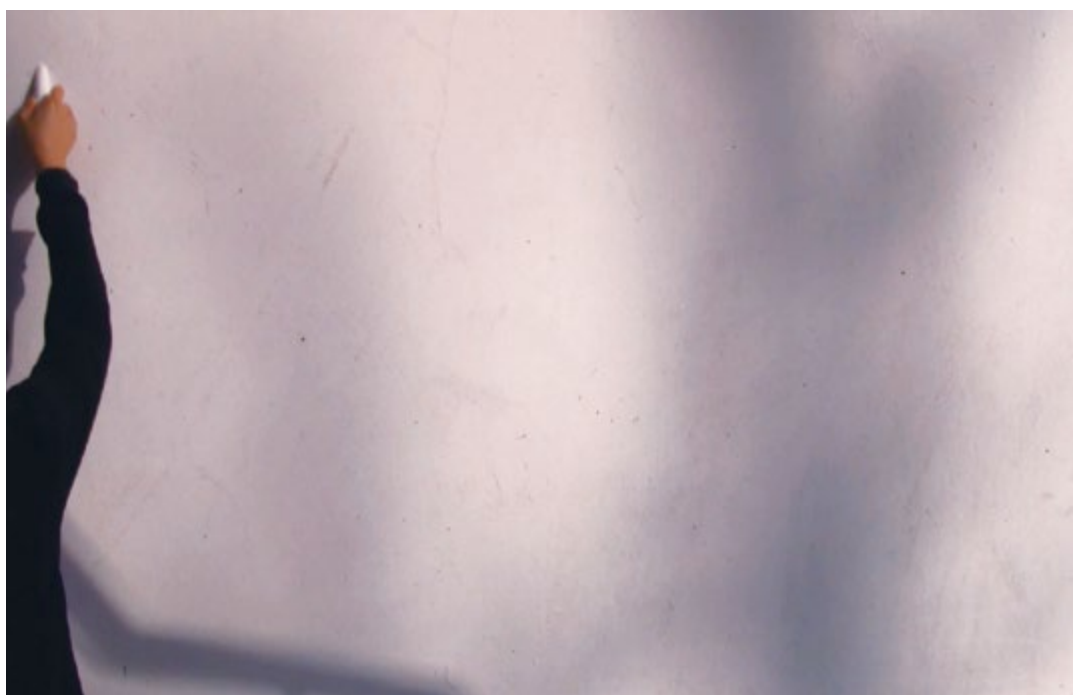




Re-trace Brush
2017, video, 23.21 minutes.



Re-trace Brush is a video work re-tracing earlier *Brush* (2015), so suggestive of its hauntology. *Re-trace Brush* begins and ends with the same action, a tracing of the artist's shadow. A sense of ghostliness not only can be 'seen' as an idea, but also in video itself. A view upon shadow tracing and the action of shadow tracing create a ghostly, ambiguous outcome.

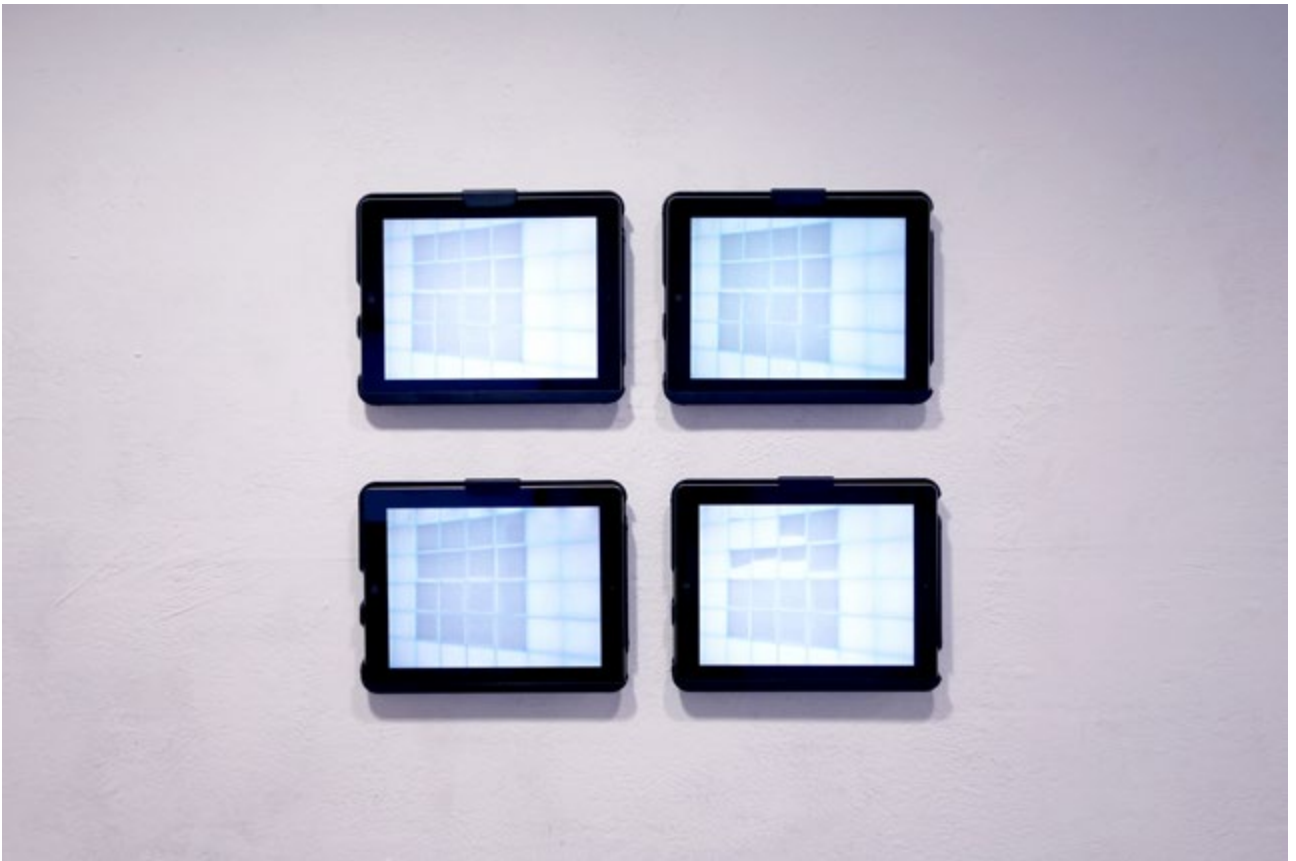


Trace Angles of the Camera
2017, video, 5.44 minutes.



Video Installation

2017, mixed-media, dimension variable.



Video Installation II

2017, mixed-media, dimension variable.



Video Installation VII

2017, mixed-media, dimension variable.





Video Installation VIII

2017, mixed-media, dimension variable.





Divide III (Sound piece)

2016, mixed-media, dimension variable.

Two headphones are installed inside of the square boxes, offering the trace, in sound, of an earthquake experience. In *Divide III* the artist is inviting the viewer to put their head into this structured space, which is both a physical and psychical space.



Chapter 1: Painting in the Expanded Field

In preceding Introduction, I defined my practice as a 'sense' of painting space, suggesting that whilst it draws upon painterly compositional methods, it is developed through site-specific considerations of architectural spaces, bodies, and differing levels of consciousness when interacting in such spaces. My practice, it is argued, is to be understood as painting in the 'expanded field'. The notion of the 'expanded field' is commonly evoked in contemporary art practice; however, it is not always clear what is meant by this concept. The Tate Modern Museum presented a selection of painting in the expanded field that show how different approaches to painting emerged after the Second World War, whereby as Tate's curator Mark Godfrey notes, 'artists explored a number of radical approaches to painting' (wall text, 'Materials and Objects 10', Tate Modern, 2016). There are two works from the late fifties/early sixties. Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio's *Industrial Paintings* (1958) breaks with the tradition of painting by using rolls to 'hang' the work. Pinot-Gallizio takes on manufacturing techniques as a means of painting, marking radical gesture in art historical terms. It is not surprising that Pinot-Gallizio's works present such a radical gesture, as he was a member of the avant-garde movement. The next work is Niki de Saint Phalle's *Shooting Picture* (1961); as the title suggests the method of creating the work is by shooting. Saint Phalle places paint in polythene bags and covers them with plaster, and then people were invited to shoot the work. The 'structure' of work presents both playful and violent gestures. One can see how the work is structured in an interpersonal and intrapersonal relationship. As Godfrey notes, the work offers a reflection of 'the memory and ongoing experience of war', rather than simply a 'pure' consideration of painting. By the 1970s, 'artists were focusing on the physical structure of the painting' (Godfrey, 2016). One key example is Sam Gilliam's drape paintings, namely *Simmering* (1970). *Simmering* evokes the problem of frame in traditional painting. Moreover, a 'picture' view of painting is undoing in the way that Gilliam folds the canvas. A tension between the painting frame and the flat surface of the painting can also be seen in Richard Smith's *Early Reply* (1972), which was 'created using a grid of aluminum poles that he used as the support for a green canvas sewn with various diagonal tapes'(ibid). Both Gilliam and Smith extend the painting category to include a 'sculptural' dimension. Overall, these exhibits at the Tate show how painting evolves after the modern period.

More recent developments in painting in the expanded field can be seen with two exhibitions from the start of the new millennium. The exhibition 'Painting Zero Degree' from 2000 presented work and an account of painting that did not follow traditional forms of works but was rather 'associated with modernity, and the fact that modernity has been and continues to be interpolated in diverse geopolitical contexts' (Carlos Basualdo, 2000:20). Thus, modernity and geopolitical contexts are key elements to approach an 'unending annihilation of painting' (Basualdo, 2000:21), whereby, as curator Carlos Basualdo puts it, '[p]ainting's subsistence in the very vortex of definitive annihilation seems to depend above all on the renewed vitality of the institutions that guarantee its history' (2000:22). Basualdo draws upon Roland Barthes' account of literature in his book *Writing Degree Zero* (1953), to consider what it means for literature/painting to maintain its autonomy as an art form, with the finding that, in short, it must continually evolve. Put another way, the painting is a 'guide' of itself, which can also be seen in 'As Painting' (2001). As Stephen Melville explains:

If painting finds itself most fully only where it is most deeply in question, it is just here that one might expect to find whatever measuring or discovery of itself painting is yet capable of. It is this work of measuring or discovery that determines what counts as painting. (2001:3)

Accordingly, one can see a way of 'defining' painting through its continual making, which is equally something I endeavour to do in this research. By contrast, however, I define my practice 'as' painting through an ongoing process (exploring what I refer to as the structures of ambiguity), not through one-off exhibitions. In other words, the way to define my practice 'as' painting is through an ongoing practical experiment of a sense of painting space. Nonetheless, 'Painting Zero Degree' and 'As Painting' both present two key moments offering contemporary reflection on painting. Indeed, they demonstrate the continued value of talking about painting in the expanded field in modern times.

The alienation of painting is an underlying theme for both 'Painting Zero Degree' and 'As Painting' (the former drawing on the influence from Barthes, as noted, the latter working through a critique of Michael Fried's (1998) the essence of painting (originally published in 1967)). These accounts work at a curatorial level. My reading of painting is based on the making of new work, and marks out a different account. Nonetheless, my practice is contextualised here in terms of a set of critical and artistic influences. It begins with an

account of a well-known essay by Rosalind Krauss, which is acknowledged as introducing the term of the 'expanded field'. Krauss is concerned specifically with sculpture, although she offers a brief note on how her reading can apply to painting (see also Krauss' 'Eva Hesse: Contingent' (2002, originally published in 1979)). The chapter then considers more recent literature specific to the expansion of painting. Having established the term, I consider how it relates to my own work, which leads through a series of examples of historical and contemporary practice (including remarks on the influence of minimalist art on my work, as well as three specific case studies of contemporary artists whose works explore themes and material practice that relate to my own work). While Krauss starts from the field of sculpture, but suggests a similar line of argument with painting, I take my starting point from painting, and through my practice, I lead toward the expanded categories of sculpture and installation.

The Expanded Field

Rosalind Krauss' essay, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', was published in the journal *October* in 1979. The article was significant in providing a language for understanding the shift from modernism to postmodernism. As she remarks in another essay two years earlier, it had become clear that new forms of art had emerged throughout the 1970s, although these were not necessarily easy to label:

It is diversified, split, fractionized. Unlike the art of the last several decades, its energy does not seem to flow through a single channel for which a synthetic term, like Abstract-Expressionism, or Minimalism, might be found... We are asked to contemplate a great plethora of possibilities in the list that must now be used to draw a line around the art of the present: video; performance; body art; conceptual art; photo-realism in painting and an associate hyper-realism in sculpture; story art; monumental abstract sculpture (earthworks); and abstract painting, characterized, now, not by rigor by a willful eclecticism. (Krauss, 1977a:68)

The follow-up essay, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', gives a more critical account of the new forms of sculpture that emerged within this mix, notably taking the starting point of 'earthworks' (as referenced above). As Craig Staff remarks, 'in effect book-ended a period of

approximately 15 years of artistic production that had begun with Minimalism. Indeed, arguably sculpture had been able to “expand” due to Minimalism opening up the possibilities of what constituted sculpture as a form of three-dimensional practice and the implications this held for the experiential basis of the artworks that fell within its critical purview’ (Staff, 2013:50).

Krauss opens her essay with reference to Mary Miss’ *Perimeters/Pavilions/Decoys* (1978). The work appears to be a large hole in the ground. A neatly formed square entrance leads underground with a ladder allowing access. Thus, the artwork is sited underground as an empty space to be entered into, making it, as Krauss puts it, ‘a sculpture or, more precisely, an earthwork’ (Krauss, 1979:30). Krauss’ point is that *Perimeters/Pavilions/Decoys* evokes a question about what we mean by sculpture. She is critical of the way trends had been written up in art criticism – ‘categories like sculpture and painting’, she writes, ‘have been kneaded and stretched and twisted in an extraordinary demonstration of elasticity, a display of the way a cultural term can be extended to include just about anything’ (ibid). Krauss is interested in sculpture as ‘a historically bounded category and not a universal one’ (1979:33). She offers a semiotic, or structuralist account, which accepts that meanings can become fixed through usage in certain ways, but these meanings are in effect only negatively defined by what they are ‘not’. Historically, we begin by equating sculpture with monuments, as a ‘commemorative representation’ (ibid). Historical statues in a city, for example, are sculptures as monuments. Normally, these are ‘figurative and vertical, their pedestals an important part of the structure since they mediate between actual site and representational sign’ (ibid). Krauss goes on argue that the logic of defining the sculpture in this way is not a myth in Western art, yet this logic is not fixed, and soon begins to fail.

One example of confusion that Krauss notes is Constantin Brâncusi’s *Endless Column* (1938) (Figure 1.1), which is part totem, part sculpture. Its structure is seemingly too tall for human ritual, and yet its form echoes something of the past. Krauss argues that works such as this undo the logic of the monument, creating what she suggests is its negative condition, namely a ‘kind of sitelessness, or homelessness, an absolute loss of place’ (1979:34). Therefore, ‘pure negativity’ becomes a point that new works approach, which can be seen in another key example that Krauss draws out: Robert Morris’ *Installation* (1964) at the Green Gallery (Figure 1.2). *Installation* at the Green Gallery is both an architectural and sculptural work, suggesting that the artwork is ‘what is in the room that is not really the room’

(1979:36). The work presents something akin to the 'structures of ambiguity' outlined in the Introduction. Somewhere between sculpture and architecture, Morris' work represents an expanded notion of sculpture, which we can both critically understand (as a rational argument) and also aesthetically experience. Entering the 'room' is to enter the sculpture, which immediately sensitises us to question the space and our own body within it. For Krauss, *Installation* at the Green Gallery is a perfect example to support her argument of how modernist sculpture begins to be defined *only* by its negative aspects; it draws out her concept of the neither/nor. Here, we can see a relationship with Donald Judd's own account, which he describes as 'neither painting nor sculpture' (1975:181, originally published in 1965). A deliberate interest in ambiguity can be seen in both accounts, yet direct reference to the linguistic field can clearly be seen in Krauss' writing. This is made explicit with a semiotic square or Greimas system in Krauss' account of the expanded field (while in Judd's case, we find a straightforward view of Modernist *painting*, particularly, against Clement Greenberg's (1993) flatness account (originally published in 1960), which will be analysed further on). Although there are a number of artists from the 1960s whose practices could relate to my expansion painting, such as Fred Saudack, Robert Ryman, and James Turrell. Saudack's works similarly evoke questions of traditional forms, in particular, sculpture and drawing. Ryman's works question traditional forms of painting. Moreover, I share an interest with Turrell in terms of the (im)material of light. However, these connections do not necessarily help me to contextualise the affect of my works – the structures of ambiguity as I have outlined. Instead I have reference to Judd's remarks on 'neither painting nor sculpture' (ibid) to be particularly helpful. The fact that Judd has both made works and written essay on practice is beneficial. Judd offers a distinct debate on ambiguous forms. Indeed, his radical view of painting and sculpture has been helpful for me to express ideas about my own practice is. Further details of which is given later in this chapter.

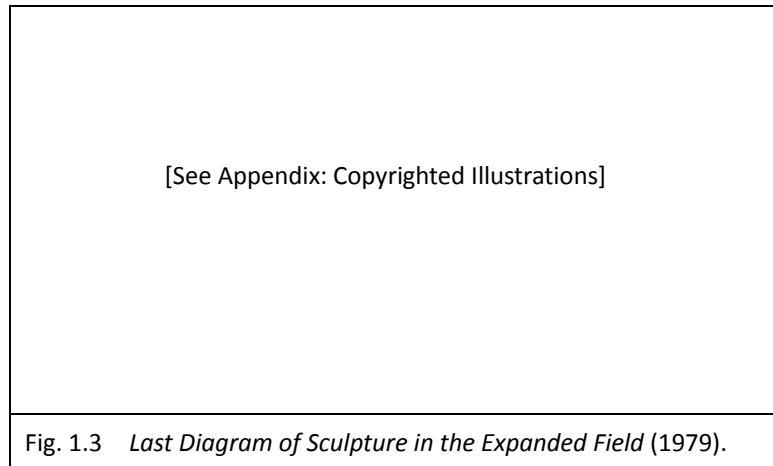
[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 1.1 Constantin Brâncuși, *Endless Column*, 1938, oak, 29.3 metres, New York.

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 1.2 Robert Morris, *Installation*, 1964, Green Gallery, New York.

The key point of Kraus' diagram is that sculpture becomes a 'neutral' term or an empty term, 'a kind of ontological absence, the combination of exclusions, the sum of neither/nor' (1979:36). This argument was developed more significantly by drawing points on a Greimas square (Figure 1.3), as follows:



All of the terms on the square begin to be questioned in the emerging works of the 1960s and 1970s, or rather they begin to be 'expanded' through the play of logical oppositions. As Krauss explains:

[T]he *not-architecture* is, according to the logic of a certain kind of expansion, just another way of expressing the term *landscape*, and *not-landscape* is, simply, *architecture*... By means of this logical expansion a set of binaries is transformed into a quaternary field which both mirrors the original opposition and at the same time opens it. (1979:37)

Thus the 'expanded field' is much more than simply adopting new materials or 'willful eclecticism'. The structuralist reading enables new terms and positions to be taken up. Whilst sculpture maybe the 'neuter' of not-landscape plus not-architecture, 'there is no reason not to imagine an opposite term – one that would be both *landscape* and *architecture* – which within this schema is called the *complex*' (1979:38). What Krauss means by this complex is 'to admit into the realm of art two terms that had formerly been prohibited from it: *landscape* and *architecture* – terms that could function to define the sculptural (as they had begun to do in modernism) only in their negative or neuter condition'

(ibid). Interestingly, these terms had been 'prohibited', she suggests, beyond the Renaissance, at least in Western modernist criticism. Yet, other cultures have been more at ease with the 'complex' of forms: '[I]abyrinths and mazes are *both* landscape and architecture', she notes, and 'Japanese gardens are *both* landscape and architecture; the ritual playing fields and processions of ancient civilizations were all in this sense the unquestioned occupants of the complex' (1979:38). Through the (mathematical) mapping of sculpture, using the Greimas square, we arrive at the expanded field as a complex field:

The expanded field is thus generated by problematizing the set of oppositions between which the modernist category *sculpture* is suspended. And once this has happened, once one is able to think one's way into this expansion, there are – logically – three other categories that one can envision, all of them a condition of the field itself, and none of them assimilable to *sculpture*. Because as we can see, *sculpture* is no longer the privileged middle term between two things that it isn't. *Sculpture* is rather only one term on the periphery of a field in which there are other, differently structured possibilities. And one has thereby gained the "permission" to think these other forms. (1979:38)

Following this, Krauss refers to a number of artists, such as Sol Le Witt, Robert Smithson and Richard Serra, as examples who approach the concept of the expanded field. On the other hand, Krauss also suggests that these *minimalists* are taking us into postmodernism. However, the values they bring to us can be seen in the features of postmodernism that Krauss analyses: 'the practice of individual artists' and the 'question of medium' (1979:41-42). Consequently, perhaps we could suggest the expanded field as a freedom field, yet the sense of freedom, unlike post-war American Art, provides nothing but 'just about anything' (Krauss, 1979:30). A more critical reading of postmodern practice follows; therefore, for Krauss, a medium is not defined but is rather presented as the 'perception of material' (1979:43).

This no doubt breaks the boundary of meaning and cultural situation. Here, the logical space is laid out, paradoxically, before Krauss provides examples of logical space, the postmodernist space of the painting is brought out roughly as she notes that '[t]he postmodernist space of painting would obviously involve a similar expansion around a different set of terms from the pair *architecture/landscape* – a set that would probably turn

on the opposition *uniqueness/reproducibility*' (1979:43). Therefore, the terms of uniqueness/reproducibility become a trigger for numbers of writers, who contribute articles to *Painting in the Expanded Field*. Nevertheless, a logical space becomes a key consideration in postmodern art, for example, Joel Shapiro, Charles Simonds, and Ann and Patrick Poirier. Moreover, their works extend the meaning of landscape; therefore, their works are positioned in the 'neuter term'. Following this complete view of the *diagram*, a sense of the expanded field and a critical mind regarding historical category are built.

While Krauss is writing specifically about sculpture rather than painting, the same structuralist approach can be applied. The expanded field is a way of reading practice in relation to its historical and cultural contexts, but also importantly, of reading it through its own questioning of the medium. For my purposes, in thinking about my practice as a form of painting in the expanded field, Krauss' note in parenthesis (in the above quote) is noteworthy, if all too brief. This intriguing line is given proper consideration in an article specific to *painting* in the expanded field by Gustavo Fares (2004), which is the focus of the next section, along with Mark Titmarsh's (2006) account that offers a reading in relation to particular examples of contemporary practice.

Painting in the Expanded Field

In *After Modernist Painting* (2013), Craig Staff offers a specific chapter on 'Painting in the Expanded Field'. This begins with a direct reference to Krauss's essay; however, Staff does not necessarily accept the ease with which Krauss suggests we can apply the same structuralist logic to painting as she had to sculpture. The problem, that Staff outlines relates to the status of painting and the minimalist tradition of the period. He cites Douglas Crimp, who evokes that minimalist art overcomes the problem of illusion in painting successfully by extending it to the form of sculpture, as he explains:

In a sense, the very success of Minimal sculpture depended on its ability to define itself specifically as a mute object, i.e., as an object which bespeaks only itself. This, it was thought, was something which painting as an inherently opposed medium could not do; a painting will always evoke, if nothing else, a virtual space from that real space which it actually inhabits (Crimp cited in Staff, 2013: 52)

Staff argues that painting had become ‘a conflicted medium’ (2013:52). Despite a willingness to break with ideas of – medium specificity and aesthetics, the discourse of painting wants ‘to ensure currency by way of establishing a legitimate position for itself within this so-called “expanded field”’ (ibid). Following this, Staff agrees with the artist David Reed’s view of experimental painting and then provides an opposing example to build up his *painting in the expanded field* account. What Reed suggested regards the phenomenon of losing status in painting around the 1960s and 1970s, which allowed for renewed experimentation. Equally, as Staff argues, artists were given ‘a certain degree of latitude and, equally, provided a mandate by which painting could be investigated, interrogated and potentially reimagined’ (Staff, 2013:52). For Staff, a particular way in which painting comes to be re-imagined is through feminist art practices, although much of this work expanded upon painting as a ‘medium’ (using, for example, sculptural techniques). Staff is more concerned with a historical account of these practices rather than responding to Krauss’ critical and conceptual account of the medium in itself. Nonetheless, his account is a reminder that the shift towards an expanded practice is not necessarily so straightforward for painting, as it was considered to be by Krauss for sculpture. It has perhaps taken longer for painting to develop in the same way; it is notable that specific accounts of painting in the expanded field have only been published more recently. Published in 2004, Gustavo Fares’ article, ‘Painting in the Expanded Field’, is a direct response to Krauss’ original article and includes a diagram updated specifically for painting (Figure 1.4). Like Krauss, Fares considers an account of the expanded field as a way of being more analytical and critical about painting today. Thus, echoing Krauss’ use of the Greimas rectangle (and Fredric Jameson’s earlier use), Fares also presents a historical and structural account of painting using the diagram (Figure 1.4).



[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 1.4 A graph of *Painting in the Expanded Field* (2004).

Following his analysis of (Jameson's view of) Krauss' writing, there are two key questions that lie at the centre of Fares' article: 'what would painting in the expanded field look like? And what consequences could such a "reading" of painting have for the understanding of the medium in a "pluralist" art-world?' (2004:480). Following this, Fares begins with Krauss' reference to the categories of uniqueness and reproducibility which he takes not as opposite terms, but as the opposite ends of a spectrum that interacts with a series of terms of his own suggestion. He places painting (as the neutral term) in opposition to no-movement and not-3D. Moreover, the purpose of the diagram is to open up the imagination rather to define what painting in the expanded field is; as Fares suggests, the elements that he draws out in the diagram could be improved after providing an explanation of the diagram. He explains the diagram as follows:

According to the graph we can comprehend... within the expanded use of the category of "painting" artistic manifestations that are now-a-days considered to be either unrelated to one another (body art and digital art) or downright opposite to painting, such as installation art... I am thinking, for example, of photography, which shares with painting the characteristic of being non-3D and of having no movement while, at same time, being related to video, a medium that presupposes movement, by way of its images and by the way video is captured in photographic frames. I am also thinking of installation, which appears at the opposite end of painting in the scheme proposed, but that the same time explores some of the same issues painting does, i.e. space, color, composition, and the like. (Fares, 2004:482)

Following this, Fares takes his reader further by adding and mixing in three more elements: ‘uniqueness/reproducibility’, ‘affine space’ and ‘history’ (2004:482). It is worth noting that Fares makes a particular point about space, which is of interest to me in my work as I am interested in working with specific spaces to create work. Fares incorporates Krauss’ concepts of uniqueness and reproducibility into his account of movement, so giving three axis: axis x (movement), y (dimensionality), and z (uniqueness/reproducibility), as displayed a diagram (Figure 1.5).

