MEMENTO-MORI IN PAINTING:

AN IMAGE OF MULTIPLICITIES

A Practice-Led Project Expanding the Notion of Memento-Mori in Painting.

Investigated via a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering
developed out of a critical and clinical stutter.

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Ethics and Data

This study was approved by the Bath Spa University Ethics Panel on 13th April 2021.

Should you have any concerns regarding ethical matters relating to this study, please contact the Research Support Office at Bath Spa University.

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No new datasets were created during the study.

ABSTRACT

Through an active engagement with works by the French classicist painter Nicolas Poussin and making use of photographs recording domestic interiors belonging the recently deceased, this practice-led project explores painting's relationship with *Memento-Mori* (meaning: Remember you Have to Die) via a theoretical and practical stuttering mode of painting.

Informed by the act of making paintings and using an exhibition of paintings as a structure to map its questions, insights and theories, the project's aim is to expand the notion of *Memento-Mori* in painting beyond being represented by objects signifying a sequential concept of time. The project moves the notion towards being alternatively represented as an image of temporally-indeterminate multiplicities, indicative of the temporal indetermination of a life-span.

Out of this expansion, the transformation of a critical stutter – via tacit knowledge of a clinical stutter – into a painterly mode of stuttering-thinking and visual-stuttering is developed to form a crucial element lying at the heart of the project.

Under the precepts of this stuttering-thinking and visual-stuttering, the painted grid is used as a device to counterintuitively connect and disrupt, reflective of a non-sequential concept of time. This use of the grid pivots on the fluid relationship within a painting between Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concepts of 'smooth' and 'striated' space, and Alois Riegl's concepts of the 'haptic' and the 'optic'.

The project proposes that *Memento-Mori* as a notion in painting could be thought of as a creational research tool to drive a painting practice, and that tacit knowledge (and, even, learned knowledge) of a clinical-stutter can form an integral and beneficial part of a painting practice.

Keywords:

Painting, Paintings, Multiplicities, Memento-Mori, Nicolas Poussin, Stuttering, Stutter, Stammering, Stammer, Probate, Time, Non-Sequential, Glitch, Memory, Grid, Interiors, Haptic, Optic, Smooth, Striated, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari.

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INTRODUCTION

Aims

This project's principal aim is to use my painting practice to investigate ways the notion of *Memento-Mori* (meaning: Remember you Have to Die) might be alternatively expressed in painting differently than by depicting objects signifying a sequential (and ultimately finite) sum of time – such as a skull, timepiece or perishable food. This central aim is based on two precepts:

- The notion of *Memento-Mori*, as a mental state, does not have a singular recognised expression.[1]
- A disjointed and disrupted unfolding of time is more reflective of a human's lifespan.[2]

During the process of this investigation, a previously unarticulated leap-of-faith (or even discovery) has emerged. Informed by tacit knowledge of a lifelong clinical stutter,[3] in parallel with Gilles Deleuze's analysis of the linguistic critical (or scholarly) stutter,[4] the genesis, articulation and development of a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering as a mode of painting has been key in coming to know how my practice and paintings might embody an expanded, and alternatively expressed, notion of *memento-mori*.

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[1] The idea that *memento-mori* does not have a recognised expression is examined in Chapter Two. The idea emerges out of Friedrich Nietzsche's account of *memento-mori* as a mechanism of willing, and Dominic Lopes's non-attempt to explain what it is for a physical configuration to have the function of indicating an emotion.

[2] In sympathy with the British art historian, poet and writer T. J. Clark, my thoughts on the subject of death, and remembering we have to die, "[...] like most of our thoughts in this area, are ordinary and chaotic" (Clark. T.J. (2006) *The Sight of Death*, Yale University Press p. 227). This project also identifies with Immanuel Kant's sense that, "[...] there is a kind of temporal indetermination in the unfolding of a life". (Rajchman, J. (2000) *The Deleuze Connections*, M.I.T. Press, p. 130).

[3] British-English tends to use the word 'stammer'. However, I have always used the American-English word 'stutter' and continue to do so throughout this thesis.

[4] Gilles Deleuze, *He Stuttered*, in: Boundas, C.V. & Olkowski, D., (eds) (2018) *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy*, Routledge, pp. 23-29.

This PhD research project is practice-led. My paintings and other works made out of my practice are where this project's questions have been raised, research done, ideas worked through, and theories formed. With that in mind, this text (the project's exegesis)[5] uses an exhibition of my paintings; the curatorial decisions and insights made during its installation; and the displayed paintings, as structures to chart the project's questions, research, ideas and theories.

Setting

Painting's complicated relationship with temporality as grounds for its capacity to test death runs deep within my painting practice. The initial concerns and motivations which originally drew me towards exploring the concept of *memento-mori* in painting were, no doubt, triggered by the premature loss of nuclear family members, and motivated also by my professional occupation as a valuer of fine art and domestic chattels for probate purposes. Most significantly, however, it was, and continues to be, a motivation essentially prompted by my heightened awareness of time passing bought about from these, and other indeterminate, factors.[6]

Memento-Mori is a notion which asks us to look back on a memory to remind ourselves of what will happen to us in the future. In other words, it asks us to simultaneously think about the past, the present and the future. "Remembering that we must die […] invokes the question of what remains, what will be remembered, and what our own memories mean to us",[7] writes the American literary and cultural historian Angela Brintlinger.

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[5] Where appropriate, instead of the word 'thesis' I have used the word 'exegesis' to describe this written text. The thesis of this project is comprised of: This text – its exegesis. In other words, a critical articulation of my paintings, practice, and research; and work created from my practice – namely, paintings and other related artefacts, which have led the project.
[6] Rather than to express, nor as an exercise to resolve, my (resolved) mourning through painting.
[7] Brintlinger, A. (2017) "Memento Mori: Strolling Through the Cemetery with Chekov", *The Antioch Review,* 75(2), p. 41.

Given Brintlinger's statement, when considering the notion of *memento-mori* in painting one is required to contemplate not only "how time exists (or does not) within painting",[8] but also how painting's relationship with temporality tests death and plays with memory. These contentions, I propose, require the conventional, or traditional, representation of *memento-mori* in painting to be expanded.[9]

Not only have I used painting to investigate the notion of *memento-mori*, but I have equally used the notion of *memento-mori* to explore the possibilities of painting. With that in mind, an additional aim of this project is to articulate my painting's relationship with temporality through a formal reading of the space and time found in their construction and embodied within them. Specifically, where my use of the painted grid counterintuitively disrupts and connects in its role to expose and highlight a disruptive unjointed temporality associated with this project's expanded notion of *memento-mori* and, in turn, with a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering. Moreover, this exegesis sets out to explain how these associations take advantage of the (perceived) problem of painting's time, embracing a non-sequential, disjointed, 'stuttering' concept of time.

Before commencing this project, I had thought of paintings, whatever their representational content, as being evocatively linked to the notion of *memento-mori* in that they bridge the gap between life – in their role in creating different realities outside of this world – and death, in their role as temporal vehicles which cheat death.[10 & 11]

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[8] Berger, J. (1985) *The Sense of Sight*, Vintage International, p. 205.

[9] By conventional, I mean traditional representations of *memento-mori* seen in, for example, Philippe de Champaigne's 17th Century oil painting *Vanitas - Still Life with a Skull* (Fig. 0:3, p. 41).

[10] Boris Groys writes: "What is alive is aesthetically banal. Life constantly repeats itself. An interesting form can only be expected from death. If the avant-garde had been actually guided by living impulses, it would never have produced anything original." Groys, B. (2021) *Logic of the Collection*, Sternberg Press, p. 31.

[11] Joseph Beuys (German, 1921-86) touched upon an elusive element of painting's complicated relationship with temporality, life, and death; identifying with this project's founding themes – stating that: "Matter, of course, does not represent life: it consists of values which can be measured scientifically, but this act of measuring is centred on dead matter. This is the great mistake, since man is not a dead being but a live one. On the other hand, it is also clear that it is necessary to test death, that the phase of death must be passed through. Even with regard to future developments, death has to be conquered. In order to be able to say anything about life, one has to understand death first." (Beuys, J. (1986), *Death Keeps Me Awake. Interview with Achille Bonito Oliva*, in Kuoni, C., (ed) (1990), *Energy Plan for The Western Man. Joseph Beuys in America*, Four Walls Eight Windows, New York. p.174.)

However, developed out of this project is a notion of *memento-mori* in painting which has less to do with a Freudian melancholic return associated with the creative arts in their role as vehicles we repeatedly return to,[12] but instead having more in common with Gilles Deleuze's implied conception of *memento-mori* which he associates with an "'unmourning' that requires more work […]",[13] and with a relationship with painting that distances itself from painting's "task of mourning".[14]

The consequence of this distancing and focussed work has permitted my practice and this project room and freedom to come to understand and develop how a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering plays a key role in revealing (and even embodying) an expanded, and alternatively expressed, notion of *memento-mori* in painting.

Noting Chapter One (Visual Stuttering) was the last section I began writing, gives proof, I submit, to the advantages of practice-led research by giving this initially unarticulated leap-of-faith time for it to be unravelled, articulated and its relevance understood. The recognition of, and coming to articulate, this leap-of-faith has generated a marked way to think about how practice-led research processes are developed and come into being and goes some way to bridge the gap between the uneasy relationship between theory and practice.

Through this process of recognition, I have come to appreciate the Dutch cultural analysist Esther Peeren's assertion that, "[…] scholarly [critical] stuttering should not be an affectation or something we seek to grow out of, but an unavoidable part of our critical practices".[15] Furthermore, a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering – born out of a critical *and* a clinical stutter – has permitted my painting practice to be open to the possibility of something different, other, or new, occurring.

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[12] Freud, S. (1991) *Mourning and Melancholia*, in Penguin Freud Library, Volume II, *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, Penguin.

[13] Rajchman, J. (2000) *The Deleuze Connections*, MIT Press, p. 132 (quoting Deleuze). Rajchman writes, "From the start Deleuze was a philosopher not of negation but of affirmation – not of mourning and absence, not of sad tired ironies, but of humour and life". Ibid. p. 13

[14] As described by the Algerian-American art historian Yve-Alain Bois in: *Painting: The Task of Mourning* in: Bois, Y-A, (1995) *Painting as Model*, MIT Press, pp. 293-244.

[15] Peeren, E. (2017) Stutter, in: Bunz, M., Kaiser, B.M., & Thiele, K. (eds), Systems of the Planetary Condition: A Critical Vocabulary, Meson Press, p.183.

<u>An Exhibition of Paintings:</u> ***Memento-Mori in Painting: An Image of Multiplicities***

In October 2024, I curated an exhibition of my paintings in support of this project. Held at the Michael Pennie Gallery in Bath, the exhibition was titled *Memento-Mori in Painting: An Image of Multiplicities*.[16] I also delivered a talk in the gallery space, introducing fellow students, researchers, and members of the public to my practice and PhD research.

The purpose of the exhibition was to mark a pivotal point in my research, occurring at a juncture where I felt the ideas and theories formulated out of my practice could be effectively communicated to viewers of my paintings. The curatorial process of selecting paintings and determining their placement within the gallery space (and beyond),[17] helped clarify the project's primary objectives and questions; whilst also offering new unforeseen insights. The curation of the show, therefore, functioned as an integral part of the project's overall practice-led research.

With that in mind, to provide a footing for understanding the project's development, the following twenty pages of this thesis contain:

- The exhibition's statement.   Page 13
- Photographs of the installation.   Pages 14-19
- Plan of the gallery space illustrating the placement of paintings.   Page 20
- Illustrations of the exhibited paintings.   Pages 21-33

The remainder of the thesis is structured around an in-depth visual analysis of the exhibition, guiding the reader through the project's aims, questions, methods, insights, and, ultimately, its contribution to new knowledge.

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[16] Bath Spa University, Locksborok Campus, BA1 3EL. 11th – 20th October.
[17] Painting No. 14.

MEMENTO-MORI IN PAINTING:
AN IMAGE OF MULTIPLICITIES

An exhibition of paintings by Tom Mence in support of a practice-led PhD investigating an expanded notion of Memento-Mori in painting.

MICHAEL PENNIE GALLERY, BATH, BA1 3EL
11 OCTOBER – 20 OCTOBER. 10AM – 6PM

ARTISTS TALK AND SEMINAR:
TUESDAY 15 OCTOBER: 11AM – 1PM

Memento-mori is a trope in art-history that renders scenes and compositions with the express intent to remind us of the inevitability of death.

Interpreting the idea of Memento-Mori (remember you have to die) as a notion that asks us to look back on a memory as a way to consider something that will happen to us in the future, the exhibited works are the result of practice-led research into alternative expressions of Memento-Mori through painting. Rather than through the use of symbolic objects, such as clocks indicating a linear concept of time, these paintings take an expanded approach to the notion of Memento-Mori.

Learning from specific paintings by 17th Century French master Nicolas Poussin and photographs of domestic interiors belonging to the recently deceased, the works in this exhibition additionally make use of the painted grid as a device to simultaneously connect and disrupt the surface of the painting and elements at play within the composition. A more diffuse notion of Memento-Mori is gestured towards; one with pluralistic qualities that reflect the temporal indetermination of a human's life-span.

This exhibition is in support of a practice-led PhD expanding the notion of Memento-Mori in painting. It is an exhibition which embraces Alva Noe's description of how paintings invite us "to wonder what you could possibly see in or with thanks to a picture".

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[18] Designed by Matthew Downing.

<u>Installation Views</u>[19]
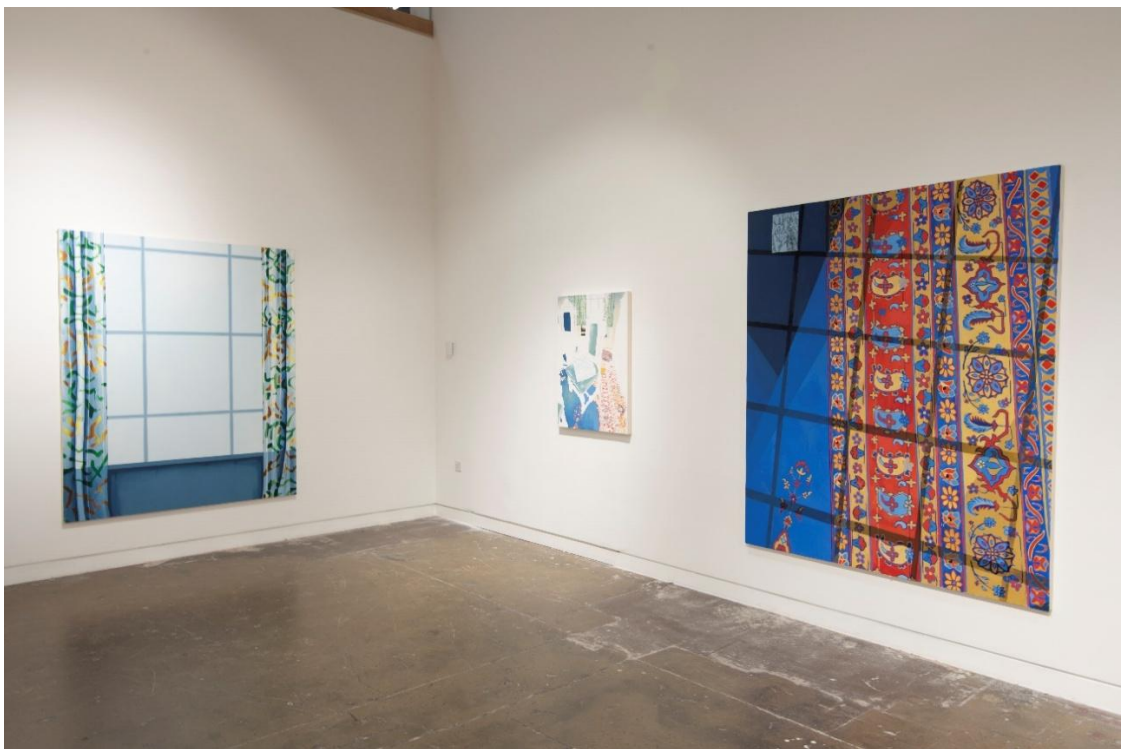
[19] Photo credit here, and installation views illustrated throughout the thesis: author and Isaac Law.
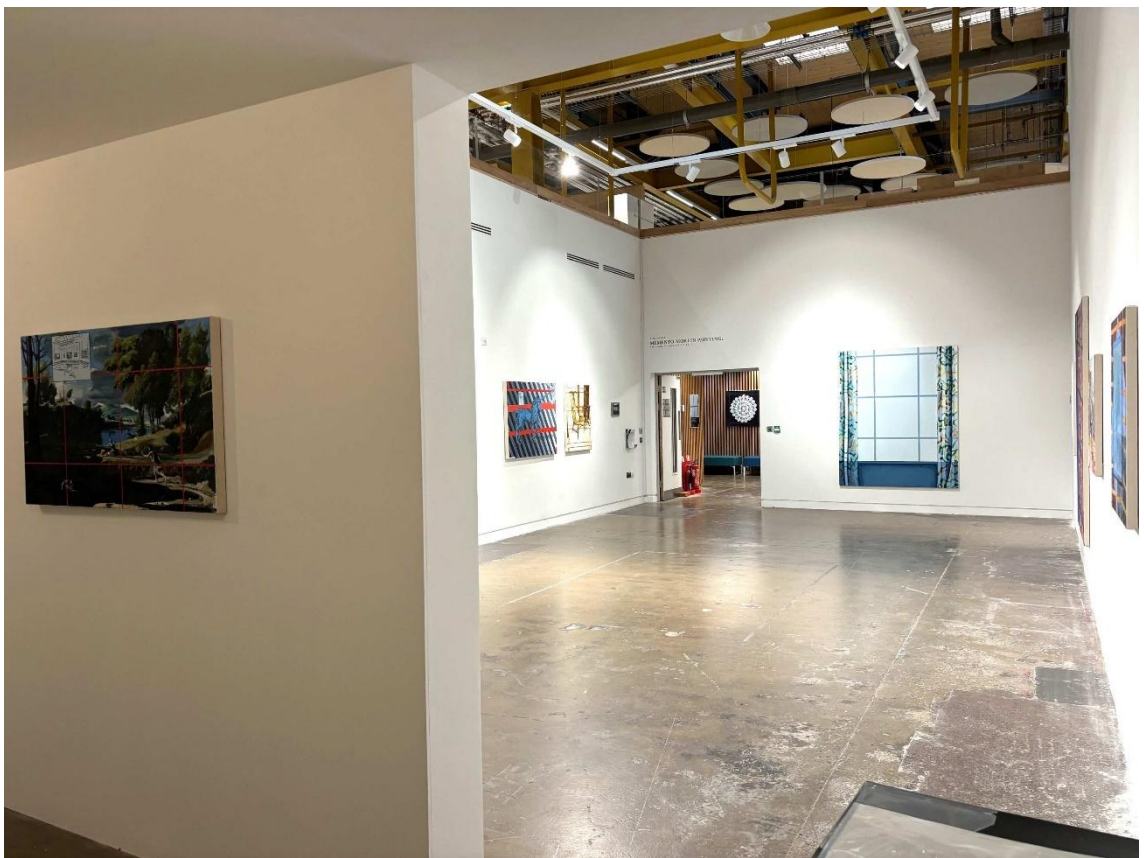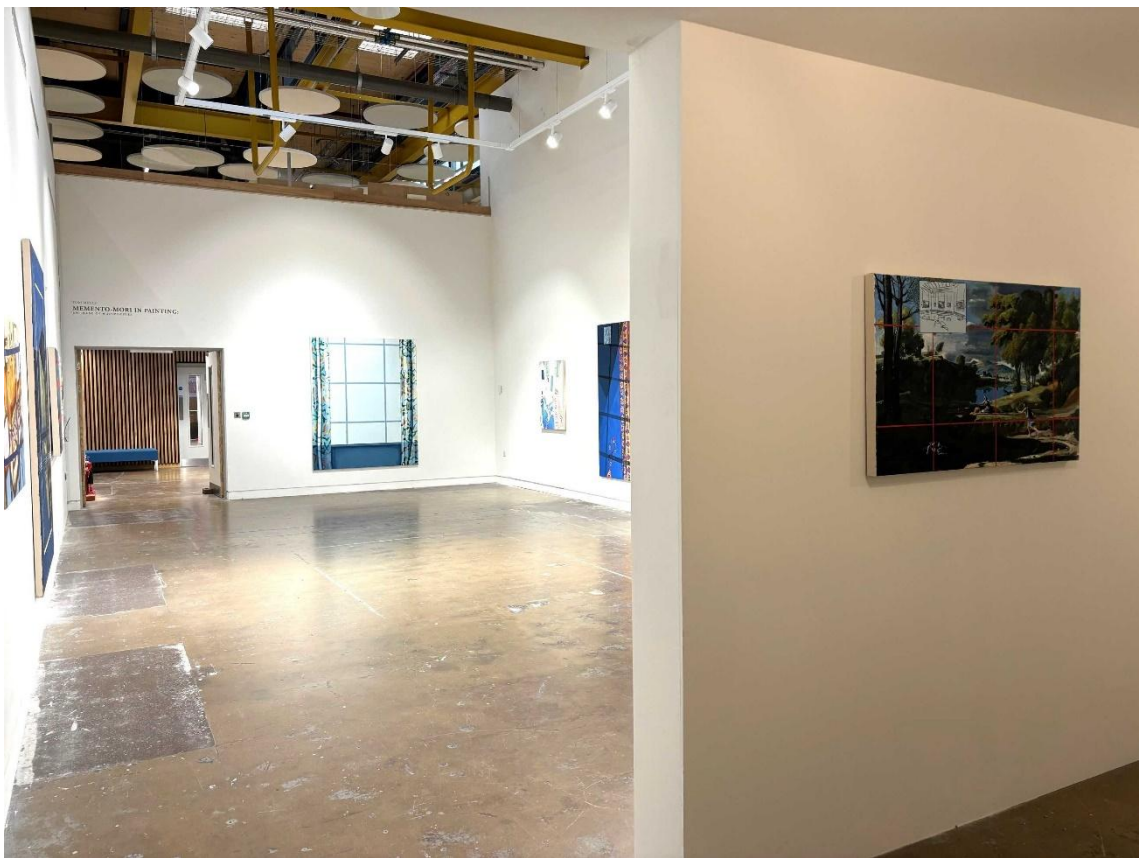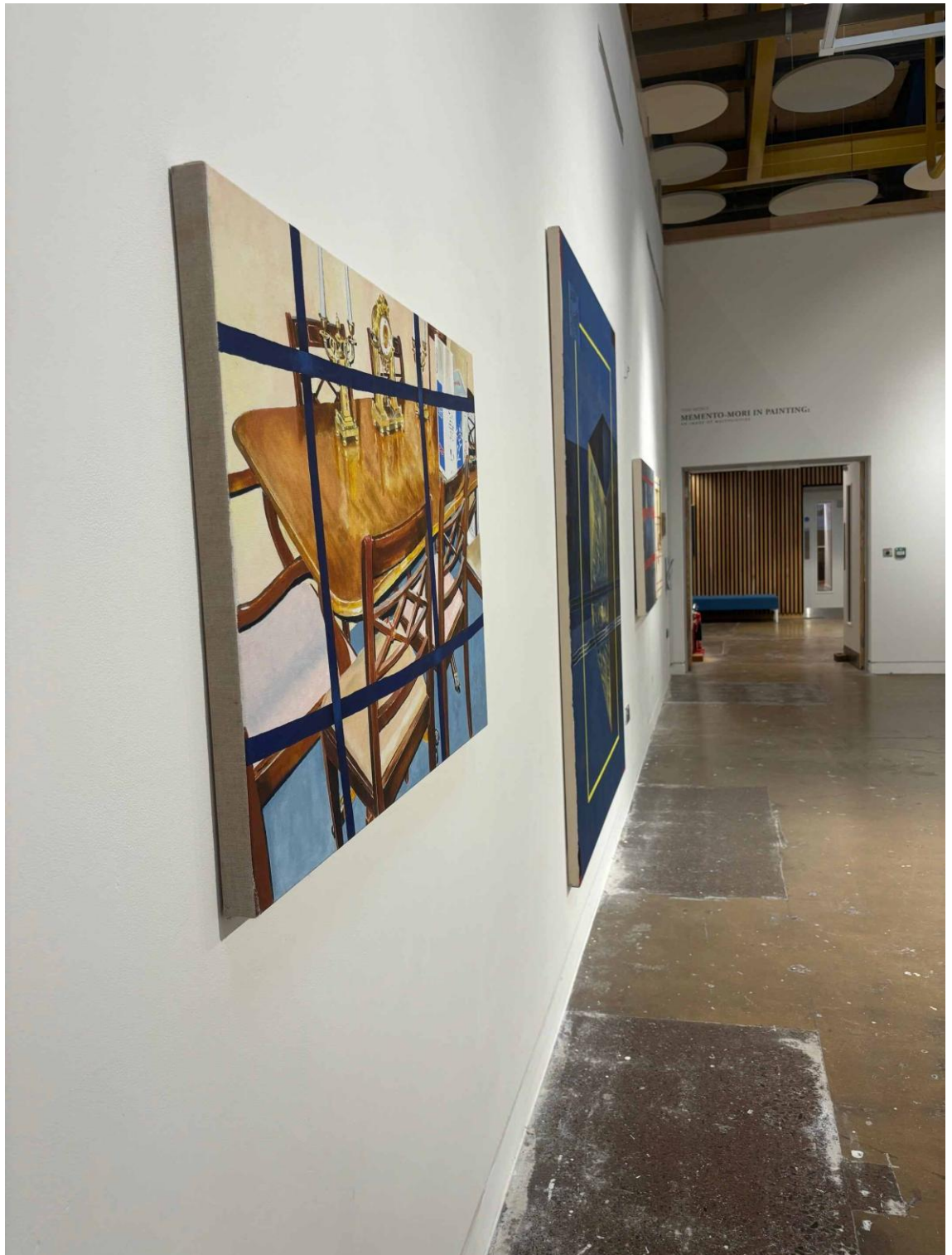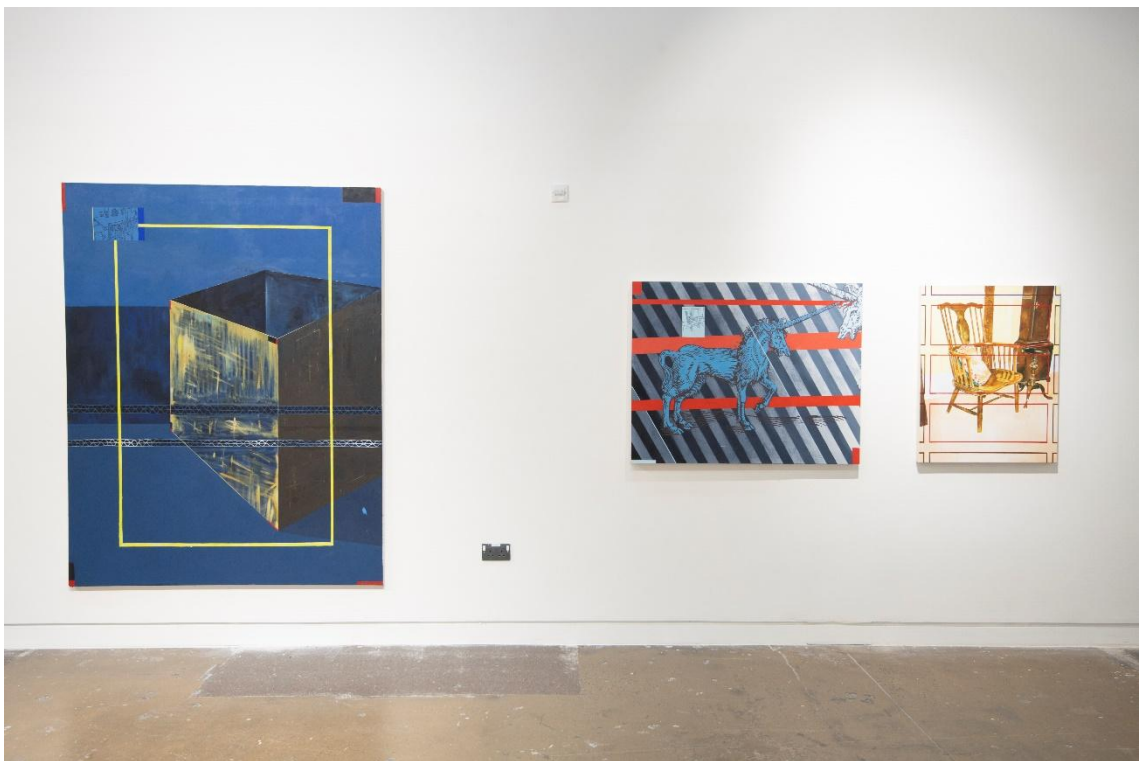
14

Gallery Plan[20]
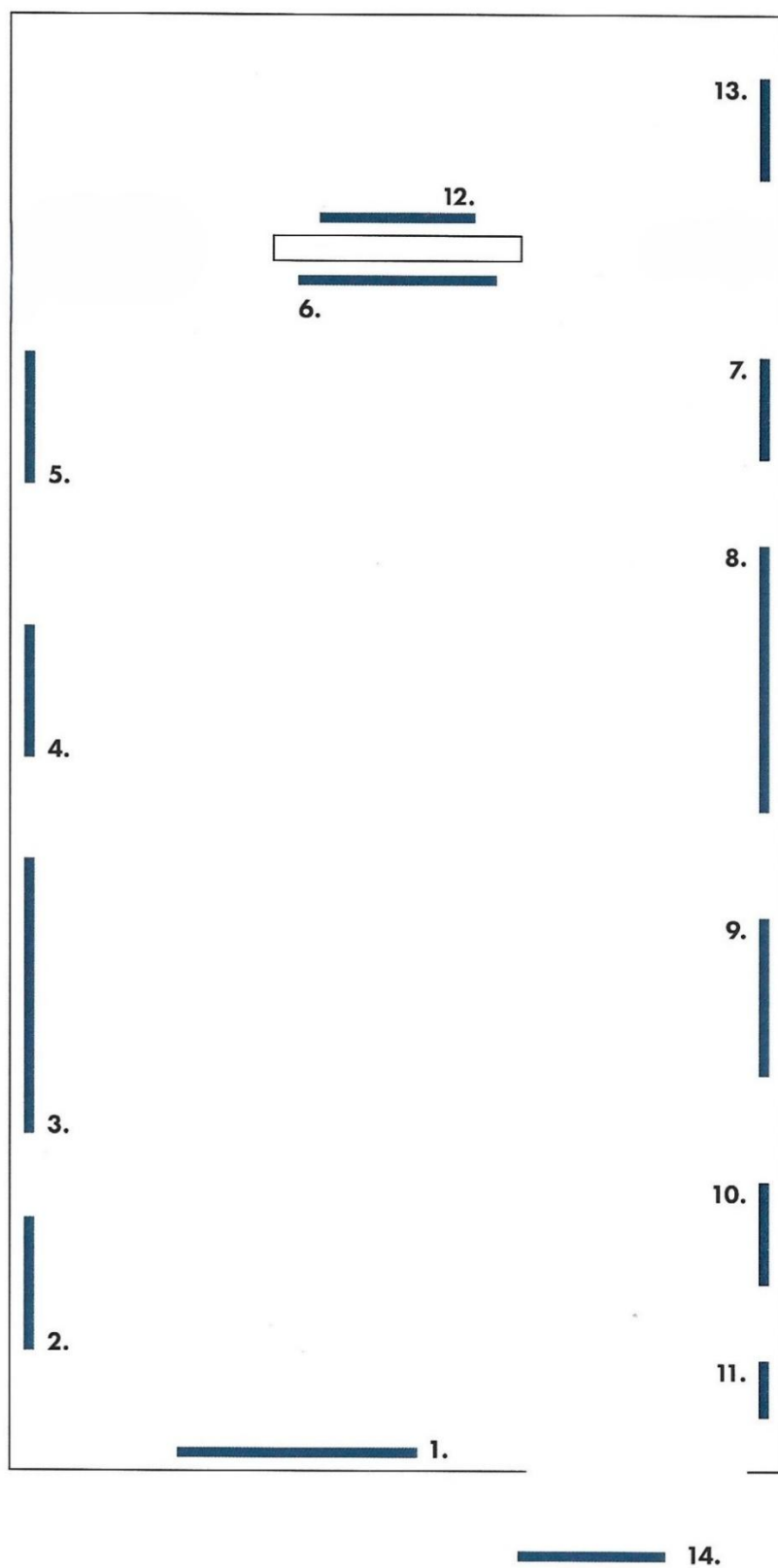
1:     *Deceased Estate, No. 138, part iii, (*2024)
       Oil on canvas, 190 x 160 cm.