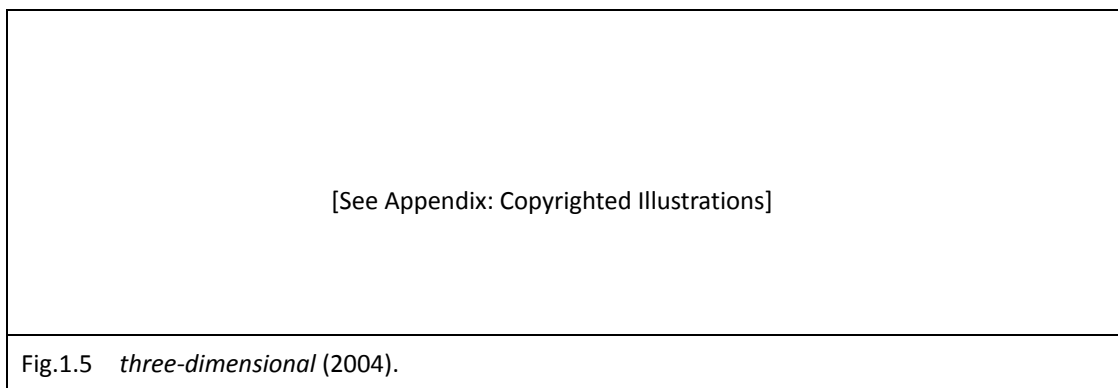


Figure 1.5 is not presenting three dimensions in the literal sense, but rather three key elements in a model of artworks. These three elements are intended to the field of painting; however, Fares did not provide examples of how painting relates to the three elements. Nonetheless, from his account of ‘affine space’ (ibid) (i.e. to allow for elements to exist in parallel), we can see how the terms might work together. For example, Fares draws out the experiences of looking at a Vincent Van Gogh painting and being in the Metropolitan area. In order to address these two different experiences, Fares suggests that use of a 3-axis model (x, y and z) to read them, yet, paradoxically, the experiences are not situated in every axis. Therefore, the experiences were seen as an additional space, which creates a sense of the expanded field:

To cope with this [the viewing experience is so different from one venue to the other] and other kinds of the limitations implied in the 3-axis plot defined above, what is needed is the addition of the possibility of shifting space, of seeing the expanded field so far proposed not as a static space, where points are located in isolation, but as an environment where change is not only possible but continuously taking place. Such an environment can be thought of as a vector space or as what mathematicians call a multidimensional affine space. (Fares, 2004:483)

Following this, Fares goes on to analyse the features of the affine space, which are flexible, with the consequence that the space that allows artworks is characterised by a continuous shift and transformation. Here, Fares provides an example, namely body art, which is not limited in performance, but instead broadly contains 'dance or sacred rituals, manifestations' (2004:484). This, then, is a way of describing painting in an expanded sense: it breaks from traditional views of painting as a specific medium and instead places painting in a set of related terms that afford a more flexible and conceptual account of what painting is. Historically, this leads Fares to describe a way of reclaiming a more positive account of painting, which centres on the concept of giving away. Fares points out four key mediums that are taking over painting: media, installation, performance art, and critics. Here, Fares argues that since painting has been taken over by the mediums, there exist particular critics who suggest that the gap between painting and meaning provides a 'freedom for painting' (ibid). Nevertheless, Fares' approach is to join artworks and meanings in order to provide a platform for us to think of painting in a pluralistic society. Fares' movement between terms and medium specificity is helpful in thinking about descriptions of my own work, for example, 'movement' and 'video' or 'complex term' and 'video installation/performance'. The characteristics of the medium can be seen in the terms that he creates; thus, this method could help me to articulate my practice theoretically. However, it is crucial to point out that the 'theory' presented by Fares (and previously by Krauss) should not be considered to have directed my work. My own engagement with 'painting' in the expanded field derives first and foremost through my *practice*, which does not develop in a straightforward way, but rather *occurs* through a sustained process of experimentation and intuitions, by using materials and compositional techniques. Through this work, I have come to reflect on my earlier use of painting in a more traditional series, which in turn has led me to the theoretical positions outlined here. Fares' account of painting in the expanded field is not a philosophy to apply in practice, but it is an account that helps to define what I am doing in my practice and can later impact on certain decisions that I make in the studio.

My understanding of 'painting' and my 'composition' of spaces and experiences begins with the process of creating itself. Through experiencing space physically and understanding the space itself within a consideration of bodily movements within it in conjunction with the materials I use, I am seeking to re-structure the space ambiguously. This involves 'drawing out' both the visible and invisible. As John Berger writes, act of drawing is 'not only to make something observed visible to others, but also to accompany something invisible to its

incalculable destination' (2011:11). In my case, the process of 'seeing' the painting depends upon the moment that a viewer's body movements interact and interrupt with a space. In thinking through Fares' account of painting, I have tried to respond to the notion of the expanded field that allows, as Fares puts it, 'the art-works to be "embodied" meanings, not just representations of meanings imposed from the outside in a sort of a-historical fashion' (2004:484-485).

Painting can be thought of as a tool or a way of thinking (and making). It allows other processes and approaches to be brought together. Just as writing is a medium that can analyse and develop itself, painting is a way of handling visual practice. It allows me to extend my interest in constructing critical spaces of both interpersonal and intrapersonal experiences. Fares develops this line of thinking with particular reference to 'space', which is of direct interest to me. Moreover, the expanded field is a way of describing a set of finite, yet complex positions that occur in practices, materials and experiences. In my own work, this is not that anything goes, but rather that there are definite conditions within which the work can be constructed, even if those conditions are often ambiguous and hard to define. I seek to define them, however, specifically from the point of making the work, or being embodied in the process and spaces of making, rather than through a prior theoretical reading of a space and/or set of memories. This is an inductive, rather than deductive approach. However, Fares' theoretical account of painting in the expanded field is useful in developing Krauss' concept of the expanded field. Nevertheless, he does not give many practical examples, and none comes from contemporary art practices. An essay by Mark Titmarsh (2006) is more useful in this respect. Again, the starting point is Krauss's essay 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field' (1979), but Titmarsh's focus is on actual examples of practice, both historical and contemporary. He notes how artists who deliberately abandon their painting practices (e.g. Ian Burn, Donald Judd, and Robert Smithson) inevitably pose questions *for* painting. The shift to the idea of painting in the expanded field is of undoing notions of 'pure painting', i.e. instead, there is an idea of 'total painting', which absorbs all other arts under painting. 'The emphasis subtly shifts from "*what* is painting" to "*how* is painting"' (2006:27).

For Titmarsh the idea of an expanded practice of painting comes from numerous earlier practices; the artists he mentions come from diffident 'isms', namely cubism, minimalism, conceptualism and fluxus. Pablo Picasso's works (Figure 1.6) can be seen as the first wave of

attempting to balance the relationship between painting and object. The action of import objects had been recognised as refusing the painting surface. On the other hand, Duchamp's works only extend this dimension further, through giving up painting skills and using readymade objects. This is what Duchamp called the "proper name" of painting' (cited in Titmarsh, 2006:28; see also Basualdo's (2000) account of Duchamp's formative role in debates of the end and expansion of painting). Two further key examples are Pollock's drip paintings and Rauschenberg's compose objects. In Pollock's case, an ambiguous relationship between painting and dancing is delivered by 'the performative act of "doing" painting' (Titmarsh, 2006:28). On the other hand, Rauschenberg shows a sense of escaping the surface of a painting through 'accumulated objects' (ibid). Here, these abandoned paintings have already been upgraded to 'absence of painting' (Titmarsh, 2006:29); this can be seen in the following movements of conceptual art and minimal art. Although neo-expressionism in the early 1980s was arguably a return to the 'proper name' of painting, the recent history is of abandoning traditional practices and, as Titmarsh notes, the rise of installation art. One problem concerns how we can distinguish expanded painting from other expanded practice (such as sculpture, film, photography, etc.). Against a trend for the 'convergence of all disciplines into "Art"' (Titmarsh, 2006:30), it is perhaps a reactionary move to 'return' to painting (as a pure form).

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 1.6 Pablo Picasso, *Still Life with Chair Caning*, 1912, oil on oil-cloth over canvas edge with rope, 20 x 37 cm.

‘The challenge now’, Titmarsh argues, ‘is to identify the shiver of painting within a convergence of materials and practice, or to be able to see a building, an installation or photograph within the discourse of painting’ (2006:30). Against the essentialism of painting, for example Greenbergian ‘flatness’, Titmarsh argues for a hermeneutics of painting: ‘[w]orks are identified as painting not on the basis of flatness or canvas or brushwork, but by a hermeneutics of painting: what at an historical moment can be proposed as painting’ (ibid). He offers three different examples from a trilogy of exhibitions held at Artspace in Sydney in 2005. Only one of these examples, Matthys Gerber’s *Diorama* (2005), includes conventional paintings. In this case, the viewing of the paintings is obscured by a set of viewing windows and criss-crossed string in front of the works. The other two examples do not include painting in any conventional sense and are of more particular interest for my own practice. The reason for this is that, obviously, the elements with which they engage do not share a similarity with my current practice. For instance, Nuha Saad and Mimi Tong’s *Intersecting geometries* (2005) is made up of a series of wooden columns, creating a ‘highly structured installation... Whatever remains of painting in this work had been reduced to a structural hinge between the wooden stretchers of painting and wooden frames of building construction’ (32). This work might be said to be a commentary on painting itself (though this is less important in my own work). The other cited work, Richard Dunn’s *Shadow Zone* (2005) – which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2 – is much closer to my own interests as an example of painting in the expanded field. Titmarsh describes Dunn’s installation as follows:

Dunn’s *Shadow Zone* was constructed from two large white translucent screens that ran down the centre of the gallery and a bank of fluorescent lights occupying the wall behind. The fluorescent lights were the only source of light within a darkened room. The intense light pumped out by them filters through the screens to create an opalescent alley of light running down the corridor space between the screens. The white screens exaggerated the dimensions of the canvas to the almost limitless proportion of sail cloth. Typically, canvas is the barrier between the viewers world and the world of the painted image, whereas here the screens functioned as a safety zone, a “shadow zone”, that invited the viewer and enveloped them in a spatio-temporal event. (Titmarsh, 2006:31)

Following my account in Introduction, in which I note the significance of shadows in my work, the reference here to a ‘shadow zone’ is of particular interest – both thematically and technically. However, of further importance is Titmarsh’s reading of the work as painting in

the expanded field. 'Colour, composition, form, texture, luminosity and flatness were once', Titmarsh noted, 'the indivisible atoms of painting' (2006:32); to cite Stephen Melville in his commentary on *As Painting*, 'all edges, everywhere hinged, both to itself and to what it adjoins, making itself out of such relation' (2001:21). Composition, for example, is not limited by a flat surface or a wooden frame, but by which could equally become a work by gathering objects. As a consequence a window view is replaced by 'surfacing of painting objects gather and events taken place' (Titmarsh, 2006:32).

My own work can be thought of directly in these terms as 'place' and 'gathering' rather than as a window or barrier, so as an event and a gathering. When I refer to my practice as a 'sense' of painting space, and as drawing upon painterly compositional methods, it can be understood that I am seeking to work with the primary elements of painting, to adopt these in themselves to produce compositional spaces, or places into which we can enter. Following this logic, the following narrative will provide a view of my practice in relation to relevant art movements and theories.

An Expansion Painting

Having reviewed the term the 'expanded field' and its meaning in terms of painting in the expanded field, this chapter now turns to more particular elements of my own practice. It begins, however, with notes about the influence of minimalism, which (as noted above) is a starting point for the expanded field and is a particular influence in my own art practice. In order to say more about my own practice as painting in the expanded field both theoretically and historically, I draw particularly on Titmarsh's account as well as Judd's 'Specific Object' (1975) and Hal Foster's 'The Crux of Minimalism' (1996). In doing so, a phenomenological account of practice can be developed. Obviously, in Titmarsh's writing, the target is defining painting in the expanded field although, unlike Fares, he does this through reference to actual examples of contemporary practice. In my case, I am similarly placing my practice at the centre of painting in the expanded field. Along similar lines to Titmarsh, I retain an interest in painterly elements as key features of painting. And importantly, in keeping with this thesis being *led* by its practice, I am more inclined to refer to an expansion of painting (i.e. to refer to expansion as a verb, as a 'doing' or making of painting), rather than to focus solely on the idea of the expanded 'field' (as a site of

theoretical and philosophical debate, as an academic exercise). This, then, is to echo my remarks in the Introduction, whereby expansion painting is intended as a definite reference to *practice* and as a form of practice as research, which works through my interest in and making of ambiguity, as sustained throughout my practice.

In its expanded sense, I am interested in painting as both a site and a temporal event. As evoked above, Titmarsh writes that, '[t]he surface of painting becomes a place rather than a window or a barrier. At the surfacing of painting objects gather and events take place' (2006:32). Thus, painterly compositional methods can be understood to underlie my development of a sense of painting space outside the limit of the frame. Moreover, since my practice incorporates the invisible 'material/medium' of air, there is a mobility of composition that gives the works a sense of animation. A key example of this is *Shoji* (2015) (Figure 0.13), which is made up of 10 x 10 centimetre squares of Japanese tissue paper overlaid to form a grid with a total size of approximately 5 x 2 metres. The work was *structured* in a busy corridor; in doing so, when people pass by *Shoji*, the airflows they produce disturb the individual squares of the grid. Apparently, the effect of the disturbing is to blow away the *view* of the shoji panel. The lattice-like arrangement totem soundly becomes order-less. From the time when the grid papers are side attached on to the wall, which creates a paradox sense of construction and deconstruction of the building. Moreover, the movement of the paper echoes in some respects the complex directionality of 'flung-ink' painting (Norman Bryson, 1988:101), which is both rendered within and outside of a grid at the same time. The practice, while compositional, moves beyond the 'image' to form a spatial interaction between artwork, vision, and the body. Visitors have commented, for example, that the work is like a membrane or skin, or has the effect of perfume. The tissue paper makes an invisible dynamic visible; here, particularly, this means that the invisible material/medium of air becomes visible by interacting with the delicate and weightless tissue papers. Moreover, tissue paper creates a lingering sensation of something that has just passed, just as we might notice all too briefly the perfume of a person who has then left us behind. Thus, *Shoji* only 'works' when people are passing by it; evoking a question about the creator of the work, which is seemingly both artist and viewer (and place).

Comparisons can be made between *Shoji* and one of the artworks Titmarsh writes of, Richard Dunn's *Shadow Zone* (Figure 1.7), shown at Artspace in Sydney in 2005. This a piece based on using fluorescent light, and polyester. The structure of the work is of two plain

white screens that cut through the centre of the space and lights that are placed behind a wall. The final element is live music. The work seems simple in construction, but its structure enables viewers to intervene in or combine with the work. The method of intervention is simply walking around the screens, with people's shadows becoming unfixed images. Here, the term unfixed images means that the images are constantly changing, without any mystery of the images, but describing the temporal effect of the work. Nevertheless, the connection between the *Shadow Zone* and *Shoji*, then, is the mobility or unfixed nature of images, allowing for interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. In both cases, there is the sense of a temporary and social engagement. Everyone who is near the work becomes part of the work, but then quickly disappears as individuals move away again. Following this, it is perhaps pertinent to pose the same question that *Shoji* evokes: who is the creator of the work? This question evokes Barthes' (1977) account of 'the death of the author', as a boundless imagination or connection beyond an original writing. In *Shadow Zone* and *Shoji*, we go beyond the author or creator (artist). Instead, there is an ambiguous 'relationship' between the viewer and the creator, with neither fixing the work. The construction of the work allows the viewers to make a reading, but equally, the works are completed or brought into being by the viewers. Indeed, without the visitors' contribution of body movements (which interacts with the surroundings) and is also an individual's shadow, *Shoji* would not be a complete work. Similarly, in *Shadow Zone*, the viewers' shadows are key to *completing* the work. In Titmarsh's account, the social phenomenon is referred to as a 'spatio-temporal event' (2006:31). I want to extend this term. For me, *Shadow Zone* can be said to be associated with the origin myth of painting. *Shadow Zone* contains the 'original' elements of painting, including not only light and shadow, but also the social dimension of drawing one another. To echo the account outlined in the Introduction regarding my understanding of 'The Origin of Painting' (myth), it is about the action of tracing, and indeed the tracing of one and another. As consequence, Dunn's *Shadow Zone* fits the concept of painting in the expanded field, not only as Titmarsh describes, but also according to my own account that looks back, beyond modernist/postmodernist debates, to Pliny's version of painting. This account understands painting as much more than marks upon a flat surface. It is an action between individuals, made through the medium of a flickering light in a room (and of course this is later extended with the Corinthian maid's father making sculptures).

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 1.7 Richard Dunn, *Shadow Zone*, 2005, Artspace, Sydney, 15 × 15 × 3.5m.

Similarly, the ambiguous relationship between the viewer and the creator in my own work as well as in Dunn's relates to features that are both physical and temporal. This reading, of course, contrasts with Fried's modernist theory. He argues that if a work includes such a social, participatory dimension then the work is to be marked *theatricality*. Theatricality is a term that Fried uses to critique Morris' situation aesthetic. For Fried, 'situation' will make an artwork become nothing: 'I think, worth remarking that "the entire situation" means exactly that: *all* of it – including, it seems, the beholder's *body*. There is nothing within his field [Morris' *situation*] of vision – nothing that he takes note of in any way – that, declares its irrelevance to the situation, and therefore to the experience, in question' (1998:155). Fried references Clement Greenberg's account of the theatrical in arguing that minimalist art is a form of manipulation. He wrote that 'It is a function, not just of the obtrusiveness and, often, even aggressiveness of literalist work, but of the special complicity that work extorts from the beholder' (ibid). Fried and Greenberg seek to uphold the integrity of the art object. It is defined entirely by what it is, rather than how it is viewed. As such, it is not hard to understand the reasons why Fried is against what he calls theatrical art. The question that Krauss evokes in describing the expanded field can be seen as an effect of theatrical art; 'what the object is, how we know it, and what it means to "know it"' (1977b:242). Krauss represents a key period of change for the institution of art and art criticism. Krauss explains the point as follows:

Fried had asserted that theatricality must work to the detriment of sculpture – muddying the sense of what sculpture uniquely was, depriving it thereby of meaning that was *sculptural*, and depriving it at the same time of seriousness. But the sculpture I have just been talking about is predicated on the feeling that sculpture *was* is insufficient because founded on an idealist myth. (ibid)

Foster develops a similar line of argument. He considers Fried's theory as excessive. He writes, '[w]ith its condemnation of theatrical art and its insistence on individual grace, this brief against minimalism is distinctly puritanical (its epigraph concerning the presentness of God refers to the Puritan theologian Jonathan Edwards). And its aesthetic does depend on an act of faith' (1996:52). Minimalism as a response against the 'pure' object or artwork is important in thinking about my own work. I align myself with Morris' *situating* of the artwork, and I am interested in the *relationship* between viewer and object, rather the coding of an object. Here, using the word coding suggests the problem of the *pictorial* view,

particularly when painting is involved with symbolic elements. In my works, the objects remain free by their lack of coding, and even more, authorship is free by sharing the role of creator, which is the social dimension in *Primarily Painting*. Painting is therefore about the moment that gathers people, objects, time, and space.

Interestingly, in Titmarsh's account of expanded painting, he ends with a reference to the primary elements: '[c]olour, composition, form, texture, luminosity and flatness' (2006:32). While his account does not reference in any way the elements of Pliny's 'The Origin of Painting', I would list similar elements, such as light, shadow, object, trace, outline and space (interesting texture and flatness are elements less noticeable in my practice). At the start of his account Titmarsh critiques the modernist concept of flatness, suggesting instead a method of defining a painting in the expanded field that is not based on flatness. Yet, paradoxically, at the end of the article, flatness re-emerges as one of the primary elements. This again raises a different point of perspective. Where I take more interest in the origin myth of painting, the key texts I have been citing regarding expanded sculpture and painting are defined by modernist debates. The concept of flatness, in this case, is founded in modernism, being described as the essence or condition of painting. This idea is most well-known from Greenberg's positive account in 'Modernist Painting' (1993). Greenberg takes his readers further into the Renaissance, where 'the flat surface, the shape of the support, the properties of the pigment' (Greenberg, 1993:86) were seen as limitations and 'negative factors' (ibid). By contrast, for Greenberg, the limitation and negative factors are positive factors and are realised by using painting to conceal painting. A sense of being against a perspectival illusionist technique reverses the importance of what is shown and how it is shown (based on flatness), which can be seen in the following narrative:

The Old Masters had sensed that it was necessary to preserve what is called the integrity of the picture plane: that is, to signify the enduring presence of flatness underneath and above the most vivid illusion of three-dimensional space. The apparent contradiction involved was essential to the success of their art, as it is indeed to the success of all pictorial art. The Modernists have neither avoided nor resolved this contradiction; rather they have reversed its terms. One is made aware of the flatness of their pictures before, instead of after, being made aware of what the flatness contains. (Greenberg, 1993:87)

Echoing modernism, my practice avoids the technique of perspective. Similarly, I am not seeking to use perspective or shading techniques to create the illusion or views of space. I am interested simply in visual space, or the experience of the visual. Moreover, I am not presenting flatness in painting, but rather a 'sense' of painting space. However, one cannot ignore that the painting techniques, perspective and shading, are an important part of visual knowledge, or the creation of visual experience. To apply these techniques requires an experience of space. The process of *representing* space in a painting is not necessarily to *copy* the space, but rather to *address* the concept of space. Pieter Jansz Saenredam's paintings (see Figure 1.8), for example, combine more than one space or viewpoint into a single picture plane. This is not a 'real' space, but is rather a means of thinking about space. Nevertheless, the functions of perspective and shadowing relate to making a single picture view or fixed image. Such a picture view or fixed image is more obviously related to photography, which provides a 'perfect' copy or evidence of something that has existed. The distinction between painting and photography is made by Susan Sontag when she asks whether we would wish for a painting or a photograph of Shakespeare:

Between two fantasy alternatives, that Holbein the Younger had lived long enough to have painted Shakespeare or that a prototype of the camera had been invented early enough to have photographed him, most Bardolators would choose the photograph. This is not just because it would presumably show what Shakespeare really looked like, for even if the hypothetical photograph were faded, barely legible, a brownish shadow, we would probably still prefer it to another glorious Holbein. Having a photograph of Shakespeare would be like having a nail from the True Cross. (Sontag, 1979:154)

The photograph offers evidence. It can present the 'truth', but it is not real, meaning it is not made up feelings or sensations. By contrast, painting lacks veracity, but is based in sensation.

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 1.8 Pieter Jansz Saenredam, *The Interior of the Grote Kerk at Haarlem*, 1636-7, 59.5 x 1.7cm.

To refer back to the Introduction, my practice actively seeks to undo the fixed image, in particular the images from the mass media. It is against representations of truth. For me, such images are not only manipulative, but also lack imagination. Again, the 'origin' myth reminds us that painting is about the action of tracing and movement, not about fixing an image or imposing a frame of presentation. The moment that the Corinthian maid traces the young man's shadow outline she is engaged in a complex interplay of the interpersonal and intrapersonal. The fixed image is, literally, unable to provide such a movement of meaning and creation of meaning. A fully embodied relationship between the body and objects can be seen as a key characteristic of painting. Thus, in my practice, instead of creating the illusion of space through techniques such as shading, the practice seeks to provide a sense of space by engaging with specific architectural space. In order to create a 'view' with the building (working with the geometry of space), I adopt processes such as tracing my shadows; in order to mark out a set of interactions within the space.



Fig. 1.9 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Height*, 2015, rubber band, masonry nail, dimensions variable.

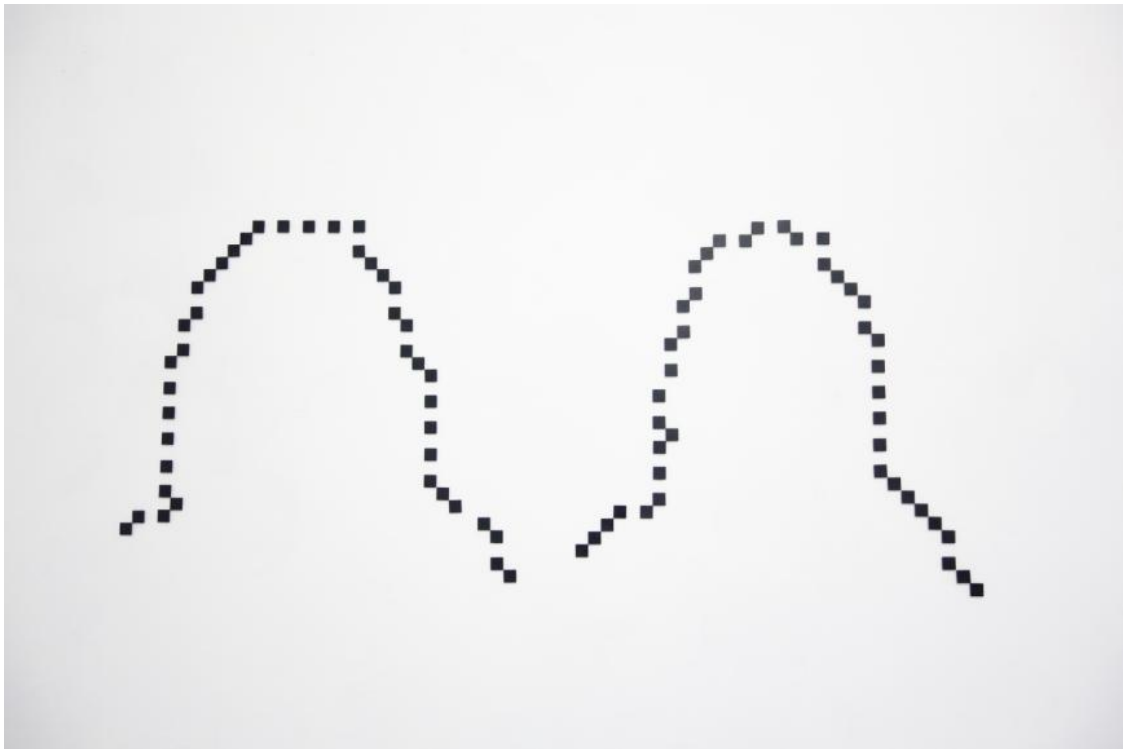


Fig. 1.10 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Experimental I*, 2015, self adhesive sticky-back plastic, dimensions variable.



Fig. 1.11 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Installation V*, 2015, acrylic paint, dimensions variable.



Fig. 1.12 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Punch I*, 2015, acrylic paint, dimensions variable.

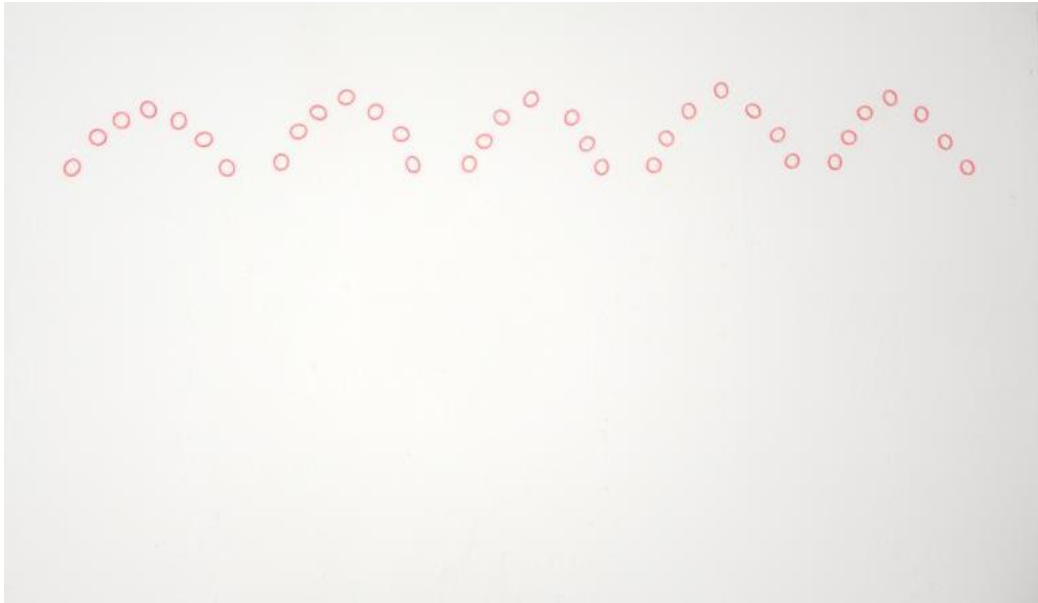


Fig. 1.13 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Punch II*, 2015, rubber band, dimensions variable.

In Figure 1.9 *Height* (2005), for example, my use of shadow is reduced to a minimal marking out. *Height* is constructed out of ten masonry nails and thirteen rubber bands. The appearance of the *Height* is a rectangle, and this rectangle is consternated by four 2.5 and 2.5 centimetre squares. Unlike *Experimental I* (2005) (Figure 1.10) and *Installation V* (Figure 1.11), *Height* is a very abstract *portrait*. However, in each of these works and in my practice more generally, an important consideration is the materials and material processes involved. Again, this is a way in which it can be understood as painting in the expanded field. There is a process of making or applying marks and materials through which works can form. In the case of *Height*, for example, the use of rubber bands and masonry nails is intended to echo the surrounding space, especially in the use of masonry nails, which are materials for fixing the structure of the building. Obviously, the nails in my piece lose their original function. They become ready-made objects.

However, when the nails are made visible to the viewers, they provide the potential of deconstruction. The nail retains a suggestion of fixing something, yet the feature of the rubber band is to be unfixed, due to the materiality that which is flexible and elastic. The unstable rubber band is in tension with the nails, offering a paradoxical relationship between the fixed and unfixed. Moreover, for me personally, the structured rubber bands echo the unstable moment in the earthquake shake (as discussed in my Introduction). I seek to draw out a sense of physicality and materiality as a way of uniting my practice with the surrounding environment. Or put another way, the practice is *embodied* with the architecture. Several of my works can be equated with gesture painting, since I use my body as a marker and as a medium. However, my practice is intended to relate to more than the single body that produces gesture painting. It is not simply about recording a trace of the body, but about locating the possibilities for making traces. It is dealing with a whole series of possible body movements in architectural space. Therefore, the careful study of material and physical properties within a defined space is important in how I compose the work. Thus, it is important to explore materials through the making process; in this way, thoughts relating to the work emerge, allowing, as Tim Ingold puts it, ‘thinking through making’ (2013:xi). Ingold has written, for example, of how learning comes through practice, rather than merely the acquiring of knowledge. In recounting a course he runs which involves model-making, he explains how students are required to construct a historical object through doing: ‘[t]hey had to draw or sketch it and make plans of it, and reflect on how their drawing affected their observations. And they had to make a model from readily available

raw materials, and consider what model-making could teach about the thing, bearing in mind the differences of scale and materials between the thing and the model' (Ingold, 2013:12). This recursive approach of making and reflecting is an important part of a practice, and underpins my approach to making. An example of this can be made through two works, namely *Punch I* (2015) (Figure 1.12) and *Punch II* (2015) (Figure 1.13), which emerged from the experience of de-installing prior work.

In the process of taking down mosaics on a wall from a previous work in which I was engaged the surface of the wall was damaged. The circle-shaped holes reminded me of an ancient painting technique. Painters punched holes by following the outline of figures; this is a method of reproduction, yet paradoxically, this way of reproduction leads to an outline that is flexible or ambiguous. The outline is transformed from lines to dots; the circle shape of dots is not only an abstract figure, but also deprives the diverse directions of the outline. The process of making in this case did not involve a draft line or initial outline of a shadow because the feature of shadow is unstable. In the other words, the mark-making process is applied straight onto the wall. At first look, these two works are made of different materials; *Punch I* is made with black acrylic paint, whilst the materials that *Punch II* used are PVA glue and rubber bands. However, there is a similarity between them, for example in the shapes of the hollow cylinders. To compare the effects of the works, both of their outcomes suggest a firmness of shapes, yet, equally *Punch I* also presents a sense of fluidity, which is an effect from the drips. Nevertheless, in the process of making *Punch I* the firmness in making the marks required strength in the action of stamping. Furthermore, it is a vertical gesture, similar to the action of punching in (an ancient painting technique). On the other hand, the process of making *Punch II* is wobbly. The rubber bands sometimes slide down on the wall's surface, due to the gravity. Both works oscillate between firmness and fluidity. Both play visible and invisible lines; the outcome of this is that there is no clear line or outline. In describing a selection of my works, I have sought to show how important elements of my practice are rooted in a consideration of painting. However, the connections I draw are not only about painterly elements (and methods), but also concern the relationship between physical and psychical experiences as a response to certain materials.

In 'Specific Object' (1975), Donald Judd provides an account of recent works of that period (the 1960s) that are 'neither painting nor sculpture' (1975:181). This suggests that they cannot be classified as following a particular 'movement, school or style' (ibid); he refers to a

three-dimensional work, rather than simply painting or sculpture. Judd's essay is important to note here since it is one of the key texts that re-considers the painting 'space', '[a]lmost all paintings are spatial in one way or another' (1975:182), he writes. As a challenge to the ideas about painting at the time, he asks us to look again at the painted space as a shape itself (noting the rectangular plane of the painting comes from placing the work flat against the wall, and which is still emphasised in the work of Pollock, Rothko, Still, Newman, and later in Reinhardt and Noland). The critical view of painting starts from a painting frame and with it is the relationship between the inside and outside of the frame. As the choice of medium is a key consideration, therefore, minimalists' paintings and their surroundings are much more interesting. On the other hand, perspective and shadowing techniques create problems. Referring to Mark Rothko's paintings, Judd explains how the problem with oil paint relates to depth, and suggests Rothko's space is 'traditionally illusionistic' (1975:182):

Anything on a surface has space behind it. Two colors on the same surface almost always lie on different depths. An even color, especially in oil paint, covering all or much of painting is almost always both flat and infinitely spatial. The space is shallow in all of the work in which the rectangular plane is stressed. Rothko's space is shallow and the soft rectangles are parallel to the plan, but the space is almost traditionally illusionistic. (Judd, 1975:182)

Judd's turn to three-dimensional work is an attempt to maintain a practice of painting, but one that is in opposition to traditional forms, and even extends the idea of 'a' painting beyond a singular object, to allow a painting (or three-dimensional works) to be made up of a series of paintings and objects. In this case, painting as a grouped composition can make a new space between paintings and the environment in which they are created or installed. The objective of painting, for Judd, is to make it as 'powerful as it can be thought to be' (Judd, 1975:184). The method involves creating painting objects that are not plane: 'anything in three dimensions can be any shape, regular or irregular, and can have any relation to the wall, floor, ceiling, room, rooms or exterior or none at all. Any material can be used, as is or painted' (ibid). Such an approach is not the same as the concern of pluralism, of 'anything goes' (Fares, 2004:477). The materials used are based on a careful consideration of the connection to their surroundings. The new works to which Judd refers are not easily defined. Instead we might describe them as presenting a dilemma of form, or as Titmarsh describes, 'an existential riddle or a zen koan painting subjected to this kind of questioning

becomes uncanny, obsessional, infinite, in flux, riddlesome, spatio-temporal, and ultimately not contained by common sense definitions of painting' (2006:29). More simply, to repeat Judd's phrase, they are 'neither painting nor sculpture' and they are 'specific objects'.

As noted above, the influence of minimalist art is able to help me to think about the materiality, physicality and phenomenological conditions in my practice. Further consideration can be made with reference to Foster's 'The Crux of Minimalism' (1996). Before turning to this, however, it is important to note the well-known argument between Michael Fried and Robert Smithson, which centers around the physicality of minimalist art. For Smithson, Fried's theoretical account is contradictory: '[w]hat Michael Fried attacks is what he is. He is a naturalist who attack natural time' (Smithson, 1996:67, originally published in 1967). This argument is retaliation to Fried's critical view of Tony Smith's statement in Samuel Wagstaff's 'Talking with Tony Smith' (1966). Nevertheless, in Foster's understanding of Fried's theory, Smith's statements become one of the key pieces of evidence that supports Fried's (1998) 'conventional nature of art' theory, which is a symptom of the death of art. As Foster states, '[w]hat was revealed to Smith, Fried argues, was the "conventional nature of art." "And this Smith seems to have understood not as laying bare the essence of art, but as announcing its end"' (1996:51). Accordingly, one can see Fried's account as an invigilator of minimalism movement. However, for Foster, minimalist art can be viewed from two perspectives. One follows Judd's account as outlined above, whilst the other follows Morris' account. Judd's 'Specific Object' (1975) and Robert Morris' 'Notes on Sculpture, Parts 1 and 2' (1966) are the two key texts in this respect; these are critiqued in Michael Fried's 'Art and Objecthood' (1998). As Foster explains, an understanding of minimalist art following Morris' work brings out a new aesthetic that relates to 'the death of author' (as discussed above), whereby the object contains the various positions for the viewer to enact. As Foster writes:

The minimalist suppression of anthropomorphic images and gestures is more than a reaction against the abstract-expressionist model of art; it is a "death of the author" (as Roland Barthes would call it in 1968) that is at the same time a birth of the viewer: "The object is but one of the terms of the newer esthetic... One is more aware than before that he himself is establishing relationships as he apprehends the object from the various positions and under varying conditions of light and spatial context." Here we are at the edge of "sculpture in the expanded field" (as Kraus would call it in 1978).

(1996:50)

Again, Foster follows Krauss' sense of the expanded field, but also implies that Morris' work is preceded in the expanded field. Foster's analysis of minimalist art, which provides a way of understanding the role of the viewer in the work, leads towards an account of the play of the interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships, further emphasising the influence of minimalism in my practice. A comparison can be made between Morris' *Installation* (1964) at the Green Gallery (Figure 1.2) with my practice, *Shoji* (2015) (Figure 0.13). The interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships are important in both works in terms of how we both experience the spaces and how we need to 'complete' the works. The viewers make the works *complete* by walking in the gallery or passing by the corridor. The physicality of the viewers and the works is an important element in how we also think internally about the experience into which we enter. In effect, there is no clear boundary between inside and outside. The materials that make up the work in the physical space are outside of our body, yet it is only through our 'reading' of the space and how the materials relate to the space and our own bodies that the works truly become perceptible. In this respect, I would suggest a potential reading of the 'sense' of painting space through Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological account (which is evoked briefly below and also referred further in the next chapter). The language of phenomenology is helpful in understanding the interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. Further philosophical consideration is taken up in the following section, notably with reference to the work of Gego whose works defy the static nature of the 'sculpture' in favour of not just human life, but also 'living' forms and structures.

Figuration, the Line through Space and Painting as Multiple Objects

In addition to the aforementioned account of painting in the expanded field, and in looking further at my own interest in an 'expanded practice', this section offers additional reflections on how we understand painting in an expanded sense. Three specific themes are presented with respect to three contemporary artists, Ann Hamilton, Gego and Torie Begg. It is not to argue that their individual practices pertain fully to questions of painting, but by examining selected works of each, I explore different methods of making and give further explanation of my interest in interpersonal/intrapersonal and internal/external relationships. The three specific themes presented here are characteristic of my works: figuration, the line through

space and painting as multiple objects. These can be thought of initial establishing thoughts on my works, which I then developed further, in more extended ways in Chapter 2. This, then, is to offer an unfolding account of my *thinking* about my work, so as to present my practice as another kind of philosophy, or a *practice* of philosophy.

Inevitably, when considering the plurality of contemporary art and its 'freedom' of options, it is necessary to be selective. As will be outlined below, there are specific works by the three artists, Hamilton, Gego and Begg which have attracted my attention, specific to my own interests. Of course, a different set of contemporary artists could no doubt be offered pertinent to the features I explore of figuration, line through space and painting as multiple objects. For example, similar questions of figuration can be seen in the work of Joan Jonas, Geta Brăteascu and Anne Bean. A sense of line through space can be found in works by Marion Baruch and Christiane Löhr and Monika Grzymala. While a focus on painting as multiple objects can be seen in Melissa Gordon's and Susan Hiller's works. Nonetheless, I have found Hamilton, Gego and Begg particularly useful in contextualising my work. Hamilton's perspective of body and object is close to my interests of internal and external relationships. Furthermore, Hamilton's consideration of object echoes my understanding (but not replication) of minimalist art. As noted above, minimalist art is not a matter of objective things, but rather a study of the phenomenon between body and object, which can be seen, for example, in Robert Morris' *Installation* (1964) at Green Gallery. This phenomenological connection also can be seen in Briony Fer's (2002) analysis of minimalist art (originally published in 1994). For Fer, minimalist art presents both an internal and external body, suggesting we can 'reconsider another aspect of the bodily orientation involved, in light not only of the external or lived body, but of the "internal body" as it had been understood by [Melaine] Klein and the unconscious processes described by psychoanalysis' (2002:76). Following Fer's view of minimalist art, one can see another way of understanding the internal and external relationship. This can be further explored in the work of Gego, who presents a strong example of a practice that questions ideas about form and space, consistently examining and challenging the boundary 'line' between inside and outside.

The work of these artists has not necessarily influenced my own work directly, but as noted, the comparisons help me to further articulate aspects and elements of my practice with regards to defining an expansion of painting. The work of Hamilton I relate specifically to the term 'figuration', which references both the action of making forms and the body as the site of figuration (notably through performance work). Furthermore, both Hamilton and I share an interest in visual language and the materiality of objects and videos; in both cases offering an exploration of figuration of an unfixed and live image. Gego's sculptural practice offers consideration of the 'line' (as both two and three-dimensional, and as distinctive and

imaginary). I find important parallels with Gego's work in terms of a *persistent* pursuit of another kind of philosophy or critical enquiry, as based on visual practice, on a making of forms that respond and situate within particular spaces. Selected works of Begg challenge ideas about painting, objecthood, and space. They show a specific handling of colour, and arguably present another kind of minimalist aesthetic, which echoes my own analysis of minimalist art, as considered earlier in this chapter. It is worth pointing out, of the three artists cited here, Begg is the only one to use actual paint in her work.

Figuration

Sound, voice, touch, motion, extension and moral recognition... The figure made by practices of making themselves. (Susan Stewart cited in John Simon 2006:1)

John Simon opens his essay, 'An Essay on the Objects of Ann Hamilton' (2006) with reference to Susan Stewart's 'Poetry and Fate of The Senses' (2002). The objects and installations of Hamilton not only provide poetry of the senses, but also create another kind of poetic form. In particular, this involves the process of making, as Simon says:

A parallel illumination of sorts may be gleaned as well from this passage – with the substitution of the word "art" for "poetry" and the addition of "and other things" to Stewart's phrase "made of language": the way Hamilton moves from the particular to the general and back to the particular, remaking the "figure" of an object into an installation, or, conversely, unmaking an installation and remaking its component parts as different "figures," fixing at different points in time and in different ways the concepts and relationships, indeed the voices and defining silent spaces, between her elements. (2006:4)

Simon is, of course, playing on the word figure, which contains a double meaning. On the one hand, it describes the way Hamilton creates her works, suggesting the action of making: 'figuring of objects to the installation and re-figuring the installations to objects' (Simon, 2006:2). On the other hand, the word figure is directly referring to the use of the body in her installations, which often involve performance art. The effect of putting figures in the installation literally brings the art to life. The first work of Hamilton's to involve performance

art is *Room in Search of a Position* (1984) (Figure 1.14), which she made when studying at Yale. For this work, Hamilton made a suit for herself, effectively positioning her as a sculpture in front of the viewers. She continues with an exploration of performance art in later installation works that again include figures (performance art) in various ways. Nonetheless, she is open to the ambiguities between art forms when she reflects back on her work:

I decided either to study sculpture or weaving. I can remember saying to myself, 'I'm interested in the relationships between things in space. And more important than the things themselves is the way they come into relation.' I assumed then this was more sculpture and less textiles; now I might say it is more textiles and less sculpture.

(Hamilton cited in Simon, 2006:8)

Hamilton's works are multi-media, using textiles, installation, sculpture and performance art, but underlying this is a notion of *figuring* in the work. Hamilton identifies 'temporality' as an important consideration for her interest in both performance art and installation art. This leads Hamilton to explore the use of video, which she starts to use in the late 1980s. As noted earlier, in the introduction, photography and film are obviously concerned with time and the dilemma between life and death. Barthes' 'punctum' addresses the projective connection between pictures and their viewers, and in doing so destabilised the image, suggesting that it can change over time or according to the viewer. However, Barthes' reading of the photograph does force us back to the fixed image, to a specific moment captured in time. In my practice, I am less interested in these fixed moments. Moreover, beyond Burgin's sequence-images, as I noted in the Introduction, I am interested in how the immaterial of shadow exceeds fixed images and sequence-images. Accordingly, the structures of ambiguity can be seen as a form of animation, as a 'live' tracing. One of Hamilton's video pieces, *ghost... a border · video* (2000)¹ (Figure 1.15), evokes not only a question of temporality, but also relates to drawing as a unique unrepeatable form. The *ghost... a border · video* is a five-minute video. Hamilton records herself drawing a line and reverses it. The reversed line appears to make a ghostly trace.

¹ A video of *ghost... a border · video* (2000): <http://bit.ly/2CZudYd>

In this work, Hamilton offers both a repeatable and an unrepeatable line. It is repeatable because it is recorded and replayed; equally, in seeing its ghostly form, we are reminded that it only ever exists once. The drawing of a line is both internal and external. It is a signature of someone; it is a style that we associate only with one single person, their 'inner' self. Equally, in Hamilton's account of drawing, through emphasizing the physicality and materiality of drawing she exposes the line as something external to us. It is as an extension of ourselves that then 'runs away' from us. Hamilton notes that 'it is my trying to draw... finding how hand and breath and live time meet in attention to leave a trace that is unrepeatable' (2006). A comparison can be noted between this work and my video piece, *Brush* (2015)² (Figure 1.16), which again makes use of the temporality of film to examine the drawing of (and out of) myself.

² A video of *Brush* (2015): <http://bit.ly/2AB6nQA>

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 1.14 Ann Hamilton, *Room in Search of a Position*, 1984.

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 1.15 Ann Hamilton, *ghost...a border · video*, 2000, video still.



Fig. 1.16 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Brush*, 2015, video still.

In *Brush*, there is a play of temporalities of the body. On the other hand, the slow methodical process of drawing or marking out my own body (based on my shadow) is a way of dwelling on and in its presence. Similarly, there is a sense of it being short-lived, since one marking out is quickly effaced by the next. The grid form also evokes a tension with the technology of seeing. An organic body undertaking a repeated action is overwritten by the action of the film, all of which is measured by the grid of the background. There is a conflict between human life and machine. On the other hand, the over-drawing of the outline of my own shadow leads to a saturated and then an apparently erased image, where it is no longer possible to determine what is inside and outside of the line, namely what is human and what is film. An effect of the film can be related to Nishitani Keiji's (cited in Norman Bryson, 1988) undoing of the anthropocentric subject, which he refers to as radical impermanence. His use of the term *śūnyatā* suggests a field of vision and sensation in which subject-entity and object-entity break up. As Bryson explains:

The concept of the entity can be preserved only by an optic that casts around each entity a perceptual frame that makes a *cut* from the field and immobilizes the cut within the static framework. But as soon as that frame is withdrawn, the object is found to exist as part of a mobile continuum that cannot be cut anywhere. (1988:97)

In attempting to write about such a continuum, Nishitani adopts two key aphorisms: 'fire does not burn fire' and 'water does not wash water' (cited in Bryson, 1988:99). For the fire to be fire, it must extend out from its enclosure of the flame; water can only be water by its infiltration of that which is dry. The reference I make to animation can be considered further in relation to a large-scale work by Hamilton, *Whitecloth* (1999) (Figure 1.17, Figure 1.18, and Figure 1.19). *Whitecloth* was an installation at The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art. The director of the museum, Harry Philbrick provides an account:

Hamilton initiated *Whitecloth* by revealing thirteen windows which had been covered over during the 1964 conversion. The space, animated by the return of natural light and a view to the exterior, again became the context for domestic objects transformed by movement and touch. Some pieces are imbedded into the building's membrane, some cut through walls and pass through floors, others are arranged in the space like object in a still life. (1999:6-7)

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 1.17 Steve Willard, one of the photos in Ann Hamilton's *Whitecloth* project, 1999.

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 1.18 Steve Willard, one of the photos in Ann Hamilton's *Whitecloth* project, 1999.

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 1.19 Deschenes, Liz, one of the photos in Ann Hamilton's *Whitecloth* project, 1999.

In this case, the process of 'figuring' the installations creates a connection with space. The careful setting up of machines and performance art gives cause for the ambiguous movements between machinery/performance movements and viewers' movements. In other words, we consider the location of the line between the creator and the viewers, which here echoes Dunn's *Shadow Zone*: the visitor's body becomes a part of the exhibit. Furthermore, Simon suggests an 'overall figure' that emerges from the various figures of visitors' bodies. To draw a similar line, in my practice, the idea of an 'overall figure' is similarly important to how an artwork is made to *work* (to be complete). The visitors are both *inside* and *outside* of the work. The overall figure contains the sense of a shared image or experience, making the relationship between interpersonal and intrapersonal is often ambiguous. As previously discussed, *Shoji* (Figure 0.13), for example, is a key work of mine that foregrounds an interplay between artist and viewer, and in doing so, suggests the artist and visitor as creators of the work. However, the work itself – like *Brush* – can be said to 'record' (if fleetingly) an overall figure that is made up of bodies and airflow. In part, as with Hamilton's work, this can be seen as a kind of social engagement.

On the other hand, the very large scales of Hamilton's works create a greater sense of immersion and collectivity. Scale is an important consideration; however, it should be noted that Hamilton's work is less about a dialogue with a particular space. My approach is to connect with viewers using a careful structure that is inspired by and in communication with the original architectural space, rather than using a grand scale of work (as a site in itself) to create an atmosphere. With *Through* (2016) (Figure 1.20), I experimented with a different approach. This work is made up of a screen, dowelling rods, and fabrics. The size is around 203 x 90 cm and 98 cm depth. It is designed as a structure to accommodate the human body, so providing an architectural space. *Through* does echo elements of the space in which it is installed, with a stage coming out from the top of the wall in a studio space; however, the stage is neither functional nor decorative. Moreover, *Through* provides an individual space through which to move, or to 'draw through', as the translucent screen and curtains make the structure *half* open and form a screen upon which someone walking through is projected onto as a faint outline or shadow. It is strange, but beautiful at the same time to see human figures move through the work, their figures appearing upon and through the fabric screen. The soft and translucent texture of fabrics is similar to Japanese tissue paper. My use of Japanese tissue paper is to echo the *shoji gami* (障子), and similarly here, people can see the new work as a transformation of my previous works. Equally, the work

represents a further transformation in my interest and/or handling of memory. Here the 'image' is closer to the moving image of film and animation (such as shadow theatre). The passage of walking through the work is also a form of transformation for the body, to transform the walking process into a form. The translucent screen is suggestive of the trace in Jacques Derrida's (1993) account (and which is considered in more detail in Chapter 2). For Derrida, trace and trait relate to the concepts of dynamic and sign. They are also the terms most often used in relation to painting and drawing, which refer us back historically to ideas about action and mark. As Malcolm K. Richards writes:

The word 'mark' appears, at times, as *marche* in the French text. The word *marche* links up with other French derivations of this term, such as *la marche*, or 'walking', possessing allusions to Derrida's essay, as well as relating to another visual term in this text, *trait* or 'trace'. All these verbal (and visual) traces are signs of difference or *différence*. Either they are significant marks made by someone other than myself or they are marks made by me in the past, even if it is a recent past. (Richards, 2013:54)

The connection here of marks to walking is made very explicit. *Through* provides both trait and trace: walking through the work we see the action of walking as a trait (e.g. a personal trait of the body), and its echo upon the screen is, then, its trace. If this seems too literal a reading between the practice and these philosophical terms, it should be remembered that the work presents these instances between trait and trace in a dynamic and fluid manner. However, trace and trait will be explored further in the next chapter.



Fig. 1.20 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Through*, 2016, fabric, wood, dowel, dimensions variable.



Fig. 1.21 Cheng-Chu Weng *Line X* , 2015, Japanese tissue paper, dimensions variable.

In thinking back to the Introduction of this thesis, in which I noted the influence of Burgin's involuntary associations and Barthes' interest in the haiku form, the works I create present us with brief instances in which an 'idea' (a philosophical thought) might emerge as a response to 'entering' the work (and not necessarily the other way around in which an 'idea' – as in logical reasoning – might inform the making of a work). However, in order to keep the practice as a *flash* of thought or experience, it is important to be aware of both echoing and exploring movement and space. An example of this is a work that both echoes and contrasts with *Through*. *Line X* (2015) (Figure 1.21) was installed at a point very close to where *Through* was latter installed. *Line X* emphasises the corner of the corridor rather than the stage. The lines of the tissue paper are attached to one corner of the stage, yet visually it looks like a close square shape from some angles. Moreover, *Line X* changes the way that people move through the space. Visitors walked around the work rather than walking through, which altered their natural pathway. Following the above accounts of my own work and Hamilton's works, a sense of the body dynamic in architectural spaces is noted, which in turn leads to the suggestion of the bridge between artist and viewer.