2:   *Deceased Estate, No. 138, part i*, (2024)
Oil on canvas, 95 x 70 cm.

3*:*   *Deceased Estate, No. 138, part ii,* (2024)
         Oil on canvas, 160 x 190 cm.

4:   *Deceased Estate, No. 159, part i,* (2022)
Oil on canvas, 70 x 90 cm.

5:   *Self Portrait,* (2021-22)
          Oil on canvas, 80 x 75 cm

6:      *Deceased Estate, No. 83, part ii,* (2023)
        Oil on canvas, 200 x 160 cm.

7: *Deceased Estate, No. 123, part i,* (2023)
   Oil on linen, 70 x 95 cm.

8:   *Deceased Estate, No. 123, part iii,* (2023)
            Oil on canvas, 200 x 160 cm.
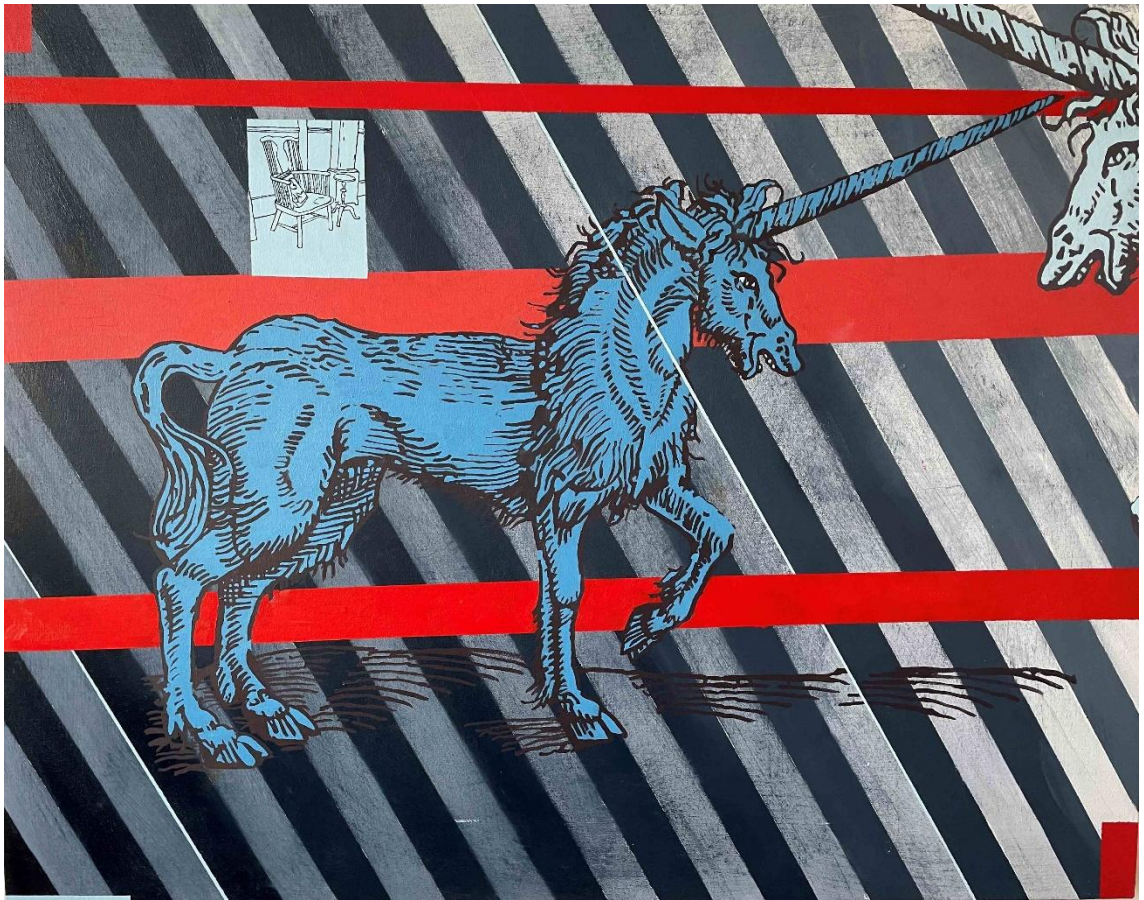
9:   *Deceased Estate, No. 125, part ii,* (2023)
           Oil on canvas, 92 x 117 cm.

10:   *Deceased Estate, No. 125, part i,* (2023)
Oil on linen, 90 x 70 cm.

11:   *Room 29, The National Gallery, London (No. 1),* (2021-22)
Egg tempera on oak panel, 20 x 25 cm.
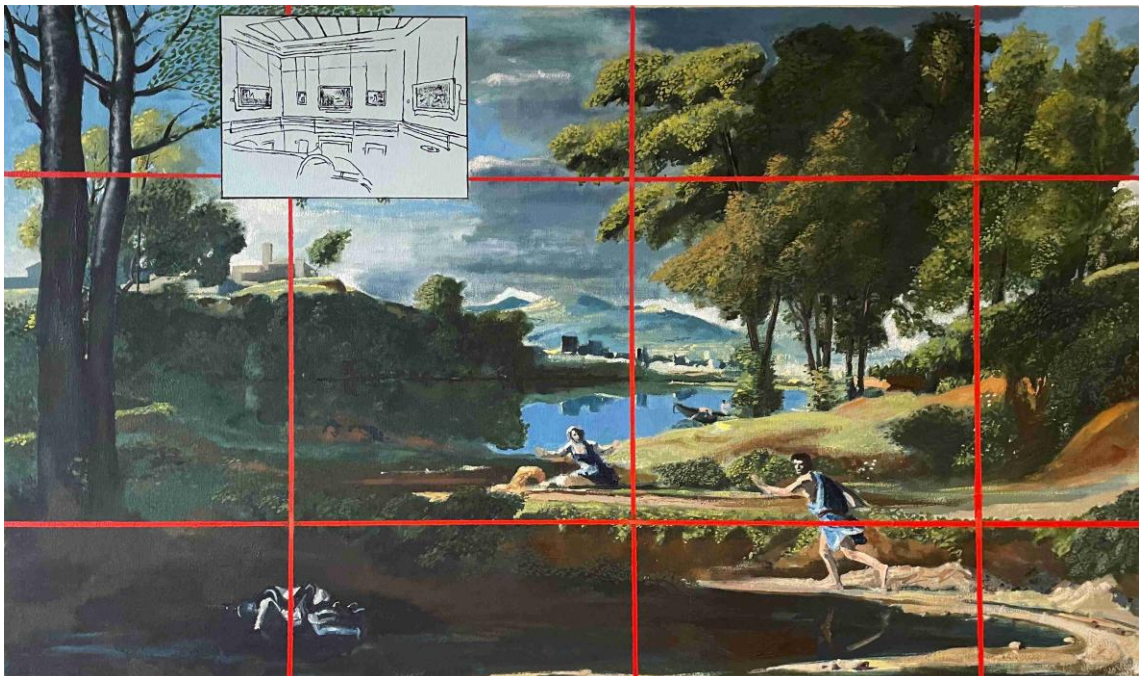
12:   *Landscape with a man Killed by a Snake (after Poussin),* (2022)
Oil on canvas, 60 x 100 cm.

13:   *Et In Arcadia Ego,* (2022)
         Oil on canvas, 75 x 80 cm
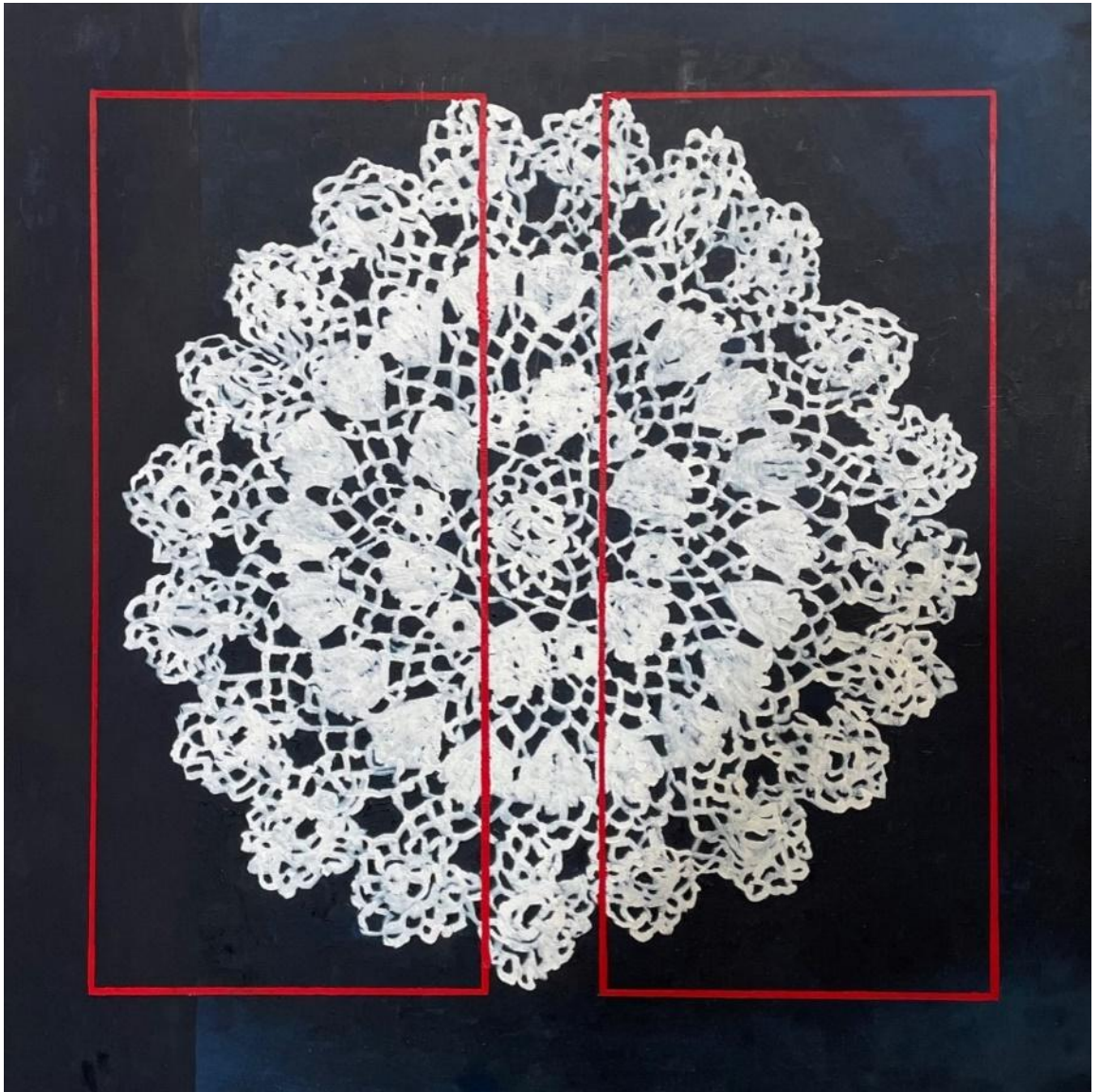
14:   *Deceased Estate, No. 159, part ii (19th Century Irish Doily)*, (2022)
Oil on canvas, 75 x 75 cm.

<u>Writing</u>

How this piece of text, as an exegesis to my practice, works, and articulates information, is very different to how my paintings work – a different type of knowledge is encountered in the act of painting and in a painting. Painting, confirms the art historian Robert Zwijnenberg, is "*in essence* is totally different from a text",[22] although the complicated relationship between text, language, speech and painting is one I have harnessed in my articulation and development of a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering.

There seems to be an element of undoing and un-sorting of knowledge whilst painting and in painting which, in turn, facilitates learning. Conversely, writing this text has required the precarious task of compiling, sorting and articulating knowledge gained from my practice. The analysis of my exhibition *Memento-Mori in Painting* goes some way to address this precariousness.

In his essay *Cezanne's Doubt*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty succinctly describes this uneasy relationship between knowledge articulated through texts, and knowledge articulated through paintings, commenting: "What [the artist] expresses cannot […] be the translation of a clearly defined thought, since such clear thoughts are those which have already been uttered by ourselves or by others."[23]

Notwithstanding, during the process of writing, editing, reading and re-reading this exegesis I have been increasingly mindful that its task has not solely been to interpret and contextualise my painting practice as research, but crucially, in my endeavour to find new knowledge, to "produce movement in thought itself",[24] and for the reader, as well as for myself, to come to a clearer understanding of the ways in which thinking, writing, painting and curating are connected and related to one another in the process of building knowledge; and in the pursuit of new knowledge.

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[22] Zwijnenberg in: Farago, C. & Zwijnenberg, R. (eds.) (2003) *Compelling Visuality*, University of Minnesota Press, p. 114. (His emphasis).
[23] Merleau-Ponty, M. (1992), *Cezanne's Doubt*, in *Sense and Non-Sense*, trans. Dreyfus, H.L. & P.A., Northwestern University Press, p. 19.
[24] Bolt, B. (2010) *Practise as Research*, I.B. Tauris, p.33.

Painting

Paintings made by me during this project are objects made up of inanimate materials such as wood, cotton and coloured oil or acrylic paint which, when constructed in a certain order, present pictures of things outside of this world.[25] With that in mind, this project's understating of a painting is one made by an artist who puts picture making and vision "in the frame for inspection".[26] Equating painting to philosophy in the pursuit of investigating how paintings work, the American philosopher Alva Noe writes:

> "[…] in contrast to the designers of catalogues trying to flog retail wares, picture makers who are artists are putting picture making itself, or vision itself, in the frame for inspection. If pictures are the result, then they are pictures that don't only show you something but also invite you to wonder what you could possibly see in or with thanks to a picture." [27]

Unless otherwise indicated, when applying the word painting in relation to my own work and others, I am describing a flat surface covered in coloured pigments which have been applied with artists' brushes and arranged in a certain order.[28] All paintings made within the confines of this project are of rectangular form, in other words, their edges are made up of two vertical and two horizontal axis.[29] Excluding paintings executed in egg tempera (Painting No. 11), I have used canvas (either cotton or linen) as a surface, stretched either on a wooden board or over wooden stretcher bars.[30]

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[25] Or what the Scottish painter Jim Mooney has termed "exotic realities". (Mooney, J. (2002), "Painting: Poignancy and Ethics", *Journal of Visual Arts Practice*, Jan. 2002, pp. 57-63.)

[26] Noe, A. (2015), *Strange Tools. Art and Human Nature,* Hill and Wang, p. 45.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Or other appropriate tools, such as: palette knives, scrapers, rags and sponges, etc.

[29] As opposed to other forms of painting which could, for instance, be associated with '*painting in the expanded field*' – a term associated with painters working on, for example, forms other than a flat rectangular surface, and which arose in the early 1980's following Rosalind Krauss's 1979 essay, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field", *October*, no. 8, (Spring, 1979), pp. 30-44.

[30] *Kneeling Woman* and *Vanitas* being the only exceptions. Illustrations: Figs. Il:13 and Il:22 (pages 253 & 258).

Due to the formal qualities of the types of paintings I have made, their relationship to space and time is informed by their stillness, their outward facing-ness and their flatness. The perpetual dichotomy between paintings' enigmatic flatness and its ability to create holed-through space by forming the illusion one can see beyond its surface is one I have taken full advantage of in my investigation into an expanded notion of *memento-mori*; principally in its function and effect on painting's relationship and "[perceived] problem" with how time exists (or does not) within painting.[31] This is contrary to Clement Greenberg's reading of painting's flatness, to which he denoted something other than the property of having a flat surface by associating painting's flatness to its medium.[32]

To focus viewers' attention to the outward-facingness nature and flatness of my paintings, before applying primer to their surfaces, I place masking-tape around their edges.[33] This procedure prevents any paint or unwanted stain marking the edges which might have the unwanted result of pointing to the paintings as objects and the reality of their three-dimensional nature, rather than towards their image-making quality. I remove the tape before the paintings are to be publicly displayed; and, in order to prevent any further staining, re-apply the tape before putting them back into storage (Fig. 0:1).

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[31] Berger, J. (1985) *Painting and Time,* in *The Sense of Sight*, Vintage International, p. 205.
[32] In: *Towards a Newer Laocoon*, Greenberg ties flatness to medium, stating that the "resistance [of painting's medium] consists chiefly in the flat picture plane's denial of efforts to hole through it for realistic perspectival space", and that: "the pristine flatness of the stretched canvas constantly struggles to overcome every other element." Originally published in *Partisan Review*, New York, VII, no. 4, July August 1940, pp. 296-310. Reprinted in Harrison & Wood (eds.) (2003), p. 566 & 567.
[33] Note: no surface of any painting can ever have a *truly* flat surface.
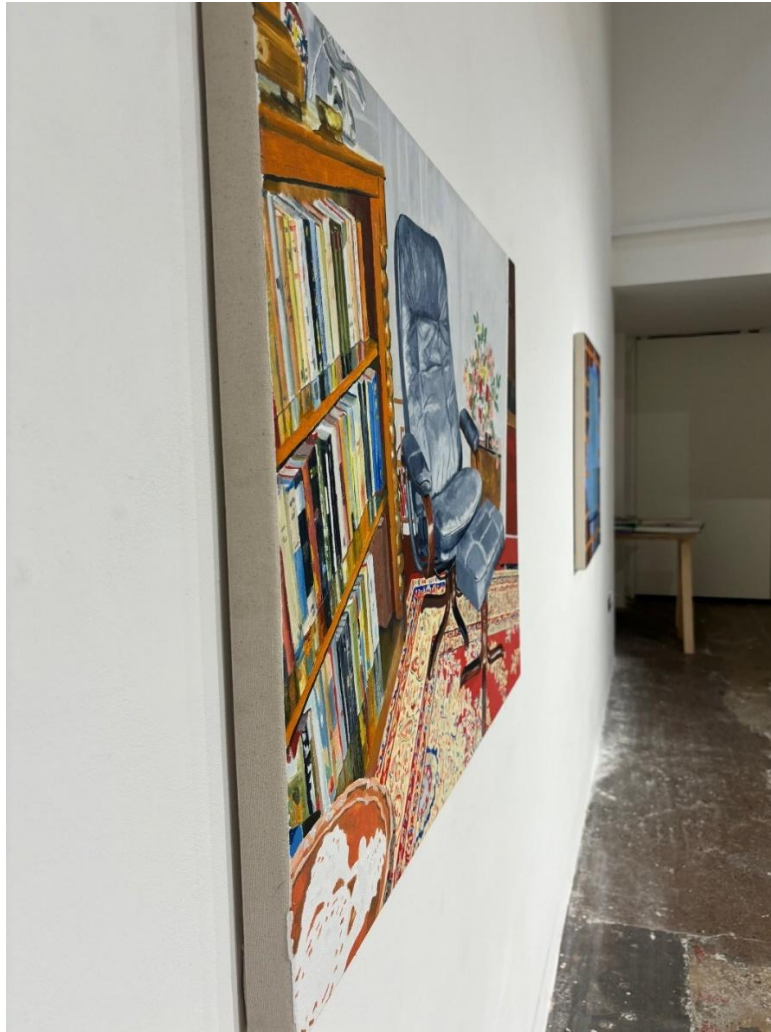
Fig. 0:1

Installation View. *Memento-Mori in Painting*: *An Image of Multiplicities.*

In alignment with the editors and contributors of *Painting Beyond Itself*,[34] who "attempt to bypass much of the modernist teleology, framed as it is by Greenberg (and also by developments in 19th Century formalism): what [the editors] term its, *'monolithic articulations'*",[35] my predominant engagement with painting is to make pictures, rather than to investigate their material nature – an engagement verified by my attentive prevention of paint intruding and marking the edges my paintings.

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[34] Graw, I. & Lajer-Burcharth, E. (eds) (2016) *Painting Beyond Itself. The Medium in the Post-medium Condition*, Sternberg Press.
[35] Palin, T. (2018) *The Condition of Painting: Reconsidering Medium Specificity*, un-published PhD Thesis, awarded by The Royal College of Art, p. 84. (His emphasis).

I consider my painting practice belonging in a place partially blinkered by Modernism,[36] while concurrently making use of, and being influenced by, Modernism's formalist definitions.[37] It is a position highlighted by a practice informed by 17th Century European paintings; and a practice which operates within, what the American art historian Hal Foster has called, a "sort of archaeology of outmoded forms".[38]

With that in mind, I might align my practice with the Belgian painter Matthieu Ronsse,[39] who states: "My point of departure is my knowledge of art history. I find art history extremely fascinating and that is why I refer to it, because it established the laws within which art works",[40] whilst obtusely finding it rewarding "to re-contaminate painting – to un-form it".[41] The inclusion, and placement of, *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake (after Poussin)* (Painting No. 12) in the exhibition goes some way to demonstrate this fascination and subsequent point of departure.

In Chapter Three I will deal with the role specific paintings by the 17th Century painter Nicolas Poussin took during this project, giving a detailed analysis of the insights made by placing *Landscape with a man Killed by a Snake (after Poussin)* within the alcove at the far end of the gallery space. During the hanging of the exhibition, a primary decision made for its placement, however, was to simultaneously give it prominence whilst also separating it from the other paintings displayed in the main gallery space (Fig. 0:2).

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[36] By the term 'Modernism', I am using Victor Burgin's definition: "[...] the historical tendency of an art practice towards complete self-referential autonomy, to be achieved by scrupulous attention to all that is specific to that practice: its own traditions and materials, its own difference from other art practices." (1996), *In / Different Spaces – Place and Memory in Visual Culture*, University of California Press, p. 198.

[37] I use the phrase 'partially blinkered by Modernism' instead of 'Postmodern' or 'Antimodernism' since my practice neither completely turns away from it, nor enthusiastically embraces it – rather borrows selected ideas for its own purpose.

[38] Hal Foster in: Bois, Y-A, Buchloh, B.H.D., Foster, H. Joselit, D. & Krauss, R. (2020) *Art Since 1900. Modernism Antimodernism Postmodernism,* (Third Edition), Thames and Hudson, p. 850.

[39] Born 1981.

[40] Gobyn, R. & Van Imschoot, T. (eds.) (2022), *Acts of Painting*, Grafische Cel, p. 69.

[41] Ibid. p. 85.
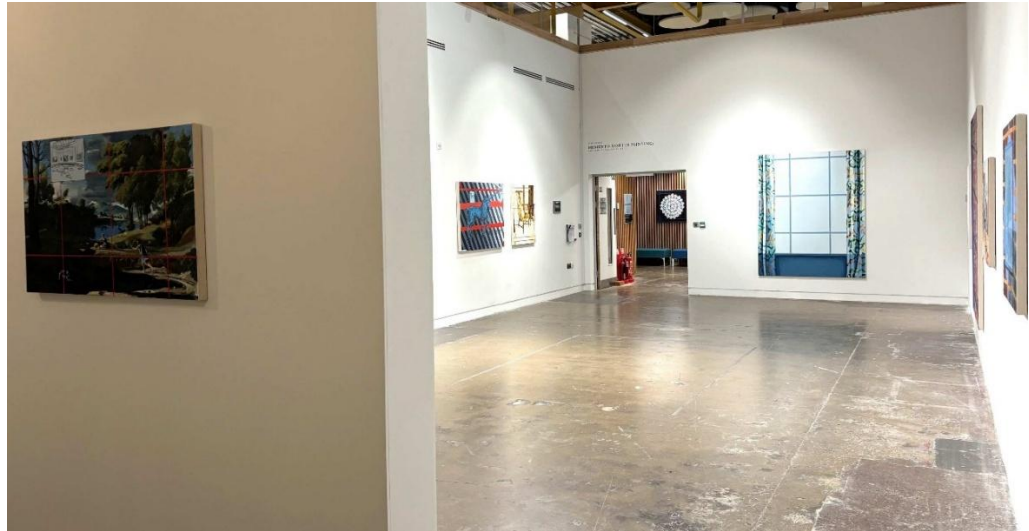
Fig. 0:2

Installation View. *Memento-Mori in Painting*: *An Image of Multiplicities.*

By placing it in an area of the gallery more reminiscent to the space where Poussin's painting now hangs in London's National Gallery (Painting No. 11) – suggested by the lower ceiling and use of spotlights to enhance the lighting – focused attention was placed on its use of established laws within which historical art works. In this case, within the laws of 17th Century European Classicism; laws not necessarily present in the other works on display, yet works having been informed and developed out of those laws.