Interestingly, however, in Hamilton's *The Event of a Thread* (2012-2013) (Figure 1.22, Figure 1.23 and Figure 1.24), she goes beyond the human body. In her statement on the work, Hamilton refers to Aristotle's concept of 'social animals', which is not only limited to humans, but also includes animals. Therefore, in the installation, the real birds in the environment are part of the objects/figures. Alongside the birds, which were symbolised and placed in the installation, performance artists (writers and singers, for instance) were arranged in particular locations (Figure 1.25). These *structured* a poetic and peaceful environment. Furthermore, in the centre of the space, Hamilton placed tight white silks from the 70 feet high arches down to the floor, which divided the space. The silks were used for swinging; as a consequence, once one swinging the action made the fabric move. The delicate movements of the silks created the sensation of floating. Some visitors would lie on the ground under the silks; to enjoy their movements (Figure 1.26). The theme of this project was Hamilton's childhood memory, particularly the moment of being on a swing. Hamilton describes, 'how hard we would work for those split seconds, flung at furthest extension, just before the inevitable downward and backward pull, when we felt momentarily free of gravity, a little hiccup of suspension when our hands loosened on the chain and our torsos raised off the seat' (2013:7). For Hamilton, the act of swinging is a social act – '[w]e were

sailing, so inside the motion – time stopped – and then suddenly rushed again toward us. We would line up on the playground and try to touch the sky, alone together’ (ibid).

Overall, it can be seen that Hamilton’s interest in figuration is complex and layered. She uses materials figuratively, but she also incorporates the ‘body’ (with performance artist and the viewer’s own body). She is also thinking through intangible elements such as her childhood memories, which of course echoes my own interest in working with spaces in both physical and psychical senses. My works do *not* seek to represent memories, but rather draw upon these as a part of a means to ‘compose’ environments that themselves can give rise to new thoughts, emotions, and experiences, and perhaps even to prompt the retrieval of one’s own forgotten memories. Again, taking *Around* (2017) (Figure 0.8) as an example, it is found that private images can ‘spilled’ over in the process of experiencing it or talking about the work (see Introduction).

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 1.22 One of the images in Ann Hamilton's *the event of a thread* project, 2012-2013.

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 1.23 One of the images in Ann Hamilton's *the event of a thread* project, 2012-2013.

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 1.24 One of the images in Ann Hamilton's *the event of a thread* project, 2012-2013.

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 1.25 One of the images in Ann Hamilton's *the event of a thread* project, 2012-2013.

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 1.26 One of the images in Ann Hamilton's *the event of a thread* project, 2012-2013.

The Line through Space

I discovered the charm of the line in and of itself – the line in space as well as the line drawn on a surface, and nothing between the lines and the sparkling when they cross, when they are interrupted, when they are of different colours or different types. I discovered that sometimes the in-between lines is as important as the line by itself.
(Gego cited in Lisa Le Feuvre, 2013:33)

In Paul Klee's *Pedagogical Sketchbook* (1925), he famously opens with the idea of taking a line for a 'walk'. The line is active, almost alive. As the line reaches a point it joins up with another line, and so forth until all the lines join together to form a plane. In this way, lines seem to occur in the spaces between other lines. Klee then shows us both passive and active lines and forms that are 'the result of an activation of planes' (1953:19). A diagram (Figure 1.27) that Klee attached with this sentence clearly shows what I mean regarding the active lines becoming planes. These lines and planes are of course the common elements of drawing and painting. However, the 'line' is also brought to life in a similar way, but in the three-dimensional space in the work of Gego. Her own words, as cited above, echo Klee, noting, for example, her interest in the 'in-between lines' (Gego cited in Feuvre, 2013:33). In this case, the lines giving rise to in-between lines are physical lines, using wires and threads.



[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 1.27 Fig. 8 (1925).

Born in Hamburg in Germany in 1912, Gego studied architecture and engineering, before engaging in art practice. She reacted against sculpture, which she saw as a 'heavy, immovable, firmly situated, static object' (Feuvre, 2013:31). By contrast, Gego's works appear delicate, wire structures, which almost seem to grow into the space where they are being exhibited. As Lisa Le Feuvre describes:

Gego extended the point into a line, creating planes, volume and three-dimensional projections into space, working with structure, scale and gravity. For Gego this was a constant process of discovery, both for herself and those encountering her work. Her sculptures or, as she preferred to call them, *bichos*, directly address the phenomenological encounter with the artwork. Translated, *bicho* means either "bug", "vermin" or an unspecified insect, colloquially used to refer to an indeterminate object, a derogatory term applied to things and people. (2013:31)

In Gego's works (Figure 1.28 and Figure 1.29), I can quickly see similarities with my own practice, which also includes the rendering of two-dimensional compositional elements as three-dimensional structures; as 'lined' spaces into which the viewer is able to enter or co-join, similarly prompting a 'phenomenological encounter' (ibid) with the work. Feuvre's essay 'Growing Lines into Sculpture' (2013) draws out the tension between the material and the immaterial. In reference to Gego's *Vibration in Black* (1957) (Figure 1.30), for example, the work was made from aluminium and was painted in black. The structure of the work allows it to *vibrate* with its surrounding, through engaging with immaterials such as gravity, air, light and shadow for instance; as Feuvre described, '[t]hrough its own structure it brings light and shadow into its own form and out into the surrounding architectural limits' (2013:35). On the other hand, in my works, they are not limited by architectural space, but rather extending the structure, as in *Line X* (see Figure 1.21), for example. However, the engagement in immaterials in *Vibration in Black* was seen as the first 'sculpture' that was approaching the new dimensions, such as kinetic art. Furthermore, Feuvre suggests that Gego was influenced by the *cinetismo*, which was a movement in the city where she stayed. Besides this logical connection, paradoxically, Gego did not see her works as sculptures.

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 1.28 Gego, *Reticulárea (ambientación)*, 1969, installation.

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 1.29 Suttle, William, a photo of Gego's *Chorros* (Exhibition Sculpture and Drawings), 1971, Dominique Lévy, New York, ©Fundación Gego.

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 1.30 Gego, *Vibration in Black*, 1957, Aluminum painter black, 75 x 60 x 43 cm
, Foundation Gego Collection at the Museum of Fine Arts, Texas.

Although Gego herself did not refer to her works as sculptures (due to equating this term to static objects), Feuvre suggests that we can now use the term in its broader sense, after Krauss, because of what Feuvre notes as the 'constant expansion of what "sculpture" might be' (2013:31). Feuvre's essay relates to a retrospective of Gego's works, under the title 'Line as Object' (at the Henry Moore Institute, in Leeds, 2013), which is adapted from a statement by Gego in which she speaks of the 'line as object to play with' (Gego cited in Feuvre, 2013: 31). As noted in the above quote, Feuvre begins the account of the exhibition with reference to the opening work, *Vibration in Black* (Figure 1.30). This early work uses both material (black aluminium) and immaterial elements (air movement, light and shadow), which combine, as she notes, to create 'optical and titular vibration' (2013:35). Although I tend to use wood rather than metal in my work, Feuvre's description could similarly be applied to my practice, since I seek to work with air, light and shadow, through which combined 'structures' or properties are brought together. Furthermore, the tension between the material and immaterial in both my work and Gego's plays a role in creating or adjusting a sense of the architectural space. Just as the structure of *Vibration in Black* is able to take 'light and shadow into its own form and out into the surrounding architectural limits' (ibid), my use of light, shadow and air allows for a 'sensation' of space that in this chapter has been defined as a form of painting in the expanded field. Viewers enter or join with the work to form an alternative space that is not limited in a frame or an architectural space.

When Gego refers to her working process as a form of inhabiting drawing, she is suggestive of a sense of expanded drawing. Therefore, for Gego, the process of making works is the same as the process of drawing. A drawn line contains both the external and internal, which also can be seen in Gego's crystal-like structures. Feuvre called these particular site structures as 'Gego-specific' (2013:37). It is a matter of the space that Gego creates and the viewers' physical space, making up, 'my environment, and others peopling that environment' (ibid). Gego's individual, dynamic engagement with a site makes the process of documenting her work an impossible mission. Gego encourages the viewer to be a 'mobile spectator' (Feuvre, 2013:39) and as such is demanding a close, the idea is in 'drawing attention to the space' (ibid), all of which is rooted in 'coordinates within which human exist' (ibid). Thus, the line for Gego is 'measured' by the human body, and equally is 'alive' to the human body. Feuvre makes a connection to Merleau-Ponty's perceptual account as a means of explaining the method of making in Gego's works; it is a process of 'intuitive thinking and perceptual experience' (Feuvre, 2013:45). As such, Gego's works are able to 'reveal its subjective nature'

(ibid). Nevertheless, Gego is creating 'connectivity and conviviality' (ibid) with the surrounding. There are a number of connections here with my own practice, particularly in the use of immaterials; the airflow plays with the boundary between interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. In drawing a comparison with Gego's and my work, similar relationships to materials, processes and spaces can be seen, which are important not only in the making process, but also to the viewer (who equally can 'make' the work). In both cases, trying to capture the works photographically is deeply problematic, as it 'fixes' a work that is not only about the 'un-fixed' image, but which is itself always in movement, always unfixed, or untethered. In the words of the minimalist, Tony Smith, 'you just have to experience it' (Smith cited in Foster, 1996:51). Indeed, throughout my doctoral research, the dilemma between making and documenting is always ongoing: it is equally witnessed in my research. The process of writing about my work is never final, but nonetheless, it provides a critical lens through which to watch how the work always escapes.

Painting as Multiple Objects

Three dimensions are real space. That gets rid of the problem of illusionism and of literal space, space in and around marks and colours... (Donald Judd, 1975:184)

It is appropriate to situate Begg's works in reference to Judd's account of the object. The materiality and 'object' of painting are clear in Begg's works. Besides a minimal gesture Begg's well-known project, *Apparently Monochrome* (1990) (Figure 1.31 and Figure 1.32) can be immediately understood as painting in the expanded field. She uses painterly colours as key elements/mediums. Red, yellow, blue, black and white are *layered* systematically. Moreover, for Begg, a single 'work' is created by a number of paintings, as noted in 'parameters of painting' (Torie Begg, 2004), for example.

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 1.31 Torie Begg, one of the paintings in *Apparently Monochrome*, 1990.

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 1.32 Torie Begg, one of the paintings in *Apparently Monochrome*, 1990.

As Begg explains:

[*Apparently Monochrome* is] often presented collectively as elements of an installation, simultaneously questioned the language of painting and presented themselves as candidates for a new vocabulary. Their rigorous technique of systematically re-iterated layers of primary colour (red, blue, yellow) and non-colour (black, white, grey) parallel the structures of minimalism, but bring to this model a completely personal aesthetic language. In re-stretching and re-presenting the canvas, [the artist] at once re-assesses the status of paint and its relationship with its supporting structure and reassert its identity as a quasi-sculptural object. (Torie Begg, 2004)

Her interest in the 'object' of painting is made explicit. As her artist statement noted: 'In re-stretching and re-presenting the canvas, [she] at once re-assesses the status of paint and its relationship with its supporting structure and reassert its identity as a quasi-sculptural object' (Torie Begg, 2004). This highlights a flexible relationship between painting and sculpture, which echoes Judd's reference to 'neither painting nor sculpture' (Judd, 1975:181). Begg's practice extends from minimalism to 'parallel the structures of minimalism, but bring to this model a completely personal aesthetic language' (ibid). We can compare Begg's *Appearance Yellow* (1996) (Figure 1.33) with Frank Stella's *installation at Leo Castelli Gallery* (1960) (Figure 1.34) to see the parallel relationship with minimalist art. In both cases, a *group* of paintings is presented as a single work; however, there are key differences. Begg is concerned with virtual space as much as objects in themselves. In Begg's 'L' and 'M' series (1995) (Figure 1.35 and Figure 1.36), she questions the virtual space of the computer. Along similar lines with my *Blurring* series (Figure 0.3 and Figure 0.4), there is an implicit critique of new technology.

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 1.33 Torie Begg, *Appearance Yellow*, installation, 1996, Theatre Municipal de Roanne, Roanne.

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 1.34 Frank Stella, *Aluminum Paintings*, 1960, Leo Casteli Gallery, New York.

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig.1.35 Torie Begg, *11118 – Brush Structure*, 1995, pure acrylic polymer and organic pigment on canvas and timber stretcher, 20 x 20 x 4 cm.

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig.1.36 Torie Begg, *MM01 – Brush Structure*, 1995, pure acrylic polymer and organic pigment on canvas and timber stretcher, 20 x 20 x 4 cm.

In my case, I seek a particular critique of the screen images (see Introduction), when noting of the problem of the 'digital frame' as not giving me the *feeling* of my family. Similarly, for Begg's 'L' and 'M' series, this concerns the experience of the screen in contemporary society. Thus, the series is questioning the visual experience between a screen and her works. Moreover, the aim of making is to draw out the viewers' cognitive process. As she explains:

To exploit the dialectical tension that is generated by the instability of control I have in making the "thing" by hand (and the result accidents and chance occurrences) versus a highly mechanistic, simplistic, rigid, repetitive, computer generated, conceptual structure (akin to machine fabrication of industrial products), again to transfer content from the object into the viewer's own cognitive process. (Begg, 1995:24)

Again, what this evokes is tension and/or interplay between object, artist, and viewers. There is also a problematic relationship between the pictorial view in painting and the computer images from Begg's narrative. The problem of the screen image is developed further in the next chapter, which explores my practice more specifically in terms of trace and screen.

Overall, one can see my 'painting' in relation to both debates of the expanded field and my own consideration of the expansion in painting *through* practice – both my own practice and that of other artists (as discussed in this chapter). Indeed, the works of other artists are helpful for me in further questioning my own interests and methods of making. There remains always a 'dialogue' with the practices of others, both with contemporary artists and with those associated with prior art movements and debates (further such dialogues are offered too in the next chapter). Moreover, another benefit of drawing upon these three contemporary artists is to explicitly opening up ideas about my practice through a 'visual' language, rather than verbal discourse. Indeed, what my works present is a 'freedom' outside of language, a visual practice enabling new ways of thinking. My particular interest in a complex set of, interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships, as they arise through material, temporal and spatial structures leads me to consider what I have referred to as the structures of ambiguity. This term is a way of describing both historical practices (as discussed, for example, in Krauss's work on the expanded field, and relating to minimalism) and also more contemporary practices, including my own. The next chapter develops further my reading of the structures of ambiguity, particularly in relation to my own work. As such my account of painting in the expanded field is extended with respect to practice and in doing so, I present further my account of 'expansion painting' (which concerns specific

materialities, temporalities and the spatial), which finally is characterised in deconstructive terms (borrowing Derrida's reference to trace, trait, and écart), as well as in relation to George Didi-Huberman and Merleau-Ponty's visual accounts.

Chapter 2: Structures of Ambiguity: Grid, Frame, Screen and Stage



Fig. 2.1 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Screen*, 2016, wooden frame and dowel, dimensions variable.

A frame is almost laid down on the floor which does not evoke anything inside it, but rather notes the things that are already there: two rows of windows on the top of the building, for instance. Most of the visitors barely notice the windows due to the height of them, but when the works are placed in the room, the light and shadow effect of the works make them notice the windows. This connection not only gives a sense of space, but also imbues the viewers with a consciousness of the interactions of space-body dynamics. Here, the frame is not a surface for loading materials, but a surface that illuminates itself. When sunlight is cast onto the frame the texture of the fabric can be seen. The veil-like delicacy and softness of the fabric, meanwhile, means that the viewers become part of the work, their shadows creating a joint relationship between the object and their bodies. It is the relationship of objects, light and bodies that completes the work; they form a 'structure of ambiguity', which will be extended further in this chapter to concern an individual's contemplation of being in space. This chapter, then, examines

in more detail the meaning of the structures of ambiguity, which are not only borne out of a relationship between the creator and the viewers (a play on the boundary line between interpersonal/intrapersonal and internal/external relationships), but also evoke a tension between art and everyday life. The boundary between art and everyday life is something that has become a site of interest in my work, in particular phenomena beyond *systematic* and *grid-like* categorisations. I used the element of grid not as an icon of rigidity, but rather a *shape* that works deconstructively. Grid is a matter of *cutting out* space, rather than shaping the space, which is the function of the *traditional* painting frame. Paradoxically, in my case, the element of frame does not divide the spaces between the inside and outside of a painting, but gathers in spaces. Another problem concerning the element of frame is surface, which I have developed through using different forms of 'screen' (e.g. computer screen and shoji screen). As noted in the Introduction, my works contain a reflection of my experience of modern living, which seeks to get away from the 'hypermediacy and remediation' (Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, 1999:20) of mass data and network information, so hopefully offering solace from the overcrowded and noisy phenomenon of current society. Accordingly, a parallel relationship between screen images from computer and painting surface is explored. This sociological and psychological concern can also be seen in Norman Bryson's (1988) account of the gaze, which is discussed later in this chapter. Another important term is 'stage', which offers a way of thinking beyond the frozen moment of a limit frame. It is through aspects of staging that I allow for the play of shadows and airflow, and a bodily, expanded compositional 'frame' or rather space. My understanding of stage relates back to the 'origin' of painting, as discussed in the Introduction, which becomes an open space for gathering people (as with the Corinthian maid 'drawing together' with her partner). My interest in the 'base' of the everyday, in fluid structures and in breaking with the traditional frame can be related to 'formlessness art'; Yve-Alain Bois explains the term formless as 'neither a theme, nor a substance, nor a concept' (1997:15). This is considered later in the chapter, where I draw out some connections, but also show how my work differentiates. A break with the traditional frame can also be seen in minimalist art (as noted in the Introduction and Chapter 1, with reference to Judd's account of the 'specific object'). A practice of painting is upheld despite turning it into three-dimensional works and engaging with the surroundings. Indeed, a painting 'space' is defined not as a space manipulated by paints per se, but rather as somewhere between painting and the environment in which works are created or installed. Importantly, I have not seen my

works as a 'future' of minimalist art or formlessness art. Art movements and debates are useful and helpful for communicating ideas to others and contextualising my works, but they can put constraints on how we think; on the choices we make in our thinking. Accordingly, to evoke Derrida's (1993) interest in 'ghosts' and hauntology', to which I will return to further in this chapter, a perennial question arise as to how we can talk of a future that acknowledges history but is not conditioned by it. Of course, histories are part of our lives; one cannot escape them. Indeed, it is important that we learn from experiences. It is a principle I certainly try to adhere to in my practice, which is built up through making and thinking, whereby we can be in dialogue with prior art movements and debates (and their ghosts), but not overly directed by them.

Chapter 1, 'Painting in the Expanded Field', offered an account of painting in the expanded field in both critical literatures and practice, reflects a theoretical and phenomenological reading of my own practice and connection with contemporary artists. This chapter develops these themes concerning the structures of ambiguity, grid, frame, screen and stage, not based on historical and theoretical debates, but rather the works themselves. The process of explaining the affect of the structures of ambiguity draws out a connection between my works and Zen writings. For example, in *Screen* (2016) (see Figure 2.1), the structures of ambiguity are between architecture and the work, which creates a sense of 'emptiness'. In Zen writings, emptiness contains mutable meanings, and the meaning of the word will change in different contexts. However, in general, it refers to emptiness, nothingness or blankness as a form of 'presence'. Thus, emptiness allows the unseen thing to be seen. As such, an individual's contemplation of being in a space is drawn out in the process of experiencing *Screen*. There is connection here to the radical modernist gesture of the 'empty' painting, as we find with Robert Rauschenberg's *White Painting* (1951). The work is simply structured by three white canvases within white paint, light and the visitors' shadows. There is a similarity or a sympathy with how bodies and shadows are drawn into both my works and Rauschenberg's *White Painting*. This is a way of understanding my work as painting (as being directly linked to the history of painting). However, where we might see Rauschenberg challenging the historical, theoretical 'category' of painting (as part of a modernist and post-modernist critique), I seek to extend consideration of structures of composition, in my case as structures of ambiguity.

In seeking to create more fluid frames in my work (e.g. Figure 2.1, Figure 2.2 and Figure 2.3), I have been led to research the relationship between geometric shapes of frame in painting. Thus, this chapter will start with a review of grid. It is followed, however, by reflections on structural film. Two elements in structural film, event and temporality, connect with an idea of the immediacy of thought and experience (as has been noted previously with reference to Barthes' pithy description of the effect of the haiku as a simple 'so!' (Barthes, 1982:81)). Overall, the aim of this chapter is to explore in more detail how I make (and how I choose to make) artworks, as influenced by both theoretical interests and practical engagement with materials, space and surrounding conditions (including light, gravity and airflow, etc.). On the whole, the chapter gives a fuller account of what I have referred to as the structures of ambiguity, looking specifically at elements of grid, frame, screen and stage.



Fig. 2.2 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Screen II*, 2016, wooden frame and dowel, dimensions variable.



Fig. 2.3 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Screen III*, 2016, wooden frame and dowel, dimensions variable.

Geometrical Shape and Tableau

The geometrical shape of the grid in my works is not a matter of cut-out space, but rather *gathering* bodies and spaces. The idea of cut-out clearly can be seen in Roland Barthes' essay 'Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein' (1977). Following Barthes' writing, geometrical shapes become a condition of theatre, which suggests all of the '*dioptric arts*' (70), including painting, theatre, cinema and literature. He argues that the so-called dioptric arts all share the same feature of the geometrical cutting out of a horizon or point of view, being a form of vision, gaze or representation. As Barthes writes:

The scene, the picture, the shot, the cut-out rectangle, here we have the very *condition* that allows us to conceive theatre, painting, cinema, literature, all those arts, that is, other than music and which could be called *dioptric arts*. (Counter-proof: nothing permits us to locate the slightest tableau in the musical text, except by reducing it to a subservience to drama; nothing permits us to cut out in it the slightest fetish, except by debasing it through the use of trite melodies). (1977:70)

The fluidity of music creates an explicit contrast with what Barthes categorises as dioptric arts. Indeed, listening to music represents for Barthes that which is impossible to *code*, occupying a field outside the boundary of meaning. I would consider Barthes' interest in music equates in certain ways to my interest in structures of ambiguity. In a similar way (but writing of the visual art), Norman Bryson's 'The Gaze in the Expanded Field' (1988), presents a critique of semiotics in relation to Western painting through a reading of 'emptiness' by the Japanese philosophers Kitaro Nishida and Keiji Nishitani. Bryson's argument draws upon Eastern painting, particularly the Japanese technique of flung ink. The sense of emptiness and fleeting and multidirectionality of Japanese flung ink painting as offers another way of thinking about the structures of ambiguity.

Returning to Barthes' writing, the readers are taken back to Ancient Greek philosophy, with reference to Pythagoreanism. A connection between representation and mathematics is built up, which did not change Greek judgement of the representation; for them, pictorial views are nothing but an illusion (as in Plato's account). Furthermore, the difference between the view of theatre and painting is space. In the case of painting, space is complex, not only evoking the problem between real and illusory spaces, but also

giving a space under the observation, composition and transaction. A well-known example is Albrecht Dürer's *Making a Perspective Drawing of a Woman* (ca. 1600) (Figure 2.5), which not only presents an image of a woman, but also a 'way of seeing' the woman; a means of staging her image (which can lead on to considerations of a gendered gaze). There are various philosophical writings on the painter's gaze, which go beyond merely interpreting the painting surface. For example, when Merleau-Ponty studies Paul Cézanne's works, '[t]he mountain itself which from out there makes itself seen by the painter; it is the mountain that he interrogates with his gaze' (Merleau-Ponty, 1964:166). Accordingly, we can see painting is a view embodied within the painter's experience. Cézanne can be said to paint a 'way of seeing', but one that is more 'open' than the gaze, understood as a structure of power based on vision. Bryson (1988) gives an account of the gaze, based on Jean-Paul Sartre's and Jacques Lacan's theories, which present the 'problem' of the gaze in Western culture, especially in painting. In this regard, Bryson describes the frame of a painting as 'a screen of signs' (1988:92). A key example is Hans Holbein the Younger's *The Ambassadors* (1533) (Figure 2.5), which is full of signs and symbols and can be 'read'.

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 2.4 Albrecht Dürer, *Draughtsman Making a Perspective Drawing of a Woman*, ca. 1600, woodcut print, 77 x 21.4 cm.

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 2.5 Hans Holbein the Younger, *The Ambassadors*, 1533, Oil on Oak, 207 x 209.5 cm,
National Gallery, London.

However, the skull in *The Ambassadors* takes the visual experience beyond language. Indeed, in the case of *The Ambassadors*, the distortion of the skull is not only a signifier of the death of the ambassador, but also a challenge to perspective and painting 'space'. In order to see the skull, the viewers cannot stand in front of the centre of the painting. The skull only appears from a certain angle. Accordingly, 'death is seen because the "world" is not' (2002:31) as Krauss puts it. Here, what Krauss means by 'world' is a matter of 'system of visibility' (ibid). Again, this is to raise the question about what is inside and outside of the frame, which in this case is starkly presented as between a living (visible) world and death (as empty of all things). Moreover, the relationship between inside and outside is based on a *continual shift* between the see and unseen, which Krauss describes as a 'mutual eclipse' (ibid). This shift is not presented in the form of a metapicture as such – W. J. T. Mitchell (1994) describes, for example, with reference to optical illusions such as the duck-rabbit illustration, which seems to present an oscillating form within a single body. *The Ambassadors* is more a picture within a picture, a system of visibility, which harbours its opposite when looked at obliquely. It requires of the viewer a dynamic body movement, not simply a change in one's single gaze. In other words, we must move to look at the painting from another position. However, while the painting 'space' in *The Ambassadors* engages with the viewer's body, it is not the space that my practice seeks to develop. My pursuit of a painting 'space' requires being outside of the limits of a frame (unlike *The Ambassadors* which presents two pictures within a single frame). Krauss makes reference to Holbein's work when writing on Eva Hesse's *Contingent* (1969) – a work that gives rise to a painterly (rather than sculptural) example of her interest in the expanded field. The work is similarly structured upon an anamorphic view that we find with *The Ambassadors*. In this case, positioned very specifically to be perpendicular to the wall, the work requires looking upon it at a right-angle to its front or back:

Contingent is made of eight bannerlike elements that hang from ceiling to floor. Each of the elements suspends a large, rectangular stretch of latex-covered chessecloth within a translucent field of fibreglass. [...] In those flattened, rectilinear stretches of fabric there is an ineluctable reference to the surface and format of painting. Further, through the experience of light and colour that *Contingent* generates as its condition or ambience, we feel ourselves to be in the affective terrain of painting. But *Contingent* is not a painting. And this is so because its flattened field are not parallel but at right angles to the wall. Faced with the spread of *Contingent*, what we see is a

series of edges: the edges of planes that self-evidently occupy the real space in which they hang. (Krauss, 2002:30)

We can see with Hesse's work an example of painting as multiple objects. The angle of *Contingent* gives rise to a 'mutual eclipse', in this case between being both painting and not painting. The tension of the painting 'edge' is magnified. As Krauss remarks, 'the edge that is displayed by Hesse is not focused on the boundaries *within* a painting or a sculpture, but rather on the boundary that lies between the institution of painting and sculpture' (32). Here, importantly, I would assert a notable distinction between this work by Hesse and my own works. While we may share a genuine interest in questions about painting and the 'space' of painting, and while we might both explore the physicality and materiality of painting by working through three-dimensional objects and spaces, I am not seeking to comment specifically upon the 'institution' of painting. Krauss' account renders Hesse's work as being primarily conceptual, as a 'statement' on painting. By contrast, I seek to apply 'painting' (in an expanded sense) to offer a means to a dialogue between spaces, objects and bodies. The ends might be similar in terms of physical installations that oscillate between being painting and not-painting, but the means are very different. As such, I do not consider my works to be painting-as-object or painting-object, but rather a means of thinking *and* making (both in terms of producing the works and how they viewed).

Nonetheless, the placement of the skull in Holbein's painting and the perpendicular placement of Hesse's work are reminders of the multi-dimensional picture plane. A 'pane', or indeed a multiplicity of planes, expanded upon in Bryson's account of flung ink. This leads me to consider painting in the expanded field not primarily as a historical and art theoretical problematic (as evoked by Krauss) but as a compositional consideration.

To develop an account of painting according to an expanded compositional plane, it is useful to refer to George Didi-Huberman. He draws attention to an interesting relationship between pictorial view and the window frame, which is not about the problem of the gendered gaze, but rather a process of being legible, visible (and invisible) and that is the visual. His account is based on a Fra Angelico's surrounding (Figure 2.6). Fra Angelico's painting *The Annunciation* (c. 1440-1441) is a story about the moment that Mary is told she will be having God's child (Jesus). Angelico paints his version of this story on the wall of an arch-shaped room (within a monastery), and the light appears to be cast into space from the left-hand side, or the space is illumined by the angel, a light of deity. Indeed, the light and shadow effect makes the effect of perspective vivid. The illusion of depth and the arch-shaped panel produce a vague relationship between the inside and outside of the frame. The ambiguous relationship between the pictorial images and the shape of the panel is taken further to a physical dimension. When concerned with the relationship between the work and its surrounding, we can consider a paradoxical relationship between representation and reality, one can understand being legible, visible (and invisible) and visual is based on ambiguous structures.

For Didi-Huberman, painting is not a matter of the transmission of knowledge, but rather of presenting the 'invisible' thing. Moreover, the condition of seeing the invisible thing is gazing. Since a blank white wall takes over the most space in the painting (*The Annunciation*), and is not nothing, but the 'white paints', this is what Didi-Huberman means by the 'invisible' thing in the painting. His view of Angelico's painting reminds us that the visual is constructed by the relationship between the viewers and the objects/materials. Here, one can see that the reception of art in 'objects' is not based on the artists, but rather on the viewers, and the conditions of viewing. Nevertheless, in this writing, the research questions the dimension of the work, rather than the relationship between image, creator and viewer. In other words, the research seeks to find a frame conceptually rather than creating an image. This echoes the moment when the Corinthian maid uses charcoal to trace the outline of her lover's shadow onto a wall. While the information of the scale is missing, what the readers know are the materials with which the Corinthian maid engaged.

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 2.6 Fra Angelico's painting and its surrounding.

In other words, I am not interested in the outline she draws but the space in which she draws. Therefore, the research questions where the frame of painting is. How does the Corinthian maid address the dimension of the painting? On the other hand, the Corinthian maid both reaches out (in three dimensions) to mark, and there are the marks themselves.

Overall, the purpose of the pictorial image in Barthes' account is a matter of a social gesture or framing; in particular, the problem of the subject. In my case, the subject might be thought to be questioned by the ambiguity of subject-object boundary (i.e. where the frame begins and ends). This echoes minimalist art, as with Tony Smith's famous quote: 'There is no way you can frame it, you just have to experience it' (Smith cited in Foster, 1996:51). Here, one can clearly see the value that minimalist art brings to us is the *experience* of the object, which draws the viewer back to the fundamental experience of perception. For Smith, instead of representing an experience limited by the frame, he is interested in drawing out the viewers' experiences. In this way, following Smith's radical view of art object, the frame gains our further critical attention. Moreover, the problem of frame is not only specific to the artist's compositional frame, but more broadly to the framing of modern living. In particular, the problem of screen images. Screen images become the major method to perceive the world today, leading our visual experience to narrow down to the geometrical shapes (such as rectangular shape of the screen and its pixels). As Sean Cubitt writes:

The aesthetic – the look and feel – of screens has changed subtly over the last hundred years, becoming an ever more rigid grid, locking our visual sensations into a numbered universe where every colour can be swapped for any other, and where the law that everything can be counted is made to apply not just to money but to everything we can capture in a photograph. (Cubitt, 2013:156)

Accordingly, we are living under the shadow of grid systems or as Barthes puts it, 'a pollution effected by the rectangle' (2013:114). Arguably, what Barthes critiques is architectural space rather than the 'space' of screen images. Yet, we cannot forget that both Barthes and Cubitt are interested in visual experience; in particular, a consideration between image and frame.

A critical view of frame is a feature of a number of my works – for example, *A Window Shadow* (2016) (Figure 2.7 and Figure 2.8). *A Window Shadow* not only works with frame, but also daily human life. The immaterial sunlight relates to our everyday life, and this is a key structure in the work, which not only becomes an important connection with viewers, but also makes the frame fluid. This can be seen in Figure 2.8 (though it is difficult to see due to it being only a reproduction of the subtle quality of light). The shadow of the window frame and fishing lines is cast on the opposite side of the window, allowing viewers to interrupt it by passing by or entering the space. Moreover, the work is carefully structured by 23 fine fishing lines, which divide the window view. The rectangular frame of the window becomes 23 pieces of rectangular views. The horizontal dimension of the lines creates a balanced composition with the pipes on the opposite wall. The pipes on the wall show a direct connection between the work and its surroundings. Here, there is a sense of light and shadow running out of the limited frame. This may be compared with Didi-Huberman's case of Angelico's fresco, where the painting engages with its surroundings (Figure 2.6), opening up the painting space. In other words, the painting space is not limited inside the panel or frame, but is also its interaction with light and the dynamics of the room.



Fig. 2.7 Cheng-Chu Weng, *A Window Shadow*, 2016, masonry nail and fishing line, dimensions variable.



Fig. 2.8 Cheng-Chu Weng, The sunlight and shadow effect of *A Window Shadow*, (which is part of the work), 2016.

Similarly, with *A Window Shadow*, the limited frame is not the window frame but the spaces – bodily, architectural and even universal space. Hence, a sense of breaking out of the painting frame can be seen in the work. In art historical terms, the sense of a breaking out of the painting frame (besides minimalist art) can be seen in formlessness art. While a classical painter constrains him/herself with the grid panels, by contrast, the formlessness artist not only escapes the system of the grid by the effect of fluidity, but also breaks with the institution of art. The *ideal* of art is ignored, while the materials become the focus of the work. According to Yves-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss' articulation in *Formlessness: A User's Guide* (1997), which takes its influence from the writings of Georges Bataille, formlessness art breaks from art historical and theoretical accounts and narrative.

According to Bataille:

formless is not only an adjective having a given meaning, but a term that serves to brings things down in the world, generally requiring that each thing have its form... All of philosophy has no other goal: it is a matter of giving a frock coat to what is, a mathematical frock coat. On the other hand, affirming that the universe resembles nothing and is only *formless* amounts to saying that the universe is something like a spider or spit. (Bataille cited in Bois and Krauss, 1997:5)

Bataille makes repeated reference to what is low, base and unwanted. Spiders and spit are things we try to keep away from and ignore. They remain unexplained, or unformed conceptually. However, Bataille makes us think about these things (even to make us feel uncomfortable with the reference to 'spider or spit') and in doing so he re-casts the world as either formless or full of many more 'forms' that we normally care to allow. We can begin to understand formlessness as akin to my own interest in the structures of ambiguity (i.e. as structures that we are not accustomed to observed). Thus, while I do not present my work in terms of high and low, I relate to Bataille's interest in affirming the universe as 'nothing' (but a nothing that is full of everything).

Bois and Krauss' analysis of formlessness, which is taken up as an alternative (to) art history, makes key reference to Bataille's commentary on Édouard Manet's *Olympia* (1863). *Olympia* has been seen as the first modernist painting by Clement Greenberg, yet as Bois argues, it can be viewed more usefully in terms of formlessness. Typically, there are two main perspectives in viewing the work, those that respond to the painting's

content (so interpreting its meaning), and those interested in its form (how it is made, how it is painted). Bataille is often placed in the latter group, yet, as Bois outlines, Bataille goes beyond form and content. His interest is the ‘indifference’ of the painting. It is of a certain ‘look’, or ‘slippage’. Bataille is interested in the work for ‘its value as an operation’ (Bataille cited in Bois and Krauss, 1997:15), as an ‘operation that displaces both these terms’ (ibid). The idea evoked here could be linked to Barthes’ tableau and Bryson’s gaze, as similarly ‘operative’ terms used to address the experience of seeing, especially Barthes’ tableau. Neither tableau nor operation is about subject, but about the *formation* of meaning. On the other hand, the difference between tableau and operation is that operation exceeds the mathematical grid (and any associations of unified knowledge, structures and history). Bois explains this at more length:

In this operation of slippage we see a version of what Bataille calls the *informe* (formless). Not with the idea, of course, of making Manet a precursor (though it is worth nothing that critics of the time characterized Olympia’s body – which some likened to a rotting corpse – as “formless”), and even less in hopes of delineating a genealogy of the term, as one might do with the history of an idea; but precisely because it is an *operation* (which is to say, neither a theme, nor a substance, nor a concept) and that to this end it participates in the general movement of Bataille’s thought, which he liked to call “scatology” or “heterology” (and of which historically the *informe* constitutes the first operation specified in his writings). (1997:15)

Formlessness, then, is against classification, which includes iconography and the male gaze. Furthermore, in the formless art curated by Bois and Krauss (1997), one can see similar interests among the artists regarding the relationship between material and the human body, which in part relates to traditional minimalist concerns with raw materials. Importantly, in the case of formlessness art, the process of interpreting (and interrupting) material is given over to viewers. Rather than simply *confronting* or *placing* works in front of viewers, the works are offered as a form of ‘operation’. An example of both formlessness and post-minimalism is Robert Smithson’s *Spiral Jetty* (1982). The work allows viewers to interrupt or engage with the work without preconceived ideas and without an immediate sense of the boundaries of a work in relation to its surroundings. To draw comparison with my interest in the structures of ambiguity, there is a similar

blurring of when and where the work begins and ends. Moreover, another connection with formlessness art is the use of 'everyday' materials. A sense of nature and temporality can be seen in both cases.

Here, to provide another examples, *Tube* (2016) (Figure 2.9) and *Cylinder III* (2016) (Figure 2.10). *Tube* is the trace of a tube in the factory-like sculpture studio. *Tube* is located on the opposite side of the tube, beside a row of the windows. Sunlight is able to be cast into the space through the windows, so that *Tube* is not only structured with consideration of the trace of the tube, but light and shadow are part of the structure. As I noted in the Introduction, shadow is central to my practice, as a key compositional element that helps me to approach the structures of ambiguity. On the other hand, the elements of light and shadow create a direct connection with theatre and stage. Here, to compare *Tube* with *Cylinder III*, the former contains a different kind of viewership to the latter. The reason for this is that the work was hung higher than the human height. It is unreachable or approachable and being translucent, it becomes in/visible in the space – it is present but not necessarily presented immediately as an artwork. Some visitors might not even notice *Tube* when they enter the space.



Fig. 2.9 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Tube*, 2016, wood, fishing line and silk screen printing mesh, dimensions variable, (The work aside a row of the windows).



Fig. 2.10 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Cylinder III*, 2016, wood and silk screen printing mesh, dimensions variable.

However, invisible properties of airflow and gravity are important to how I approached my work, and indeed have become increasingly significant in the process of making. There is a tension, for example, that is undertaken in the process of binding the fishing line to negotiate between body, object and gravity. Through this experience, I discovered that it is important to *listen* to the nature of the materials. Before arranging each drape of the work (Figure 2.11), I had tried running the body of *Tube* horizontally (using fishing wire to avoid the material draping); however, this made the material seem constrained, as if working against its own natural properties (Figure 2.12). In the process of making my work there is an ongoing negotiation between myself, materials, the formulating of an 'object' and the space of the work. It is important that the creator's body *works* with the material and its scale. Rather than gravity being simply a human constraint it becomes an element that I explicitly work with. Richard Serra has talked about the use of gravity in his work in similar ways, here speaking in relation to eight sculptures in the installation of *The Matter of Time* (2005):

The torqued ellipses, spirals, spheres and toruses exist in the polarity between the downward force of gravity, their weightedness, and their upward rise in elevation, which attempts to attain a condition of weightlessness. The formal linkage of all works in this installation enables the viewer, even if he or she knows little about the nature of sculpture, to access and acknowledge the entirety of the sculptural field as a coherent language. When I conceived this installation, this coherence was very important to me. (Richard Serra, 2005:141)

My interest in gravity could be understood as a means to foreground space in expanded ways. On the one hand, there is the space we typically inhabit (i.e. how our bodies usually move through and hold up in space, and how we see space with our eyes, etc.), but there is also a wider available space, which a drape of a cloth or the movement of some tissue paper can help remind us of. Thinking again of Dürer's drawing we can see the creation of perspectival space as he draws the figure upon a gridded screen, but we are also privy to the space in which he draws (i.e. the room) which is outside of the frame he uses to draw with. This can be taken as a metapicture of the wider available physical space that I am referring to, but which I choose to explore through the composition of materials in the space of a room or similar environment.



Fig. 2.11 Partial view of the final work, *Tube* (2016).



Fig. 2.12 Preparatory image, showing *Tube* suspended using fishing wire to make for single horizontal tube shape. This approach was altered to allow for the draping of the material, as seen in Figure 2.11.

For Serra, the viewer's bodily experience is important as 'temporal' experience. This can be particularly seen in his *The Matter of Time*, as installed at the Guggenheim Museum (Bilbao). Serra's work is able to draw out viewers' different experiences in their everyday life, such as '[t]he perceptual or aesthetic, emotional, or psychological time of the sculptural experience' (Richard Serra, 2005:141). The structures of ambiguity – a relationship of uncertainty between the maker and the viewers, can also be seen in Serra's narrative, which as he goes on suggest: 'grasp their [his visitors] own experience as it unfolds' (ibid).

The material (silk screen printing mesh) helps us to feel a sense of softness, flexibility and fluidity. Accordingly, one may make a connection with soft sculptures, for example, Robert Morris' (1967-8) felt pieces. Yet, in this case of Morris' works the 'weightedness' of the fabric draws attention to its own materiality. We might consider these as structures of ambiguity, but ambiguity about their own materiality. In my case the delicate lightness of the silk allows me to 'draw' in other elements, such as light, gravity, and air, making these ambiguous structures of an *interaction* of elements, and so not just in reference to the cloth's own materiality. In addition, not only is there a mutual support between the silk and airflow, the material as used in silk screen prints also bears a *trace* of the shoji gami (障子), used in my other work. Of course, the differences with Morris' work can also be understood in historical terms. One cannot escape the cultural context in which Morris was making his work. He was of a generation growing up and then subsequently working in the post-war period in which new industrial techniques and materials were emerging. In my own generational context, as noted in the Introduction, I am situated within a postmodern, pluralistic and post-industrial setting. Arguably, there is not the same sense of new or changing materials or forms, but rather a set of choices and 'selections' that can be made; as Danto evokes, '[f]or art to exist there does not even have to be an object to look at, and if there are objects in a gallery, they can look like anything at all (1997:16).

My choice of materials relates to my own personal biography, but also for their material properties as offering the structures of ambiguity in response to particular contemporary issues. Rather than working with materials strictly in their own terms, I am equally concerned with wider aspects of modern living and the need, as I see it, to become more mindful of a sense of 'being'; to have a 'slower' sense of one's surroundings. Indeed, the sense of peace and calmness in my works is to mark an explicit contrast with the

overcrowded phenomenon of contemporary society.

Practice of Grid/Frame/Screen/Stage

The preceding account has explained how – in compositional terms – I have been interested in multiple viewpoints and the relationship of different tangible and intangible materials, objects and bodies. The following examples, each based on the construction of a screen, extend this account, but also explore particular elements of grid, frame, screen and stage. One of the difficulties in trying to describe structures of ambiguity is that language itself (as a form of ‘grid’ or framing) can quickly come undone, or impose too heavily upon the openness of a work. The softness of *Tube* is an undoing of the geometrical space that the real tube that it echoes is constructed within. Here, begins a sense of floating out of a representational grid. Similarly, as discussed with *Through* in Chapter 1, we can read *Tube* with Derrida’s terms of trace and trait. The making of the work is a trace, an action of echoing the real tube on the opposite side of the room. The work itself then becomes a trait, it is an impression of the tube, though equally it starts to take on its own composition (it becomes a tracing of a particular space). The movement of the work between both trace and trait leads to its ambiguous status, at which point it becomes more difficult to clearly define it as either. As a structure of ambiguity it is somewhere between. In this case we can turn to Derrida’s third term *écart*, which is a deliberate play on the word ‘trace’ (its reverse) and ‘gap’ (in the original French).

In *Spurs: Nietzsche’s Styles* Derrida invoked the connection between the English word ‘spur’ (impetus) and the German word ‘spur’ (trace) in order to reconsider the relation between an underlying impetus (i.e., what the substantial truth of something is), and the way in which that impetus is manifested (i.e., the different styles of presentation that contain a trace of their underlying substance, but which through that trace are also capable of creating a gap (in French, *écart*) between style and substance). (Andrew Clark, 2011)

The term *écart* is revealed as an underlying problematic in philosophy, which can be seen, for example, in the writings of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Merleau-Ponty and Martin Heidegger. In my case, I am interested in the structure of ambiguity as a form of gap. Here,

again, we might use *Tube* as an example. When the sunlight is cast into the space after lunchtime, the body of *Tube* extends (Figure 2.13). This extension is an *écart* of *Tube*. In other words, the extension is a gap between the trace (the process of making *Tube*) and trait (the work itself) of *Tube*.

Similarly, the *Screen* series (Figure 2.1, Figure 2.2 and Figure 2.3) provide a trace of shoji gami, yet the difference is that the *Screen* series show a trace of the painting frame and window frame. Moreover, the wooden frame is a trace of a shoji panel. This connection is based on a transformation of my experience. As Chapter 1 noted, I seek to draw out a sense of physicality and materiality as a way of uniting my practice with the surrounding environment. Thus, the wooden frame suggests a bound connection with the materiality of a shoji panel (rather than signifying the earthquake experience as discussed in the Introduction). Accordingly, I consider it important to present the particular aesthetic of the shoji panel, which is not only based on the grid frame, but also on the phenomenon of light and shadow. Therefore, the transparent feature of shoji gami creates the trace of the shoji gami. The shadow of the shoji panel seems to extend the room, or as Junichirō Tanizaki describes, provides a sense of ‘emptiness’, which is ‘a tastefully built Japanese room’ (1991:32). Moreover, the structure of shoji doors in a building creates the means of both veiling and unveiling. This parallel relationship between doors provides a particular kind of space; when these sliding doors are opened, the viewers can look into the rooms. On the other hand, the translucent, yet opaque screen allows for some light as well as giving occupants privacy. One can understand that the shoji panel is not just a wooden frame, but a frame that ‘contains’ light and shadow. Indeed, light and shadow are significant elements that structured Japanese architecture (Tanizaki, 1991). By contrast, in my case, light, shadow and wooden frame are composited within a consideration of structures of ambiguity. In which particularly can be experienced in a condition of the works (Figure 2.14, Figure 2.15 and Figure 2.16).



Fig. 2.13 A shadow of *Tube* (an écart of *Tube*, 2016).



Fig. 2.14 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Screen*, 2016, wooden frame and dowel, dimensions variable.



Fig. 2.15 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Screen II*, 2016, wooden frame and dowel, dimensions variable.



Fig. 2.16 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Screen III*, 2016, wooden frame and dowel, dimensions variable.

Another difference with *Tube* is that the experience of the *Screen* series is a continuing process of trace and trait. Walking around the work we can see the action as trait, while shadows cast on screen are trace. Equally, *Through* (Figure 1.22) provides a dynamic and fluid view of trace and trait. Accordingly, one can see how the element of frame engages with body and space as structures of ambiguity. Here, reference can be made back to Mimi Tong and Nuha Saad's *Intersecting Geometries* (2005) (Figure 2.17), which was an example given in Titmarsh's account of expanded painting (see Chapter 1). As Titmarsh explains, *Intersecting geometries* works against illusion in painting, particularly perspective. This is achieved as result of the 'hinge between the wooden stretchers of painting and the wooden frames of building construction' (Titmarsh, 2006:32), which creates an ambiguous relationship between frame and the surrounding. By contrast, the *Screen* series does not overcome an illusion of space in painting, but nonetheless primes one's sense of space, which comes through the moment visitors' shadows cast onto the screen. The effect of this engagement with the work helps us to be mindful of the original space, as well as being in the space. Further, as above noted, the wooden frame and fabric is not only a trace of a painting frame, but also a trace of a window frame and a shoji panel. In this regard, my works exceed painting in the expanded field or, as I describe them are an expansion painting. The consideration of an individual's contemplation of being in space also can be developed in reference to structural film, as will be discussed below. Both my works and structural film can be seen to share elements of event and temporality (and working with light, stage, time, and movement). Furthermore, the method of presenting 'raw' medium, as found with structural film, is an interest I hold in my expansion painting.

[See Appendix: Copyrighted Illustrations]

Fig. 2.17 Mimi Tong and Nuha Saad's *Intersecting geometries*, 2005, wood, canvas, acrylic paint, wallpaper, dimensions variable, Artspace, Sydney.

Theatrical Art and Structural Film

My interest in structural film is twinned with an interest in theatrical art, and draws upon two key writings: Rosalind Krauss' 'Mechanical Ballets: Light, Motion, Theater' (1977) and Peter Gidal's 'Theory and Definition of Structural/Materialist film' (1976). These two texts help me further examine the notion of 'structures of ambiguity'. A vagueness in the relationship between creator and viewer is critical; moreover, the elements of time and space are addressed. While Krauss' focus is on sculpture rather than painting, my research interests of light, movement, stage, time and event relate well to her work. Krauss' essay 'Mechanical Ballets', is similar to the later essay, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field' (1979), discussed in Chapter 1, as both question the medium of sculpture. However, the difference is in presenting a critical view of Michael Fried's (1998) account of 'theatricality'. Unlike Fried, Krauss is interested in the value of theatrical art. As she puts it, 'theatricality is an umbrella term, under which one could place both kinetic and light-art, as well as environmental and tableau sculpture, along with the more explicit performance art, such as "happenings" or the stage properties Robert Rauschenberg constructed for the dances of Merce Cunningham' (1977:204). Following this logic, a sense of theatricality can already be seen in other artworks not necessarily labelled as theatrical art. Thus, theatrical art can be said to cut across different art movements. Again, one can see a radical view of modernism in Krauss' writing. Besides offering a theoretical consideration of theatricality, she has a particular interest in theatrical sculpture. Robert Morris' *Columns* (1961-73), Claes Oldenburg's "*Ghost Toilet*" (1966), and Bruce Nauman's *Corridor* (1968-70) are three works she offers as examples, as key works to question 'what sculpture is, or what it can be' (1977:242); which preempts the same concerns in her essay two years later on sculpture in the expanded field (as discussed in Chapter 1).

Columns (1961-73) according to Krauss presents a combination of sculpture and performance. She describes Morris' sculpture as follows:

The curtain parts. In the center of the stage is a column, standing upright, eight feet high, two feet on a side, plywood, painted grey. Nothing else is on the stage. For three and a half minutes nothing happens; no one enters or leaves. [...] Suddenly the column falls. Three and a half more minutes elapse. The curtain closes. [...] The author, in 1961, of both this performance and its “performer” was the sculptor Robert Morris. (1977:201)

Accordingly, what the viewers are taken to is similar to an experience in theatre. As we saw the structure of the sculpture contains stage and movement within ‘real’ time. The connection to real time in Morris’ sculpture is an element that Fried attacks in the work of ‘theatricality’, since it undermines the autonomy of a work. The fact that an artwork needs to be completed in time, with an audience, is what Fried is against. Krauss, then, re-defines the use of the concept of theatre and suggests it can *already* be seen in kinetic sculpture and other movements (light-art, tableau sculpture, etc.). Similarly, time in Gidal’s structural film is a key element. For him, real time, as a method, is a means to break with the illusion of images. He seeks for viewers to see an image in its immediacy. As Gidal puts it, the idea is for a ‘1:1 relation between viewer and viewed’ (1976:9). Effectively, then, authorship in structural film-making is shared by maker and viewer through focusing on the materiality of film, which, when viewed, attempts to place the emphasis on the ‘live’ rendering and experiencing of an image. It is an attempt to break with the ‘past’ of photographic imaging, to break with the idea of ‘that-has-been’ (as evoked by Barthes in *Camera Lucida* (1993:77)). Accordingly, one can see a relationship between the aspirations of structural film and my own engagement with structures of ambiguity.

The loosening up of authorship and the boundaries of artworks in my practice also relates to questions of the everyday. I.e. a shadow, and the ubiquity of shadows, merely a matter of the everyday, or can it be part of an artwork? When installing work in a gallery, for example, great efforts are often taken to remove or soften shadows. Alternatively, shadows in a work might be very deliberately exposed. In my case, however, I am interested in shadows as they actually exist, without manipulation, and/or allowing them to work with an installation as it develops. This can make it difficult in some cases to discern what is and is not the ‘artwork’ (and of course this further alters through the interaction of bodies). Such ambiguity relates to Anna Dezeuze’s account of

certain artworks she describes as being ‘almost nothing’ (Dezeuze, 2017:18) – a term she uses to address ‘borderline art’ in the 20th Century, which she derives initially from Francis Alÿs’ travelling exhibition title, *Nothing* in 2001, and refers to characteristics of ‘absence, formlessness, invisibility and the immaterial’ (Ele Carpenter cited in Dezeuze, 2017:9). According to Dezeuze’s account, borderline art stems from the 1960s, with artworks situated at the boundary between everyday life and art. An example of my own is *A Window Shadow II* (2016) (Figure 2.18 and Figure 2.19), which similar to a number of my other works uses everyday materials such as light, shadow, air and paper. Importantly, the light in *A Window Shadow II* is not artificial light but sunlight. This can be seen as being at odds with theatrical art and structural film. However, sunlight and shadow place the work within a particular temporality (with the optimum time between 10am and 2pm).