Matthieu Ronsse validates a comparable engagement with art history, using it to facilitate his painting practice's development and progress: "Anyone who seeks to advance the idea of art is an advocate for change. But for change to happen, you need a platform that has already been built, on which you can make further progress."[42]

The painting's placement made the viewer either focus their lines of sight on just the work itself or, when looking out from the far back corners of the gallery, allowed them to view both the painting and a (restricted) view of the central gallery space. On reflection, the painting's thought through positioning illustrated a point of departure (and, even, a question) from where my practice developed the project's ideas and theories (Map 1).[43]

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[42] Ibid. p. 69
[43] Examined in Chapter Three.
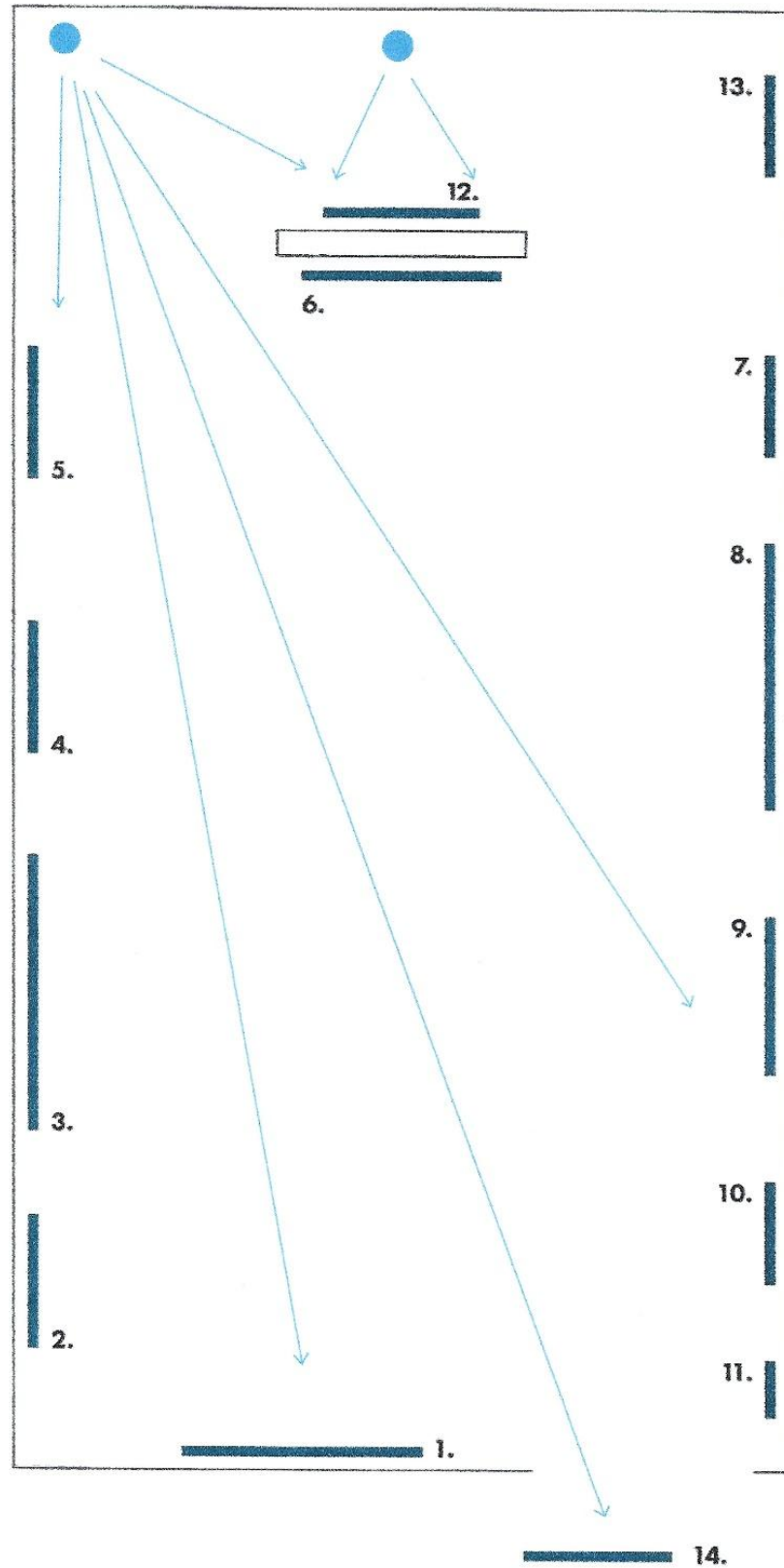
Map 1.

Viewers.   Lines of sight.

Memento-Mori – Remember You (have to) Die – has traditionally been characterised in Western (European) painting picturing objects signifying (human skull) or representing (hourglass) a palpable and sequential notion of a temporal finitude (Fig. 0:3).[44]

Fig. 0:3

Philippe de Champaigne, *Vanitas – Still Life with a Skull*, (circa 1671), oil on panel, 28 x 37 cm. Musee de Tesse, France.

Meanwhile, the art historians David Joselit and Isabelle Graw have advocated that a specific quality of painting [45] is its possession of an indexicality which signifies notions different than those inferred solely by a painting's pictorial content.[46] An hourglass may pictorially represent the passing of time, whereas paintings themselves, advocate Joselit and Graw, can be said to point to the artist's presence and stored time.[47]

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[44] The classic definition of a signifier is given by the American philosopher Charles Sanders Pierce as a sign that represents something for someone, such as a skull (or death's head) signifying the reminder of death – or *memento-mori*. See: Pierce, C.S. (1991) *Peirce on Signs: Writings on Semiotic by Charles Sanders Peirce,* edited by James Hoopes, University of North Carolina Press.
[45] Using this project's definition of painting, set out previously on pages 35-36.
[46] In: Graw, I. & Lajer-Burcharth, E. (eds), (2016) *Painting Beyond Itself. The Medium in the Post-medium Condition*, Sternberg Press, pp. 11-22 & 79-102, and in: Graw, I, (2018) *The Love of Painting, Genealogy of a Success Medium*, Sternberg Press, pp. 9-27.
[47] Ibid.

Taking their proposals into account (which I reflect upon in Chapter Four), the project questions whether it is possible to claim that a painting's signified could include an expanded notion of *memento-mori* reliant on this unique indexicality. Out of this enquiry, I explore (in Chapters Five and Six) how a non-sequential concept of time, when theoretically and visually associated with the use of a painted grid as a device – and with a visual-stuttering as a mode of painting – might be better suited to the idea of *memento-mori* which concomitantly contains a threefold Augustinian idea of time, which prescribes that, "[…] there are three times, a present of past things, a present of present things, and a present of future things".[48]

I have approached this problem and other stated aims through my practice resulting in two distinct bodies of work, and reflecting on their mode of image construction, content, and formal properties. These bodies of work have relied on two different sources, each imbued with diverse pictorial and theoretical notions associated with *memento-mori*:

- Two paintings by Nicolas Poussin:[49]

    Landscape With a Man Killed by a Snake, (circa 1648). (Fig. 3:2).

    Et In Arcadia Ego, (circa 1638). (Fig. 3:4).

- Photographs, taken by me, of chairs in domestic settings belonging to the recently deceased during my job as a probate valuer.[50] (Fig. 0:7).

Both bodies of work are distinct, and rarely visually bleed into one another, yet their modus-operandi and mode of construction are entirely attuned, intrinsically linked, and innately informed by each other in their containment and exploration of an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting.

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[48] Ricoeur, P. (1990), *Time and Narrative, Volume 1*, translated by Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer, University of Chicago Press, p. 54.
[49] French, (1594 – 1665).
[50] See Appendix, pages 283-294.

An exception, however, is *Deceased Estate No. 83, Part iii*, (Painting No. 6). On entering the exhibition, the painting was positioned on the far wall, opposite the entrance, and where, on the other side of the (partitioned) wall, *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake (after Poussin)* (Painting No. 12) hung. (Fig. 0:4).

Fig. 0:4

Installation View. *Memento-Mori in Painting*: *An Image of Multiplicities.*

I constructed the painting by appropriating the striped wall-paper and picture-frame directly out of photograph No. 83 from my library of catalogued deceased estate photographs.[51] However, instead of depicting a generic landscape painting which can be seen in the original photograph, I loosely copied the bottom right corner of Poussin's *Landscape with a Man* (Fig. 0:5).

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[51] See Appendix, page 287. See also Fig. Il:23, page 259.

Fig. 0:5

Deceased Estate No. 83, Part iii (detail).

Although this painting was the only one in the main section of the gallery depicting a human figure, the painting itself does not represent a human figure – but represents a painting within which figures are depicted. Acknowledging this overtly semiotic reading, the decision to centrally place this painting within the galley space was, in part, to use it as a kingpin to connect Poussin's distinctive interpretation of *memento-mori* (examined in Chapter Three) to a body of work (deceased estate paintings) which appropriated and learnt from this interpretation through an active practical engagement.

In other words, the positioning of Painting No. 6 brought Poussin's painting, and the insights I gained from it, centrally into the territory of the deceased estate paintings (Fig. 0:6).
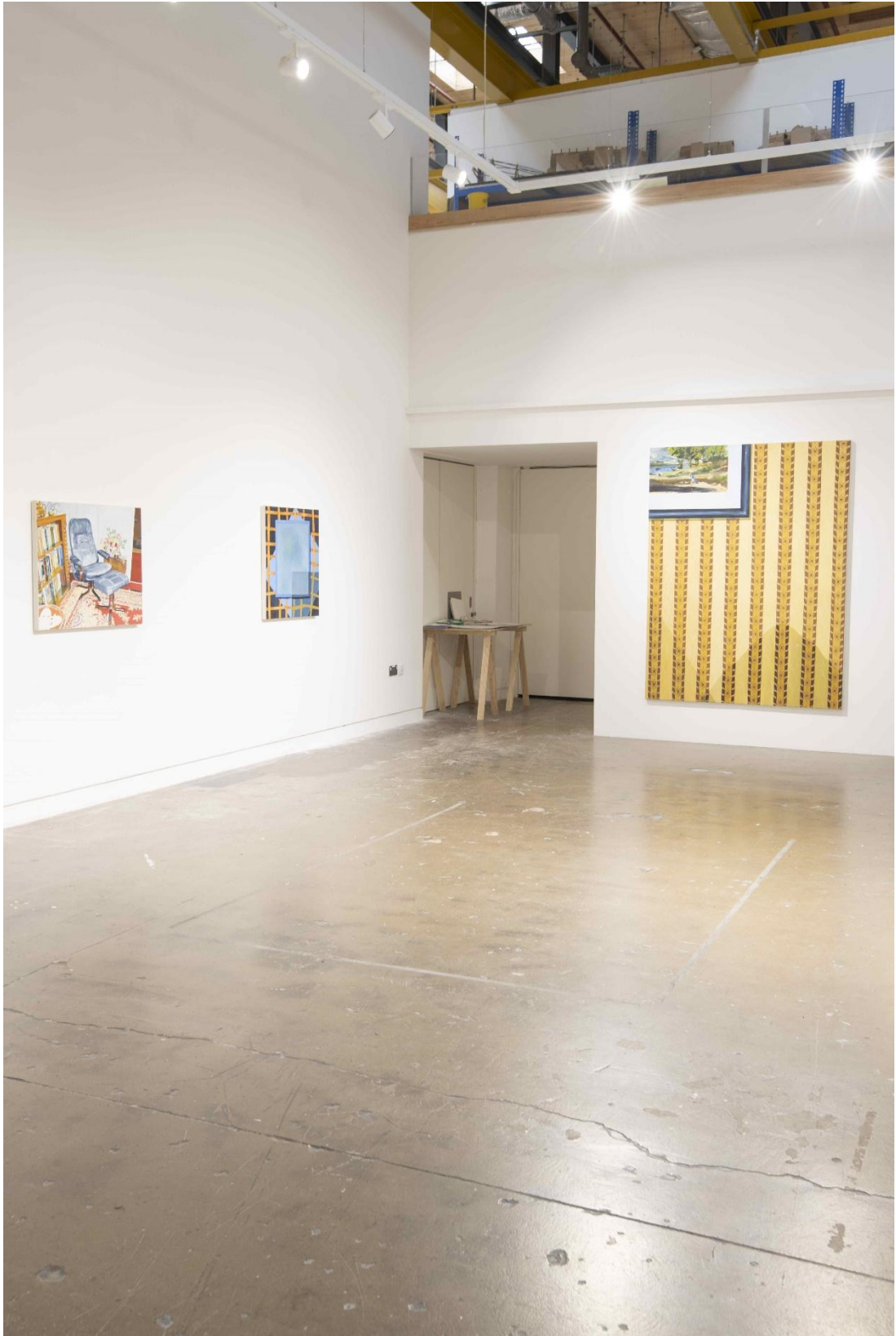
Fig. 0:6

Installation View. *Memento-Mori in Painting*: *An Image of Multiplicities.*

<u>Approach</u>

My initial, and originally planned, approach for this practice-led research project was to focus on an extensive library of approximately one thousand photographs of domestic interiors belonging to the recently deceased. These are 'snap-shot' digital photographs taken by me to use as aides-mémoire whilst writing up chattels valuations during my professional work as a probate valuer.

The photographs were taken quickly with a small handheld digital camera without deliberate aim nor with any consideration to how they looked. Their original purpose was solely for gathering information, nevertheless their integral 'artlessness' has recurrently charmed and nagged at me. I felt, and still feel, an affinity towards them (Fig. 0:7).

"Affinity" writes Brian Dillon, "is a mood. A temporary emotional state, yes – but also something close to the musical or grammatical meanings. […] a sensation that is not exactly taste, desire, or allyship, but has aspects of all."[52]

Having used some of these photograph during my M.F.A.,[53] in the intervening six years between its completion and the start of this project I had been ruminating on more than simply their original purpose as a transient visual aides-mémoire. Viewed this way, I acknowledge Alva Noe's contention, that: "Describing what we see is *immensely* complicated and requires a negotiation; somehow, remarkably, we may fail even to notice this".[54]

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[52] Dillon, B. (2023) *Affinities*, Fitzcarraldo Editions, p. 278.

[53] I had used these digital photographs during my master's degree (Bath Spa University, 2014-15) as a way of investigating how the use of photography can facilitate experience-experiments in the construction of paintings, employing various painterly styles, manners, materials, sizes and forms of display. Because of their content, and original purpose, these studio experience-experiments were done under the backdrop of the notion of *memento-mori*.

[54] Noe, (2023), *The Entanglement*, p. 46. (His emphasis).

Fig. 0:7

Deceased Estate, No, 191, digital photograph (circa 2010).

As a probate valuer my involvement with the process of death within a domestic setting is purely procedural. Despite the procedure's pragmatism, I find it a deep cerebral source, echoed in the dichotomy within the photographs between the profoundly vulnerable and the hard-edged reality of a finite life. A dichotomy, I would argue, running deeper than Roland Barthes' characterisation of photographs' punctum, described by the American art historian Martin Jay as being, "that unexpected prick, sting, or cut that disturbed the intelligibility of the culturally connotated meaning",[55] despite their content.[56]

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[55] Jay, M. (1994), *Downcast Eyes*, University of California, p. 453.

[56] From its earliest days photography has, by some, been associated with loss and death. Barthes, for example, accounts for the photograph's nature as an inscription of death and return, "a presence of something from the past, an awareness of it having-been-there." Barthes, R. (1977) *Image-Music-Text*, Fontana Press, p. 44.

I have heard the camera being described as a "miniature coffin" (source un-remembered), capturing moments that are no longer. The American painter Richard Hennessy has expressed the opinion that photographs' "unrelievedly static quality only adds gloom .... Life has been stopped dead in its tracks – just think, DEAD IN ITS TRACKS." Hennessy, R. (1979) "What's All This About Photography?", *Artforum*, vol. xvii, No. 9, p.29. (His emphasis).

There is a commonality, a kind of shared state of reflective stillness and remembrance, to all the numerous and varied domestic interiors belonging to the recently deceased I have visited in my twenty-five, or so, years as a probate valuer. The homes have possessed a distinctive and all-consuming sense of a life lived, captured in the space and objects used within that space.[57]

After visiting my exhibition *Memento-Mori in Painting*, the British painter Maria Lalic sent me a message.[58] Within it, she wrote:

> "Hello Tom,
>
> I just wanted to say I came to your show on Thursday evening and was thrilled to see and be with it for some time, huge congratulations. It has such a clear grounding in your lived experience but translated through your work into a universal contemplation of just what is a life, what biographies/memories objects hold, how are most private spaces are organized and appear to define a whole character – which of course may be more to do with the looker's assumptions than the previous owners actuality. A really rich and rewarding experience. I hope you can get it shown to a wider audience, it deserves it."[59]

Jay reminds us that Barthes describes the death signified in photographs as a "[…] 'flat death', yielding up no meaning beyond mortality".[60] Photography, Barthes stated, "is simple, banal; [and has] no depth".[61] Barthes envisioned the camera as a type of clock for seeing, claiming that the (chemical, analogue) photograph is, "undialectical; it is denatured theatre where death cannot be 'contemplated', reflected and interiorized."[62]

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[57] Over time I have come to deeply resonate with Gaston Bachelard's contention that: "The house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind [...]. Past, present and future give the house different dynamisms, which often interfere, at times opposing, at others, stimulating one another." Bachelard, G. (1994) *The Poetics of Space*, Beacon Press, Boston, p. 8.

[58] Maria Lalic, 1952 - .

[59] Message sent from Maria to me via Instagram on 20th October 2024.

[60] Jay, (1994), *Downcast Eyes*, p. 455. Quoting Barthes.

[61] Barthes, R. (1984) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Fontana Press, p. 115.

[62] Ibid. p. 90.

With this in mind, on starting this project I was hopeful my practice and research may go some way for me to understand these *memento-mori* infused some-*things* "not quite apprehended" going on in the photographs,[63] and, moreover, to find a way to speak of these things, "how to give them a meaning, a tongue, to let them […] speak of what is, of what we are."[64] I suggest Maria Lalic's reaction and thoughts on the exhibition goes some way to validate an element of success in this aim.

Relying on what Isabelle Graw describes as being Michel Foucault's "formations" in relation to painting,[65] and explored via the construction of a painting with the aim of bringing the other (hidden, or 'sensuous')[66] some-things out of the photographs, through paint and the act of painting, it was my hope that the excavation of these photographs, employing painting as a tool, would allow me to "[…] develop tactics for attending to that which is habitually unnoticed, for slowing down [my] process of observation, for cultivating second sight".[67] I set out to find a way my practice could alternatively express the notion of *memento-mori* in painting out of these *memento-mori* infused 'common things'.

Within three months, however, paintings by Nicolas Poussin emerged, somewhat unexpectedly, to the forefront as an additional compatible, energising, and rewarding strategy for my practice to excavate and investigate (Painting No's 6, 11, 12 and 13). I was initially affected by Erwin Panofsky's interpretation of Poussin's dialectical and dichotomous account of *memento-mori* and life and death in his paintings, which, according to Panofsky, reveals a "[…] a metaphysical principle which connects the present and the future with the past and overthrows the limits of individuality […]";[68] a

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[63] Brown, B. (2001) "Thing Theory", *Critical Inquiry* 28, Autumn 2001, p. 3. A 'thing', as described by Bill Brown, is "temporalized as the before and after of the object […], thingness amounts to a latency (the not yet formed or the not yet formable) and to an excess (what remains physically or metaphorically irreducible to objects)". Ibid.

[64] Perec, G. (2008) *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces,* trans. J. Sturrock, Penguin Books, p. 210.

[65] Formations in painting which "emerge because of specific practices that generate products that can be assigned to the singular agents who produced them." Graw (2018), *The Love of Painting*, p. 15.

[66] See Chapter Three, page 149.

[67] Cocker, E. In: Fisher, E. & Fortnum, R. (eds.) (2013) *On Not Knowing: How Artists Think*, Black Dog Publishing, p. 128.

[68] Panofsky, E. (1938) "*Et in Arcadia ego* et le tombeau parlant", *Gazette des Beaux-arts*, ser. 6, 19 (1938), pp. 305 – 306, reprinted in Clark (2006), p. 96.

principle echoing this project's expanded notion of *memento-mori* which, as we shall see, moves away from a sequential concept of time towards a disrupted, disjointed non-sequential concept.

In Chapter Three I will give an account of, and examine how, this reading by Panofsky of Poussin's paintings permitted me to think about *memento-mori* in paintings being revealed as narrative, content and object; and how all three could be employed to connect the present and the future with the past; and, in doing so, facilitating potential ways (an expanded) notion of *memento-mori* in a painting could be alternatively expressed.

Informed by Nicolas Poussin's thinking about *memento-mori*, which, according to Louis Marin, was a wholly new idea, and one "entirely in harmony with the formal qualities of his style",[69] this project has harnessed, and actively run with, the insights gained from practical and theoretical research into the nature of Poussin's paintings; transferring those elements, demonstrated by the curatorial decisions made for *Memento-Mori in Painting* (Fig. 0:6), onto the deceased-estates body of work which now predominates my practice.[70]

Methodology

My painting practice is my methodology. In other words, my painting methodology has been born out of my practice, rather than my practice being subordinate to a preordained methodological system. Through time, an established methodology has worked in balanced union with my practice.

I think of my methodological processes being comparable to an engineer's systematic reasoning. By which I mean, in engineering terms, "my practice is a network of strategies, or systems. What happens when you reconfigure those systems, remove a

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[69] Marin, L. (1999) *Sublime Poussin*, Stanford University Press, pp. 104 – 119.
[70] 2024.

strategy, replace a strategy, or take a shuffle to them. What changes, what remains."[71]
The three key strategies I have employed to this methodology, have been:

- Paintings by Nicolas Poussin.

- Photographs of deceased estates.

- The painted grid.

Using different painterly styles, manners, scales, and materials I have put these strategies through various states and processes of painterly manipulations. Such as, for example: fragmentation, appropriation, translation, and re-organisation – to see what changes and what remains. Out of their reconfiguration I have reflected on how they have altered, affected, or revealed, an expanded notion of *memento-mori*. During this reflection I have been mindful that thinking and envisioning what a painting might be is very different from the activity of painting, and the painting itself.

This methodology, I suggest, is comparable to that used by the German painter Albert Oehlen[72] for a series of paintings he has been making since the early 1990s, sourced from John Graham's[73] painting *Tramonto Spaventoso.*[74] Oehlen has named this ongoing group of paintings the *John Graham Remix* series, reflecting both his interest in music, and his methodological approach, "that reconfigures and reconstructs [the painting's] elements through remixed logics and warped pictorial strategies".[75] He has stated that he finds freedom in the limitations and constrictions created from the self-imposed restriction of using a single painting for inspiration for over twenty years.[76]

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[71] These comments were made to me by an engineering friend. They added, "It is paramount, for example, for a safety engineer to constantly assess and re-assess systems within a power station. If one system breaks down, or is needed to be replaced, what happens to other systems? Do they remain safe, do they remain in working order? Generally, there is a specific answer engineers are either calculating, digging out from the archives, or testing against a set of limits/criteria but we have to interpret results, and a large part of the work is judgment-based. But we can't always generate the data needed & everyone's perception of risk is different based on experience, so there is some subjectivity to it... although the rationale to support the argument needs to be sound." email message, December 2022.
[72] Born Krefeld, Germany, 1954.
[73] American (1886-1961).
[74] (1940-49), oil on canvas, 41.1 x 66 cm.
[75] Obrist, H.U. (2019) *Albert Oehlen. Endless Possibilities of Interpretation*, Serpentine Gallery, London (pages unnumbered).
[76] Ibid.

Unlike Oehlen, I have not restricted myself to a singular source, but have instead restricted myself to a specific group of photographs and a select number of paintings by Nicolas Poussin. Like Oehlen, I have found a freedom in the limitations and constrictions I have placed upon my practice.

Studio

During the course of this project, I have had access to two studio spaces. The work done in each space has had different emphases due to the nature of their built and social environments. For instance, I have used my smaller home studio (Malvern, UK) for sketching, planning, drawing, and more experimental work (Fig. 0:8). My larger shared studio space at *Emerge* (Bath, UK) I have used for larger paintings (Fig. 0:9), partly conceived out of work done in my home studio.
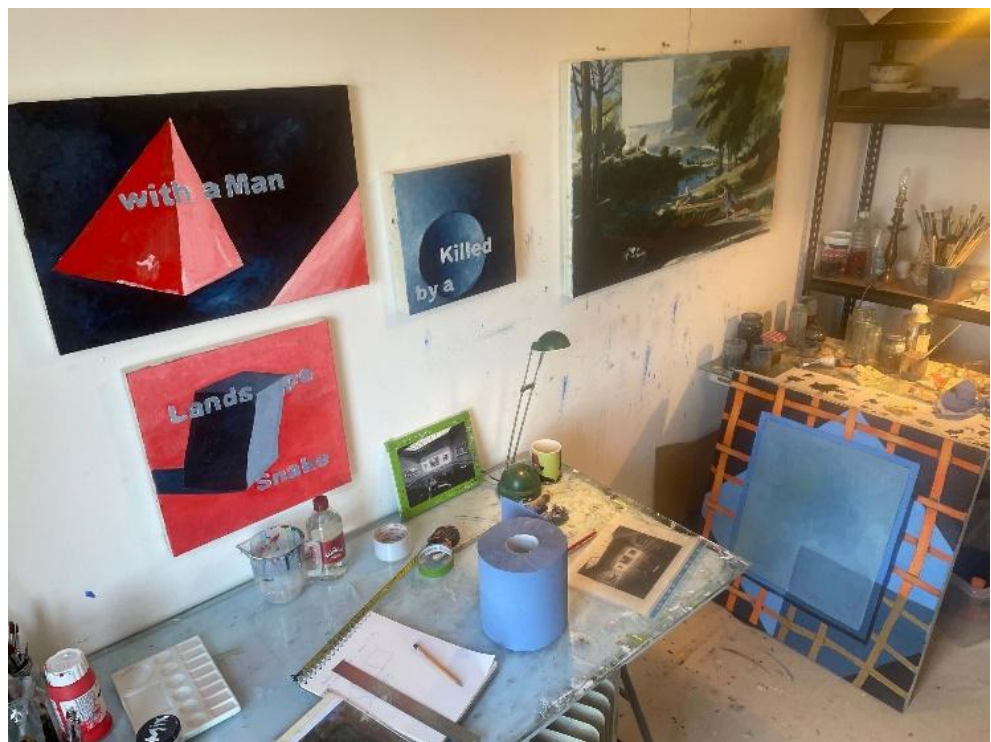
Fig. 0:8

Home studio, Malvern, UK.

Fig. 0:9

Emerge studio, Bath, UK.

Both studios are spaces of mixed and fragmented things. An "[…] aversion to mixed things has long been a trope in Western Culture", states Mary Anne Frances in the introduction to *Mixed Forms of Visual Culture*.[77] This is re-enforced, she implies, by the multiple ways in which mixed things are portrayed as having negative associations, such as: "mishmash, mash-up, […] hotchpotch (or hodgepodge), rag bag and jumble".[78] I concur with Frances, that within the realm of these definitions, and in the context of my practice-led research, these mixed entities are wrongly marginalised.

Jacques Derrida implied that "all metaphysicians from Plato to Rousseau, Descartes to Husserl, have proceeded [by] conceiving […] the pure before the impure, the simple before the complex".[79] It seems to me, however, that work done in the studio is in complete contradiction to this procedure; the impure and complex are conceived

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[77] Francis, M.A. (2021) *Mixed Forms of Visual Culture. From the Cabinet of Curiosities to Digital Diversity*, Bloomsbury, p. 1.
[78] Ibid. pp.1-2
[79] Derrida, J. (1988) *Limited Inc*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman and Samuel Weber, Northwestern University Press, p. 93.

before the pure and simple. It is in the studio where this procedure takes place and, within the context of this project, the process of writing this exegesis has distilled the positive rag-bag and jumbled nature of the studios into a more digestible and more clearly articulated concept via its movement of thought.

Negative Capability

The work I have made in the studio has been approached with an element of Negative Capability,[80] described by John Keats in 1817 as "when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason."[81] The word 'negative' was not being used by Keats in the pejorative sense, but to convey the idea that artistic achievement can only be attained when approached with an element of un-knowing; or when approached with an element of passivity, "a willingness to let what is mysterious or doubtful remain just that."[82]

That is not to say this approach mitigates a rationale to remain in a state of uncertainty, nor to fetishise doubt. On the contrary I have used it as an oblique strategy to find out where uncertainty and doubt occur (essential for any research project). Within the realm of the studio, I have used negative capability as a kind of passive engine.

I also identify with the Belgian painter Luc Tymans' belief that contemporary painting, amongst other things, needs to be about "precision".[83] By which I take his meaning to imply that painting needs to be done with purpose, intent and integrity, whether or not one necessarily has a preconceived notion of its outcomes and final state. My painting practice is one that relies, in equal measures, on commitment and the acceptance of an unknowing.

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[80] A phrase made by Keats when discussing Shakespeare's literary achievement with two friends whilst walking home after a night out.
[81] Rollins, H.E. (ed), (1958), *The Letters of John Keats*, vol. 1., Cambridge University Press, p. 194.
[82] Hebron, S, (2014*), John Keats and Negative Capability,* British Library, online: https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/john-keats-and-negative-capability [accessed 7th March 2022]
[83] Tymans in: Coggins, D. (2009) "Takeover Artist, an Interview with Luc Tymans", *Artnet*, 16th September 2009.