I take ‘event’ to be a connection between theatrical art and structural film. Yet, the event in theatrical art might often be described as more dramatic than structural film. Moreover, following Krauss’ analysis of theatrical art, a sense of ‘violence’ can be experienced, with viewers potentially being challenged in either physical or intellectual ways, which Krauss (1977:232) outlines, for example, with *Happenings* (event) (1960-1966). By contrast, the ‘event’ of structural film is the presenting of raw materiality, which prompts an immediate experience of the material of the work. The experience of film *itself* is generated through the viewer’s experience of film. Accordingly, a connection with structural film can be seen in terms of the opening up of authorship, the immediacy of materials and acknowledgment of different temporality (and in my work different spatiality). The focus of structural film upon sheer materiality and the foregrounding of mediation leads to the displacement of a clear sense of authorship, or rather avoids distance with viewers. In Gidal’s account, distance is built up by the narrative in images, which can be seen not just in narrative-based art and film, but also in areas such as abstract expressionism. For Gidal, abstract expressionist art is not about freedom, but subjection, being a ‘problematical, humanistic, ideology of process’ (Gidal, 1976:19). The relationship between artist and artwork in abstract expressionism is ‘over-determining’ (Gidal, 1976:8) and ‘distanced’ (6). As a method to overcome these problems structural film relates to its immediate materials and in real time. In consequence, structural film approaches what Gidal suggests is ‘another level of abstract (or non-abstract) associations’ (2).



Fig. 2.18 Cheng-Chu Weng, *A Window Shadow II*, 2016, Japanese tissue paper, glue, dimensions variable.



Fig.2.19 Cheng-Chu Weng, The sunlight and shadow effect of *A Window Shadow II*, (which is part of the work) (2016).

In this respect, a connection can be made with Barthes' 'The World as Object' (1972), in which he examines Dutch paintings to address the relationship between painter, object, painting, and the viewer. A painting is a transformation of the painter's experiences of the world. When one looks at the representation of an object in a painting, it is not just a copy of the object but a transformation of the object. Equally, in Valéry's view, a painter 'takes his body with him' (cited in Merleau-Ponty 1964:162). Implied in both Barthes' and Merleau-Ponty's accounts is a sense of embodiment between painter and painting, which concerns a *presentation* of subject matter, not its re-presentation or expression. So, for example, in line with Barthes' essay, Svetlana Alpers' (1983) account Dutch painting is that it is about the 'art of describing' not narrativising. It is the presentation of 'thing' rather than 'thingness'. An underlying point to consider here is how one approaches abstraction – i.e. to what degree must you plan and prepare a work, and to what extent do you allow for accidental and incidental aspects? Theatrical art will require a good deal of planning, yet its 'effects' are what must unfold from the work's execution. Similarly, structural film is made – from a 'technical' point of view – prior to its viewing. Yet, equally it is the event of its viewing that is the 'work'. By contrast, abstract expressionism is said to occur in its making. Beyond the basic materials and supports one arranges in order to make a work such as an abstract expressionist canvas, the case is made of the work being made at the moment of inscription. It is performed and recorded (through paint), but is not subsequently a 'theatrical' artwork. It does not deliberately seek to be an open text in the sense of theatrical art. In my own case, there is a balance between planning/preparation and the inscription of the work (through its viewership). The works then are carefully structured (through their construction), but with a view to then structuring ambiguities through engagement with the work. In other words, my works allow bodily, eventful connections, but at the same time are presented through deliberate articulations and installation of space. Having now considered some of the initial ideas around theatrical and structural artworks, the following section focuses on a set of works that came out of my reflections of studying structural film.

Flouting Surfaces

There is a similarity between shadow, painting and projector image in that they all need a surface to cast on. A series of my works not only asks where the grid, frame, screen and

stage is, but also where is the surface to *gather* the elements. This question in particular can be seen in *Movement and Sound* (2016)¹ (Figure 2.20). A projected light is re-projected three times, through repeating the actions of recording and projecting at the same time. In doing so, the gap between the two technologies, projector and video camera, show in the projected light, which is presented as running bars; they become the material that I attempt to work with. Here, the method of exploring the 'problem' of projecting light is traced in the running bars. However, there was difficulty in tracing the projecting bars, as they are thin lines, running too fast for the human physical body to catch. Therefore, instead of tracing the bars, the *length* of the bars is traced. The length of bars is the same as the length of the projecting light. In other words, the projector light is the frame that shapes or contains the running lines. The dimension of the gesture is based on my observation of the running bars, from left to right and from top to bottom. Body movements are constrained by the length of the bars. The square projected light thus becomes one of the frames or stages that I work with. After tracing the running bars, what are left on the wall are horizontal lines without an outline of frame. In other words, the result of tracing running bars upon onto the wall now appears to be bound by an 'invisible' frame once the projected light is switched off (Figure 2.21). The frame of the video camera is another frame I work with, which in this case creates a sense of cut-out image. However, in the case of *Movement and Sound*, sound is more attractive than images. The sound is made by friction, caused by the moment that the charcoal touches the rough surface of the wall. The sound seems to transform the texture of the wall surface, in contrast to the smooth screen surface of the video presented on a monitor screen. The medium of video is without a specific surface; therefore video is able to float on or even 'float' the surface.

¹ A video of *Movement and Sound* : <http://bit.ly/2qu1ljK>



Fig. 2.20 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Movement and Sound*, 2016, video still.

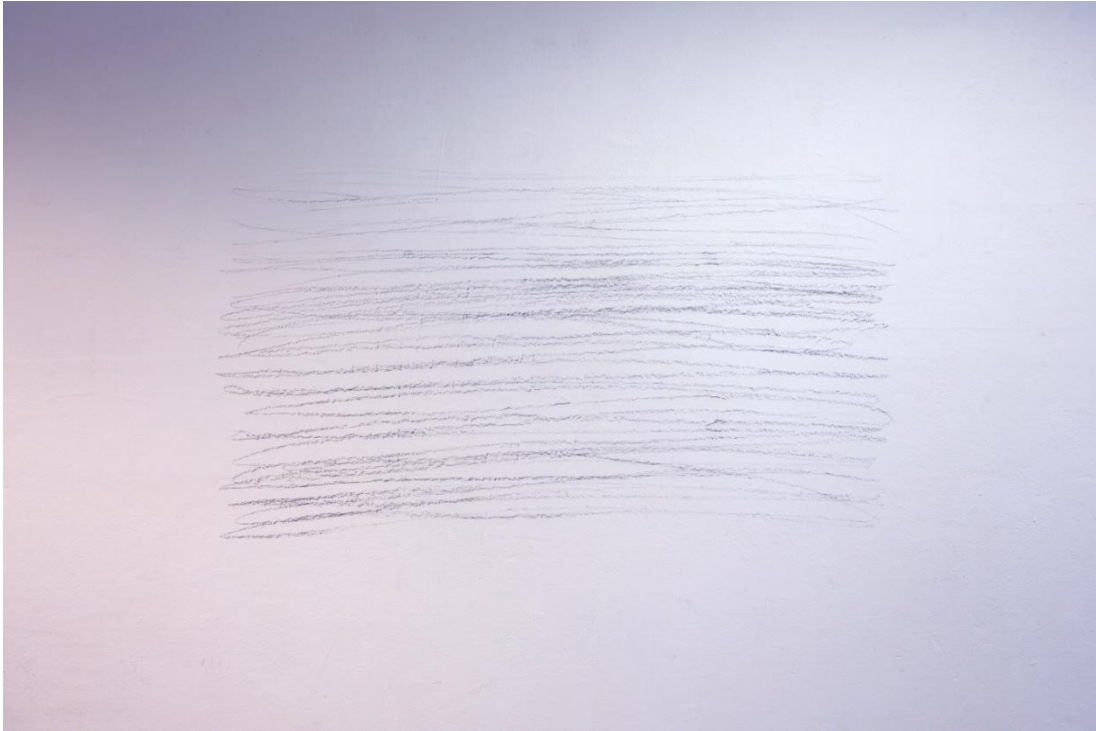


Fig. 2.21 View after projector is switched off.



Fig. 2.22 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Screen XII*, 2016, mixed-media, dimensions variable.

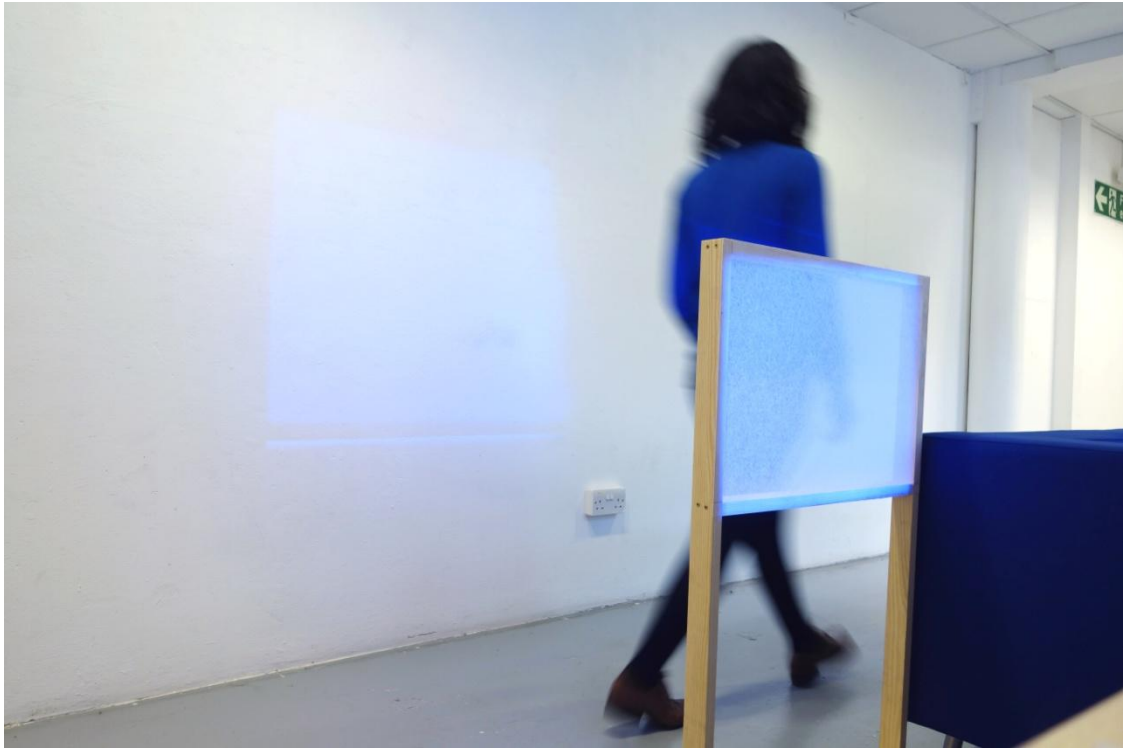


Fig. 2.23 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Screen XII*, 2016, mixed-media, dimensions variable.

There is a play on words here that is fitting with deconstructionism. To float in this case is both to acknowledge a surface (which can be floated upon) and also must necessarily be apart from it (as to a-rise from it). Float then is to be ‘a-part’ of/from the surface, so inherently always in some sense disregarding the surface or ‘flouting’ it. This again is a way into understanding structures of ambiguity – as both being structured (and designed, crafted), yet somehow flouting its own sense of structure, or bringing into presence its own uncertainty. This sense of ‘floating’ the surface also can be seen in *Screen XII* (2016) (see Figure 2.22 and Figure 2.23). Similar to other works (such as *Shoji*), this piece is installed in a corridor space, which allows for lots of movement of bodies. A projector was set up in on side of the corridor space, which projects onto a white wall. A self-standing frame is located between the projector and the wall, the dimension of the frame being the same as the projected light. It is a trace of the projected light. The frame is made from wood and Japanese tissue paper. The transparency of the tissue paper allows the projected light to be cast through and onto the white wall. Here, one can see that *Screen XII* contains three frames; one is the wooden frame, and another is a rectangular shape with projected light merely cast onto the tissue paper, the other is a rectangular shape on the wall. The distances between the projector and two different surfaces make the projected light constantly alter in scale and texture. Furthermore, visitors passing by not only break the frame, but also the surface. Therefore, what we see is a continuous ‘floating’ frame and surface. Thus, through the careful structure of light and frame, a sense of gathering can be seen in this work, similar to the effect of *Shoji*. The difference is that the projected light makes viewers slightly uneasy, as most people are wary of interrupting the projected light. By contrast, in the case of *Shoji*, the spotlight does not have such *significance* for them. Arguably, the use of the projector equates more to theatrical art as discussed by Krauss, which causes more tension or ‘drama’ with viewers. The light forms a ‘stage’ through which viewers must pass, whereas the ‘stage’ of *Shoji* is much less evident. We might suggest that the ‘painting’ space of *Shoji* is more approachable than *Screen XII*. However, since both works engage with the passerby, so the temporality of their placement both offer are eventful. Although, of course, the ‘material’ of projected light creates a literal reference to structural film.



Fig. 2.24 Cheng-Chu Weng, Part of *Screen XI*, 2016, mixed-media, dimensions variable.



Fig. 2.25 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Part of Screen XI*, 2016, mixed-media, dimensions variable.

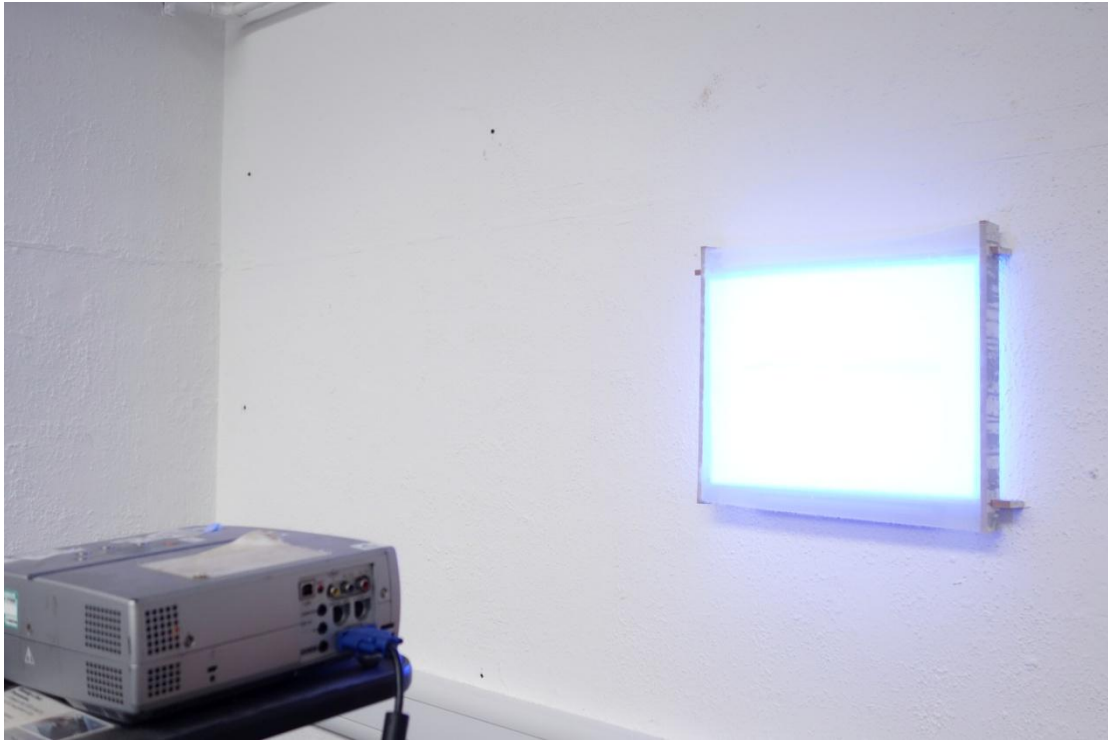


Fig. 2.26 Cheng-Chu Weng, Part of *Screen XI*, 2016, mixed-media, dimensions variable.

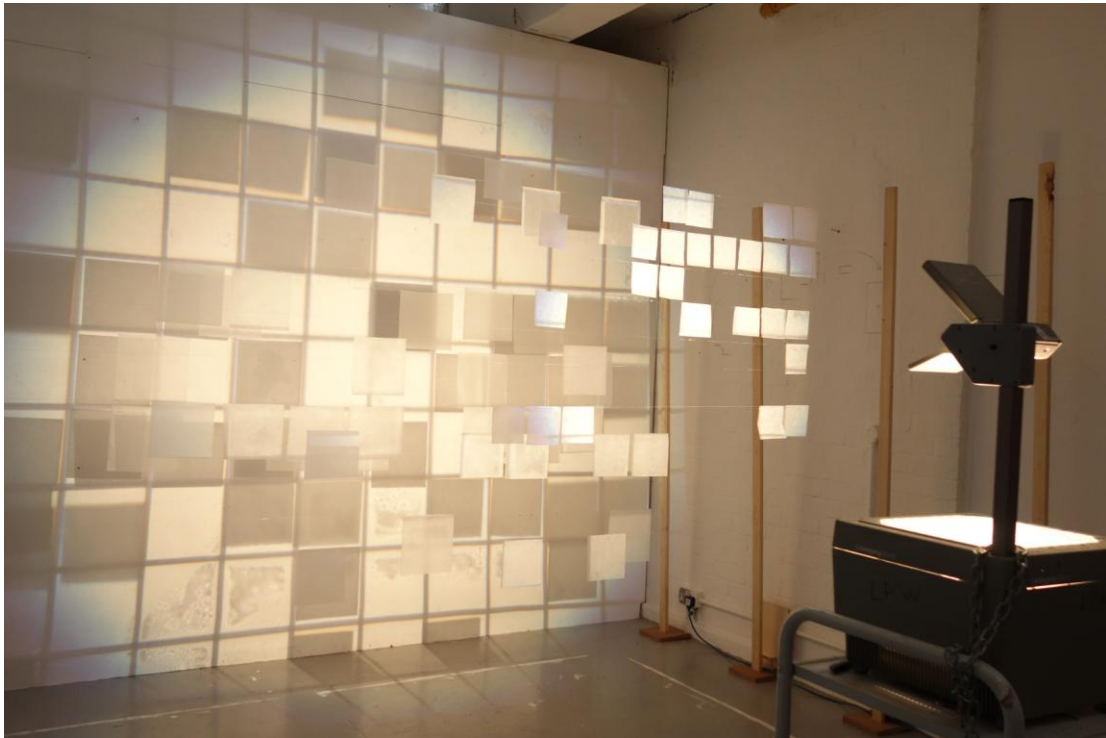


Fig. 2.27 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Grid VIII*, 2016, mixed-media, dimensions variable.

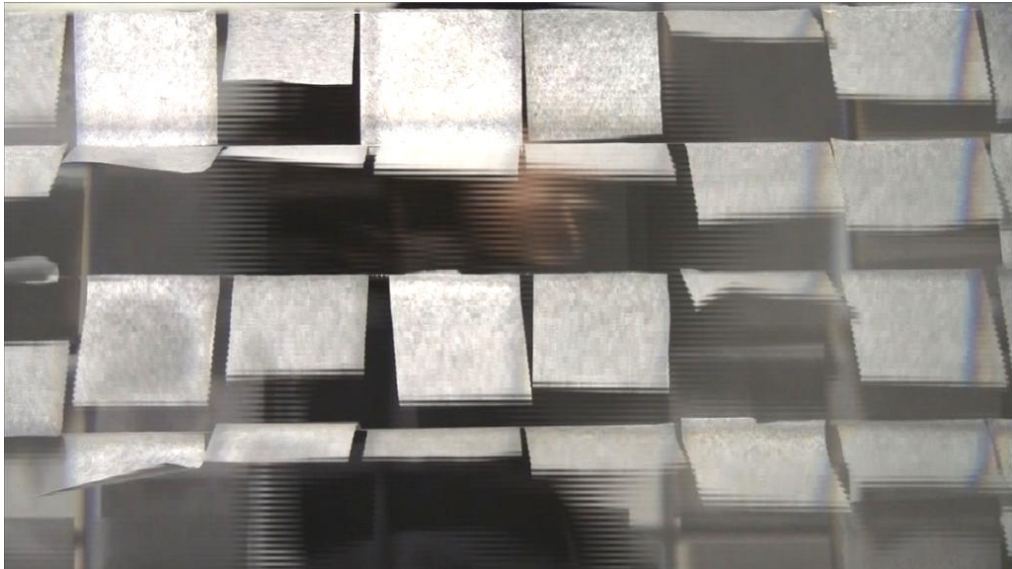


Fig. 2.28 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Running through Grid*, 2016, video still.



Fig. 2.29 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Grid*, 2016, mixed-media, dimensions variable.

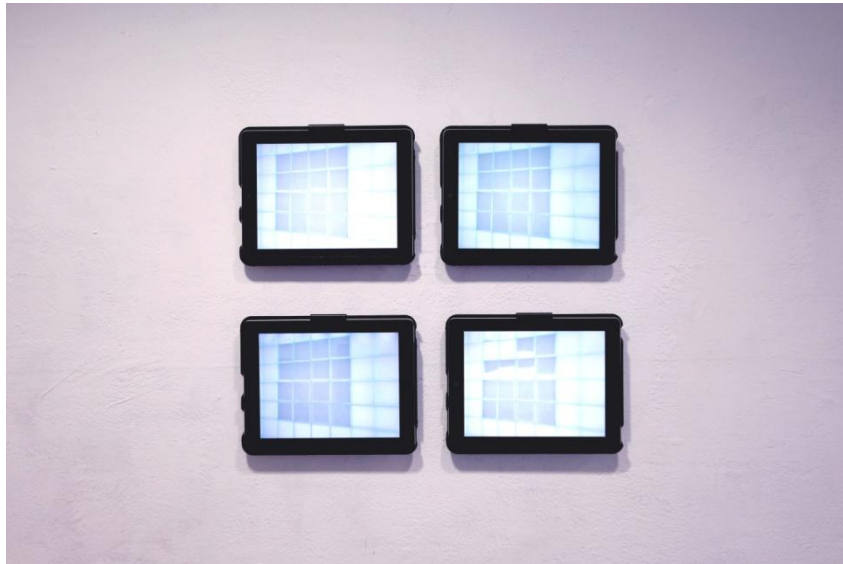


Fig. 2.30 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Video Installation*, 2017, mixed-media, dimensions variable

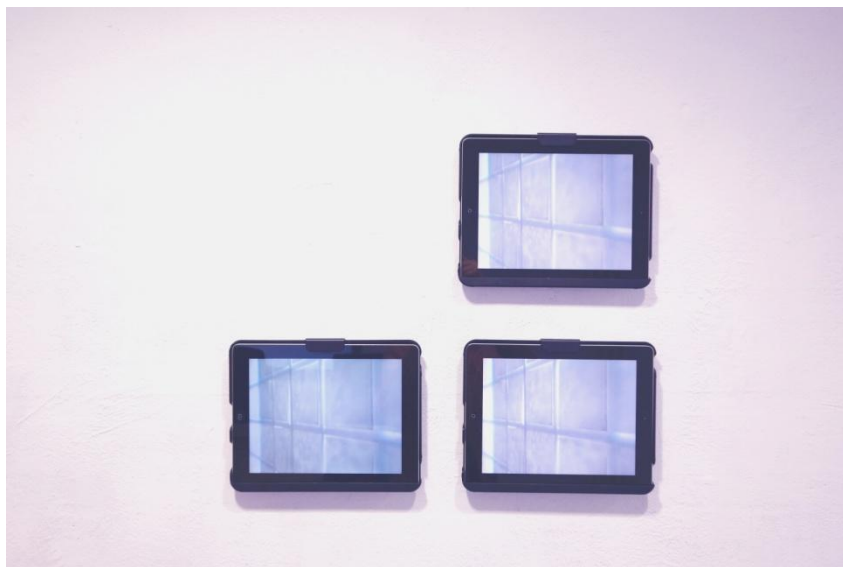


Fig.2.31 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Video Installation II*, 2017, mixed-media, dimensions variable

Different to the example of *Screen XII*, the previous work, *Screen XI* (see Figure 2.24 Figure 2.25 and Figure 2.26) presents less interaction, but a more literal sense of floating. Figures 2.24, 2.25 and 2.26 show *Screen XI* structured in different ways. The fact it can be structured differently immediately presents the work without a solid surface. In other words, the surface in *Screen XI* is 'designed' always to be floating. It is worth noting that the configuration of *Screen XI* in Figure 2.24 bears similarity to the outcomes of *Movement and Sound*, as drawn on the wall (Figure 2.21). Both present a form of marking out after the projector light is switched off. However, in Figure 2.24, what is left behind of the projected light is equally a form of framing and so potentially interrupts or frames what is further projected. On the other hand, the configurations of *Screen XI* shown in Figures 2.25 and 2.26 provide another sense of floating surface. Here, the illuminated frames offer an ambiguous relationship or blending between inside and outside of the frame. The work leads one to question where the light comes from. This kind of floating and ambiguous light can also be seen in *Grid IIII* (2016) (Figure 2.27).

Two further works – *Grid IIII* (2016) and *Running through Grid* (2016)² (Figure 2.27, and Figure 2.28) – not only echo the above narrative, but also provide a 'view' of the practice. *Grid IIII* is a work that derives from *Grid* (2016) (Figure 2.29), though the connection between viewers and grid is tighter than *Grid*. The reason for this is that the grid panel has been *laid out*; visitors are able to walk into a different layer of grid panels. These multiple layers of grid panels and scale not only provide a sense of immersion, but also a sense of 'depth', literally (by being able to walk in amongst or in close proximity to the layers). Philosophically, according to Merleau-Ponty, 'depth' can be a way of understanding or acknowledging 'being'. In 'Eye and Mind' (1964), for example, Merleau-Ponty suggests that every painting contains a sense of 'being'; and this idea amplified by *Grid IIII*, in which viewers are both in the state of 'being' and creating/embodying 'being' at the same time. This influence of Merleau-Ponty – as referenced in various place in the thesis – can obviously be seen across the main body of my works. We might compare, for example, *Shoji* and *Grid IIII* with Wassily Kandinsky's paintings. The different colour values and size of grid provide a sense of 'melody', which is an effect that can be seen in both Kandinsky's paintings and *Grid IIII*. Although, of course, *Grid IIII* allows viewers to change or at least influence the *tone* through passing by it. *Shoji*,

² A video of *Running through Grid* (2016): <http://bit.ly/2CJC9A6>

however, is *minimal* and almost *invisible*, like a feature of borderline art, or 'almost nothing' (Dezeuze, 2017:18). Therefore, the effect of *Grid IIII* is much more theatrical. Moreover, the multiple layers in *Grid IIII* create a sense of stage in the background. However, the purpose of building the layers is not to create a sense of drama, but rather a 'processing' or gathering of instances. Here, the meaning of processing is similar to Serra's concept of 'temporal experience', which is an experience outside of the human time zone and everyday experience. Furthermore, a similar sense of materiality can be seen in both Serra's work and mine, with for example the colour of shadows and texture of Japanese tissue papers constantly changing with the process of people passing by the different layers of grid panels. Moreover, the texture of the overhead projector light could be seen on the white wall.