The Painted Grid

In Chapter Five I give an account of how and why the painted grid has become a significant (and somewhat, unforeseen) element throughout this project, informed, in part, by the influence of a painting's material nature, specifically the warp and weft of a canvas's surface. In my use of the grid, I was, and still am, wary of the fact that, according to John Elderfield, the grid should initiate art, rather than, itself, making art.[84]

With this in mind, my initial reason for using the painted grid involved an element of negative capability and, on reflection, was an attempt to combine a way to:

- Trap (my) time spent painting.

- Trap time within a painting.

- Suggest the paintings are a part of the extended visual world surrounding it.

- Point to the materiality of the painting by echoing the weave of the canvas.

- Highlight the flatness and facing-ness of the painting's surface.

- Disrupt the holed-through space of the painting.

Although all these reasons play their part, and will be individually referred to throughout this exegesis, from early on in the project their accumulative effect seemed to add up to more than a sum of their parts (Fig. 0:10). It was a recognition and awareness which involved an intuitive reasoning that the painted grid has an intriguing way of evading, skewing, and disrupting a sequential notion of time – testing paintings' temporality by a questioning visual imposition – and what I later understood, and came to articulate, as a visual-stuttering.

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[84] In the closing sentences of Elderfield's 1972 essay "Grids", he writes: "The majority of grid work ends up not moving, but merely pleasant. To take some graph paper, strengthen some of its lines, and start filling in some of the squares can't really help produce an attractive effect – but more often than not the result will just be good design. Ending on this pessimistic note is unfair to those who have used grids to considerable and sometimes to major effect, but it was not the grid itself that made their art – it merely initiated it." Elderfield, J. (1972) "Grids", *Artforum*, vol. 10, no. 9, May 1972, p. 59.
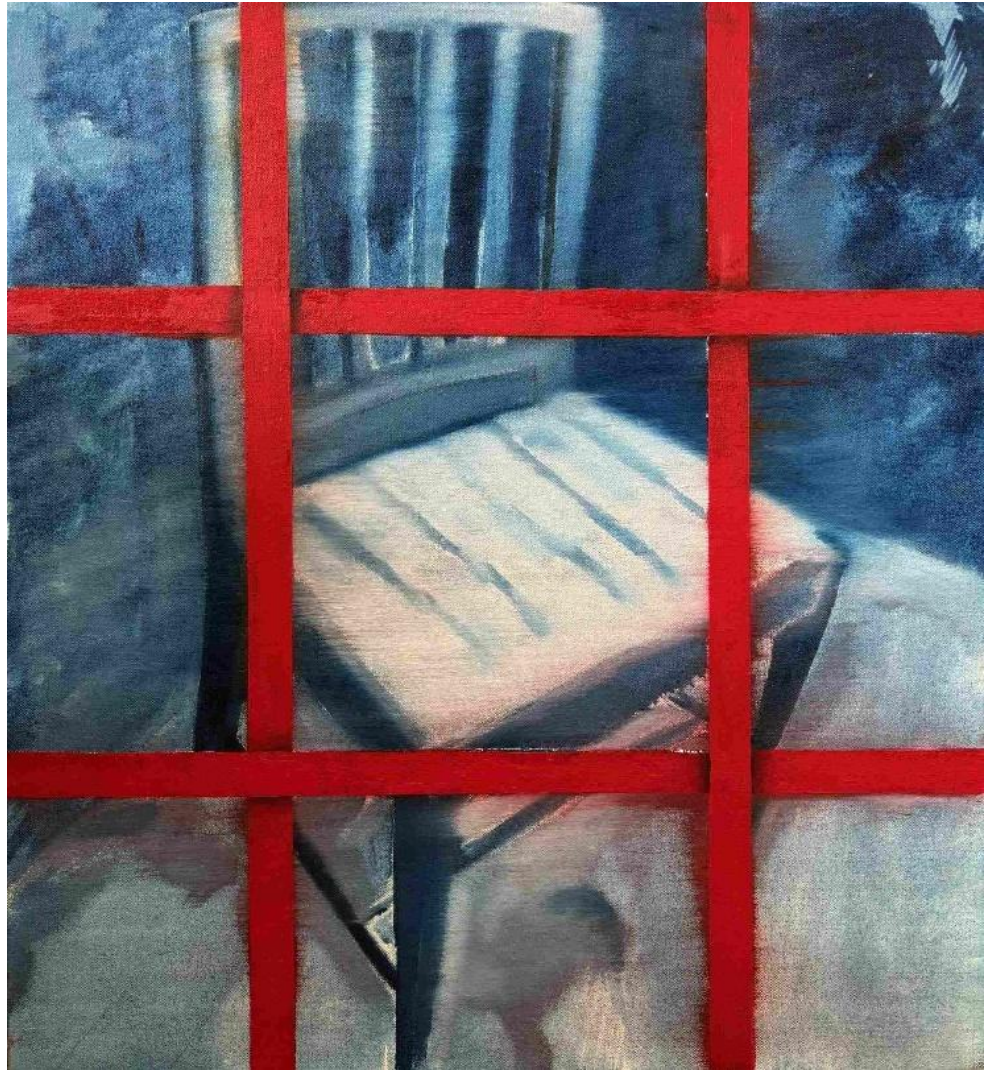
Fig. 0:10

Deceased Estate, No. 109 (2021), oil on canvas, 60 x 55 cm.

In my eye's mind the painted grid acts to fragment the content of a painting out of a larger (potentially infinite) grid.[85] The painting's grid is therefore separated away from its larger 'parent' and becomes, somehow, autonomous. "Art" writes Andrew Hui, "is a repository of the world that gave birth to it – but it must be severed from it to achieve autonomy. In this act of rupture, the fragment comes into being."[86]

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[85] I have used the term 'my eye's mind' several times throughout this exegesis (as opposed to 'my mind's eye'), borrowing it from the English painter Bridget Riley (born 1931) who's book of collected writings is titled: *The Eye's Mind: Bridget Riley. Collected Writings 1965-2019*. "Perception" she observes, "seems to be more alert and energetic when its objective is not fully explicit". (2019, Thames and Hudson, p. 106.)

[86] Hui, A. (2019) *A Theory of The Aphorism*, Princetown University Press, p. 15.

In this sense, I have used the painted grid as a device to fragment the notion of *memento-mori* away from more conventional, or palpable, sources; transposing it to more unconventional, alternative, painterly settings.

There is, I propose, a direct link to my use of the painted grid with this project's emergence of a visual-stuttering born out of a critical and clinical stutter. Not only does the grid block and trap (or net) an image,[87] but it also opens the image to alternative interpretations that can change the course of a subject – allowing the possibility for something new, or different, occurring.

With further analysis of my exhibition: *Memento-Mori in Painting*, the following chapters will provide validation for these intuitive reasonings. Using Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's notions of 'smooth' and 'striated' space, I will examine how my use of the painted grid as a device may be a suitable tool to reveal an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting allied to a non-sequential notion of time.

Furthermore, I will articulate how this PhD project has engaged with the clinical *and* critical stutter through a different and idiosyncratic framework revolving around an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting. This engagement, I propose, has allowed room for meaningful aesthetic insight – and exposed the, sometimes, uneasy relationship between theory and practice.

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[87] See Fig. Il:8, page 250.

Contents

Following this Introduction is a Literature Review, leading to Chapter One which deals with how a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering revealed itself over the course of the project and what relationship it plays in its investigation into an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting.

Chapters Two and Three set out to explain how I have employed the notion of *memento-mori* and certain paintings by Nicolas Poussin as practical and theoretical strategies. Chapter Four considers how an expanded notion of *memento-mori* could be explored and revealed within a painting's unseen in-between, using my painting *Self Portrait* (Painting No. 5) and Da Vinci's painting *St. John the Baptist* to articulate and develop themes revolving around this idea.

Chapters Five and Six look back on the insights articulated in the preceding chapters, using them to develop and examine how the painted grid, can, under certain circumstances, be allied to an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting suited to a disjointed, stuttering, non-sequential concept of time. They also set out to propose that an expanded notion of *memento-mori* can be expressed in painting out of, and within, an image of multiplicities – in alignment with, and reliant upon, a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering.

The Conclusion summarises the conclusions made in each chapter and reiterates the various proposals made within them. It ends by setting out where and what contributions to new knowledge have been found during this practice-led project.

The Bibliography, Illustrations and Appendix follow.

LITERATURE REVIEW

<u>Research <> Practice</u>

During the first months into this project, my overriding concern was how to tackle the relationship between research and practice, and what forms new knowledge could arise out of practice-led research. To address this concern, I turned to texts related to research processes and methodologies.[88] With different emphasis, they covered ways new knowledge can be found in the modes, processes, and methodologies a practice-led research degree takes, as well as in the reflected-upon outcomes of the artefacts produced.[89]

Natalie Loveless's *How to Make Art at the End of the World, A Manifesto for Research-Creation*,[90] on the other hand, takes a distinctive and pedagogically attuned method of considering and analysing research-creation. In Chapter Two I address and develop some of Loveless's proposals, in particular using Jacques Lacan's *objet petit a* as gaze as a kind of "research-creational thing-to-think with",[91] and have, in addition, combined it with Lacan's "special kind of memento-mori", described by the British academic and writer Malcolm Bowie.[92]

Loveless introduces her book by reminding us of Rosalind Krauss's 1979 essay, *Sculpture in the Expanded Field*,[93] making the point that Krauss argued that one can no

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[88] Referenced in the Bibliography.

[89] My intention at the outset was not to make the analysis and process of research the sole, or most significant, element within this project. I consider it as a by-product, rather than this project's primary research aim.
An example of how this may become a possibility during practice led PhD's is described by Otto von Busch in his article *Research Navigation* from 2011. He sets out how his PhD thesis *Fashion-able* was noted by some for lacking in objectivity by trying to expand his practice by drawing parallels to practices in other fields and which, because of its methodology, was also criticised for embarking on a journey without a clear research question or final answer. However, the article makes a counter argument that the rigidity of academic research is the only way "to steer the process safely into harbour". He states, "In my experience, I found quite the opposite."
von Busch, Otto, 'Research Navigations', *Journal for Artistic Research*, 0 (2011), https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/7967/7968/0/0 [accessed 6th June 2022]

[90] Loveless, N. (2019) *How to Make Art at the End of the World. A Manifesto for research-Creation*, Duke University Press

[91] Ibid. p.80.

[92] Bowie, M. (1991) *Lacan*, Fontana Press, p. 164.

[93] Krauss, R. (1979) "Sculpture in the Expanded Field", *October*, no. 8, (Spring, 1979), pp. 30-44.

longer "analyse emerging artistic forms using the tools in the contemporary art toolkit at her disposal,"[94] and so presents her reader with new tools to describe new art forms.[95] In a similar fashion, Loveless suggests, it is necessary to continuously update and remake (or remodel) the toolkit as to aid our ability "to read, analyse, and situate expanded contemporary practices such as new public art, relational aesthetics, art-as-social-practice, and works that fall under what has been called the educational or pedagogical turn".[96] Loveless makes the point that this "social-and-spatial-remaking" is a move from an understanding of "art as easel painting or bronze cast sculpture".[97] With her pedagogical research-angle in mind, it seems there needs to be an expanded *and* a remodelled toolkit required for today's contemporary practices in order to develop a further understanding of traditional art forms, such as painting. Emerging out of this project, the introduction of a stuttering-thinking and visual-stuttering to the toolkit may go some way to advance this development.

Theory

Yves-Alain Bois has made the regularly alluded to point that, "one does not 'apply' a theory; […] concepts must be forged from the object of one's inquiry or imported according to that object's specific exigency; and that the main theoretical act is to define this object, not the other way around".[98] On the other hand, he also comments that to reject all theory on that basis is in danger of "throwing the baby out with the bath-water".[99]

"Our search for a theory of pictures," writes William Mitchell, "may best be advanced by turning the problem upside down to look at pictures of theory."[100] In light of Mitchell's observation, this project's theory has been visually formed and informed out

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[94] Loveless (2019) *How to Make Art*, p.1.
[95] For example, an "axiomatic structure" emerges between "architecture and not-architecture" (later called installation art), and a "marked site" between "landscape and not-landscape" (later called earth or land art). Krauss (1979) *Sculpture in the Expanded Field*, pp. 30-44.
[96] Loveless (2019) *How to Make Art*, p. 2.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Bois, Y-A, (1995) *Painting as Model*, MIT Press, p. xii.
[99] Ibid, p. xiii.
[100] Mitchell, W.J.T., (1995), *Picture Theory*, University of Chicago Press, p. 82.

my practice and paintings made, and subsequently literary articulated via this exegesis, with the visual analysis of my exhibition *Memento-Mori in Painting* used to hold these theories together and to make their relevance understood.

The American art critic Jerry Saltz reminds us that painters and artists use theoreticians and philosophers because they provide a framework to help explain concepts they find difficult to clarify without their help. "Important things are hard to write about".[101] With that in mind, many of the ideas set out in this project are developed out of concepts and themes considered by Gilles Deleuze, writing alone, and by Deleuze and Felix Guattari, writing as one.[102] Not only do they inform my approach of analysing the different types of space within my paintings, but they also introduced me to a connected rhizomic mode of thinking and working. Moreover, the writings of Deleuze introduced me to the possibilities of how a critical (or scholarly) stuttering-thinking could manifest itself into a visual-stuttering, metaphorically transformed and developed out of a critical, *and* a clinical, stutter.

In *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* Deleuze and Guattari describe a rhizome as a subterranean stem, any point of which "can be connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different," they explain, "from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order."[103] I consider work done in the studio, my paintings and writing process are all kindred to the rhizome in they have been open to "establish[ing] connections between semiotic chains, [they] may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but [they] will start up again on one of [their] old lines, or on new lines."[104] For instance, each of my paintings lead on from the last painting, whilst also being directly and indirectly connected to every other studio-created artefact and piece of writing (evidenced in my exhibition *Memento-Mori in Painting: An Image of Multiplicities*). The rhizome, they summarise, connects any point to any other point, it has neither

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[101] Saltz, J. (2020) *How To Be An Artist*, Ilex, p. 93.
[102] Particularly by those set out in *A Thousand Plateaus*, *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translation and forward by Brian Massumi, Bloomsbury Academic, (2020), originally published in English in 1988 by The Athlone Press Ltd.
[103] Ibid, p. 7.
[104] Ibid, p.8.

beginning nor end, it is made up of multiple plateaus and operates by "variation, expansion, conquest, capture, [and] off-shoots".[105]

The American philosopher John Rajchman has described the use of Deleuzoguattarian rhizomatic theory "to make connections one needs not knowledge, certainty, or even ontology, but rather a trust that something may come out, though one is not yet completely sure what".[106] Bearing this assumption in mind, I am aware that an element of risk is required when relying solely on intuitive trust in the pursuit of new knowledge. Employing a rhizomic-like, map-like, structure to my practice, writing and thinking, has worked in compatibility with how an accumulation of knowledge has formed during the process of this project.[107] Instead of progress being generated purely by a step-by-step tree-like fashion, it has been generated in a more non-chronological way where themes and strands of thinking have been woven together, "sometimes disappearing to resurface again, viewed from a different perspective".[108]

I acknowledge the idea of mapping is a much used one in relation to practice-led research – nevertheless the map, it seems, is important for getting lost, as well as finding your way.[109] The map, Deleuze and Guattari explain, is "open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification."[110] I associate constituent parts of my paintings' modes of construction as being relatable to their assertion to: "Make a map, not a tracing".[111]

In simple terms, I consider my painted primary versions of photographs from deceased estates and paintings by Poussin as being forms of tracing (for example, Paintings No's. 2, 4, 7, 10 & 11), while secondary, tertiary and quaternary paintings germinating from the primary versions, I consider as being map-like creations (for example, Paintings No's 1, 3, 6, 8 & 9) (Fig. LR:1).

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[105] Ibid.
[106] Rajchman, J. (2000), *The Deleuze Connections*, MIT Press, p. 7.
[107] See research plan, Appendix, page 255.
[108] I owe Beth Harland's text *A Fragment of Time in the Pure State* for introducing me to how a Deleuzoguattarian rhizomic way of thinking could be an appropriate way to analyse and articulate how a creative practice-led research project could be unfurled. (2009), pp. 7-8.
[109] See Chapter Five, page 179.
[110] Deleuze & Guattari (2020), *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 7.
[111] Ibid. p. 12.
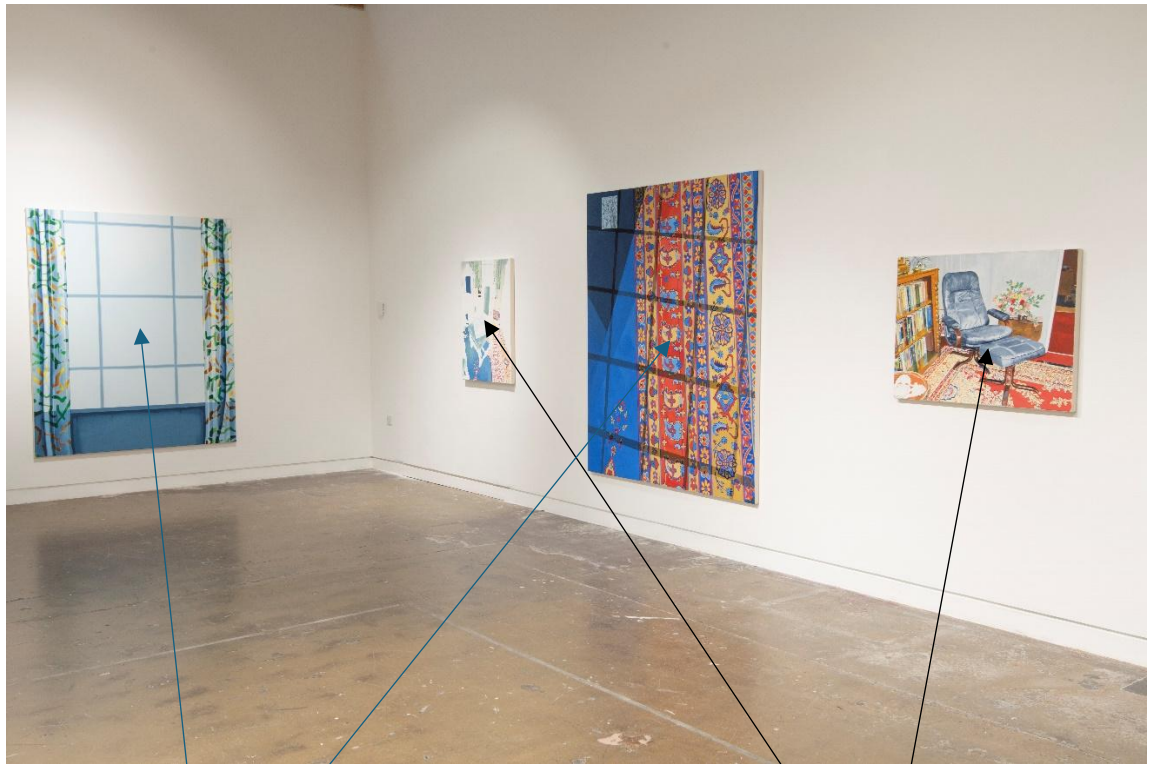
MAPS

TRACINGS
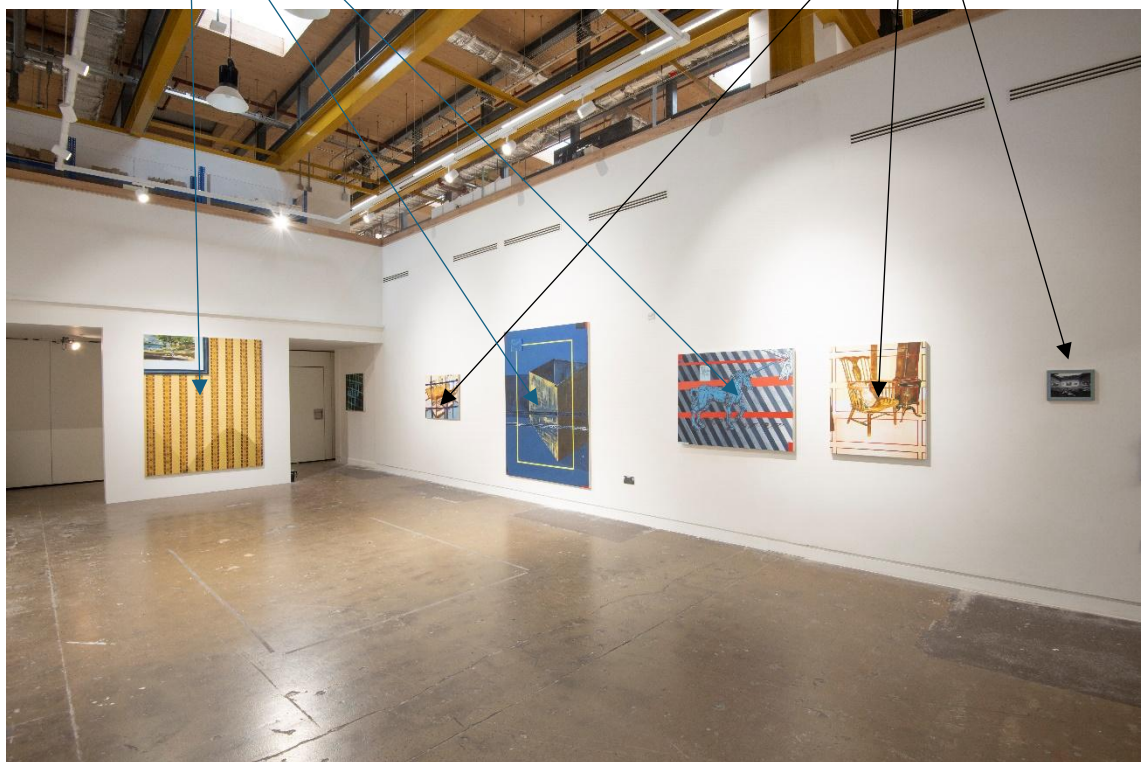
Fig. LR:1   Installation Views. *Memento-Mori in Painting: An Image of Multiplicities.*

Deleuze and Guattari clarified:

> "What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely orientated toward an experimentation in contact with the real. The map does not reproduce an unconscious closed in upon itself; it constructs the unconscious."[112]

Deleuze and Guattari make their readers aware, however, that it is not the case that one is better than the other; or that one is bad and the other good. They add that theoretical 'maps' and 'tracings' are connected and informed by one another, and that, "it is a question of method: *the tracing should always be put back on the map*".[113] It is an emblematic coda my practice has intuitively held onto, if only to prevent getting completely lost and veering away from the project's central aims.

In hindsight, the choices made while deciding which paintings to include and which to exclude in the exhibition *Memento-Mori in Painting,* reflected this coda. Without projected forethought, the chosen fourteen exhibited paintings were made up of equal numbers of 'maps' and 'tracings' – an unforeseen outcome echoing my practice and contributing to the exhibition's (and this project's) overall identity.[114]

Deleuze's thinking encouraged my propensity for experimentation and avoidance of the compartmentalising of knowledge – for instance, in my use of a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering to bridge the gap between thought and making. I have also engaged with Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomic mapping concept for the structure of this exegesis; certain threads of thought within it are picked up in a non-hierarchical, weave-like manner, mirroring my painting and practice.[115 & 116]

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[112] Ibid. p. 13.
[113] Ibid. (Their emphasis).
[114] See also Chapter Five, page 179.
[115] At the end of my first year into this project it was noted to me that my, then, somewhat fragmented, writing style echoed that of the British sculptor Joanna Sperryn-Jones, making me seek out her paper *Breaking as Making* (2011), in which she gives an account of how her way of working in the studio involving breaking ceramic forms to create and communicate was echoed in the unorthodox way her written work was presented. The paper opened the possibility that, if appropriate and done with good reason, I too might be able to present my exegesis in a way that reflected my panting practice.
[116] When connections have been made, I have endeavoured to point them out, either in the main body of the text, or in the footnotes.

Furthermore, I have engaged with Deleuze's non-philosophical understanding of philosophy. I am neither a philosophy student nor a theorist, but a painter – and it is as a painter where I judge my strengths lie. Although, as Rajchman points out, Deleuze's belief is in the intrinsic relationship between art and philosophy and contends that this relationship is not one of "judgment and object, but rather of '*resonances and interferences*' across two different kinds of practice, neither of which is situated '*above*' the other".[117] I have endeavoured to rely on Deleuze and Guattari's texts first-hand. However, secondary explanatory texts by John Rajchman,[118] James Williams,[119] Constantin Boundas,[120] Dorothea Olkowski,[121] and Christopher Vitale [122] have been invaluable for their clarification, interpretation and insight.[123]

During the early stages of my research, I became increasingly interested in how *memento-mori* as a thought drives (or motivates) a painting practice, rather than how *memento-mori* can be alternatively revealed out of a painting practice and through a painting. On reflection, this interest, primarily informed by Jacques Lacan's texts in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*,[124] led me to become concerned with a somewhat overtly psychoanalytic (or Lacanian) angled approach to painting – to a point where I felt it was becoming detrimental to my practice and to this project. By which I mean, psychoanalytic theory began to lead my practice and research, rather than my practice leading and being my research. What remains of this research is now predominately contained within Chapter Two and, to a lesser extent, Chapter Four.

[117] Rajchman (2000), *The Deleuze Connections*, p. 114. (His emphasis).
[118] Rajchman, J. (2000) *The Deleuze Connections*, MIT Press.
[119] Williams, J. (2013) *Gilles Deleuze's 'Difference and Repetition': A Critical Introduction and Guide*, Edinburgh University Press.
[120] Boundas, C.V. & Olkowski, D., (eds) (2018) *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy*, Routledge.
[121] Olkowski, D. (1999) *Giles Deleuze and the Ruin of Representation*, University of California Press, and Olkowski, D. (2021) *Deleuze, Bergson, Merleau-Ponty: The Logic and Pragmatics of Creation*, Affective Life, and Perception, Indiana University Press.
[122] Vitale, C. (2017) *Guide to Reading Deleuze's Cinema II: The Time-Image*, https://onscenes.weebly.com/film/guide-to-reading-deleuzes-cinema-iithe-time-image [accessed 13th February 2023].
[123] Other useful texts have been: Alliez (2011), Bal (1997), Bowie (1991), Didi-Huberman (2005), Friedlander (1992), Gallop (1985), Homer (2005), Inwood (1997), Kenny (1997), Levine (2008), Lingis (1994), Mitchell (1995), Mulvey (2007), Scott (2008), Stengers (2011) and Zizek (2006).
[124] Lacan, J. (1998) *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, translated by Alan Sheridan, Vintage.

<u>History</u>

In an essay titled *Why Nothing Can Be Accomplished in Painting, And Why It is Important to Keep Trying,*[125] James Elkins considers the different modes of writing about painting, dividing alternative discourses into five groups.[126] In all five categories he considers the role history plays on their content and reasoning, either its use or non-use,[127] and states that "the decision about the importance and relevance of history is the most fundamental one in writing about painting even now".[128]

Elkins argues, however, that even though painting remains to be "annoyingly, and dauntingly, entangled in art history", its language allows sense and direction be given to "art of all kinds".[129] Suggesting that the most interesting art is not necessarily made by paintings, he nevertheless makes the point that painting is crucial "for the conceptualisation of visual art, and to art's sense of its own history".[130]

Literature concerned with the life and paintings of Nicolas Poussin are in abundance. That being said, I have generally relied on texts by Erwin Panofsky, Louis Marin and T.J. Clark as main sources information, understanding and insight,[131] and from whom I have amalgamated their central through-lines to explore and learn from the inherent contradictory nature of Poussin's paintings.[132]

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[125] (2004), https://jameselkins.com/why-nothing-can-be-accomplished-in-painting/ [accessed 23rd June 2022]
[126] In summary, these are: writing done for brochures and text media, (often being opportunistic and done for money); academic writing whose principle purpose is to classify paintings into styles and schools, "putting structure and sense where there did not appear to be any"; writing asking if painting is dead; writing concerned with painting's relationship with modernism; and finally the kind of writing whose primary subject is not painting, but uses painting and paintings to examine concepts "located in wider cultural contexts". Ibid.
[127] He offers Dave Hickey and Arthur Danto as examples of writers who separate contemporary painting from painting's history.
[128] Elkins (2004), *Why Nothing can be Accomplished*.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Panofsky (1938 and 1955), Marin (1995, 1999 and 2001), Clark (2006).
[132] This contradictory nature has also been revealingly articulated by John Berger. Describing Poussin's *painting A Roman Road* (1648), oil on canvas, 79 x 99.7 cm (Dulwich Picture Gallery), Berger writes: "[Poussin] tries desperately to keep everything under control: he emphasises the straight edge of the man-made road, he makes as much as he can of the calculated angles of the church roof, he disposes the small figures in their telling, clear poses, but the evening light making shadow chase shadow, the sun going down behind the hills, the awaited night – these are too much for him. Beyond the town walls, beyond the circle of learning, there is a threat". Berger, J. (1969) *The Moment of Cubism and Other Essays*, Littlehampton Book Services, p. 81.

The apparent freedom gained from the idea that contemporary painting could be unfettered from its history, Elkins proposes, may act as a burden rather than a course to pursue. However, what he describes as a burden, I have considered a freedom. Moreover, Elkins suggest the idea that anything might be considered as a painting by rejecting its history means, in turn, that there is "no reason to count anything as a painting".[133]

Ten years after Elkins wrote this essay, New York's Museum of Modern Art's 2015-16 exhibition of paintings used the science fiction writer William Gibson's concept of 'a-temporality' in its title: *The Forever Now. Contemporary Painting in an Atemporal World.*[134] It was used to describe "a new and strange state of the world in which, courtesy of the Internet, all eras seem to exist at once. […] In visual art, atemporality manifests itself as a kind of art-making that is inspired by, refers to, or avails itself of styles, subjects, motifs, materials, strategies, and ideas from an array of periods on the art-historical timeline."[135]

This phenomenon in (Western) painting by (Western) painters, of looking and referring to every-previous-time and to every-previous-where in contemporary painting has been recently investigated by Craig Staff in *Painting, History and Meaning. Sites of Time.*[136] Not only has Staff's book given this project a context for its interest and use of 17th Century paintings by Nicolas Poussin, but has, like *The Forever Now*, similarly contextualised my practice amid other painters using atemporality and anachronism as types of informal strategies.[137]

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[133] Elkins (2004), *Why Nothing can be Accomplished.*
[134] 14th December 2014 – 5th April 2015.
[135] Hoptman, L. (2014) *The Forever Now. Contemporary Painting in an Atemporal World*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, pp. 13 – 14.
[136] Staff, C. (2021) *Painting, History and Meaning. Sites of Time*, Intellect.
This trend, Staff affirms, is in contrast to the historical progression of the modernist artwork which, in 1972, Rosalind Krauss described as "a series of rooms *en filade*. Within each room the individual artist explored, to the limits of his experience and his formal intelligence, the separate constituents of his medium. The effect of his pictorial act was to open simultaneously the door to the next space and close our access to the one behind him. The shape and dimensions of the new space were discovered by the next pictorial act; the only thing about that unstable position was clearly determined beforehand was its point of entrance." Rosalind Krauss "A View of Modernism" (1972), reprinted in Harrison, C. & Wood, P. (eds.), (2003), p. 978.
[137] Painters mentioned by Staff in this context include: Lisa Yuskavage (American, 1962 -), Maria Lalic (British, 1952 -), Raquib Shaw (Indian, 1974 -), Glenn Brown (British, 1966 -), Kehinde Wiley (American, 1977 -), Johannes Phokela (South African, 1966 -), Tomma Abts (German, 1967 -),

<u>Processes and Mediums</u>

The question as to whether the processes and material stuff of painting still remains central to its identity, is asked by Tom Palin in his 2018 PhD thesis, *The Condition of Painting: Reconsidering Medium Specificity*.[138] He considers the extent to which the medium of a painting is dependent on the specificity of its medium and argues that Heidegger's notion of truth,[139] "offers the possibility of replacing the redundancy of the medium with a notion of regeneration, against the backdrop of the end-ism that haunts painting".[140] Although my interests lie more with painting's picture making quality rather than its medium's specificity, from Palin's thesis I gleaned and developed key sources of information and concepts revolving around the painted grid and painting's relationship with temporality; as well as describing how a painting's surface offers us clues to what a painting is, and in turn opening up ways to explore what a painting's surface could express.

Palin considers and develops many of the themes set out in *Painting beyond Itself, The Medium in the Post-medium Condition,* edited by Isabelle Graw and Ewa Lajer-Burcharth.[141] The book is made up of a collection of essays questioning what the medium was before modernism – in other words, before Clement Greenberg located his "teleological account of modernism and on which he based his reductivist and essentializing definition of the medium, the limitations of which are now quite clear".[142]

In the opening essay David Joselit [143] gives an account of paintings' ability to 'store' not only time but also "an exorbitant stockpile of affect",[144] to which Isabelle Graw

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Cheyney Thompson (American, 1977 -), Dana Schutz (American, 1976 -), Marlene Dumas (South African, 1953 -) and Taus Makhacheva (Russian, 1983 -).

[138] Palin, T. (2018) *The Condition of Painting: Reconsidering Medium Specificity*, un-published PhD Thesis, awarded by The Royal College of Art.

[139] Developed by Heidegger in his *The Origin of the Work of Art*, originally published in 1950, and in the *Holderlin Lectures* Heidegger gave at the University of Freiburg during the winter semester of 1941-42.

[140] Palin (2018) *The Condition of Painting*, p. 5.

[141] Graw, I. & Lajer-Burcharth, E. (eds), (2016) *Painting Beyond Itself. The Medium in the Post-medium Condition*, Sternberg Press.

[142] Ibid. p. 7.

[143] *Marking, Scoring, Storing, and Speculating (on Time),* Ibid. pp. 11- 20.

[144] Ibid. p. 14.

attaches the term 'Liveliness'.[145] Graw uses the term to denote the "manifestation of the artist", to which painting's indexicality points directly back to, regardless of its visual representation.[146] This project is, in part, an investigation into how far these perceived abilities can be stretched.

Although my practice is not primarily concerned with the specific role and relationship photography has with painting, I have relied on photographs (both taken by myself and sourced online) to a greater or lesser extent throughout this project (Painting No's. 2, 4, 7, 10 and 11). Since the arrival of the internet, the role of the digital has become a firm third spoke in the painting/photography relationship. Rather than looking into the specific nature and qualities of these mediums, during this project I have been more attentive to how contemporary painters are using the different mediums' interconnectedness.

In the preface of *PhotographyDigitalPainting* its editor, Carl Robinson, suggests that the interconnections between painting, photography and the digital are formed as a type of rhizome, "all intertwining laterally with each other",[147] echoing my painting practice and writing process. In Robinson's succeeding *Painting, Photography, and the Digital* he collates fifteen essays by artists whose practices, amongst other concerns, deal with the "physical connections" between painting, photography and the digital in "*picture making*".[148]

For instance, Frances Woodley's essay gives an account of how she manipulates digital photographic reproductions of northern European paintings linked to the still-life and vanitas tradition (Fig. LR:2).[149] This manipulation, she explains, both interconnects and anchors her post-internet practice to a historical mode of picture making and content,

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[145] *The Value of Liveliness. Painting as an Index of Agency in the New Economy*. Ibid. pp. 79-101.
[146] Ibid. p. 81.
[147] Robinson, C. (ed.) (2000) *PhotographyDigitalPainting: Expanding Medium Interconnectivity in Contemporary Visual Art Practices*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, p. xvii.
[148] Robinson, C. (ed.) (2022) *Painting, Photography and the Digital. Crossing the Borders of the Mediums*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, p. xv. (His emphasis).
[149] Titled: *Reproductions and Reimagining's: Reflections on an Interconnected Practice*. Ibid, pp. 22-49.

echoing this project's engagement with Nicolas Poussin and painting's long-held association with the notion of *memento-mori*.[150]

Fig. LR:2

Frances Woodley, *Dump* (2020), digital painting, 100 x 120 cm.
Courtesy of the artist.

In a similar manner to Woodley, the British painter Sarah Key manipulates digital photographs – but uses the grid-like properties of the digital photograph to reassess the grid's continued use in contemporary painting practices. The central purpose of Key's PhD thesis *Grids: Painting in Dialogue with the Digital*,[151] was to move beyond Krauss's texts on the grid,[152] and considers how the grid is used a 'device' in the construction of her own work, rather than an "emblem", "sign" or "metaphor", as used by Krauss.[153]

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[150] This association is recounted by Victor Stoichita in *A Short History of the Shadow* (1997) Reaktion Books, pp. 1-43. Summarised in Chapter Two, page 111.
[151] Key, S. (2008) *Grids: Painting in Dialogue with the Digital*, unpublished PhD thesis, Loughborough University. Available at: https://ethos.bl.uk/ [accessed 3rd August 2023].
[152] See Bibliography.
[153] Key (2008) *Grids*, p. 12.

In the thesis Key gives an account of how her practice uses the grid (in its digital format) to construct and deconstruct images, and describes the dialogue that emerges between the grid, the digital and painting as one which "creates a network *between structure and sensation* that opens the grid to the forces of corporeality and desire, at work within painting."[154] (Fig. LR:3).

This image has been redacted by the author from the digital version of the thesis for copyright reasons.

Fig. LR:3

Sarah Key, *The Grid*, (2005), acrylic on MDF, 91.5 x 91.5 cm.
Scanned from: Key (2008) Grids, p. 236.

Unlike Key, this project is not dependant on the digital's reliance on the grid as a medium to manipulate or construct images, yet it has similarly opened the grid up to alternative interpretations and forces. Informed through insights gained from Nicolas Poussin's construal take of *memento-mori* in painting, this project's reading of the painted grid has incorporated the formation of an in-between space between structure and sensation, where, I propose, an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting may be found.

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[154] Key (2008) *Grids*, p. 12. (My emphasis).

<u>The Unseen In-Between</u>

Throughout this exegesis I have used archaeological excavation as a metaphor in relation to my practice's search for hidden things (specifically, an expanded notion of *memento-mori*) within painting.[155] In archaeological terms excavation is the exposure, processing and recording of hidden remains.[156] Archaeological items can be hidden between natural physical materials and, when excavated, are revealed. Whereas in terms of painting, "we are repeatedly made aware of the painful fact that […], though it has no hidden exits and shows everything at once on a single surface, [paintings] possess a strange and awesome capacity to dissimulate."[157]

After being prompted by comments and writings made by the German painter Jutta Koether,[158] the English painter Leon Kossoff,[159] the English poet Simon Armitage,[160] the Ukrainian born novelist Clarice Lispector,[161] the English art critic and author John

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[155] In my use of archaeological excavation as a metaphor in my search for some-*thing* not within plain sight, it is worth noting Athur Danto's assertion that, according to him, "Metaphors have in common with texts as such that they do not necessarily wear their metaphoricity on their surfaces, and what looks like an image may really be a structural hypothesis as to how a reality we heretofore lack words for is to be understood". Danto, A.C. (1986) *The Philosophical dis-Enfranchisement of Art*, Columbia University Press, p. 158.

[156] Excavation unearths things that have been hidden which were previously not so. Excavated objects are required to be interpreted or translated by historians and archaeologists for them to be understood in their original context.
It is interesting to consider whether objects can ever be fully comprehended, since they have (literally) been taken out of their original space and time, even though, as George Kubler explains, "everything made now is either a replica or a variant of something made a little time ago and so on back without break to the first morning of human time." Kubler, G. (1962) *The Shape of Time. Remarks on the History of Things*, Yale University Press, p. 2.

[157] Didi-Huberman, G., "The Art of Not Describing: Vermeer – The Detail and the Patch", *History of Human Sciences 2, no.2*, (1989), p. 135.

[158] Koether in: Buchloh, B. (2016), "A Conversation with Jutta Koether", *October 157*, Summer 2016, pp. 15-33. (Chapter Three, page 92).

[159] Wollheim, R. (2000), "Learning from Poussin. From a conversation with Leon Kossoff at his London Studio", *Modern Painters*, Spring 2000, vol. 13, issue 1, pp. 24-29.

[160] Armitage, S. (2007) Sir Gawain and The Green Knight, W.W. Norton & Co.

[161] In a constant reach for the ungraspable present, which slips away as one reads and writes, the protagonist of Clarice Lispector's novel Agua Viva asserts, "I write to you as an exercise in sketching before painting. I see words. What I say is pure present and this book is a straight line in space". (Lispector, C. (2012) *Agua Viva*, Penguin Modern Classics, p. 7.) Lispector, as a writer, tries to capture the temporal facing-ness of painting and attempts to search "whatever is lurking beyond thought". A task which, for her protagonist, seems to be Sisyphean. Further on in *Agua Viva*, the protagonist of the novel exclaims: "It's so odd and hard to substitute the paintbrush now for that strangely familiar but always remote thing, the word. The extreme and intimate beauty is within it. Yet it's unreachable – and when it's within reach that's when it becomes illusory because once again it remains unreachable." (Ibid, p. 65).

Berger,[162] and the English artist Richard Wentworth,[163] my practice has intuitively explored zones, or spaces, in paintings which occupy areas of opposing poles in an effort to un-dissimulate, or expose, an expanded notion of *memento-mori*.

The following chapters will endeavour to articulate how the disrupted <> connected quality of my paintings produced during the project are the result of a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering, instigated and developed out of its search for (or exposure of) an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting.

Stuttering

Because of the speculative nature of developing and employing a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering, via a critical *and* clinical stutter, to investigate an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting, sourcing literature in this area has been a challenge. My paintings have, ultimately, been its main source and primary points of reference. That said, Gilles Deleuze's concepts revolving around the critical linguistic (or scholarly) stutter, set out in his essay *He Stuttered*, initially informed me how the idea might be approached, articulated and understood.[164]

However, Kelly Hardcastle-Jones's (unanswered) question in a 2014 paper dealing with Deleuze's critical stutter asking whether what we discover about stuttering "[…] *and its capacity to produce newness is true*," then, "Deleuze's understanding of stuttering (in the critical sense) might reveal a false problem in the old understanding of stuttering (in the clinical sense)", was equally important.[165]

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[162] Berger, J. (1969) *The Moment of Cubism and Other Essays*, Littlehampton Book Services, pp. 81-85.

[163] "The active space," claims Wentworth, "is the unseen in-between". Said by Wentworth (born 1947) during an online seminar I attended on 7th December 2021 (organised by Bath Spa School of Art) titled *Creative Connections,* and where he spoke about the material and haptic nature of his sculptural work.

[164] Gilles Deleuze, *He Stuttered*, in: Boundas, C.V. & Olkowski, D. (eds) (2018) *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy,* Routledge, pp. 23 – 29.

[165] Hardcastle-Jones, K. (2014) *Deleuze's "Stuttering". Decomposition, Deterritorialization, and Pushing Language To Its Limit*, https://kellyhjones.files.wordpress.com/2014/03/deleuzes-stuttering.pdf [accessed 15th June 2023] (My emphasis).

Hardcastle-Jones's text was a key initiator to speculatively consider a clinical stutter's role in metaphorically transferring a scholarly critical stutter into a productive and strategic stuttering-thinking and visual-stuttering. Furthermore, Dorothy Olkowski's ideas dealing with difference and representation in her text *Women, Representation and Power* informed how this metaphorical transformation could be rationalised and visually manifested.[166]

The editors of *Stammering Pride and Prejudice: Difference not Defect* proclaimed (in 2019) it to be "the first published book exploring stammering from a social model".[167] The essays within it deal with personal narrative, art, and disability theory, presenting valuable insights made by people who stammer – and helping me to theoretically bridge the gap between a clinical stutter and a visual stutter. For example, Emma Alpern's essay *Why Sutter More?* describes how, as a stutterer, something interesting happens when introducing herself to others for the first time.

Alpern writes:

> "When the underside of language is revealed by stuttering in this way, in the instant before saying [my] name, it sends an immediate shock through the listeners. In one way, it seems like speech is broken when this happens, but we may do better to understand it as simply something that happens in language. The stuttered introduction carries a unique charge that, when we step away, can almost seem exciting".[168]

I suggest that the transformation of a critical and clinical-stutter into a visual-stutter carries with it an equivalent unique charge. It is a charge which I have endeavoured to harness during this project's investigation into how an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting could be alternatively expressed.

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[166] In: Olkowski, D. (1999) *Giles Deleuze and the Ruin of Representation*, University of California Press, pp. 1-31.

[167] Campbell, P., Constantino, C. & Simpson, S (eds) (2019) *Stammering Pride and Prejudice. Difference not Defect*, J&R Press Ltd, (back cover copy).

[168] Emma Alpern, *Why Stutter More?*, in: Ibid. p. 21.

<u>Key Artists</u>

- Beth Harland (British, 1964 – 2019)

The Dutch cultural theorist Mieke Bal begins her book *The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually* by questioning: "How can an image be written? And once written, how can it be read?".[169] Bal associates paintings' facing-ness with, what she terms Proust's narrative 'flatness', and reminds us that for Proust "art is, above all else, flat".[170] Nevertheless, Proust's literary design seen in *Remembrance of Things Past* is given by Bal as an example of how literature might emulate paintings' flatness, and in particular in Proust's use of 'the mottled screen' as a metaphor in connection to reading and writing.[171]

The British painter and academic Beth Harland picked up and developed Bal's ideas in her 2007 PhD thesis, published in 2009 as *A Fragment of Time in the Pure State: Mapping painting's temporality through the digital image.*[172] Harland's thesis set out to create a model aligning painting's temporality with Proust's 'time regained' reflecting "a more fully lived experience of time".[173] She makes it clear that when speaking of 'painting's time' she means "to reference the time both contained and released by a painting."[174]

Many of the ideas set out in *A Fragment of Time*, and illustrated through her practice, have been essential in the development of this project's association of the painted grid with Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of 'smooth' and 'striated' space, allowing me to consider how the painted grid could be allied with a disrupted, non-sequential concept of time associated with this project's expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting.

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[169] Bal, M. (1997) *The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually*, Stanford University Press, p. 1.
[170] Ibid. p. 20.
[171] Proust, M. (2002) *Remembrance of Things Past*, translated by Lydia Davis, Penguin Books (originally published in 1913).
[172] Harland, B. (2009) *A Fragment of Time in the Pure State. Mapping painting's temporality through the digital image*, VDM Verlag Dr Muller.
[173] Ibid. p. 5.
[174] Ibid.

Part of Harland's practice involved manipulating images using the digital without knowing the cumulative result by implementing a computer command onto a digital photograph – for example an arrangement of objects on a table – "the exact outcome of which is often highly speculative although the exact nature of the command is understood".[175] (Fig. LR:4).

Fig. LR:4

Beth Harland, *Zone 15*, (2006), oil on canvas, 152 x 117 cm.
https://bethharland.wordpress.com

In her thesis, Harland gave an account of how this unknowing speculation and ease of image manipulation, although created via the digital where the image is reliant on the pixel's grid-like striated space, is more associated with smooth space. Or, in other words, a space where "the movement between is all or, in Deleuze and Guattari's words, 'the interval is substance'".[176]

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[175] Harland (2009), *A Fragment of Time*, p. 23.
[176] Ibid.

Harland explained:

> "I sense the space of the digital plane to be without centre or prescribed
> direction, an extremely fluid space, open to slippage and multiple linkages,
> 'filled by events… far more that by formed and perceived things'. In so many
> respects, this suggests itself as a smooth space."[177]

As I have previously indicated, my practice does not rely upon using the digital as a
form of image creation, nor as a tool to work through ideas. However, along with Sarah
Key, Harland's alliance of the digital with Deleuze and Guattari's 'smooth' space was
pivotal in my development, and articulation, of my use of the painted grid to
counterintuitively disrupt and connect; both in a temporal and in a formal sense;
qualities that I, in turn, have allied with an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in
painting alongside a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering.

- Maria Chevska (British, 1948 -)

An aim of Maria Chevska's practice, she has explained, is to move painting away from
its hermetic nature, "[…] in that painting can seem very removed from the world, […] it
happens in the studio".[178] From early on in her practice, Chevska came to the
realisation that everything does not have to be in the same frame, wanting her
paintings to be porous to the world outside. In other words, she seems to be as
interested in the external space of a painting, as she is the internal space. Bearing this
in mind, words and phrases are a regular occurrence in her paintings, thus moving
them away from the world of painting and towards the world of speech and language
(Fig. LR:5).

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[177] Ibid. (Quoting from *A Thousand Plateaus*).
[178] Maria Chevska - *Art360 Foundation, Interview with David Bickerstaff*, Dec 2016 – YouTube,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JH22NPzn2p8 [accessed 12th March 2022]
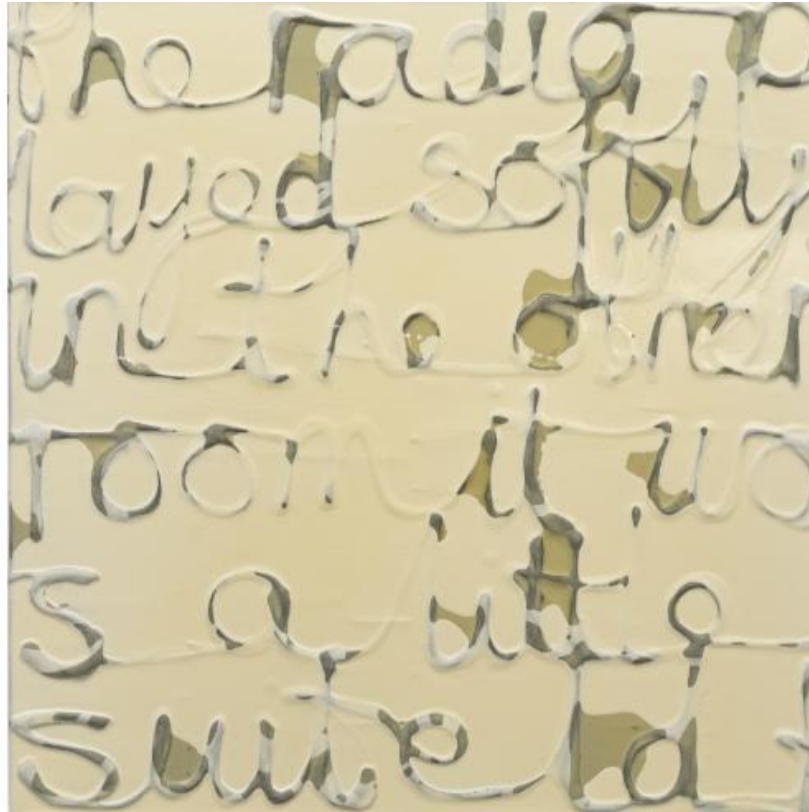
Fig. LR:5

Maria Chevska, *Why Don't You* (2001), oil on canvas 72 x 72 cm.
Courtesy of the artist.

Chevska's collaborative works with the French theorist and writer Héléne Cixous merges the lines between text, speech and paintings.[179] For instance, Cixous wrote a short book musing on Franz Kafka's (supposed) last words: *Lemonade Everything was so Infinite* – a phrase Chevska has used for series of paintings titled *Visibility*.[180] Cixous relates how this phase is, to her, "[...] full of being, both so heavy and so light that they are more precious to me than an entire book: in order to work on the mystery of these phrases, I have been led to help myself with painting".[181]

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[179] For example: Cixous, H. & Godfrey, T. (2005) *Vera's Room: The Art of Maria Chevska*, Black Dog Publishing
[180] Exhibited at: Anderson O'Day Gallery, London, 1990.
[181] Helene Cixous, *Lemonade Everything Was So Infinite*. Passage re-printed in: Sellers, S. (ed) (1994), *The Helen Cixous Reader,* Routledge, pp. 114-117.
Cixous writes: "I have allowed myself to adventure toward the canvas partly because I had written this text, 'Lemonade Everything Was So Infinite'. Because, in order to work on what is, for me, the very treasure of writing – in other words, ultimate phrases that are full of being, *both so heavy and so light* that they are more precious to me than an entire book: in order to work on the mystery of these phrases, I have been led to help myself with painting". Cixous, H. (1991) *Coming to Writing and Other Essays*, edited by Deborah Jensen, Harvard University Press, p. 115. (My emphasis).

The idea of a phrase being both so heavy and so light, and relating it to painting, directly connected me to the German painter Jutta Koether's description of Poussin's painting style as being both rigorously structural and having, "another kind of material – emotional inserts – that you can't account for".[182]

Early on in this project I made a series of thirty-six acrylic *Title* paintings on A4 paper using a variation of the words contained in the title of Poussin's painting: *Landscape with a Man killed by a Snake* (presented in a ring-binder during the exhibition *Memento-Mori in Painting*).[183] I turned five of the acrylic paintings into larger oil paintings of different dimensions, later exhibiting them in an irregularly positioned and spaced-out group.[184]

At the time I made and exhibited these series of paintings I had yet to articulate the idea of a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering. However, I now see a direct correlation between Chevska's use of phrases which move her paintings into the world of speech, and these paintings with this project's emergence, and development of, a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering (Fig. LR:6).

Fig. LR:6

Title Paintings, No's. 5, 8, 25, 27 and 30 (2022), oils on canvas. Various dimensions.
Installation view. Interim Exhibition, Sion Hill, Bath: 26th August – 6th September 2022.

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[182] Buchloh, B. (2016), "A Conversation with Jutta Koether", *October*, 157, Summer 2016, p. 29.
[183] Illustrated in the Appendix, pages 266 – 272.
[184] Interim Exhibition, Sion Hill, Bath: 26th August – 6th September 2022 (see Appendix, pages 263 – 265).

In both Chevska's phrase paintings and my *Title* paintings, there is a tension within the space between the dialogue (or words) and the paintings themselves. In addition, there is a kind of a repetitive, even obsessive, nature to my series of paintings, related, I suggest, to the way Emma Alpern describes how conversations and phrases for stutterers can be infused with significance.[185]

These painting could be read as literal visual representations of a clinical stutter in their painterly depiction of disrupted and disjointed words and phrases.[186] But it is the counterintuitive connecting / disrupting nature of a critical and clinical stutter, when theoretically manifested as a mode of painting, that this project has engaged with and developed.

Chevska's use and description of the relationship between the internal space of paintings and the external space of paintings, informed both my use of the painted grid as a formal and theoretical device – and the curatorial decisions made while assembling the exhibition *Memento-Mori in Painting*.

In a conversation in 2016 with the art historian Brandon Taylor, Chevska comments:

> "[I have] invested in the physicality of the paint-drawn mark, and developed the internal spaces of paintings, yet I am interested too in their potential to be installed in different spatial contexts and consider the place of viewing by allowing, at least, for rearrangement and permutation in the way they are seen."[187]

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[185] Emma Alpern in: Campbell, P., Constantino, C. & Simpson, S (eds) (2019) *Stammering Pride and Prejudice. Difference not Defect*, J&R Press Ltd., p. 21. (See Chapter One, page 98).
[186] For instance, as explored in the exhibition, *Wouldn't You Rather Talk Like Us?* (City Lit Gallery, London, 29th November 2024 – 6th January 2025). The exhibition statement asserted it to be "[...] the first of its kind in the world". Its two main contributors, Paul Aston and Conor Foran, presented works looking at ways clinical stuttering could be positively represented, exploring the experience of stuttering using a variety of mediums. For example, Aston offered a series of portraits of people actively stuttering; and Foran presented posters showing phrases and words in different typefaces, sizes and manners, evocative of disruptive speech patterns.
[187] Taylor, B. (2017) "'Something is said...": A Conversation with Maria Chevska', *Journal of Contemporary Painting*, Volume 3, Nos. 1+2. pp. 83-99

With this comment, and Chevska's group of paintings that make up *Under One Small Star* (Fig. LR:7), in mind, I had previously exhibited Paintings No's 4 and 14 as a diptych, originally conceiving them as a pair (Fig. LR:8). However, in *Memento-Mori in Painting* they were displayed apart from one another – No. 14 (the doily) being hung in the area outside the gallery, albeit in view of No. 4.

Fig. LR:7

Maria Chevska, *Under One Small Star* (2023), oils on canvas. Various dimensions.
Courtesy of the artist.

Fig. LR:8

Installation view. *The Grid as Device*, Sion Hill, 12th – 25th September 2023.

In a similar manner to Chevska, the different ways this pair of paintings have been displayed during this project bring into question ways paintings can "intermingle with events and phenomena beyond the studio".[188] I reflect upon this question in Chapter Three when considering my use of Poussin's paintings and Jutta Koether's practice to illustrate what role a painting's 'transitivity' might have in expressing an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting. Equally informative has been the philosophical angle Chevska places on painting as a medium. In the same 2016 conversation, she tells Taylor:

> "I've heard painting called an old medium – a massively feeble riposte, surely, yet it retains integrity as a thoughtful or philosophical form of resistance to many things, the potential to not trivialize global politics, for example, or make false claims. I also rate the potential for audiences to read paintings affectively without feeling preached at."[189]

[188] Ibid.
[189] Ibid.

- Jutta Koether (German, 1958 -)

In April 2013 Ewa Lajer-Burcharth and Isabelle Graw organised a conference at Harvard University inviting painters who, at that time, were self-consciously re-engaged with the problem of the medium of painting and dealing with painting's attempt "to reach outside of itself".[190] By doing so, they wished to consider, "what kind of subjects can painting be seen to articulate".[191]

During the conference Jutta Koether conducted a performance involving movement, speech, music and a slide-show. The performance was similar to the one she had done in New York the year before, performed alongside a series of paintings titled *The Four Seasons* based on a series of 17th Century similarly titled paintings by Nicolas Poussin, hanging in the Louvre, Paris.[192] (Fig. LR:9).

Fig. LR:9

Jutta Koether, *Fifth Season Act*, (2012), Bortolami Gallery, NYC, Artists Space.
Image scanned from: Koether, J. (2013) *Seasons and Sacraments*,
Dundee Contemporary Arts, p. 35.