On the other hand, *Running through Grid* is a video piece, with a shot of the process of interruption in *Grid IIII* by running around the four layers of grid panels, which not only creates ghostly movements, but also a sense of breaking the surface of the screen. This method of filming is the same as *Ghostly Grid* (2016) (Figure 2.32), which aims to present the work itself by recording the nature of it. The effect of *Running through Grid* provides an ambiguous relationship between figure and ground, this vagueness being in the subject and object; indeed it is an effect of the structures of ambiguity. What the viewers watch is the film itself, on a flat surface with moving images. This work echoes *Brush* (2015), as discussed in the Introduction. What people can see in *Brush* is the repeated action of tracing shadow under the projection of the grid panel. Again, the figure and ground seems unified by the similar elements. Figure 2.30 and Figure 2.31 show the installation of a series of video explorations. Viewers can see the similarity between the videos and the composition of the iPads presenting a connection between grid, frame and stage. Accordingly, iPads are used (in terms of their physical dimensions) to form a grid upon the space of a wall rather than simply to display the rectangular frame of the moving images upon them. This series relates to Judd's remark that 'anything on a surface has space behind it' (1975:182). This is of course accentuated by the fact that the iPads display floating grid imagery. Judd's observation that the outside of the painting frame is as important as the inside is notable, for example, in the work of Frank Stella. Similarly, the relationship between what is inside and outside of the frame is blurred through the gridded formation of iPads. They present both a literal space and also a virtual space. Furthermore, the moving image is an extended virtual space that includes

past, present and future. Drawing together my interest in structures of ambiguity and the 'floating' of surfaces, there is a recurring figure that is both real and virtual, there and not there. It is a 'ghostliness': 'the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive' (Colin Davis, 2005:373). This remark is made in the context of an analysis of Derrida's (1994) hauntology, to which I will now turn (in conjunction with Derrida's writing on the visual, and the work of Merleau-Ponty) in a final concluding section. Crucially, however, rather than taking bearings directly from philosophical arguments, an important, if not necessary aspect of a *practice* of hauntology. I would maintain that *through* practice I seek to understand and present *another* kind philosophy. Moreover, as noted in the Introduction, the debate of 'painting space' in my thesis begins from a 'practical' endeavour and is drawn to and through a 'philosophical' account. Thus, the closing philosophical note on 'painting space' is to be read as a combined practical and philosophical concern.

A Sense of Painting Space

As has been noted throughout this thesis, there is an ongoing phenomenological, dilemma between what is inside and outside, what is and is not the object etc., and of course how it is that we can perceive different elements at different times. As outlined in the Introduction, painting can be related to the action of tracing another's shadow. In this way it can be described as an extension of bodies, not least the painter's body. In Merleau-Ponty's account, this extended body is worked across space and time:

The enigma is that my body simultaneously sees and is seen. That which looks at all things can also look at itself and recognize, in what it sees, the "other side" of its power of looking. It sees itself seeing; it touches itself touching; it is visible and sensitive for itself. It is not a self though transparency, like thought, which only thins its object by assimilating it, by constituting it, by transforming it into thought. It is a self through confusion, narcissism, through inherence of the one who sees in that which he sees, and through inherence of sensing in the sensed – a self, therefore, that is caught up in things, that has a front and a back, a past and a future... (1964:162-163)

This account goes beyond the physicality of body and breaks the line of time and space. This sense of embodiment and the mobility of the body can also be seen in Derrida's *Paper Machine* (2001). As Derrida suggests '[p]aper is utilized in an experience involving the body, beginning with hands, eyes, voice, ears; so it mobilizes both time and space' (44). In the case of painting, there is a paradoxical relationship between what we 'see' and what is 'seen', which alters temporally and spatially. For Merleau-Ponty, the 'seen' is a matter of bodily experience, especially the sense of touch. To echo Didi-Huberman's schema of the visible, legible, invisible and visual, as we saw earlier in this chapter, the process of 'seeing' (in) painting is complex and leads out to the 'visual', beyond what is visible. Likewise, Merleau-Ponty's consideration of visibility is not only limited to visual perception. However, as has been suggested here, the moment of tracing an outline is intertwined with what is inside and outside. Painting is an uncertain outline. Interestingly, in Derrida's *Memoirs of the Blind* (1993), he refers to Merleau-Ponty's *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968) to explain trait and the condition of visibility, and yet, paradoxically, Derrida is questioning what would happen if the invisible thing was traced out. In order to answer this question it is important to know what Derrida means by 'invisible thing'. It is a term that appears in both Derrida's and Merleau-Ponty's accounts. For them, the invisible means *hidden* in the visible; the condition of visibility is non-visible. According to Derrida's explanation, the non-visible is essential to approaching the visible. This is displayed in the famous paintings of *The Origin of Painting* and *Invention of the Art of Drawing* (Figure 0.9, Figure 0.10, and Figure 0.11). The *unseen* relationship between the lovers makes the invisible visible; or just at the moment the blind man uses his other sensors to perceive the world. For Derrida, the result of drawing the invisible thing alleviates blindness: '[t]he visible *as such* would be invisible, not as *visibility*, the *phenomenality* or *essence* of the visible, but as the singular body of the visible itself, *right* on the visible – so that, by emanation, and as if it were secreting its own *medium*, the visible would produce blindness' (1993:51-52). Derrida then goes on to refer to Merleau-Ponty's account of 'invisibility', in which there is an enigmatic relationship between visibility and non-visibility, based on the problem of '*punctum caecum*' (Merleau-Ponty cited in Derrida, 1993:53). This psychological issue becomes a point that turns on trace and trait. Punctum caecum occurs in consciousness, at the point 'where it sees itself looking' (Derrida, 1993:53). Following this point of narcissism, Derrida suggests that the invisible is related to blindness:

The *aperspective* thus obliges us to consider the objective definition, the anatomico-physiology or ophthalmology of the “*punctum caecum*,” as itself a mere image, an analogical index of vision itself, of vision in general, of that which, seeing itself see, is nevertheless not reflected, cannot be “thought” in the specular or speculative mode – and thus is blinded because of this, blinded at this point of “narcissism,” at that very point where it sees itself looking. (1993:53)

As Derrida extends Merleau-Ponty’s account of visibility, one can see the difference between their theories. Merleau-Ponty analyses actions (particularly in painting) rather than *breaking down* the action. In consequence, trait cannot simply be read as invisible, but as nothing. As Derrida explains:

A tracing, an outline, cannot be seen. One should in fact not see it (let’s not say however: “One must not see it”) insofar as all the colored thickness that it retains tends to wear itself out so as to mark the single edge of contour: between the inside and the outside of a figure. Once this limit is reached, there is nothing more to see, not even black and white, not even figure/form, and this is the *trait*,... , toward the threshold where only the surroundings of the *trait* appear – that which the trait spaces by delimiting and which thus does not belong to the trait. *Nothing belongs* to the trait, and thus, to drawing and to the thought of drawing, not even it is own “trace.” Nothing even participates in it. The trait joins and adjoins only in separating. (1993:54)

According to this paradox, trait could be understood as *pre-action*. However, since my practice engages with movement, the structures of my works could be described as haunting the trait, or trace of trait without *retrait/drawing*. To use *Shoji* as the key example, the action of drawing or painting is taken over by the viewers; therefore, the work itself is not about the trace or trait, but the *structuring* of being both trace and trait.

However, as noted above, for Merleau-Ponty every painting contains a sense of being. Therefore, he is not interested in making a distinction between figurative and non-figurative art but rather in being in visual experience. Nevertheless, following Merleau-Ponty’s analysis, the concept of depth can be seen from the practical view of space in painting (such as perspective) to the conceptual view of space. For

Merleau-Ponty, the effect of perspective can be both illusion and thought, as he suggests that representation of space is able to make the viewer see the space where it does not exist. For him, this kind of *transformation* of space presents the ‘thought of seeing’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1964:176). Indeed, one can see Merleau-Ponty’s account of visibility as a critique of Rene Descartes’ account of vision. He is particularly against the method that Descartes uses to perceive the object, which loses the thing itself. He, therefore, suggests unveiling painting not by the use of profound form or colour but by gesture. A painter’s vision is embodied within gestures, and it is not hard to understand why Merleau-Ponty was particularly interested in Cézanne’s paintings, in which one can see a *sense* of thing, rather than an image of thing. In other words, Cézanne’s paintings are not representing the views, but rather the views he *experienced*. Merleau-Ponty also referred to Henri Michaux, suggesting the importance of ‘breaking the “skin of things”’ (1964:181). In consequence, painting is not only a matter of presenting the sense of thing, but also formulates itself as a thing, like, haiku, which is a form of itself. Furthermore, for Merleau-Ponty, painting is both alive as itself and reproducing of itself. Therefore, a surface of painting not only provides the visible thing, but also an invisible thing, as he evokes: ‘[e]ssence and existence, imaginary and real, visible and invisible – a painting mixes up all our categories in laying out its oneiric universe of carnal essences, of effective likenesses, of mute meaning’ (1964:169). However, in my account of the expansion of painting, the sense of painting space is not about presenting Merleau-Ponty’s account of depth, but rather the actual phenomenon of depth; an experience which I attempt to prompt through the structures of ambiguity.

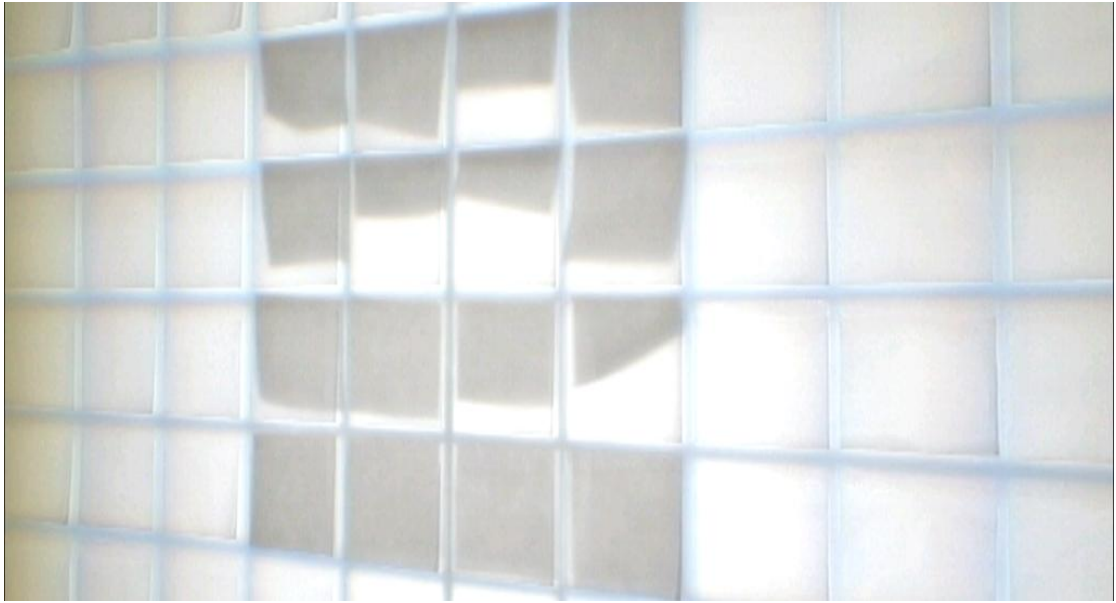


Fig. 2.32 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Ghostly Grid*, 2016, video still.

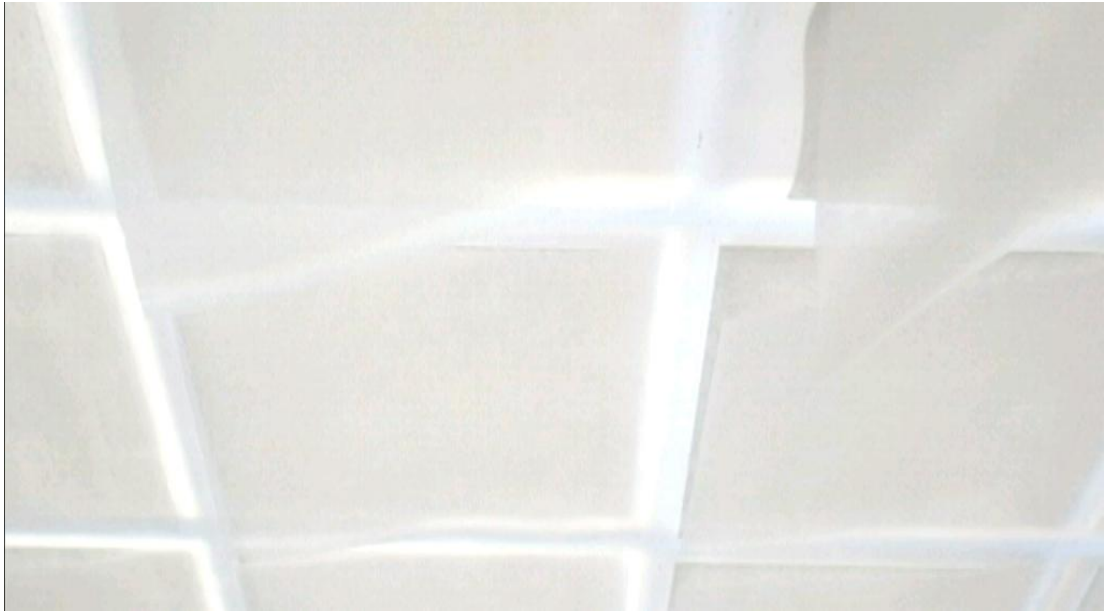


Fig. 2.33 Cheng-Chu Weng, *Ghostly Grid II*, 2016, video still.

In many regards this brings me back to my experience of using Skype to speak with my family (as recounted in the Introduction). The representations of my family as images upon the screen were able to represent a true feeling or sense of them. Skype images are formulated on a smooth surface within rectangular frames, and as with the traditional view or element of painting includes surface and frame. Unlike the paintings I originally made (shown in the Introduction), my response now to the 'screen' can be seen in *Ghostly Grid* (2016)³ and *Ghostly Grid II* (2016)⁴ (Figure 2.32 and Figure 2.33). These works present close-up, direct unedited filming from *Grid* (2016) (Figure 2.29); hence they form a 'ghost' of the 'original' work. This process connects with Derrida's sense of 'ghost' (as underlying mediation). It is a term he uses when putting forward his hauntology account, which he uses to describe a thing that exists without the boundary of timelines and which keeps appearing in or haunting someone's life. A further consideration of in relation to his account is that video in itself as a medium is ghostly. Thus, besides the ghostly views shown (i.e. as content) in the video works of mine, the medium is itself ghostly, being able to resonate in different timelines. As Derrida describes with Ken McMullen's experimental film *Ghost Dance* (1983), cinema is 'the art of letting [the] ghosts come back' (Derrida cited in Murray Leeder, 2015:7).

In *Ghostly Grid*, viewers can see the ghost of a grid. The shadow of grids and the grid itself create a sense of its 'having-been-there' through its immediate presence on the screen. *Ghostly Grid II* provides a less 'ghostly' view, and rather more an everyday view. As one of the viewers of the work commented, the video reminded him of his home at a moment when he sat beside a window in fine weather, enjoying a view of the sunlight cast into the room through the window and curtains. However, exploring the medium, video pushes the immaterial further to de-material. The process of filming not only takes away the phenomenon that is created or occurs at the moment that I interrupt with light, shadow, object and space, but builds up the other kind of phenomenon and space. On the other hand *Ghostly Grid II* uses a much tighter close-up of the paper materials. This close-up view loses the sense of the grid formation. In effect, what is left is nothing but the ghostly movements, which seem to confront the surface of the screen and frame, producing an effect of coming out of the screen. Therefore, the surface of the screen appears to be broken by the ghostly movements.

³ A video of *Ghostly Grid* (2016): <http://bit.ly/2qzORhD>

⁴ A video of *Ghostly Grid II* (2016): <http://bit.ly/2m6BxuF>

Overall, this chapter has presented a practical account of expansion painting. An account of structures of ambiguity has been extended through a reading of theatrical art, formlessness art and structural film. In addition, various conceptual terms, such as in/visibility, trace, trait, écart and depth, have been applied. What follows is a conclusion, 'Finish: A Practice of Expansion Painting', which draws together the key themes of the research through further contextualisation of art history and theory. As has been argued in this chapter, expansion painting cannot simply be derived from historical, theoretical and philosophical debate, but must emerge through making and viewing the artwork as an *open-ended* experience; hence the conclusion is presented through a layering of 'finishes'. This, then, is to echo the breaking of the traditional rectangular frame of painting as pursued throughout this thesis. The research does not follow 'regulatory lines' (Barthes, 2013:114), but instead a more complex, circular line. The concept of finishing is not one easily contained in a conclusion, being more attuned to matters of infinity or, as Barthes puts it, the 'myth of the wheel' (2013:115).

Finish: A Practice of Expansion Painting

A finished work is exactly that, requires resurrection.

John Cage (italic, cited in Caroline A. Jones, 1993:629)

When do we ‘finish’ a work? We might suggest it is finished when we think it is ready to be viewed, yet is this when it begins? By way of presenting a ‘conclusion’ to my work, reference can be made to John Cage who plays on the meaning of finish in various ways. The need of resurrection, as he puts it, is not simply based on the actions of the viewer, but on a more subtle relationship between the viewer and the maker. What Cage reminds us, is a problem of any artwork: when and where does the work begin and end? While Cage is mentioned only in passing in this thesis, he is nonetheless an important reference point. His famous gesture of *not* playing the piano in 4’33’’ (‘composed’ in 1952) is precisely concerned with where and when music begins. The work deliberately asks us to listen to the ‘music’ outside of what the piano might play. It is a work of unbounded proportions. And yet, equally, it is *structured* – notably by the timing announced in the title of the work, as four minutes and thirty-three seconds. In many regards, then, Cage’s 4’33’’ could be taken as a significant precursor to what I have described in my own work as ‘structures of ambiguity’ (it is worth referring to his well-documented interest in East Asian aesthetics, which similarly chimes with aspects of my work).

In the case of my own works, they evoke not only the question of when and where a work begins and ends, but also a ‘sense’ of painting space. Just as Cage once invited us to question an ambient music by being *in* and *of* its ambience, in my own work I reframe physical spaces: spaces between one and another, between objects and architectural elements. It is to engage in phenomenological ‘depth’ (which in turn can connect with psychical ‘spaces’ of thoughts and memories). Therefore, what my works are concerned with is not simply a post-structuralist, theoretical consideration of the boundary between and the viewer and reader (though this is certainly evoked), but an experiential, phenomenological consideration: being in-between spaces. It is a threshold that is captured in Cage’s sense of ‘finish’, which we know is informed by his interest in Zen philosophy. In such writings, finish is not a matter of ending, but rather of a beginning; or

at least one can exist within the other. Thus, finish is a dual term ending/beginning, or death/life, but it is not dualistic. It is not seeking to be one or the other. It is an understanding of finish in this structurally parallel or multiple sense that Cage drew upon repeatedly in this work. Similarly, what this written thesis has sought to yield is a parallel relationship between theory and makings or more importantly, as argued in Chapter 2, in the closing philosophical note on 'painting space', to refer to a *combined* practical and philosophical pursuit.

Cage's quote on 'finish' comes from his essay 'Forerunners of Modern Music', which was published in *The Tiger's Eye* 7 (March 1949), and which presents a critique of 'high art' as accounted for in art historical discourse and the genealogy of modernist music. While operating within certain avant-garde structures, Cage played an important role in offering a more radical view of the arts. Along with others of his time, it is this radical gesture that has enabled generations to come to challenge the category of 'high art' and modernist ideologies, and, as in my own case, to pose questions about art and the everyday life. I am interested in a set of meanings associated with 'finish' and what it means in relation to contemporary practice. In my case, shadow operates as an ambiguous boundary concept (just as the idea of a finished artwork remains ambiguous). Shadow is a key term to indicate an underlying consideration of my practice that handles both the material and the immaterial, building and examining the subtle relationships between body, object, and space. In amongst these elements shadow is an alternative system or structuring device. In this regard, in order to offer some final reflections on my works, the following account presents three different takes on what we might mean by the word 'finish': firstly there is the situating of my works within (or indeed out from) disciplinary structures (which relates to John Cage's need to finish with schools of thought). Secondly, following on from this, I turn to Danto's (1997) account of the end of art, which further situates my practice, particularly as contemporary practice. Finally, I turn to the importance of the material 'finish' of my work (and indeed any work); as an aesthetic concern with making, form and object. Here I refer particularly to various im/materialities of my sense of painting space, which I have referred to specifically as an expansion of painting. As is hopefully clear from the preceding chapters, there is a certain open-endedness to the works I produce. Philosophically, this makes it difficult to want to propose a conclusion to the work but at least presented here are a few different ways in which to 'finish'.

Finishing School: Situating Structures of Ambiguity

The term 'finishing school' is frequently used with negative connotations, suggestive, for example, of disciplining children and young adults in readiness for strict codes of social etiquette. Accordingly, it is in being against hierarchies and disciplinary notions that Cage presents his radical view of education. He refers then to finishing *school* (i.e. to dispense with school) in a speech he gave for the Black Mountain College during the summer of 1948. As he recounts:

We would finish anything. We would really break down all of the conventional ways of approaching school. And the finishing school was going to be caravan, and we would travel from city, and it would be posted outside of the city that finishing school was coming. (Cage cited in Mary Emma Harris, 1987:156)

The Black Mountain College was established outside of the formal education system by Theodore Dreier and John A. Rice in 1933 (in Asheville, North Carolina, the United States). Art and democratic governance were at the heart of the College's education system. Thus, all college members took a role in maintaining the school community. It was an approach that broke with schooling systems at the time, and which is still often evoked in discussions about new and progressive forms of education, notably approaches to learning that are non-hierarchical and based on the received knowledge of experts. Such an ideal presents a challenge to the maintaining of different (and often rigid) schools of thought in art. When we refer to art styles in art history, we tend to refer to particular schools, such as the Heidelberg School and Pont-Aven School. These can be useful ways to quickly draw together connections and themes, but essentially they have come to dominate how we talk about art and how we associate artists and time periods. My reading of Cage's 'finishing school' is less about a break with a general sense of art education (as a disciplinary system), but more as a challenge to the idea of neatly bounded art movements. In other words, to 'finish school' is to break with disciplinary discourse, which is to allow for freedom, democracy etc., but also in terms of my own work, to seek 'freedoms' outside of language (and structural descriptions), so instead allowing for a visual 'language' or visual practice to enable new ways of thinking. In this sense, I do not consider my works to follow the path of art movements (though I refer to these in places to help develop a broader set of descriptions). Crucially, it is in acknowledging the difficulty of defining my

works (e.g., what is inside/outside, what is im/material, and where 'authorship' is located), that I am drawn to the consideration of 'structures of ambiguity'. Arguably, there is a 'freedom' being asserted in the ambiguity of my works, but one that is "practice" consistency.

As discussed in Chapter 1 my works can be considered as 'another-kind' of minimalist aesthetics. In part, my works look like minimalist art, but are not strictly meant as minimalist art. Accordingly, one can see that my works fit with some existing language and ideas, but at the same time break from them or at least are no longer appropriate. An example of 'another-kind' of minimal aesthetics can be seen in my analysis of the relationship between *Shoji* (2015) (Figure 0.13) and Robert Morris' *Installation* (1964) at the Green Gallery (Figure 1.2). *Shoji* not only presents a minimalist kind of outcome, but also brings forth an experience that is similar to the phenomenon that Morris' work provides, so questioning, for example, 'what is in the room that is not really the room' (Krauss, 1979:36). Yet, similar to others of my works, *Shoji* also takes us toward an experience of a sense of painting space. Another significant example is offered in Chapter 2, in which the *Screen* series (2016) (Figure 2.1, Figure 2.2 and Figure 2.3) is compared with Tony Smith's interest in the experiencing of objects in an expansive way, beyond any deliberate framing (Foster, 1996:51). There is a parallel relationship between Smith's interest in frame and my approach. Similarly, I evoke a radical view of the traditional painting frame and draw out the importance of one's fundamental experience of perception. In other words, my works seek to lead us to experience and question an art object and its surrounding. Another point of reference can be Eva Hesse's *Contingent* (1969), also discussed in Chapter 2. Similar to Hesse's *Contingent*, I break from symbolic meaning, also the system of visibility in traditional painting is challenged by, or, as I argue, is expanded by producing 'painting' as three-dimensional work. The tension between the institution of painting and sculpture is raised in both Hesse's work and my works. However, I do not consider my works in terms of 'painting-as-object', but rather more painting as 'object-subject-environment'; as part of which I am not trying to comment on the disciplinary way between painting and sculpture. In presenting ambiguous structure of subject, object, and environment, my works exceed the dominate discourse of forms in the 1960s. Instead, by working *through* the medium of painting I seek to both engage with painting and reach another form of painting, which I define as an expansion of painting. Indeed, expansion painting yields through both a thinking and a making, which taken

together I would describe as a painterly 'action', rather than a form of conceptualism. However, this action is never fully completely without the reception of the work. In the process of experiencing the works there is a potential heightening of one's senses. In this way, I am interested in our awareness of being.

My approach has not been to 'finish' with key language and ideas. Indeed my reading of various ideas relating to painting in the expanded field has had an impact on my practice. However, my research is led by my art practice and its processes, which in turn has led me to consider my works more as an expansion of painting space (rather than merely a response to the discourse on the expanded field). My further consideration draws upon Titmarsh's (2006) account of painting in the expanded field, which is close to what I have pursued in my work and connects with the examples of practice that were introduced at the end of Chapter 1. In thinking alongside these contemporary practices, I have been able to situate my practice beyond the earlier discourse of painting in the expanded field (as stems from Krauss' account of sculpture in the expanded field). Overall, in order to develop my account of expansion painting, I have considered it important to enter into 'dialogue' with contemporary practice. Notably in Chapter 1, I draw upon the insights of three contemporary artists, who each help me in opening up ideas about my practice through a visual 'language', rather than verbal discourse. It is through my interest in different artists' practices with respect to specific elements of making that I have added to my account of expansion painting. Importantly, 'dialogue' here is not literally holding a conversation with the artists or presenting just an analysis with their artworks. It is to share in preoccupations of the elements of 'figuration', the nature of the 'line' and painting as 'multiple objects'. In the section, my interests in internal/external and interpersonal/intrapersonal relationships, as well as some art movements, are given a further explanation. Following this, working beyond theoretical debates, I have tried to articulate an expansion of painting (as set out, for example in my 'Notes on Practice'), and through this I have presented 'structures of ambiguity' as the main contribution and/or site of my study.