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[190] Graw, I. & Lajer-Burcharth, E. (eds), (2016) *Painting Beyond Itself. The Medium in the Post-medium Condition*, Sternberg Press, p. 9.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Originally made for the Whitney Biennial in 2012.

Two years later Koether reflected on the Harvard conference and on her performance with a succession of related, yet disjointed, thoughts and insights (echoing, perhaps, the performance itself):

> "One of the 'moves' in speaking on the topic of painting as subject was to suggest a direct encounter with the fragmented experience of the audience, untimely, but precisely so. [...] – not done with the twitches and screams of the body but with the technical tricks of various mediums used these days to speak about painting. As well as in such glitches and in texts and sounds accompanied by an erratic, malfunctioning slide-show at an irregular pace. [...] To learn how to mess with time. And how to relate to the world on one's own time".[193]

There is, I suggest, a connection between Koether's performance, whereby she endeavours to expand the behaviour of paintings within and beyond the frame, with the glitch-like, erratic, nature of a critical and clinical stutter. Using Koether's own words: a critical, clinical and visual stutter, I propose, necessitates one "[...] *to relate to the world on one's own time*".[194] A disjointed, stuttering / glitch-like, relationship with time is one that can be allied with this project's expanded notion of *memento-mori* which submits to a non-sequential, 'haptic', notion of time reflective of the temporal indetermination of a human's life-span.[195]

In Chapter Three I relate the role of Koether's paintings have in, what the art historian David Joselit calls, painting's transitivity; or how paintings expand beyond the frame, the studio and gallery environment – and into other social networks. Demonstrated in my exhibition by the curatorial decisions made in the hanging of Painting No's. 4 & 14,[196] I have used the term to consider how far the motion of *memento-mori* in painting can be expanded or stretched.

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[193] Jutta Koether, *Beyond, Beyond! Two Years after the Conference*, in: Graw, I. & Lajer-Burcharth, E. (eds), (2016) *Painting Beyond Itself. The Medium in the Post-medium Condition*, Sternberg Press, p. 56 & 57.
[194] Ibid. (My emphasis).
[195] Explored in Chapter Six.
[196] See page 39.

Furthermore, the description by Koether of Poussin's paintings having a contradictory structure and non-structure was key for my practice's engagement with how a similar contradictory quality within my own paintings, using the painted grid as a device, could be developed to express a non-sequential disjointed, stuttering notion of time.[197]

Koether clarified her decision to engage with the works of Nicolas Poussin in a conversation from 2016 with the German art historian Benjamin Buchloh, explaining how she feels the distant past (in art historical terms) to be a freer place and that "past works, like those of Poussin, enable me to open a window, a stage, for that moment and invite me on a non-immersive cruise into the past".[198] In a comparable manner, my practice has learnt from Poussin's interpretations of *memento-mori* in painting, developing them to form my own (idiosyncratic) interpretations of how *memento-mori* in painting could be expressed. Koether states:

> "I got interested in traversing a realm that was so layered in the scholarship, and I gave myself the task of ploughing through that scholarship because I wanted to *learn* something. I wanted the learning process to be very intense."[199]

The multi-layered manner by which Koether painted her version of Poussin's *Four Seasons* enriches the viewing experience by giving the impression of more than one image on each painting (Fig. LR:10).[200] There is a performative nature in applying images on top of each other which, she comments "only painting can do".[201] There is also, I suggest, a haptic, or Deleuzian cinematic 'time-image' quality to these paintings in that they reveal (and release) a kind of disjointed time by simultaneously offering the viewer an image of multiplicities.

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[197] See Chapter Three, page 132.
[198] Buchloh, B. (2016) "A Conversation with Jutta Koether", *October 157*, Summer 2016, pp. 15-33.
[199] Ibid. (Her emphasis).
[200] I was fortunate to view these paintings when the exhibition *Jutta Koether: Seasons and Sacraments* was shown in the U.K. at the Arnolfini in Bristol (4th May – 7th July, 2013), having previously been shown at Dundee Contemporary Arts (9th February – 21st April, 2013).
[201] *Jutta Koether – Seasons and Sacraments* (10th April 2013) Dundee Contemporary Arts, You Tube Video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QE2D0DUlEnA [accessed 10th February 2022]

Fig. LR:10

Jutta Koether, *The Seasons IV*, (2012), (Autumn, after Poussin).
Acrylic and oil on canvas 170 x 220 cm.
Image scanned from: Koether, J. (2013) *Seasons and Sacraments*, Dundee Contemporary Arts,
p. 35.

In Chapter Six I explore how my use of the painted grid similarly makes use of painting's facingness and its ability to denote multiple times on one painted surface. "The fact that we still have paintings," Koether comments, "is really in the way that it offers a performance that leads to a surface that then oozes or resonates or engages you in a certain, in not one way, but in multiple ways [sic]."[202]

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[202] *Jutta Koether – Seasons and Sacraments* (10th April 2013) Dundee Contemporary Arts, You Tube Video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QE2D0DUlEnA [accessed 10th February 2022], (3 mins 20 secs).

Other Artists and Resources

Alongside a miscellaneous range of texts,[203] many of the insights gained and developments made throughout this project have been instigated by the regular viewing of key historical paintings; viewing various exhibitions (in the UK, Ireland and France); and taking part in workshops, conversations and meetings with fellow artists of various disciplines organised by Bath Spa University and self-generated.[204] As will be made apparent, paintings on permanent display in The National Gallery, London – notably Nicolas Poussin's *Landscape with a man Killed by a Snake* [205] and Hans Holbein's *The Ambassadors* – have been critical to this project. So too have been regular trips to Tate Britain and Tate Modern, London, to view their permanent collections, in addition to relevant temporary exhibitions – such as: *Lubaina Himid*,[206] *Philip Guston*,[207] and *Capturing the Moment*.[208]

Other insightful exhibitions have been: *The Artists Studio* at the Whitechapel Gallery,[209] and *Mixing it Up; Painting Today* at the Haywood Gallery.[210] The former investigating the role the studio has had on artists' practices; whilst the latter introduced me to a wide range of international contemporary painters who engage with paint and painting as a platform for "unexpected conversations and speculative thinking"[211] – the works of Gareth Cadwallader [212] and Issy Wood [213] being of particular relevance.[214]

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[203] Referenced in the Bibliography.

[204] I have been a resident at *EMERGE* studios in Bath since October 2022. The informal conversations and chats, alongside various workshops and crit sessions (some of which I have led), have been, in hindsight, critical for the progression of this project. Without access to the space EMERGE has offered, this project would, no doubt, be very different.

[205] In addition, the exhibition *Poussin and the Dance* at the National Gallery (9th October 2021 – 2nd January 2022) providentially took place at a time when my practice was, for the most part, involved in using Poussin's paintings as its main source of imagery.

[206] Tate Modern, London, 25th November 2021 – 3rd July 2023.

[207] Tate Modern, London, 5th October 2023 – 25th February 2024. (See Chapter Five, page 155).

[208] Tate Modern, London, 15th June 2023 – 28th April 2024.

[209] Whitechapel Gallery, London, 24th February – 5th June 2022.

[210] Haywood Gallery, London, 9th September – 12th December 2021.

[211] Rugoff (2021) *Mixing it Up*, p. 6.

[212] English, 1979 -

[213] English, 1993 -

[214] In many of Wood's paintings (often oil on velvet) she appropriates photographs found in auction-house catalogues, commenting that the auction-house is a place where "centuries of heritage and ulterior motives are boiled down into a transaction" (Wood, in: Rugoff (2021) *Mixing it Up*, p. 114). It is worth noting that many of the items included in my library of photographs would have gone to auction.

The methodology used by English painter Colin Crumplin,[215] has, to some extent, informed elements of the methodological processes I have employed during this project. Specifically, the way Crumplin makes abstract acrylic 'starts', with which he then endeavours to see-in them – relying on pareidolia [216] – imagery found in photographs sourced from newspapers and magazines, or taken by himself.[217] Crumplin then scales-up and paints the 'seen' figurative images in oil paint, on either linen or canvas.[218] (Fig: LR:11).
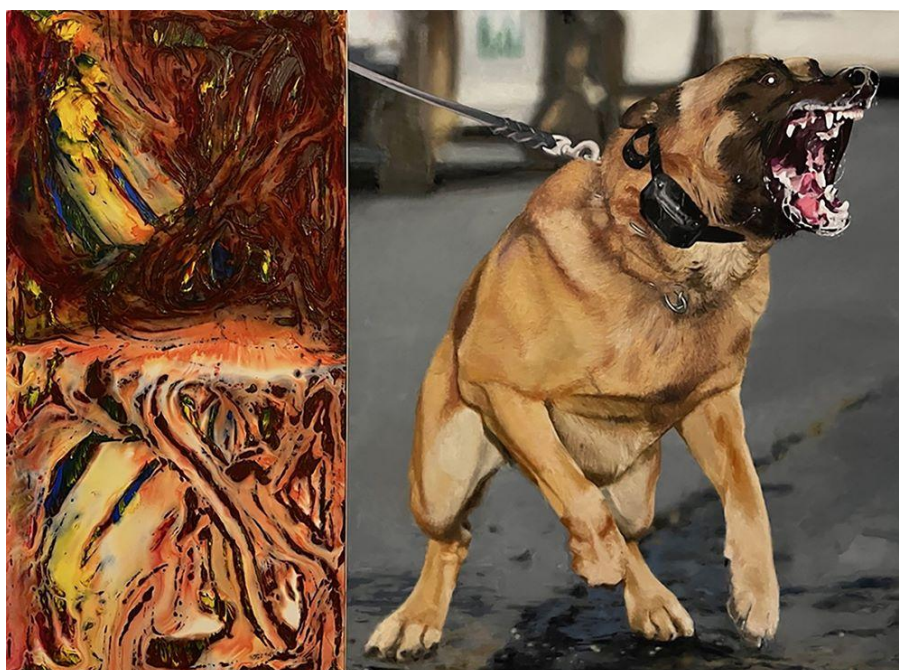
Fig. LR:11

Colin Crumplin, *Dog* (2023), acrylic and oil paint on canvas, 225 x 306 cm.
Courtesy of the artist.

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[215] Born 1946.

[216] "Pareidolia: the tendency to perceive a specific, often meaningful image in a random or ambiguous visual pattern." https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pareidolia, [accessed 14th July 2024].

[217] On a visit to his studio on 23rd May 2024 he showed me an extensive collection of photographs sourced from a wide variety of sources.

[218] He explains: "I suppose my idea is that the works are always about the comparison as well as the character of each part - in recent paintings a swiftly made start using acrylic paint on cotton duck (the means of 'high', Greenbergian modernism in painting) is responded to with an attached panel made in oil paint on linen (the conventional figurative painting medium). Running through everything are thoughts about copying, picturing and for 30 some years a concern with pareidolia as a fundamental human characteristic." Email correspondence between Crumplin and myself, 20th September 2022.

The relationship between the two associated paintings – one abstract, the other figurative and displayed together as a diptych – raises questions and ideas relatable to those explored in my practice; specifically in the construction of paintings where I have made use of primary photographic sources (Tracings) to expand and stretch the notion of *memento-mori* from one painting to an associated-other (Maps), or from one network to another (For example Painting No's 4 & 14, 7 & 8 and 9 & 10).[219]

In 2023 I used *Instagram* to contact the British painter, Richard Baker. Baker paints from photographs of interiors and furniture sourced from the internet, and who's painting practice has some parallels to my deceased estate group of works. "Although I paint from photographs," he explains, "my work is far from photorealistic. The painted surface and gesture is evident in the work, but I never deviate too far from the photographs either. To do so would indicate too much self-assertion and creativity. My practice is one of discovery not invention".[220]

There is a rectilinear grid-infused form to the structure of Baker's paintings. I addition, the furniture he chooses to paint often has a modular sculptural form. For example, kitchen cabinets and dining room furniture possessive of straight lines characteristic of modernist post-war architecture and design.

His paintings are not abstract in the Greenbergian sense but retain a quality of abstraction in their "elegantly structured planes of colour and tone".[221] The writer and curator Derek Horton writes: "[Baker's] work is the ghost in the machine of modernism, a contra-Greenbergian pollution of abstract compositional purity with the narrative content of mundane objects".[222] (Fig. LR:12).

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[219] See Appendix, page 289, for a (shortened) email exchange between Colin and myself from January 2023. See also Fig. LR:1, page 63.
[220] Baker, R. (2018) *Modest Gestures in a Minor Mode: Staging Meaning in a Painting Practice*, unpublished essay, MA Creative Practice, Leeds Arts University, p. 9-10.
[221] Horton, D, (2018), *Things: narrative and structure in the paintings of Richard Baker*, unpublished.
[222] Ibid.

Fig. LR:12

Richard Baker, *French Blue Chair,* (2021).
Oil on calico, 64 x 80 cm.
Courtesy of the artist.

The visible echoes of modernism manifest themselves as a grid-like structure, "overlaid with flat planes each delineated with a flat edge",[223] yet also contain a distinct narrative from the objects represented. A narrative created from the presence of an absence and in "the ordinary, banal, aspects of [a] couple's middle-class life […] reflected both in the things they surround themselves with and by the things that are the focus of their unfulfilled material desires".[224]

The facility of Baker's paintings to straddle modernist and "post-modernist notions of formalism" and meaning using the grid as a formal structure, whilst also "breaking the silence of the grid's 'hostility to narrative'",[225] leads Horton to state that, when viewing Baker's paintings, philosophically they, "[…] subvert the values of modernist painting and its impulse to minimalist order by engaging in a bewildering simultaneous confirmation and denial".[226]

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[223] Ibid.
[224] Horton, *Things*, (2018).
[225] Horton, *Things*, (2018), quoting from Krauss, *Grids*, (1979).
[226] Ibid.

Baker's grid is formally infused within the images of his paintings, whilst my use of the grid is more often formally applied as a separate painted linear devise. Notwithstanding, I suggest both Baker's and my use of the grid might be said to operate between the "bewildering simultaneous confirmation and denial" of structure and narrative.[227] Whereas Baker's relation with the grid is incorporated within his painting's formal structure, the out-standing linear delineation of the grid in many of my paintings magnify a painting's contrary and dichotomous properties – with the ultimate aim of opening them up to the unexpected and to the possibility of something different, or other, occurring (for example Painting No's. 7 and 10).[228]

In January 2024 I visited Musee d'Art Contemporain de Bordeaux and was introduced, via a posthumous exhibition of his life-work, to the French artist Jean Sabrier.[229 & 230] During his lifetime Sabrier appropriated and dissected various historical works of art to challenge the way we look at things. For example, he used the paintings of Paolo Uccello[231] as a methodological strategy; dissecting and analysing the early Renaissance artist and mathematician's work through drawings, watercolours, sculptures and sketches with the intent to explore "beyond the realm of painting, into a conceptual vein that spans art and science".[232] (Fig. LR:13).

Describing Sabrier's practice in 2011, the French writer and poet Bernard Noel noted, "[…] when it is well directed, perception can go further than sight, and there, in an extremity of rapture, blossom into a *feeling that sees*."[233]

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[227] Ibid.

[228] Asking Baker for his thoughts on how far a notion in painting, such as *memento-mori*, could be stretched and/or extended, he interestingly replied: "Infinitely I would imagine. In the same way that traditional notions of what painting is now includes what is termed the expanded field of painting and which is seemingly limitless, any notions that Memento-Mori cannot be stretched, extended, or reinvented similarly would seem to be mute. The future habitually disproves notions of limits and/or boundaries as people will inevitably always strive to stretch them or recategorize them." Baker, R. (2023) *Thoughts and Responses to Tom Mence*, unpublished, (Appendix, page 300).

[229] French (1951 – 2020).

[230] *Ce qu'on ne voit pas/What can't be seen*, 7th April 2023 – 28th April 2024.

[231] Born Paolo di Dono, Italian (1397-1475).

[232] Cavender, A. & Mallet, S. (2024) *Jean Sabrier, Ce qu'en ne voit pas/What can't be seen*, Capc Musee d'Art Contemporain de Bordeaux (exhibition booklet), p. 4.

[233] Noel, B. (2011) *Jean Sabrier*, Le Bleu du Ciel. (My emphasis).

Fig. LR:13

Vue de l'exposition "*Jean Sabrier, Ce qu'on ne voit pas*". Capc Musée d'art contemporain (07.04.2023- 28.04.2024). Photo © Arthur Péquin.
https://www.capc-bordeaux.fr/en/agenda/expositions/jean-sabrier-ce-quon-ne-voit-pas

In an equivalent manner to Sabrier's use of 15th Century paintings to investigate an interest in science, this project has used 17th Century paintings by Nicolas Poussin to investigate the notion of *memento-mori* – and alternative ways in which it could be expressed.

Other painter's practices used to help illustrate and place the project's ideas, and my own practice, into contemporary context, have been: Wilhelm Sasnal (Polish 1972-),[234] Thomas Eggerer (German 1963-),[235] Gerhard Richter (German 1932-),[236] Ritsart Gobyn (Belgian 1985-)[237] and Johannes Phokela (South African 1966-).[238]

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[234] Chapter Two
[235] Chapter Three
[236] Chapter Three
[237] Chapter Four
[238] Chapter Five

<u>**VISUAL STUTTERING**</u>

<u>Introduction</u>

The aim of this chapter is to rationalise a leap-of-faith, and an initially unarticulated intuitive sense, that an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting can be explored within a non-hierarchical visual and theoretical space allied to, and because of, a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering.[239] Emerging out of my painting practice and developed during the process of this research project, this chapter was the last I began writing, necessitating the full time-span of the project for the ideas within it to be rationally articulated.[240]

I will explore how a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering, developed out of a critical (scholarly) and clinical (verbal) stutter, creates a space where a notion of *memento-mori* in painting can be represented and thought about differently, other than by portraying objects symbolising a sequential notion of time. Moreover, I will suggest how it could be used to investigate a space where *memento-mori* can exist during the act of painting, whilst concomitantly being associated with the push/pull holed-through space created out of coloured paint applied to a flat surface.

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[239] As a stutterer, I see no need to apologise for introducing the metaphor of a clinical stutter in relation to Deleuze's critical stutter. Whereas Kelly Hardcastle-Jones felt the need to apologise, since, she explains, "Stuttering is a concept that gets used widely: medically, sociologically, anthropologically, linguistically, literarily, musically and philosophically. A stutter can be a developmental disturbance; a hindrance to communication; a metaphor or trope; an oddity or joke; a sign of social anxiety or traumatic childhood; paired with the repetition of psychological tics." Hardcastle-Jones (2014) *Deleuze's "Stuttering"*, p. 19.
See, for example, David Mitchell's novel *Black Swan Green*; Tom Hooper and David Seidler's film, *The King's Speech;* and Talking Heads' song, *Psycho Killer*.
[240] Stuttering has been clinically defined as "a speech disorder that involves frequent and significant problems with the normal fluency and flow of speech".
https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/stuttering/symptoms-causes/syc-20353572 [accessed 28th May 2024].

In his essay, *Figures of speech: can conversation be a democratic mode of drawing?*, Stephen Felmingham proposed an erosion between the distinction between speaking and drawing.[241] By eroding this distinction, he explained, "[…] the aim is to widen our current definitions of drawing and creativity in the social realm where speaking, conversing, gesturing and writing are part of our quotidian life and are vitally alive in human discourse […]".[242]

Felmingham equates the pattern-making properties of speech with the pattern-making properties of drawing. In addition, aided by ideas introduced in the Literature Review and set out by Gilles Deleuze,[243] Dorothea Olkowski,[244] Kelly Hardcastle-Jones,[245] and Esther Peeren,[246] I will advocate the disruptive nature of a critical and a clinical stutter can be equated to a disruptive mode of painting which opens "[…] the possibility of something different occurring".[247]

Giles Deleuze proposed that language itself can stutter, beginning his essay *He Stuttered* by stating: "It is no longer the individual who stutters in his speech, it is the writer who *stutters in the language system (langue):* he causes language as such to stutter".[248] According to Deleuze, our language system is a stuttering system, and suggested that philosophy, or a way of thinking, also stutters. Kelly Hardcastle-Jones describes Deleuze's stuttering critical thinking as being characterised by "fits and starts, blocks and flows, heterogeneity, variables and relatively stable constants [and] disequilibrium […]".[249]

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[241] Felmingham, S. (2019) "Figures of speech: can conversation be a democratic mode of drawing?", *Drawing: Research, Theory, Practice,* 4:1, pp. 71-80.
[242] Ibid. p. 72.
[243] Giles Deleuze, *He Stuttered*, in: Boundas, C.V. & Olkowski, D., (eds) (2018) *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy*, Routledge, pp. 23-29.
[244] Olkowski, D. (1999) *Giles Deleuze and the Ruin of Representation*, University of California Press.
[245] Hardcastle-Jones, K. (2014), *Deleuze's "Stuttering". Decomposition, Deterritoralization, and Pushing Language To Its Limit,*
https://kellyhjones.files.wordpress.com/2014/03/deleuzes-stuttering.pdf, [accessed 15th June 2023]
[246] Peeren, E. (2017) *Stutter*, in: Bunz, M., Kaiser, B.M., & Thiele, K. (eds), *Systems of the Planetary Condition: A Critical Vocabulary*, Meson Press, pp. 179-184.
[247] O'Sullivan S. (2009) "From Stuttering and Stammering to the Diagram: Deleuze, Bacon and Contemporary Art Practice", *Deleuze Studies*, 3 (2), p. 249.
[248] Deleuze, in Boundas & Olkowski (eds), (2018), *Gilles Deleuze*, p. 23. (His emphasis).
[249] Hardcastle-Jones (2014) *Deleuze's "Stuttering",* p. 14.

Examining how the linguistic critical (or scholarly) stutter could be metaphorically transformed into a visual stutter, the American philosopher and author Dorothea Olkowski proposed that a stuttering thought, caused by a buffering language system, can be pictorially revealed as a space without a traditional point of view.[250] She suggested that Deleuze's stuttering (critical) thinking can be visually described as a non-hierarchical space, asserting that:

> "Stuttering is what happens when the language system is in motion, in 'perpetual disequilibrium', so that the entire system stutters, murmurs, mumbles and breaks up in a heterogeneity of time and space."[251]

This assertion led Olkowski to imply that a linguistic critical stuttering system visually disrupts spatiotemporality, creating a "[...] distortion of the hierarchically composed representational image",[252] for which she gives examples of work by William Blake,[253] Francisco Goya[254] (Fig. 2:2) and Giotto di Bondone (Fig. 1:1).[255]

Similarly, I will use examples of paintings from my exhibition to describe how a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering, born out of a critical *and* a clinical stutter has informed their construction. I will examine what relevance and influence this mode of painting, in its role as a visual spaciotemporal disrupter, has had on this project's investigation onto alternative ways *memento-mori* in painting could be expressed. In addition, I will reflect on how curatorial decisions made during the installation of the exhibition provided further insights into the role stuttering has on the project.

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[250] Hardcastle-Jones defines stuttering as "[...] a movement that affects becomings in language (by decomposing it, deterritorialising it, and pushing it to its non-linguistic limits) which reveal the system in disequilibrium that subtends the Image of Language(/Thought)." Ibid, p. 24.

[251] Olkowski (1999) *Gilles Deleuze*, p. 14.

[252] Ibid. p. 17.

[253] Olkowski writes: "In William Blake's primal scenes of awe, terror, or creation, an emblematic figure blazes in the centre of a depthless surface. These paintings and drawings manifest no respect for norms or proportion or sense, the key elements of perspectival visual representation." Ibid.

[254] Describing Francisco Goya's '*Executions of May 3, 1808*' (1814, oil on canvas, 268 x 347 cm. Museo del Prado, Madrid), Olkowski writes: "[...] a grey wall of soldiers that forms a solid, nearly undifferentiated plane, each soldier a repetition of the next, while the surface of the canvas becomes a site of murder and carnage." Olkowski (1999) *Gilles Deleuze*, p. 17.

[255] Blake (English, 1757-1827), Goya (Spanish, 1746-1828), di Bondone (Italian, c. 1267-1337).

Even though Deleuze makes it clear that it is not speech that stutters, but the language system,[256] I have employed my own lived experience and tacit knowledge of a clinical stutter to reason that both the critical *and* clinical stutter can be used to facilitate the beneficial use of stuttering (in its various forms) during the act of painting and in the construction of an image. In other words, instead of transferring just a critical stutter directly towards a visual stutter, I have engaged with both a critical *and* a clinical stutter to develop a visual-stuttering into a mode of painting – and a way to think about painting.

Emboldened by Hardcastle-Jones's proposition that "the clinical and the critical [could] inform one another for the sake of expanding a concept's capacities",[257] I propose the disruptive nature of a critical *and* a clinical stutter can aid the understanding of an expanded and disrupted notion of *memento-mori* in painting.[258]

When my speech severely blocks, the structure of language seems to fail, and its pattern-making properties are disrupted. A disruptive timeless space without a point of view comes into existence, conceptually akin to this project's notion of *memento-mori*. This space, I suggest, also creates a condition for possibilities and potential – allowing a multiplicity of new connections being made.

If thought, according to Jacque Derrida, begins by interruption, then how can language hope to keep up with the force of thought in order to express it?[259] Having asked this

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[256] Deleuze wrote: "[...] if the [language] system appears to be in perpetual disequilibrium – [...] language itself will begin to vibrate and stutter, and will not be confused with speech." However, he also makes the point that language merges with speech in the case of poetry, which realises "all the power of bifurcation and variation, of heterogenies and modulation that characterise language." Deleuze, in Boundas & Olkowski (eds), (2018), *Gilles Deleuze*, p. 23.
[257] Hardcastle-Jones (2014) *Deleuze's "Stuttering"*, p. 21.
[258] "It is by lending his body to the world" wrote Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "that the artist changes the world into paintings". Merleau-Ponty, M. (1964), *The Primary of Perception*, edited by James Edie, Northwestern University Press, p. 162.
[259] The idea that 'thought begins by interruption' is introduced by Derrida by using a particular domestic event, as summarized by Hardcastle-Jones: On stepping naked out of the shower Derrida is stopped in his tracks by the gaze of his cat causing him to immediately concurrently think 'I should cover myself', and 'Why do I feel the need to cover myself?'. Nakedness is considered 'shameful' to humans, yet the cat can't know that. He is forced into encounter something he is unable to grasp – the meaning of the gaze of the cat. Having been interrupted, he is forced to think the encounter even though it is something he doesn't understand: "The animal looks at us, and we

question, Kelly Hardcastle-Jones goes on to ask: "What if we discover about stuttering *and its capacity to produce newness is true*, then Deleuze's understanding of stuttering (in the critical sense) might reveal a false problem in the old understanding of stuttering (in the clinical sense)?"[260]

Reflecting on these questions, I would like to consider how stammerers, when forming speech, learn to think differently from more fluent speakers.[261] This is not a particularly insightful, nor controversial, observation. Amongst other fellow stammerers this seems to be a commonly shared opinion.[262] Nevertheless, in terms of this project, it is an important observation.

While speaking, a stammerer's perpetual speech disequilibrium demands constant internal searches for different words or phrases which may help relieve a speech block. In my own experience, for example, during a block between times of fluency, or "relatively stable constants",[263] a multiplicity of connections are concurrently being made and modified as words and phrases are being substituted for ones more easily orally expressed.

Deleuze relates stuttering to the rhizome and writes of critical-creative stuttering as a space of connections and searching. In a similar manner to the rhizome, he suggests that critical stuttering belongs to a place in-between or in the middle:

> "Creative stuttering is what makes language grow from the middle, like grass; it is what makes language a rhizome instead of a tree, what puts language in a state of perpetual disequilibrium. [...] There are many ways to grow from the middle and to stutter."[264]

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are naked before it. Thinking perhaps begins there." Derrida, J. (2008) *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Fordham University Press.

[260] Hardcastle-Jones (2014) *Deleuze's "Stuttering"*, p. 21. (My emphasis).

[261] I am aware of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis which states that the "grammatical and verbal structure of a person's language influences how they perceive the world. It emphasizes that language either determines or influences one's thoughts." https://www.simplypsychology.org/sapir-whorf-hypothesis [accessed 7th May 2024].

[262] An observation confirmed by my own tacit knowledge and from talking to other fellow stammers, and, for instance, explored in: Campbell, P., Constantino, C. & Simpson, S (eds) (2019) *Stammering Pride and Prejudice. Difference not Defect*, J&R Press Ltd.

[263] Hardcastle-Jones (2014) *Deleuze's "Stuttering"*, p. 14.

[264] Deleuze, in Boundas & Olkowski (eds), (2018), p. 27.

In addition, I speculatively propose that for the clinical stutterer, connections within the language-system are counter-intuitively closer to being made than for the more fluent speaker.[265] The benefits do not outweigh the frustrations, but clinical stuttering necessitates a kind of naturally formed rhizomic (or Deleuzoguattarian) way of thinking where map-like connections are constantly, often frenetically, being made.