The term 'structure of ambiguity' in itself marks an ambiguity of language. It is seemingly an oxymoron – i.e. that ambiguity is precisely something that lacks structure. Yet, persistently through my practice I have worked toward *and* encountered this dual relationship between things that are present and others that are not, which function within and between one another. It is not a dualistic relationship between one thing and another, but rather a phenomenon of

the in-between, more akin to the quality of mist (rather than the coming together of different element). Additional terms, such as 'gathering', 'in-between' and 'ghosting,' operate similarly. They are supplements to my main term of 'structures of ambiguity', but also deconstructive supplements that help relate to, and work on from the artwork. The affect of my works, the sense of breaking with language and idea, is something I find continually emerging in my research. For example, I find the *Screen* series compares with Robert Rauschenberg's *White Painting* (1951). A sympathy between our works allows for a direct connection with the modernist history of painting, but it is at the level of structures of composition (and its ambiguity), that maintains a relationship of practice, not theory. Similarly, the fluid frame of the *Screen* series (Figure 2.1, Figure 2.2 and Figure 2.3), and *A Window Shadow* (2016) (Figure 2.7 and Figure 2.8), exceeds Roland Barthes' (1977) account of tableau. Indeed, my works are not seeking to present cut-out images, but rather providing an 'open' way of seeing. Therefore, it is important to break the geometric shape and draw out the viewers' space-body dynamic within a painterly compositional method.

In keeping with Cage's finishing school, a notable break with the historical and art theoretical accounts of painting was referenced through Norman Bryson's (1988) account of Japanese flung ink painting. As we saw, a parallel relationship with Bryson's flung ink account and my own account of expanded 'space' of painting has been pushed and pulled through the preceding chapters. Indeed, the sense of emptiness, fleetingness and multidirectionality of Japanese flung ink painting offers another way of thinking about structures of ambiguity. This is equally captured, in Chapter 1, in reference to the multidirectional interactions/interruptions with *Shoji* (Figure 0.13), with the movement of the papers echoing the rendering within and outside of a grid, as we might consider with flung ink painting. This similar complex directionality is pushed further in the critique of the multi-dimensional picture plane in Chapter 2. Accordingly, Bryson's 'reading' of flung ink is expanded. The sense of breaking out the traditional painting frame in my works also connects with both minimalist art and formlessness art, although, again, I do not seek to be 'fixed' by either of these 'schools' of art. Rather, I consider my works to exceed these roots. When, for example, in Chapter 2, I analyse the materiality, structures and effects of my works in comparison to specific practices, such as Eva Hesse's *Contingent* (1969), Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970), Richard Serra's *The Matter of Time* (2005) and Robert Morris' (1967-8) felt pieces, I find that the reference to old debates and concepts can be both useful and 'deadening'. It is convenient to place my works in this context, to help communicate ideas to others, but it risks defining it in ways that are too rigid. Inevitably, my practice is *haunted* by art historical and theoretical debates; they are an ever present

‘future’, and ongoing framing or reading. As Georges Bataille puts it in his brief statement on ‘formless’, philosophy (or academic thinking more broadly) is quick to ‘make sense’ of things, to cover over what things are with what we believe (or wish to believe) things mean. For Bataille, the ‘dictionary begins when it no longer gives the meaning of words, but their tasks’ (cited in Bois and Krauss, 1997:5). In a similar sense, I consider my works to bring about an affect, rather than to simply represent a meaning. As another kind of ‘finishing school’, I have taken interest in theatrical art and structural film (as discussed in Chapter 2). Both these areas I consider to *present* rather than represent their works. As such, through studying these movements in relation to two specific texts, they help me to further examine the notion of ‘structures of ambiguity’. In particular, vagueness in the relationship between creator and viewer is critical; moreover, the elements of time and space are addressed. However, as we saw, although my works share the preoccupation of the relationship between creator and viewer, light, time, and space, they cannot be easily identified as theatrical art and structural film, which can be seen, for example, when my works use the natural resource as material/medium, as in *A Window Shadow II* (2016) (Figure 2.18 and Figure 2.19). Thus, overall, structures of ambiguity can be said to be situated in and articulated through an approach of ‘finishing (with) school’ – a deconstructive oscillation of being in and out of established ways of describing and defining artworks, methods and site of viewership. In the ‘end’, however, the disciplinary debates cannot fully situate my works, leaving my practice as an *unfinished* contemporary practice.

Unfinished: A Contemporary Practice

In *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (1997), Danto provides a critical view of art itself. Art history, he suggests, does not exist until 1928, prior to which he refers to the ‘Era of Art’ (About A. D. 1400 to 1928) (1997:3). This is a period of art production without its own critical consideration. As Danto explains, the productions of artefacts ‘were not even thought of as art in the elementary sense of having been produced by artists... but were regarded as having a miraculous provenance’ (ibid). In the main, artefacts and images were crafted that belonged to religious and cultural activities, so more along the lines of ‘icons’ (ibid). After this period comes the ‘Age of Manifestos’ (From 1928 to 1964) (Danto, 1997:29), and following that, bringing us up to the present, is the

contemporary or we might say the 'age of pluralism'. For Danto, a key marker for this shift from the Age of Manifestos to the contemporary is Andy Warhol's *Brillo Box* sculpture (1964). In parallel with the idea of schools of thought defining art and art movements, the Age of Manifestos endeavoured to define what art is. Through this process – presented as manifestos – art becomes a political tool to express the ideas of art based upon its 'stylistics'. Clement Greenberg's modernism is a key example of what Danto suggests as a regime of truth of art, and which is based upon certain narratives or ways of framing history. In Greenberg's account he traces from the Renaissance. Accordingly, modernist art is established as a means to protect the history of art, especially traditional forms. Underlying Greenberg's account is a Kantian critical method, to understand the way in which we can frame or understand art. Paradoxically, this critical method works its way toward the 'end of art', in which there is no one way of defining it, so leaving us only with its pluralism. Following this logic, Danto goes on to articulate an idea that art becomes a philosophical issue:

The point about the Age of Manifestos is that it brought what it took to be philosophy into the heart of artistic production. To accept the art as art meant accepting the philosophy that enfranchised it, where the philosophy itself consisted in a kind of stipulative definition of the truth of art, as well, often, as a slanted rereading of the history of art as the story of the discovery of that philosophical truth. (1997: 30)

The trend towards art as a philosophical discourse can in particular be seen to emerge in the 1960s. A blooming of art theories arguably takes us away from an interest in art *making* (there is a shift towards conceptual art, that can be as much thought as it can be made). Of course, art never stops being produced, but what does come to an end, as Danto argues, are the narratives of art. In other words, art is no longer bound in the history of art. Accordingly, to use Cage's term again, the age of pluralism *finishes* with the narrative of art (though perhaps we are then left with its perpetual resurrection).

As we saw in Chapter 1, Krauss' critique of modernism marks a break (or a breaking open of) the history of art and of traditional forms. Minimalist art finishes off modernism. Crucially, the freedom of sculpture in the expanded field is that it is not so much about something, but a thoughtful working through of a medium in itself (or rather in dialogue with mediums, plural). A consideration of medium also can be seen in my practice, which

suggests that painting is not *the* object that we typically refer to (i.e. a painting hanging on the wall), but a model of thinking *and* making. My practice draws upon painterly compositional methods (certainly in terms of my own training and instincts) but is developed through site-specific considerations of architectural spaces, bodies, and differing levels of consciousness when interacting in such spaces. Without understanding my work in this way, it is possible to jump to the conclusion that I am merely making sculptures or installations. This, again, is the problem with a set discourse of art, which presents 'ways of seeing'. However, my approach is similar to Krauss (and Donald Judd), in being interested in spaces in-between or that which is neither/nor. However, my focus is on a material neither/nor, as derived through a process of making. I am not seeking to offer a meta-critique, to make objects about objects, or use mediums to speak of mediums. In this sense, I am not trying to define art forms in an expanded field. Instead, I engage in a practical endeavour of working within materials, elements and modes that I attributed to painting, but which I seek to work within in an expanded form. This perspective, for example, is what drew me back to the myth of painting in Pliny's account, in which the act of mark making is clearly in operation through space, amongst bodies and in relation to certain atmospherics of an environment and its light. Despite the 'disciplinary' scene of the Corinthian maid (who draws up boundaries, and undertakes an 'exercise' in drawing; and for whom her solidier lover must go away to war), this scene has been for me a liberating one. It has allowed me to focus on the act of making, to be less haunted by the historical forms and styles pervading from modernism onwards. The minimal and geometrical elements of my works may give an illusion or spectre of minimalist art. Yet, my practice is not the future of minimalist art. It is difficult to detach it from our ability to select 'options' from a pluralistic array of art (as Danto suggests). Yet, to echo the argument of contemporary art that I have in the Introduction and Chapter 2, the 'problem' of pluralism is reflected in my own approach and thinking about my works. Also, in particular, as I have outlined in the thesis, I consider my works to offer a different kind of space or contemplation, which is against the overcrowded, busy environments of our 'plural' lives.

Overall, Danto's 'finishing off' of art history is to argue for a new perspective on art and its 'time'. Contemporary art emerges as an unfinished art – it is not destined for somewhere in particular, for some reason. It is rather an open-ended means of being in the world. In my research, I have similarly 'finished' with art history as a means to situate my practice. The difficulty of situating my works can be seen in Chapter 1 in reference to the two

exhibitions, 'Painting Zero Degree' (2000) and 'As Painting' (2001). While the ideas behind these exhibitions can be shown to connect with my own interest in painting in the expanded field, there is always a dilemma that can occur as a curatorial practice comes to over-write an individual art practice. In this case of the two exhibitions, the artists involved are drawn into a discourse about painting that is not necessarily enabling their specific interests to be heard. We can take our eyes off of the practice itself and of the effects of the works produced. The need to present a sense of 'progress' in painting (to be 'as painting' or 'zero degree') can prevent us from reflecting on the sense of an unfinished nature of painting, or art-making in general. To put it another way, it is not easy to trace a practice that is *still life* – i.e. that is still in the making, still living. As *still life*, an explicit example of my works as contemporary practice is noted in the Introduction. I point out that contemporary practices are not focused so much on their being 'now', but as being a freedom of choices. In respect of 'finishing school', the freedom of options remains operative; they remain in play. Just as Barthes (1977) once wrote that the 'theory of the Text can coincide only with a practice of writing' (164), so the 'theory' of the artwork can only coincide with its making. Furthermore, since my works are not completed until the moment viewers interrupt them, the works are deliberately 'structured' as un-finished, contemporary forms. In a literal sense, my works are of an un-finished contemporary practice.

Finish: Im/materialities of a Sense of Painting Space

In offering some final resolve upon my work, it is important not only to refer to the practice in the above theoretical and historical terms, but also to remind of the work itself. There is a certain 'finish' to the work I display: they are made of particular materials, with particular ways of joining together, fastening and aligning with their surrounds. In this way, my works are not representations, but the very *matter* of a 'sense' of painting space. As noted in the Introduction, the method of drawing out a sense of painting space relates to drawing upon painterly compositional methods but developed through site-specific considerations of architectural spaces, bodies, and differing levels of consciousness when interacting in such spaces. Therefore, the sense of painting space is not represented by or made-up literally by shading or a perspectival technique. Instead, a phenomenological reading is an important undercurrent, which in turn enables a critical consideration of 'structures of ambiguity'.

Accordingly, one can say, my sense of painting space is rendered through certain ways of 'finish' or 'finishing off' (the) space.

The action of painting is re-defined, or negotiated in new ways. As we saw in Chapter 1, drawing up Pliny's 'The Origin of Painting', the suggestion is of painting as the moment of gathering. Furthermore, the materials of painting are re-examined. As such the im/materials of light, shadow and line replace traditional paints. As with structural film, the approach is to work directly with the elements that a medium formerly sought to render. Instead of painting the light (with paints), the approach has been to paint with light, or with air, bodies, space. Accordingly, this is not a gesture of 'abandoning' painting but rather its expansion. Expansion, here, can be understood as a verb, as a 'doing' (of the making of painting), which is related to, but different to the more technical or theoretical account of the 'expanded field'. In the main, my inquiry has involved four dimensions: material, process, time and scale. In the case of material, the engagement is with the immaterial, such as light, shadow, air and airflow, which again is to move beyond traditional and modernist painting. Moreover, these key elements/materials are what underline my approach towards structures of ambiguity. In particular, as I have outlined in the preceding chapters, I take shadow as the main device, as both material and metaphor, which shapes the core of my practice. Shadow is not only as a component of practice (as a key compositional element and device), but also metaphorically provides 'ambivalence', being both of and outside of an object, and suggestive of both distinctive and indistinct forms. Moreover, my interest in the shadow is as a trace of something else, as its own visible entity, and yet as something immaterial. Thus, shadow works as synecdoche for a range of concerns for what lies in and outside of composition (in and outside of a drawn line, in and out of the 'artwork' within a space), all relating back to *painterly* considerations regarding the 'suspension' of compositional elements within a medium, but which this thesis offers in an expanded sense.

In conjunction with my interest in shadow, I work with geometrical shapes, producing objects or components of a work that present a fine, *material* 'finish'. For example, woods, papers and fabrics are cut and structured as clean, neat shapes, typically squares or rectangles. This is another kind of 'finish', which belongs to the language of design. One might describe the quality of production, of an object, as having a high quality finish, for example. Crucially I do not seek to 'over-finish', or over-work the use of materials. As has

been outlined, however, I am more interested in allowing materials to behave in ways suitable to their own materiality – i.e. to let cloth drape, to allow paper to waft, and for light and shadow to spill naturally upon a surface. Nonetheless, as *structures* of ambiguity, I work carefully with materials and their placement, and aim *not* to draw attention to how something is constructed. It is the interaction of elements that is important, not their construction. In this regard, I work towards a high-quality or rather delicate finish. Taken altogether, playing on the different version of the word ‘finish’, this written component of my thesis comes full circle; it finishes back where it started. This circulation draws out the shape of the structures of ambiguity, but along the way provides the means of expanding upon an expansion of painting that ‘is’ a contemporary practice. In bringing this practice-based doctoral thesis to its current endpoint, the aim has been to offer fuller understanding of the nature of my practice, particularly the experience of time. Both experiencing my works and reading through this written thesis is ‘a *physical* time’ (Richard Serra, 2005:31), whereby, in the words of Serra, this research is ‘compressed or protracted but always articulated. Sometimes it narrows to details, but you are *always returned* to the field in its entirety’ (italic, *ibid*). Following this logic, the structure of this written thesis not only presents a sense of ‘open-endedness’, but also ‘draws’ out my interest in physicalities and materialities. Finally, the last gesture of this thesis presents a view of *haunting* back to the beginning of itself – a practice of expansion painting.

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Introduction

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Illustration:

Introduction

Fig. 0.1 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) *Untitled (After Donald Judd)* [MDF board]

Fig. 0.2 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) *Divide IV* [dowel, screen print silk]

Fig. 0.3 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2012) *Relocation Celebration* [oil colour on board]

Fig. 0.4 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2012) *Zoo* [oil colour on board]

Fig. 0.5 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2014) *Practice V* [oil colour on boards]

Fig. 0.6 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2014) *Cylinder II* [oil colour on self-adhesive covering films]

Fig. 0.7 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2015) *Sticky Note VII* [sticky note]

Fig. 0.8 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2017) *Around* [dowel, garden fleece]

Fig. 0.9 Allen, D. (1775) *The Origin of Painting (The Maid of Corinth)* [oil on panel] At:
<https://www.nationalgalleries.org/collection/artists-a-z/a/artist/david-allan/object/the-origin-of-painting-the-maid-of-corinth-ng-612> (Accessed on 28.05.16)

Fig. 0.10 Regnault, J.-B. (1785) *Origin of Painting* [oil on canvas] At:
<https://i.pinimg.com/originals/91/19/78/9119788ec4f46c00aa3f5f680e66e05f.jpg>
(Accessed on 28.05.16)

Fig. 0.11 Benoît Suvée, J. (1791) *Invention of the Art of Drawing* [oil on canvas] At:
http://www.wga.hu/html_m/s/suvee/inventio.html (Accessed on 28.05.16)

Fig. 0.12 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2015) *Shoji* [Japanese tissue paper]

Fig. 0.13 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2018) *The Structure of Mist* [Tangujo paper, projector]

Chapter 1: Painting in the Expanded Field

Fig. 1.1 Brâncuși, C. (1938) *Endless Column* [oak] At:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sculptural_Ensemble_of_Constantin_Br%C3%A2ncu%C8%99i_at_T%C3%A2rgu_Jiu (Accessed on 28.05.16)

Fig. 1.2 Morris, R. (1964) *Installation* at the Green Gallery [installation] At:

http://www.artspace.com/magazine/art_101/art_market/minimalism-52622
(Accessed on 28.05.16)

Fig. 1.3 Krauss, Rosalind (1979) *Last Diagram of Sculpture in the Expanded Field* In:

Sculpture in the Expanded Field [diagram] p. 36

Fig. 1.4 Fares, Gustavo (2004) *A Graph of Painting in the Expanded Field* In: *Painting in the Expanded*. [diagram] p. 482

Fig. 1.5 Fares, Gustavo (2004) *three-dimensional* In: *Painting in the Expanded*. [diagram] p. 483

Fig. 1.6 Picasso, P. (1912) *Still Life with Chair Caning* [oil on oil-cloth over canvas edge] At:

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-1010/early-abstraction/cubism/a/picasso-still-life-with-chair-caning> (Accessed on 28.03.16)

Fig. 1.7 Dunn, R. (2005) *Shadow Zone* [installation] At:

http://www.richarddunn.net/wp/2005-shadowzone-sydney/l_img_44474eecd03ad/
(Accessed on 28.05.16)

Fig. 1.8 Saenredam, Jansz Pieter (1636-7) *The Interior of the Grote Kerk at Haarlem* [oil on canvas] At: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/526006431460542293/> (Accessed on 24.01.17)

Fig. 1.9 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2015) *Height* [robber band, masonry nail]

Fig. 1.10 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2015) *Experimental I* [self-sticky back]

Fig. 1.11 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2015) *Installation V* [acrylic]

Fig. 1.12 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2015) *Punch I* acrylic]

Fig. 1.13 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2015) *Punch II* [robber band]

Fig. 1.14 Hamilton, A. (1984) *Room in search of a position* [photograph] At:

https://www.pinterest.com/pin/571746115172935641/?from_navigate=true

(Accessed on 28.05.16)

Fig. 1.15 Hamilton, A. (2000) *ghost...a border · video* [video] From: *ghost...a border · video*

Directed by: Ann Hamilton At:

http://www.annhamiltonstudio.com/videosound/ghost_video.html (Accessed on 28.05.16)

Fig. 1.16 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2015) *Brush* [video]

Fig. 1.17 Willard, Steve (1999) One of the photos in Ann Hamilton's *Whitecloth* project

[photograph] In: The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, *Ann*

Hamilton-whitecloth: The 1998 Larry Aldrich Foundation Award Exhibition. Plate 37. Connecticut: The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art

Fig. 1.18 Willard, Steve (1999) One of the photos in Ann Hamilton's *Whitecloth* project

[photograph] In: The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, *Ann*

Hamilton-whitecloth: The 1998 Larry Aldrich Foundation Award Exhibition. Plate 48. Connecticut: The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art

Fig. 1.19 Deschenes, Liz (1999) One of the photos in Ann Hamilton's *Whitecloth* project

[photograph] In: The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, *Ann*

Hamilton-whitecloth: The 1998 Larry Aldrich Foundation Award Exhibition. Plate 60. Connecticut: The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art

Fig. 1.20 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) *Through* [fabric, wood, dowel]

Fig. 1.21 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) *Line X* [Japanese tissue paper]

Fig. 1.22 One of the images in Ann Hamilton's *the event of a thread* project (2012-2013)

[photograph] At: <http://www.annhamiltonstudio.com/projects/armory.html>

(Accessed on 28.05.16)

Fig. 1.23 One of the images in Ann Hamilton's *the event of a thread* project (2012-2013)

[photograph] At: <http://www.annhamiltonstudio.com/projects/armory.html>

(Accessed on 28.05.16)

Fig. 1.24 One of the images in Ann Hamilton's *the event of a thread* project (2012-2013)

[photograph] At: <http://www.annhamiltonstudio.com/projects/armory.html>

(Accessed on 28.05.16)

Fig. 1.25 One of the images in Ann Hamilton's *the event of a thread* project (2012-2013)

[photograph] At: <http://www.annhamiltonstudio.com/projects/armory.html>

(Accessed on 28.05.16)

Fig. 1.26 One of the images in Ann Hamilton's *the event of a thread* project (2012-2013)

[photograph] At: <http://www.annhamiltonstudio.com/projects/armory.html>

(Accessed on 28.05.16)

Fig. 1.27 Klee, Paul (1925) *Fig.8* In: *Pedagogical Sketchbook*, translated by Moholy-Nagy, S.,

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Fig. 1.28 Gego (1969) *Reticulárea (ambientación)* [installation] At:

<https://www.creativetourist.com/articles/art/leeds/gego-at-the-henry-moore-institute-line-as-object/> (Accessed on 24.01.18)

Fig. 1.29 Suttle, William (1972) A photo of Gego's *Chorros* (Exhibition Sculpture and

Drawings) at Betty Parsons Gallery [photography, ©Fundación Gego] At:

<https://www.daros-latinamerica.net/essay/gego-elusive-transparency> (Accessed on 24.01.18)

Fig. 1.30 Gego (1957) *Vibration in Black* [Aluminum painter black] At:

<http://postwar.hausderkunst.de/en/artworks-artists/artworks/vibracion-en-negro-vibration-in-schwarz> (Accessed on 28.05.16)

Fig. 1.31 Begg, Torie (1990) one of paintings in *Apparently Monochrome* [unknown] At:

<http://toriebegg.com/abstract.htm> (Accessed on 28.05.16)

Fig. 1.32 Begg, Torie (1990) one of paintings in *Apparently Monochrome* [unknown] At:

<http://toriebegg.com/abstract.htm> (Accessed on 28.05.16)

Fig. 1.33 Begg, Torie (1996) *Appearance Yellow*, installation [installation] In: Sadin, E. and

Begg, T. (1998) *Torie Begg-Apparently Black*, plate 38, Roanne: Theatre Municipal de Roanne.

Fig. 1.34 Stella, Frank (1960) Aluminum Paintings [installation] At:

<http://thesingleroad.blogspot.co.uk/2011/09/working-in-series.html> (Accessed on 28.05.16)

Fig. 1.35 Begg, Torie (1995) *11118 – Brush Structure* [pure acrylic polymer and organic

pigment on canvas and timber stretcher] In: Southampton City Art Gallery, *Real Art: 'a new modernism' – British reflexive painters in the 1990s*, plate 25,

Southampton: Southampton City Art Gallery.

Fig. 1.36 Begg, Torie (1995) *MM01 – Brush Structure* [pure acrylic polymer and organic

pigment on canvas and timber stretcher] In: Southampton City Art Gallery, *Real Art: 'a new modernism' – British reflexive painters in the 1990s*, plate 29, Southampton: Southampton City Art Gallery.

Chapter 2: Structures of Ambiguity: Grid, Frame, Screen and Stage

Fig. 2.1 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) *Screen* [wooden frame and dowell]

Fig. 2.2 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) *Screen II* [wooden frame and dowell]

Fig. 2.3 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) *Screen III* [wooden frame and dowell]

Fig. 2.4 Dürer, Albrecht (ca. 1600) *Draughtsman Making a Perspective Drawing of a Woman* [woodcut]

At:<https://marshadevine.wordpress.com/2010/05/20/tips-on-using-a-grid-for-sighting/> (Accessed on 18.12.16)

Fig. 2.5 the Younger Holbein, Hans (1533) *The Ambassadors* [Oil on Oak] At:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Ambassadors_\(Holbein\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Ambassadors_(Holbein)) (Accessed on 18.12.16)

Fig. 2.6 Fra Angelico's painting and its surrounding (unknown date) [photograph] At:

<http://www.churchesofflorence.com/sanmarco.htm> (Accessed on 18.12.16).

Fig. 2.7 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) *A Window Shadow* [fishing line, masonry nail]

Fig. 2.8 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) The sunlight and shadow effect of *A Window Shadow*, (which is part of the work) (2016) [photograph]

Fig. 2.9 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) *Tube* [wood, fishing line and silk screen printing mesh]

Fig. 2.10 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) *Cylinder III* [wood and silk screen printing mesh]

Fig. 2.11 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) Partial view of *Tube* (2016) [photograph]

Fig. 2.12 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) Preparatory image, showing *Tube* suspended using fishing wire to make for single horizontal tube shape. This approach was altered to allow for the draping of the material, as seen in Figure 2.11. [photograph]

Fig. 2.13 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) A shadow of *Tube* (an écart of *Tube*, 2016) [photograph]

Fig. 2.14 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) *Screen* [wooden frame and dowel]

Fig. 2.15 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) *Screen II* [wooden frame and dowell]

Fig. 2.16 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) *Screen III* [wooden frame and dowell]

Fig. 2.17 Tong, Mimi and Saad, Nuha (2005) *Intersecting geometries* [wood, canvas, acrylic paint, wallpaper] At:<http://www.nuhasaad.com/artspace-projects-and-exhibitions>

(Accessed on 18.12.16)

Fig. 2.18 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) *A Window Shadow II* [Japanese tissue paper, glue]

Fig. 2.19 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) The sunlight and shadow effect of *A Window Shadow II*,
(which is part of the work) (2016) [photograph]

Fig. 2.20 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) *Movement and Sound* [video]

Fig. 2.21 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) View after projector is switched off [photograph]

Fig. 2.22 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) *Screen XII* [mixed-media]

Fig. 2.23 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) *Screen XII* [mixed-media]

Fig. 2.24 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) Part of *Screen XI* [mixed-media]

Fig. 2.25 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) Part of *Screen XI* [mixed-media]

Fig. 2.26 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) Part of *Screen XI* [mixed-media]

Fig. 2.27 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) *Grid IIII* [mixed-media]

Fig. 2.28 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) *Running through Grid* [mixed-media]

Fig. 2.29 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) *Grid* [mixed-media]

Fig. 2.30 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2017) *Video Installation* [mixed-media]

Fig. 2.31 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2017) *Video Installation II* [mixed-media]

Fig. 2.32 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) *Ghostly Grid* [video]

Fig. 2.33 Weng, Cheng-Chu (2016) *Ghostly Grid II* [video]