In her essay *Why Stutter More?*, Emma Alpern touches on this idea while describing the possible advantages of a clinical stutter. She writes:

> "While the surface of [a] conversation may feel relatively level to most fluent speakers, to stutterers, familiar with anticipation, memories and physical struggles, it's infused with significance. [...] Stutterers, in some way, become experts at speaking."[266]

At this point it is, perhaps, worth noting that I only began painting in my late teens, when my stutter was at its most severe and when any form of verbal communication was particularly challenging. Before that time, I had shown no faculty for painting, nor had any interest in it. My sudden interest (even obsession) with painting – and making pictures – was as much a surprise to myself as it was to others. However, my abiding memory of coming to painting (or painting coming to me) was an immense sense of relief that alternative forms of expression and communication, other than verbal, were available – and seemingly more in tune to my position in a world that, I was then taught and led to believe, privileged fluency.

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[265] Hardcastle-Jones makes the point that 'speculation' is, in of itself, a Deleuzian trope. She writes: "[...] much of what you'll read... in this paper is written in a tone that might be called, 'untraditional', 'folksy', or 'abnormal for philosophy'. That is entirely on purpose. My contribution to Deleuze's effort to disrupt common sense's notions about how thought and language 'should' proceed is to forego the traditional academic tone of most papers and presentations." Hardcastle-Jones (2014) *Deleuze's "Stuttering"*, p. 21.
[266] Emma Alpern in: Campbell, P., Constantino, C. & Simpson, S (eds) (2019) *Stammering Pride and Prejudice. Difference not Defect*, J&R Press Ltd., p. 21.

Visual Stuttering

A critical (or scholarly) stuttering thinking has been used by the British artist Beth Harland to visually describe how the viewer experiences an "unstable relation with the image",[267] while Dorothea Olkowski describes it as being able to bring the background up onto the surface of the image creating a space without a point of view.

Olkowski offers Giotto's 14th Century *Arena Chapel* interior, and in particular, the scene of Hell (Fig. 1:1), as an example of how a Deleuzian stuttering thinking can, for example, be visually translated into bringing backgrounds up to the surface of images, where "form is destroyed", and where "relief is renounced".[268]

Fig: 1:1

Giotto di Bondon, *Interior of Scrovegni Chapel*, Padua, Italy (c. 1305), tempera wall fresco, (detail).

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[267] Harland (2009) *A Fragment of Time*, p. 43.
[268] Ibid.

Olkowski writes:

> "Giotto's [fresco] articulates a highly differentiated kind of pictorial space that sharpens the viewer's awareness of the picture surface. In the scene of hell [...] there is a total collapse of hierarchized space; shattered architecture, a completely flat surface, fading and disappearing colour and bodies."[269]

Giotto's fresco is given to us as an opposing comparison to paintings which obey the norm for single-point perspective laid out as the rules of representation by Alberti in his treatise: *On Painting*.[270] In synchronicity with this project, Olkowski turns to Poussin who considered that "[...] the highest aim of painted imagery is to represent noble and serious human actions, shown in a logical and orderly way – not as they actually happen, but as they would happen were nature perfect."[271]

Following Deleuze's stuttering prescription, however, "[...] we must think about the bottom of such images rising to the surface. [...] When [...] the grid is effaced, modelling is defeated, and form is destroyed."[272] Recognising Olkowski's hyperbolic language, I propose *Deceased Estate, No. 125, part ii* (Painting No. 9); and *Deceased Estate, No. 125, part i* (Painting No. 10), and the curatorial decisions (and insights) made during their installation for *Memento-Mori in Painting*, demonstrate this visual stuttering prescription born out of a critical and, importantly, a clinical stutter (Fig. 1:2).

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[269] Olkowski (1999) *Gilles Deleuze*, p. 17.
[270] "The image must appear within the boundaries of a rectangle or framed window that maintains the image at a distance from the viewer who views it as if through a window". Ibid. p. 16.
[271] Janson, H.W. (1971) *History of Art*, Harry N. Abrams, p. 471.
[272] Olkowski (1999) *Gilles Deleuze*, p. 17.

Fig. 1:2

Installation View. *Memento-Mori in Painting*: *An Image of Multiplicities.*

Part i (the painting of the chair) was sourced from my library of photographs of deceased estates, numbered 125.[273] I had previously assigned the photograph, being one of two hundred photographs of chairs, into various categories belonging to arbitrarily created groups.[274] Photograph no. 125 is included in *Category no. 49*,[275] which contains four photographs picturing both chairs and, in acknowledgment of conventional representations of *memento-mori* in paintings, various timepieces. In this instance, the bottom half of a 19th Century longcase (or grandfather) clock.[276]

During the process of painting No. 10, I used a digital projector to draw the photograph's outline onto a gesso primed linen surface. Relying on an A4 print-out and a hand-held backlit tablet for reference, I proceeded to apply oil paint of corresponding

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[273] See Appendix, page 290.

[274] Charlotte Fiell writes, "At the functional level, a chair makes physical and psychological connections with the individual sitting in it through its form and use of materials. At the same time, it may embody meanings and values which connect with the user at an intellectual, emotional, aesthetic, cultural and even spiritual level." Fiell, C. & P. (2022) *1000 Chairs,* Revised & Updated Edition, Taschen, p.6.

[275] See Appendix, page 281.

[276] The paintings included in my 2023 exhibition *The Grid as Device* were sourced from these four photographs belonging to Category 49. (See Appendix, pages 300 - 302).

colours using artists brushes to transfer a mimetic copy of the photograph onto the linen surface. The painting began as a transmission of a digital photograph into paint onto a linen surface, rather than a reproduction of the photograph nor a direct in-situ painting of a domestic interior.

The painting was completed in three stages. After each stage I contemplated leaving the painting as finished. In the first stage the chair was not yet rendered in paint, causing the chair's outline to be delineated by its absence, forcing the viewer to see things unseen (Fig. 1:3).

In the second stage the completed painted photograph is shown (Fig. 1:4). In the third and final stage a red rectangular grid-like device covers the painting from edge to edge (Fig. 1:5).
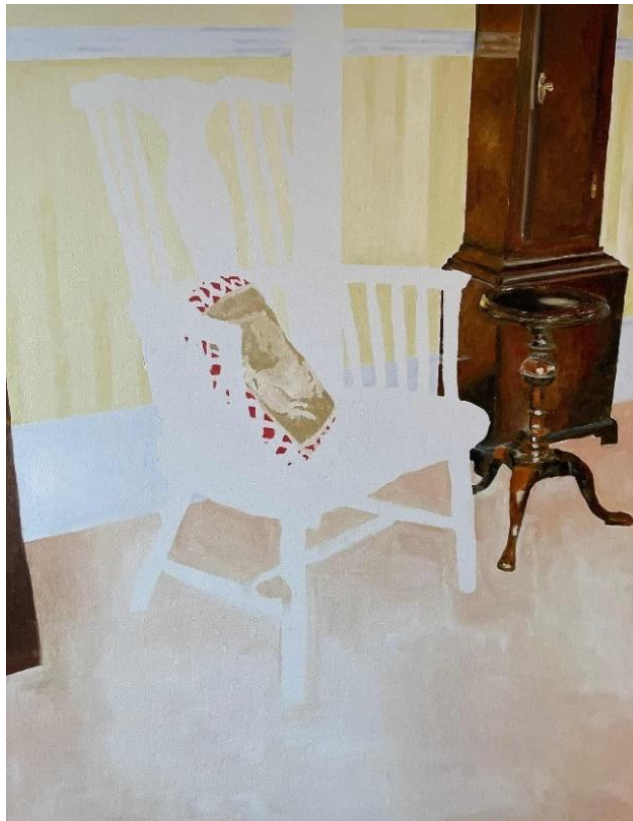
Fig. 1:3

Deceased Estate, No. 125 Part i, (Stage 1)

Fig. 1:4

Deceased Estate, No. 125 Part i, (Stage 2)

Fig.1:5

Deceased Estate, No. 125 Part i, (Stage 3)

From the image I took the motif of a formless unicorn out of the chair's cushion, re-configuring and placing it to the forefront (or surface) of *Part ii* (Figs. 1:6 & 1:7).

Fig. 1:6

Deceased Estate, No. 125 Part i, (detail)

Fig. 1:7

Deceased Estate, No. 125 Part ii, (detail)

The unicorn as a motif is not associated with *memento-mori*, but traditionally been used in painting to symbolise a "strangely ambiguous symbol of female chastity, [connected with the] religious and profane aspects [of the] Virgin Mary".[277] In this instance, however, the unicorn's connected, yet disjointed, association with the notion of *memento-mori* and its central placement in Painting No. 9, brings focused attention to how a painting does, or does not, point to a notion of *memento-mori*, despite its content.[278]

Not only does the formless rendering of the unicorn (appropriated from a 16th Century wood engraving) bring the image right up to the painting's surface (described by Olkowski), but the capricious decision to use the unicorn this way is, I propose, a manifestation of this project's understanding of a visual stutter. By which I mean, the unicorn's connected, yet disjointed, association with a source imbued with the notion of *memento-mori* is allied to a stutterer's thinking while in conversation. The image of the unicorn became, for me, "infused with significance"[279] born out of a painterly struggle and a stuttering way of thinking in a comparable manner – for the verbal stutterer – specific words and phrases can become infused with significance born out of anticipation, 'blocks', memories and physical struggle. Nevertheless, without this sense of a struggle or capricious significance, new connections would, I suggest, be harder to come by, nor, perhaps, even considered.

Furthermore, the decision to hang the paintings (No's 9 & 10) only eight inches apart from each other (Fig. 1:2), instead of hanging them further apart or together as a diptych, was reflective of the connected<>disjointed quality of a critical and clinical stutter. In turn, this hanging decision allowed consideration into how far a notion, such as *memento-mori* in painting, can be 'stretched' or 'transitivified' away from its original source, or network, before it disappears (a consideration fully explored in Chapter Three).

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[277] Hall, J. (1984) *Hall's Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*, John Murry, p. 316.

[278] See also the associated painting: *Deceased Estate, No. 125, Part iii*, (2023), Fig. Il:21, page 259.

[279] Emma Alpern in: Campbell, P., Constantino, C. & Simpson, S (eds) (2019) *Stammering Pride and Prejudice*, p. 21. (See page 98).

The mode of painting, and process of constructing, *Deceased Estate, No. 138, parts i, ii & iii* (Painting No's 2, 3 & 1) follows a similar stuttering-thinking and visual-stuttering prescription (Fig. 1:8). For instance, the carpet and curtain, appropriated from *part i*, have been brought right up the surface of *parts ii & iii,* infusing them with significance – and (in Olkowski's terms) distorting the hierarchical representational nature of the original photograph.

The grid, in all three paintings, and the unfinished-finished nature of Painting No. 2, giving a further dimension to the counterintuitive connective<>disruptive nature of a critical and clinical stutter (investigated and explained in Chapters Four, Five and Six).

Fig. 1:8

Installation View. *Memento-Mori in Painting: An Image of Multiplicities.*

A Glitch

In popular culture there is a connection between clinical stuttering and the lack of sovereignty. Esther Peeren comments that, "overcoming a stutter is framed as gaining control of oneself and as facilitating unconstrained, effective communication".[280] Based on my own lived experience, there is some truth to this.[281]

During this project, however, I have been open to a stutter's potential. My practice has demonstrated how a metaphorical transformation of the linguistic critical stutter, via a clinical stutter, into a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering, can theoretically and visually reveal spaces and notions in paintings previously unseen, over-looked or unconsidered (Painting No's. 1, 3, 6, 8 and 9).

The following chapters will articulate how a visual-stuttering, born out of a clinical stutter, plays a crucial role in helping my practice find alternative ways an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting could be expressed, allowing the "potentiality of something else".[282] In a similar manner to a critical stutter, my practice has appropriated the disruptive qualities a clinical stutter to visually disrupt and destabilise "matters of fact" and "consensus".[283]

Evinced from the outcomes and processes of my practice, and demonstrated during my exhibition, I have welcomed these properties while searching for alternative ways an expanded notion of *memento-mori* might be expressed in a painting. Or, in other words, how *memento-mori* in painting might be expressed as *something else*, other than using a skull or an hour-glass to represent the sequential passing of a finite time.

[280] Peeren, E. (2017) *Stutter,* in: Bunz, M., Kaiser, B.M., & Thiele, K. (eds), *Systems of the Planetary Condition: A Critical Vocabulary*, Meson Press, p. 180.
[281] In Tom Hooper's 2010 Oscar winning film The King's Speech, King George VI overcomes his speech impediment helped by the speech therapist Lionel Logue. The king ends up conquering his stutter and addresses the nation on the occasion of the British declaration of war on Germany. "The implication is that his position as ruler of the British Empire is cemented not so much by what he says, but by the fact that he is able to say it fluently". Peeren (2017), *Stutter*, p. 180.
[282] O'Sullivan S. (2009), "From Stuttering and Stammering to the Diagram: Deleuze, Bacon and Contemporary Art Practice", *Deleuze Studies*, 3 (2), p. 249.
[283] Stengers. I. (2005), "Deleuze and Guattari's Last Enigmatic Message", *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 10 (2), p. 154.

Simon O'Sullivan equates the Deleuzian critical stutter to a glitch which both breaks a world and makes a world. He writes that a stuttering glitch "is then a moment of critique, a moment of negation – but also a moment of creation and affirmation."[284] As will be explored and explained in Chapters Five and Six, in this context it might be allied to an ungrounding visual-stutter created between the 'smooth' and the 'striated' spaces of the painted grid operating in the same space, or same surface – or what Deleuze and Guattari term as "abstract line – concrete line".[285]

Moreover, the Belgian philosopher Isabelle Stengers has suggested that if a stutter is not dismissed or taken to be an affliction to be cured, "but considered as symptoms of systematic problems, may go from being interruptions to staging interventions".[286] The stutter then becomes a "counter-effectuation that produces active divergence".[287] When we encounter a stuttering glitch, suggests O'Sullivan, we:

> "[…] – must respond to the glitch, the affective-event, *as* an event, as the bearer of the potentiality of something else. Put simply, one must, in order that this procedure work, be open to the possibility of something different occurring. This, I think, is crucial. The artwork – or the work that demands of us – involves an active engagement, a *participation* as it were."[288]

I acknowledge that the speculative nature of associating a critical stutter with a clinical stutter to validate an idiosyncratic mode of painting is a risk when attached to a project whose success is measured by whether something different or new has, or has not, occurred. Notwithstanding, a glitch occurs as an event only when something different or unexpected happens which disrupts the status quo – a quality required for new knowledge to be gained.[289]

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[284] O'Sullivan (2009), *From Stuttering and Stammering*, p. 251.
[285] Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, (2020), p. 576.
[286] Peeren (2017), *Stutter*, p. 181.
[287] Stengers (2005), *Deleuze and Guattari's Last Enigmatic Message*, p. 163.
[288] O'Sullivan (2009) *From Stuttering and Stammering*, p. 249. (His emphasis).
[289] "After an event," comments Slavoj Zizek, "nothing remains the same". Zizek, S. (2014) *Event*, Penguin, back cover copy.

Conclusion

Three dominant ideas have emerged from of my practice's engagement with a visual-stutter, developed out of a critical (scholarly) and clinical (verbal) stutter. When a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering are attached to painting, they:

1. Beckon connections.
2. Beckon alternative spaces.
3. Beckon things to the surface.

Supported by the application of these three ideas, acquired by means of my painting practice and insights gained during the curation and installation of my exhibition, the following chapters will advocate that an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting can be allied to, and be revealed by, a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering (transformed out of a stuttering-language-system *and* a clinical-verbal-stutter).

As we shall see, I additionally suggest in Chapter Three that a stuttering-thinking and visual stuttering is relatable to Jutta Koether's and Leon Kossoff's description of Nicolas Poussin's paintings. Where, on the one hand, there is a coexistence of rigidity allied to a pattern making structure, related to language – and on the other, a non-structure which nearly collapses, related to stuttering. I will also propose a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering is relatable to Erwin Panofsky's dialectical and dichotomous reading of Poussin's engagement with *memento-mori* in painting.

The ideas introduced in this chapter, although initially intuitive and unarticulated, are key in setting in motion the reasoning leading this project to:

- Counterintuitively use the painted grid to disrupt and connect, rather than to regulate and restrict.
- Associate the disruptive aspect of the painted grid to a disruptive notion of time, in line with this project's expanded notion of *memento-mori*.
- Associate the disruptive aspect of a visual-stutter to a disruptive notion of time, in line with this project's expanded notion of *memento-mori*.
- Metaphorically and visually raise up a notion of *memento-mori* to the surface of a painting.

CHAPTER TWO

MEMENTO-MORI

Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to define this project's expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting. To do so, I will consider:

1. Whether *memento-mori* could be expressed through pure painting.
2. Whether *memento-mori* as a mental state can look like some-thing in painting.
3. *Memento-mori* as a creational research tool to drive a painting practice.

To place my notion of *memento-mori* within a contextual network, I will provide a summary of where and how *memento-mori* in painting has traditionally been placed, and how it could be perceived within a concept of pure painting. I will give an account of why *memento-mori* as a mental state, which does not have a perceived singular recognised expression, has allowed me to speculate on alternative means and ways of using paint and paintings to convey *memento-mori*'s ineffable expression.

Introducing the psychoanalytic idea of the '*objet petit a*' as anything and everything that desire touches, yet is itself untouchable,[290] I propose that the '*objet petit a*' can be associated with *memento-mori* during the act of painting and in a painting (examined by a visual analysis of Painting No. 8). This proposal has been developed out of Natallie Loveless's pedagogical description of *objet petit a* as a "research-creational thing-to-think-with" [291] – in other words: as a creational tool and way to think during painting.

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[290] Informed Jacques Lacan in: Lacan, J. (1998) *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, translated by Alan Sheridan, Vintage.
[291] Loveless (2019) *How to Make Art*, p. 82.

The correlation between death, *memento-mori*, and painting is an early and well documented one. Pliny the Elder (23-79 C.E.) tells us the origin of painting is based upon a story in which a woman traces on the wall the shadow of her lover on the eve of his departure to war, thus irredeemably linking the image to separation, love, interruption, loss and, ultimately, to death.[292] The use of shadows in my paintings, for example in *Deceased Estate, No. 83, part ii* (Painting No. 6), are, in part, an affirmation of this historical telling – in addition to an acknowledgement of (and sympathy with) the 15th Century Italian Renaissance art historian Leon Battista Alberti's belief that paintings' task is "to let the absent be present, and to show the living to the dead".[293] (Fig. 2:1).

Painting's association with death continued through the Renaissance, and up to the 19th Century when it was also attached to the trope of painting's eventual demise,[294] first expressed by Paul Delaroche in 1840 after he came across the new Daguerreotypes.[295] This belief continued into the 20th and 21st Centuries by a varied and large number of artists, academics and critics,[296] and succinctly summarised by

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[292] Retold in: Stoichita, V.I., (1997), *A Short History of the Shadow*, Reaktion Books Ltd, pp. 14-17. It is worth noting the distinction between the Plinian semblance, where the image is the other and the same, and Platonic mimesis, a likeness as copy, the same in a state of double. This distinction between likeness (the mirror) and semblance or simulacrum is an important one, since "the latter being associated with magic and archaic divination, it was the former which would dominate Western painting from the Renaissance onwards." Harland (2009) *A Fragment of Time*, p. 32.

[293] Alberti L.B. (2011), *On Painting*, ed. & trans. Sinisgalli R., Cambridge University Press, p. 44.

[294] Sarah Key, in 2008, summarised: "The death of painting is rooted in a critique of easel painting where it is implicitly tied to the socio-political identity encompassed by the academy, museum and private collection. It also reflects the challenges faced by painting from the mid 1800's on, in respect of technological developments in image making. The death of painting re-emerged as a much-discussed topic by artists, critics and academics in the 1960's and 1970's through perceptions on modernist abstract painting that considered it to be formally exhausted, politically detached from social discourse and patriarchal in its lineage – for these reasons Pop Art & Feminist Art were antithetical to abstract painting. Discussions on the death and rebirth of painting continue, whilst painting practices also continue within a pluralist art world." Key (2008) *Grids*, p 1, ft.1.

[295] In 1981 Douglas Crimp wrote "'From today painting is dead': it is now nearly a century and a half since Paul Delaroche is said to have pronounced that sentence in the face of the overwhelming evidence of Daguerre's invention." Crimp, D. (1981) "The End of Painting", *October 16*, Spring 1981, p.75. (His emphasis).

[296] As examined in: Bois, Y-A. (1993) pp. 229-244; Crimp, D. (1981) pp. 69-86; and Staff, C. (2013), pp. 90-109.

Laura Pittman in 1993 when she stated her belief that: "Painting is a carcass right now – it has been picked clean of all its meat. Painting has always been about death."[297]

Fig. 2:1

Deceased Estate, No. 83, part ii (detail)

As a counter argument to linking death to painting's apparent demise, the British artist and writer Jim Mooney suggests that painting's repetitive revival is because of painting's connection to death. He suggests that (Western) painting's survival is secured by a certain failure "which is the failure to mourn".[298 & 299]

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[297] Gallery Talk at the Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles, 4th December 1993.
Louis Marin also held the belief that representative paintings are "torn between death and life, precisely because pictures that depict something might also be mistaken for the object itself, non-presence and death are woven into them." Marin, L. (1995) *To Destroy Painting*, translated by Mette Hjort, University of Chicago Press, p. 45.

[298] "Painting: Poignancy and Ethics", *Journal of Visual Arts Practice*, Jan. 2002, pp. 57-63.
Mooney writes, "Contemporary painters, addressing their own specific concerns and motivations, knowingly or unknowingly, enter into an extended dialogue with the condemned body of painting, which inevitably invokes its long, distinguished and degraded history. Successful mourning would allow these painters to bring the dialogue to a close, to walk away, unburdened and untroubled, the body laid to rest.", p. 58.

[299] This 'death of painting' debate seems still, in various degrees, to be within the conversation when discussing contemporary painting. For instance, a forthcoming symposium titled "Crisis/death/resurrection; a painting symposium" will be asking how painting today can possibly engage with society in ways that are novel when other media might align more with the world in which we live. MTU, Crawford College of Art and Design, Cork, Ireland, 28th March, 2025.

On the other hand, Gilles Deleuze's interpretation of *memento-mori* suggests that a Freudian mourning or melancholic association with the arts need not be involved where *memento-mori* presents itself in painting – it is an interpretation to which I, and this project, adheres.[300]

Deleuze offers an alternative to Sigmund Freud's melancholic reading, proposing instead the relationship between the arts and melancholy necessitates "a kind of '*unmourning*' that requires more work, but promises more joy".[301] In the relation between the philosophical and the aesthetic, melancholy might "be said to be sensation of an un-happy idealization",[302] however, Deleuze indicates that an antidote to it, "is to be found not in rememorization and identification but in active forgetting and affirmative *experimentation* with what is yet to come."[303]

Keeping in mind that although *memento-mori* in painting is not a representation of death but a remembrance of death, the American art historian Linda Nochlin reminds us that from the early 19th Century representations of death (in Western painting) became more than a metaphysical expression. An expression previously abundant in Christian symbolism or ancient mythology which had predominated painting since the Renaissance.[304]

Nochlin explains how painters such as Francisco Goya (Fig. 2:2), Gustave Courbet, Edouard Manet and Edgar Degas attempted to grasp and convey in their works the mundane truth of dying,[305] "[...] the bare truth, stripped of all transcendental meaning and metaphysical implications, but rich in the circumstantiality of phycological, physical and social detail".[306]

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[300] See Introduction, pages 10-11.
[301] Rajchman (2000) *The Deleuze Connections*, p. 132.
[302] Ibid. p. 133.
[303] Ibid. (My emphasis).
[304] Examined in: Nochlin, L. (1990), *Realism,* Penguin Books.
[305] Goya (Spanish, 1746-1828), Courbet (French, 1819-1877), Manet (French, 1832-1883), Degas (French, 1834-1917).
[306] Ibid, p. 60.

Fig. 2:2

Francisco Goya, *Executions of May 3, 1808,* (1814)
Oil on canvas, 268 x 347 cm. (Museo del Prado, Madrid)

Whereas, in the case of one of Wilhelm Sasnal's four paintings derived from press photographs of Colonel Gaddafi's dead prostrated body after having been captured and killed by rebels during the Libyan civil war, "[…] rather than show the corpse directly, Sasnal depicts an amorphous mass of paint resting on what appears to be a mattress.[307] The thick impasto of the oil paint, alludes to the ripped and torn body of the dictator, contrasting sharply with the flat paint work of the surrounding space."[308] (Fig. 2:3).

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[307] Wilhelm Sasnal (Polish 1972 -)
[308] https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/sasnal-gaddafi-1-t14241 [accessed 17th January 2022].

Fig. 2:3

Wilhelm Sasnal, *Gaddafi 1*, (2011). Oil on canvas, 80 x 100 cm. (The Tate Gallery, London). Purchased with assistance from the Roman Family Collection, 2014.
©William Sasnal, courtesy Sadie Coles HQ.

The source of the painting's content revolves around events which took place in Libya on 20th October 2011. The German art historian Peter Geimer describes Gaddafi's dead body as being "[…] transformed into *pure painting* – a thick ball of oil paint in an impasto application",[309] whilst Kevin Brazil has commented: "We don't see a dead body made into a spectacle, we see matter that has changed over time, irreversibly, from liquid to solid".[310] I suggest, given that this painting, via a photographic image, has, according to Geimer, transcended a realist's representation of death into a perceived idea of pure painting, leads one to consider whether the remembrance of death (rather than death itself) – or, in other words, the notion of *memento-mori* – might be similarly transformed or expressed.

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[309] Geimer, P., '*Painting and Atrocity: The Tuymans Strategy*', in Birnbaun, D., Graw, I., & Hirsch, N., (eds), (2014), *Thinking Through Painting. Reflexivity and Agency beyond the Canvas*, Sternberg Press, p.17. (My emphasis).
[310] Brazil, K., (2021) "When is Painting", *Art/Agenda*, 10th September 2021, https://www.art-agenda.com/criticism/418898/when-is-a-painting [accessed 19/09/21].

<u>Pure Painting</u>

Modernism, Hal Foster reminds us, was the pursuit of purity. It held that "the concept of art [is] meaningful, or wholly meaningful, only within the individual arts".[311] A simplified post-modernist reading of Modernism, Foster opines, can be "distilled in the term 'purity'".[312]

"Purity in art", wrote Greenberg, "consists in the acceptance, willing acceptance, of the limitations of the medium of the specific art".[313] The materials used for painting, and painting's flatness, are given examples of its limitations, and for some modernist painters the pursuit of exploring painting's limitations was a pursuit of its (Greenbergian) purity.

Whereas Harold Rosenberg, referring to *The New American Painting* (explicitly action painting) in 1952, made the point that: "What was to go on the canvas was not a picture, but an event".[314] Rosenberg believed this "new painting" was not pure art since "the extrusion of the object was not for the sake of the aesthetic".[315] His statement suggests that pure painting should be taken as simply an aesthetic concern. What matters, he wrote, "is the revelation contained in the act [of painting]. It is to be taken for granted that in the final effect, the image, whatever be or not be in it, will be a tension",[316] in other words, a tension between medium and aesthetics.

Concerned with the notion of content, and the "new" critics' (specifically Greenberg and Rosenberg) approach as to whether the relationship between form and content is sufficiently "organic", Walter Bates stated that, "whatever the theoretical stand [this approach] has tended to stress the medium of art, without an equal emphasis on the

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[311] Foster, H. (1982), "Re: Post*", Parachute*, 26, Spring 1982, p.11.
[312] Ibid.
[313] Greenberg, C. (1940), "Towards a Newer Loacoon*", Partisan Review*, July-August, 1940. Reprinted in: Shapiro, C.&D., (eds), (1990), *Abstract Expressionism, A Critical Record*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 61-74.
[314] Rosenberg, H. (1952) "The American Action Painters", *Art News*, December 1952. Reprinted in: Shapiro, C.&D., (eds), (1990), *Abstract Expressionism, A Critical Record*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 75-85.
[315] Ibid.
[316] Ibid.

range and value of what is being organised".[317] By which I take his meaning to imply that pure painting is not just about, for example, medium or individual attributes. There is, according to Bates, more to be taken into account.

Furthermore, in a declaration made by Adolph Gottlieb and Mark Rothko,[318] they expressed the belief that subject is crucial in painting, and in doing so they raise the question as to whether pure painting is possible, or whether it can even exist. "There is no such thing as good painting about nothing", they state, "We assert that the subject is crucial and only that subject-matter is valid which is tragic and timeless."[319] Definitions of pure painting, it seems, alter depending by whom and when it is defined. In the period of just twelve years (1940-1952), it had imbued upon it the qualities of aesthetics, medium, materiality, content, subject, tension and limitation.

The British painter Michael Stubbs (1961 -) questions what he describes as Greenberg's discredited claim, "that painting should seek its own purity through the acknowledgement of its material".[320] Pure, and the attributes of purity, implies that something is without contamination. Nevertheless, when applied to painting, paintings' contaminations cannot affect it, since purity in painting is not singularly defined.

Stubbs's central concern in his 2003 PhD thesis, *Digital Embodiment in Contemporary Abstract Painting*, arose from a sense of "dissatisfaction with irony rather than from an aversion to purity".[321] According to Stubbs, the death of Modernism is also the death of practices that take Modernism's "historical essentialism as a starting point".[322] In order to retrieve painting from this dead-end, he re-employs Maurice Merleau-Ponty's idea that in painting there is an overlapping between the impure interior sense of self

[317] Quoted in: Geiger, D. (1961) "Tolstoy as Defender of a "Pure Art" That Unwraps Something", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Autumn, 1961, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 81-89.
[318] Published in The New York Times, June 13, 1943.
[319] Reprinted in: Shapiro, C.&D., (eds), (1995), *Abstract Expressionism, A Critical Record*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 75-85.
[320] Stubbs, M. (2003) *Digital embodiment in contemporary abstract painting*, PhD thesis, Goldsmiths, University of London, p. 2.
[321] Palin, T. (2018) *The Condition of Painting: Reconsidering Medium Specificity*, un-published PhD Thesis, awarded by The Royal College of Art, p. 50.
[322] Stubbs (2003) *Digital embodiment*, p. 2.

in the acting body of the painter with "the world of external objects as an imaginary texture of the real".[323]

Stubbs's argument, along with an agreement with Philip Guston's recognition that "painting is impure",[324] has presented me with a mindset emboldening my search for an alternative way to express an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting beyond its traditionally held conventions.[325] Conventions, for example, which have not envisioned how, as a mental state, it could be expressed in painting as 'pure painting' (whatever that might imply). This mindset has been further emboldened by the possibility of something different, or other, occurring facilitated by a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering allowing the notion of *memento-mori* in painting to move on from its traditionally held conventions.[326]

Mental State

Bearing in mind a mental image is not the same as a visual image, it is worth considering at this point whether *memento-mori* as a mental state, or as a thought, can look like some-thing, rather than being substituted by an object that signifies it. A mental image of an object or thing also brings with it its use, its touch and its perceived structure. It is not really an image at all, but more of a culmination of feelings or thoughts. It only becomes an image when we decide to draw or paint it.

Death is a state of being, or rather, not being, whereas *memento-mori* is a mental state of remembrance. The professor of philosophy Catherine Abell reminds us that there is a potential problem of expression in painting since, "[…] only mental states can be expressed. The problem of expression arises because art works do not themselves

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[323] Ibid. p. 46
[324] Philip Guston in: Balken, D., Berkson, B. & Guston, P. (eds), (1994), *Philp Guston's Poems – Pictures*, University of Washington Press, p. 34.
[325] And in contradiction to Charles Edouard Jeanneret's and Amedee Ozenfant's *'Purism'* statement, published in 1918. "Purism", they wrote, "strives for an art free of conventions which will utilize plastic constants and address itself above all to the universal properties of the senses and the mind." Re-printed in: Harrison. C. & Wood, P. (eds) (2003) *Art in Theory, 1900-200, An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Blackwell Publishing, pp. 239-242. (Le Corbusier was Charles Edouard Jeanneret's other given name).
[326] Demonstrated, for example, in Fig. 0:3, p.41.

have mental states."[327] How then can *memento-mori* as a mental state be expressed in painting when it is without a singular recognised expression, hindered further by painting's inability to be in possession of a mental state?[328] A further pivotal question for this project to address is what relation, with regard to *memento-mori* in painting, "must a work bear to a mental state in order to express it, if not one of possession"?[329]

Or, in other words, to recognise that the notion of *memento-mori* is a mental state of (I suggest) multiplicities, then in "the absence of a [singular] characteristic causal connection between features of representational works and the mental states they express," how might "an adequate account of expression […] identify some other relation a work must bear to a mental state in order to express that state"?[330]

With this question in mind, one of my aims and problems to solve is to search a way for some other relation a painting holds in place of a signified expression absent from a cerebral notion of *memento-mori*.[331]

The philosopher Dominic Lopes explains that a picture may express dread,[332] for example, at an impending danger partly by depicting a scene of impending danger (Fig: 2:2), and a depicted man's face may express contempt for another depicted figure partly because he is depicted as looking at the latter's look of shame.[333 & 334] Lopes does not, however, attempt to explain what it is for a physical (or visual) configuration

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[327] Abell, C. (2013), "Expression in the Representational Arts*", American Philosophical Quarterly*, Jan. 2013, vol. 50, no. 1, pp. 23-35.

[328] It was due to this consideration that I decided on *Memento-Mori in Painting: An Image of Multiplicities* as the title for my exhibition.

[329] Ibid, p. 24.

[330] Ibid. p. 25.

[331] Michael Polanyi reminds us: "It is commonplace that all research must start from a problem. Research can only be successful only if the problem is good; it can be original only if the problem is original. But how can one see a problem, any problem, let alone a good and original problem? For to see a problem is to see something that is hidden. It is to have an intimation of the coherence of hitherto not comprehended particulars." Polanyi, M. (2009) *The Tacit Dimension,* University of Chicago Press, p. 21.

[332] Lopes, D. (2005) *Sight and Sensibility*, Oxford University Press. pp. 74-75.

[333] Artistic expression sometimes involves the deliberate deployment of features that are characteristically caused by mental states. A painter "[...] may apply rapid, broad slashes of paint onto a canvas in order to produce a work that expresses the anger that characteristically causes such slashes", without being angry themselves. Abel (2013) *Expression*, p. 25.

[334] The Estonian painter Kaido Ole (born 1963) has described how: "Expressionist painting is often staged [...]. Real moments of anger don't last long. You can only be aggressive for a short time, and then it's over." Quoted in: Benschop, J. (2023) *Why Paintings Work*, translated by Susan Ridder, Garret Publications, p. 169.

to have the function of indicating an emotion. I submit this lack of explanation gives purpose to a practice-led research project investigating how one might set about exploring possible alternative physical configurations a painting could employ to express *memento-mori* – a notion which does not have a singular recognised expression.[335]

A Symbiosis

This project's aim to find alternative physical configurations a painting could possess to express *memento-mori* is reliant upon a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering, set out in Chapter One. During the process of this project this reliance has developed to become a dominant driving force within my practice. In this sense, the relationship between the two is symbiotic. In other words, they exist together in a way that is beneficial to their development and the project as a whole – whilst providing new insights into each.

With this in mind, the remainder of this chapter will examine how *memento-mori* (as a mechanism-of-willing) and a visual-stuttering (as a mode of painting) could both be considered as creational research tools to drive a painting practice. A summary of Jacques Lacan's reading of anamorphosis (*ana*: again, *morphosis*: to form) and its relationship with *memento-mori* in painting will lead to a suggestion that anamorphosis and a visual-stuttering have (in terms of this project) a consequential affinity.

These ideas (formed out of my practice) will be illustrated by a visual analysis of *Deceased Estate, No. 123, part iii* (Painting No. 8) and aided by the decisions, and resulting insights, made while installing the exhibition *Memento-Mori in Painting.*

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[335] A proposal set out in Chapter Six.

<u>Mechanism of Willing</u>

Friedrich Nietzsche briefly mentions *memento-mori* in his early text: *On the Utility and Liability of History for Life in Unfashionable Observations*:

> "Previously this 'memento mori', called out both to humanity and to the individual, was always a terribly painful goad and the pinnacle, as it were, of medieval knowledge and conscience. The phrase with which the modern age answers this call, 'memento vivere' still sounds, to be quite frank, rather timid; it has no resonance and almost seems to be insincere."[336]

Although the notion is mentioned once and only in passing, Manuel Dries employs the context in which Nietzsche used it to examine *memento-mori*'s role functioning as a mechanism of willing. Dries explains, "Through constant reminders in word and image of one's mortality, the vanity of earthly desire and […] a divine Last Judgment, the memento-mori played a pivotal role in the functioning of the medieval conscience that guided people's actions."[337]

Dries reasons that because the medieval notion of *memento-mori* influenced how our actions were assessed, the notion transcended a base mechanism of willing towards a unique human mechanism of willing based on reason.[338] Informed by Nietzsche's notion of *memento-mori* as a mechanism of willing, he suggests a functional interpretation of *memento-mori* could be described as a "self-system to run […] 'mental stimulations' that motivate action."[339]

Taking this into consideration, I turn to the Canadian art historian Natalie Loveless who has described a way of applying Jacques Lacan's interpretation of *objet petit a* to creative practices, and proposes that it can be used as a "research-creational thing-to-

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[336] Nietzsche, F. (1995), *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,* in *Unfashionable Observations,* trans. Richard T. Gray, Stanford University Press, p. 130. (Originally published in 1874).
[337] Dries, M. (2017) Memento Mori, Memento Vivre: Early Nietzsche on History, Embodiment, and Value. *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 48(1), pp. 29-55.
[338] A base mechanism of willing, Dries explains, which could, for example, have given us and our fellow animals an understanding of food sources. Ibid.
[339] Ibid.

think-with".[340] As we shall see, Lacan correlates the *objet petit a* with a special kind of *memento-mori* which goes beyond its association with a skull (or death's-head), and towards a notion outside all speech.[341] This correlation has led me to consider not only *what* in painting could go beyond *memento-mori's* association with a skull, but also how the notion, as a mechanism of willing, could act as a creational research tool to drive a painting practice, and be associated with a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering which operates in an area outside fluent speech.

'Objet petit a'

According to both Jacques Lacan and Sigmund Freud an object, or thing, of desire can only remain so if it continues to be unobtainable, and for the continuation of desire to exist so too does repetition. Lacan names the unobtainable object of desire the *'objet petit a',*[342] and, as such, becomes a "[…] lure. It becomes the object-cause of desire, setting our stories, and thereby our worlds into play. […] the *'objet petit a'* is that object that makes manifest the drive(s) in the form of desire."[343]

In this sense, Loveless suggests that it can be manipulated into a "research-creational thing-to-think-with. […] [it] is what we are in the grip of when we find ourselves pushing our projects into disciplinary and formal directions that we don't yet know how to justify."[344] The *'objet petit a'* has alternatively been described by:

> "[…] Slavoj Zizek as a principle of anamorphosis because it '*is always, by definition, perceived in a distorted way*'. Ellie Ragland defines the *objet a* as '*an irreducible residue of indecipherable knowledge*'. Lacan himself states in the seminars on vision that the gaze [as *objet petit*] is specified as '*un-apprehensible*'."[345]

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[340] Loveless (2019) *How to Make Art*, p. 80.
[341] Bowie (1991), *Lacan,* Fontana Press.
[342] It is commonly referred to more concisely as '*objet a*', and as opposed to '*objet A',* "… in order to distinguish it from the *Big Other* of the general language system." Levine (2008), p. 67.
[343] Loveless (2019) *How to Make Art*, p. 82.
[344] Ibid. p's. 82 & 15.
[345] Scott, M. (2008), "Lacan's 'Of the Gaze as Object Petit a' as Anamorphic Discourse", *Paragraph*, Vol. 31, No. 3, (November 2008), p. 238. (His emphasis).

The common denominator, however, seems to be that the '*objet petit a*' is anything and everything that desire touches – yet is itself, untouchable.

The *fort'da* Game

In the first few sentences of his 1964 lecture, titled *Of the Gaze as Objet Petit a,* Lacan reminds his listeners of the etymological construction of the German word Wiederholung - wieder: again - holen: to haul - in English: 'to haul again'; or more concisely: repetition or recurrence. He then continues to pair wiederholung (repetition) with zwang (compulsion) to create the word Wiederholungzwang (repetition compulsion), or "the compulsion to repeat".[346]

Loveless suggests that by beginning his seminar this way, Lacan is situating the '*objet petit a*' and his audience within a reading of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*,[347] "specifically the fort/da game of his grandson, little Ernst - a game, it turns out that has everything to do with *objet petit a*".[348]

The game involved Ernst playing with a spool having cotton still tied to it. Lying on his bed he throws the spool out of sight whilst shouting *'Fort!'* (Gone!), only to pull the cotton and bring the spool back into his sight shouting *'Da!'* (There!). Freud attaches this game to the temporary loss of Ernst's mother, symbolised as the spool, whereby Ernst has control, and the satisfaction, of bringing her back. In repeatedly creating the loss of the spool he also "creates the mother as a site of desire and value".[349] Similarly, the '*objet petit a*' requires a repeatable irrecoverable loss for it to be set into play.

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[346] Lacan, J. (1998) *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, translated by Alan Sheridan, Vintage, p. 67.
[347] Originally published in 1920. Freud, S. (2003) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle, and other Writings*, Penguin Modern Classics.
[348] Loveless (2019) *How to Make Art*, p. 81.
[349] Ibid. p. 82.

<u>Anamorphosis</u>

Lacan develops his thinking on the '*objet petit a*' by introducing the idea of the '*objet petit a*' as *gaze* with help of the term of anamorphosis (*ana*: again, *morphosis*: to form), and associates the term with Hans Holbein's use of the skull in the 1553 painting *The Ambassadors* (Fig. 2:4).

Fig. 2:4

Hans Holbein, *The Ambassadors*, (1533).
Oil on oak, 207 x 209.5 cm. The National Gallery, London, (NG1314).

Anamorphosis, Lacan tells us, is about forming things again and again, in a repetitious manner.[350] To see the skull in Holbein's painting you have to move to a position where the rest of the painting becomes illegible (or hidden). Lacan recounts that the blurred form in the bottom centre of the picture, which has long held your attention, only becomes clear as you begin walking out of the room, "It is then that, turning around as you leave - […] - you apprehend in this form What… A skull."[351] This experience, on one level, echoes Freud's *fort/da* game whereby a cotton spool is replaced by the gaze - as the title of Lacan's seminar proclaims, the gaze as '*objet petit a*'.[352] He affirms, "This picture is simply what any picture is, a trap for the gaze. In any picture, it is precisely in seeking the gaze in each of its points that you will see it disappear."[353]

Re-enforcing the idea of '*objet petit a*' as a thing-to-think-with, Loveless points to the manner in which Lacan talks about the '*objet petit a*' and anamorphosis as an un-graspable or un-pin down-able thing, whilst also surmising that the mundane vanitas objects (some being associated with *memento-mori*) depicted in *The Ambassadors*,[354] are in contrast to the illegibility of the unknown form at the bottom of the picture and which can only be addressed (or seen) when the mundane is hidden.

There is, I propose, a connection between the idea of anamorphosis and a stutter (critical, clinical and visual). They can both be used to describe forming things again and again, in a repetitious (and disruptive) manner; and describe the un-graspable nature of things, ideas, language and speech. In Chapter Six an in-depth analysis of *Deceased Estate, No. 123, part iii* (Painting No. 8) will be given in relation to my use of the grid as a device to spatiotemporally disrupt and connect. However, because of its placement on the right wall of the gallery space, during the exhibition a perspectival and anamorphic feature of the painting became clearer and more relevant (Fig. 2:5).

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[350] Lacan (1998), *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, pp. 79 -90.
[351] Ibid. p. 88.
[352] Lacan also suggested a psychoanalytic theme of castration whereby the blurred image of the skull is a symbolic phallic representation.
[353] Ibid. p. 89.
[354] Objects of traditional, graspable, learning such as navigational, mathematical and musical instruments.

Fig. 2:5

Installation View. *Memento-Mori in Painting*: *An Image of Multiplicities.*

On entering the gallery, the painting was seen at an oblique angle, naturally exaggerating the perspectival nature of the painterly represented box-like form. Unlike Holbein's painting, viewing the painting this way did not reveal anything previously unseen. It did, however, add an anamorphic dimension to the painting in that the distorted view of the painting echoed the angle of the box's front-facing surface. The four rectangular shapes in each of the painting's corners (repeated on the box's front-facing surface) gave the internal space within the painting an additional anamorphic dimension (Fig. 2.6).
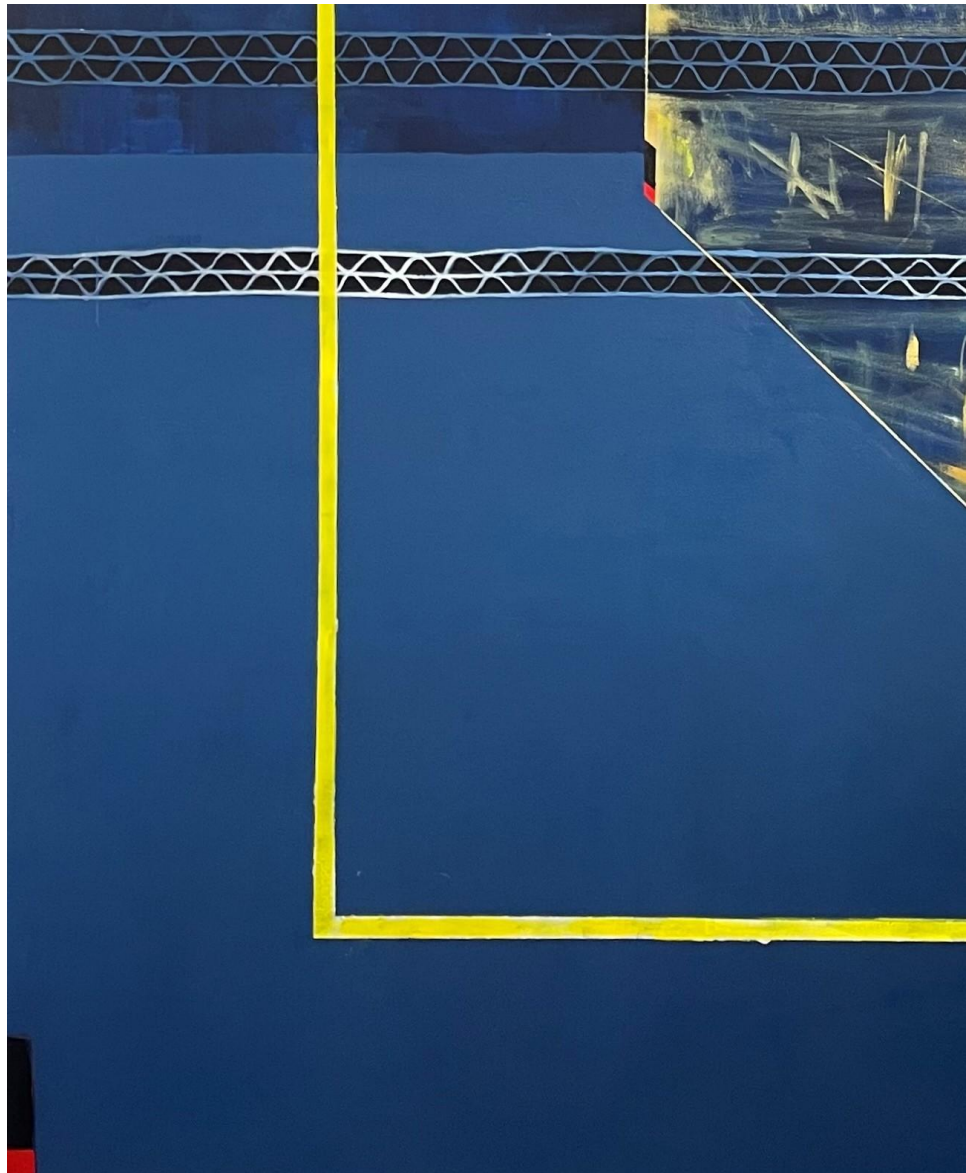
Fig. 2:6

Deceased Estate, No. 123, part iii (Detail: bottom left corner)

When viewing the painting I became aware of myself (and others) repeatedly looking at (and, perhaps, wishing to 'resolve') the visual play between the painting's surface plane and its interior pictorial planes. On moving back-and-forth around the painting, the surface of the painting and the box's front-facing surface can, in specific viewing positions, occupy the same visual plane – but never at the same time.

<u>A Special kind of Memento-Mori</u>

Painting No. 8's photographic source, suggested by its title (and visually referred to in an outline drawing of the photograph in the top left corner) puts this project's expanded notion of *memento-mori* within a painted anamorphic setting. With that in mind, the British academic Malcolm Bowie has described Lacan's use of Holbein's anamorphic skull as a search for a "special kind of memento-mori."[355] He writes:

> "Yorick's skull would not have been suitable, and neither would the tomb that Poussin's shepherds seem just to have come upon in the Louvre version of his *Et in arcadia ego*. It had to be a death's head that belonged to all speech, […]."[356]

Borrowing Malcolm Bowie's description of Lacan's *objet petit a* as gaze as "a special kind of memento mori",[357] where Holbein's anamorphic skull moves the notion outside speech – and combining it with Loveless's thinking tool – I propose there is way in which one could think of an expanded (or, special kind of) *memento-mori* as a creational tool and mode to think with, during the act of painting and looking at a painting.

I am aware that by travelling down this road of thought I may be accused of becoming "the hapless proprietor of a gratuitous verbal universe."[358] Notwithstanding, I propose this psychoanalytical angled reasoning to rationalise a painting practice whereby a repeated, stuttering, call-back to the notion of *memento-mori* is a constant, could be understood as an alternative way to express, examine and indicate an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting. By which I mean it could be used to reason how the notion of *memento-mori* in painting might be said to exist during the process of painting, whilst also influencing and informing the construction and resulting content of a painting.

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[355] Bowie, M. (1991), *Lacan*, Fontana Press, p 164.
[356] Ibid. p. 164-165.
[357] Ibid. p. 164.
[358] As warned by Bowie, who also comments that "The noise of theory can be as forlorn as the rustle of dry leaves on a dull day". Ibid. p. 160.

Conclusion

In my appropriation of some of Loveless's ideas I have been mindful of the fact that she approaches research-creation from an educator-researcher's pedagogical viewpoint. The manifestation of her Lacanian angle on research-creation is, to some extent, left open. As a self-critical response to focussing on research-creation rather than its results – results achieved, she implies, by means of the academic-everyday (of 2019) "cutting corners and rushing toward shiny metrics"[359] – she responds:

> "[…] I turn to research-creation to encourage modes of *temporal* and *material* attunement within the academy that require slowing down in a way that does not fetishize the slow but in which slowness comes from the work of defamiliarization and the time it takes to *ask questions differently*."[360]

A stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering has morphed this project's notion of *memento-mori* into a form of research methodology and strategy. It has enabled me to ask questions differently, to defamiliarise and disrupt the notion away from its traditionally held associations and move it towards a state of disequilibrium and disjunction reflecting the temporal indetermination of a human's life-span.

During this chapter I have made use of apophatic reasoning. In other words, to explore what an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting could be or could become, I have eliminated what it need not be. For instance, an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting (emerging out of my practice) need not be connected to a Freudian return associated with the arts and preoccupied with absence and mourning; nor need it be solely used as a reminder to live by, and express, our consciously adopted values, nor as a riposte to *memento-vivere* (remember we must live). Instead, I suggest an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting might act as a rebuff to Nietzsche's implied position that a contemporary interpretation of *memento-mori* in painting is "insincere" (by which I take his meaning to include it of possessing a kind of artificiality).[361]

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[359] Loveless (2019) *How to Make Art*, p. 107.
[360] Ibid. p. 107. (Her emphasis).
[361] Nietzsche (1995), *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, p. 130.

The following chapters will address how this project has exploited painting's unique properties - specifically in relation to painting's relationship with time - to find and investigate what the visual manifestation of a painterly configuration might be to have the function of indicating (or expressing) a state of mind or emotion related to *memento-mori*.

CHAPTER THREE

NICOLAS POUSSIN

Introduction

In this chapter I will:

- Unpack Jutta Koether and Leon Kossoff's observations on paintings
  by Nicolas Poussin.
- Give an account of Erwin Panofsky's insights on Poussin's use of
  memento-mori.
- Articulate the relevance of these discourses to my practice and to
  the project's aims.

Acknowledging Poussin's role in David Joselit's notion of painting's "transitivity",[362] analysed through Jutta Koether's 2009 exhibition *Lux Interior*,[363] a further aim of the chapter is to give an account of Martin Kippenberger's rhetorical question: How does painting belong to a network.[364]

Using diagrammatical maps and installation views, I will analyse the insights made during my exhibition to explain the role painting's transitivity has played in this project's investigation into alternative ways, and the limits to which, an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting could be alternatively expressed.

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[362] Joselit (2009) *Painting Beside Itself*, p.126.
[363] Reena Spaulings Fine Art, New York. 26th April – 24th May 2009.
[364] Kippenberger (German, 1953-1997) exclaimed, "Simply to hang a painting on the wall and say that its art is dreadful. The whole network is important! Even spaghettini.... When you say art, then everything possible belongs to it. In a gallery that is also the floor, the architecture, the colour of the wall.' Quoted in: *One Has to Be Able to Take It!*, excerpts from an interview with Martin Kippenberger with Jutta Koether, November 1990 – May 1991, in *Martin Kippenberger, The Problem Perspective*, ed. Ann Goldstein, MIT Press, (2008), p. 316.

Jutta Koether and Leon Kossoff

In an interview with the German art historian Benjamin Buchloh, the German painter Jutta Koether observed:

> "In Poussin there is a coexistence of rigidity, almost like an architectonic structure, and another kind of material – emotional inserts – that you can't account for. Whether they happen through specific figures or through the narrative of the story, they have a certain rendering: for example, this extremely weird rendering of the leaves and nature of the so-called natural world. On the one hand, Poussin has structure, but it's so tiny it's almost pointillism, and it nearly falls apart, so there's a contradictory dissonance produced. A sensation. A space for thinking and feeling."[365]

For Koether, a space for thinking and feeling within a Poussin painting lies between its architectonic structure and its pointillism which almost fells the structure.[366] This space, I submit, could be described as a rhizomic in-between place, or as a place with "[…] no beginning or end; [the rhizome] is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo."[367] Moreover, I propose that this in-between, middle, place can be associated with a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering where connections can be made and the opportunity for something other, different or new can occur.

Deleuze and Guattari describe the middle as being, "by no means an average; on the contrary, it is where things pick up speed."[368] In a purely practical way, my coming to unpack Koether's statement, made possible by work done in the studio, was when this project's trajectory began to clarify and 'pick up speed'.[369]

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[365] Buchloh, B. (2016), "A Conversation with Jutta Koether", *October*, 157, Summer 2016, p.29.
[366] Architectonic – (of an artistic composition) having a clearly defined structure, especially one that is artistically pleasing.
[367] Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (2020) *A Thousand Plateaus,* p. 26. (See Introduction, page 37).
[368] Ibid, p. 27.
[369] They continue: "*Between* things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other way, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks *and* picks up speed in the middle." Ibid. (Their emphasis).

In comparison to Koether, the British painter Leon Kossoff [370] implied that the contradictory dissonance within a Poussin painting (referred to by Koether) not only creates a different kind of space, but also creates a different (or disjointed, stuttering) kind of time. In reference to a series of drawings Kossoff was currently exhibiting at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles based on the paintings of Poussin,[371] he was asked by the British philosopher Richard Wollheim, "Why Poussin?".[372] In reply, Kossoff talks around a kind of timely contrary dissonance. A dissimulated kind of time within a zone point between two extremes.

Kossoff mentions the opening chapter of Milan Kundera's novel *Immortality* in which the narrator describes a scene he witnesses while sitting beside a pool at his health club.[373] An elderly wheezing woman, having had swimming lessons with a young lifeguard, leaves the pool and walks towards the exit. The passage, in full, reads:

> "She passed the lifeguard and after she had gone some three or four steps beyond him, she turned her head, smiled and waved to him. At that instant I felt a pang in my heart! That smile and that gesture belonged to a twenty-year-old girl! Her arm rose with bewitching ease. It was as if she were playfully tossing a brightly coloured ball to her lover. That smile and that gesture had charm and elegance, while the face and the body no longer had any charm. It was the charm of a gesture drowning in the charmless-ness of the body."[374]

Kossoff states to Wollheim that in this moment, "Something happens: time collapses, something happens… Space is displaced".[375] On the face of it, it seems that this piece of writing is entirely unrelated to Poussin, in fact wholly unrelated to painting even though these comments were made by Kossoff in his effort to answer Wollheim's question, "Why Poussin?".[376]

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[370] 1926 – 2019.
[371] 18th January – 16th April 2000.
[372] Wollheim, R. (2000) "Learning from Poussin. From a conversation with Leon Kossoff at his London Studio", *Modern Painters*, Spring 2000, vol. 13, issue 1, pp. 24-29.
[373] Kundera, M. (1991) *Immortality*, translated from the Czech by Peter Kussi, Faber and Faber.
[374] Ibid. p. 3.
[375] Wollheim, (2000) *Learning from Poussin*, p. 28.
[376] Ibid.

This 'something' happens between extremes existing in the same place and at the same time. Between elegance and charm-lessness; between young and old; and, in the context of the novel's main themes, between immortality and death.

At the end of the interview with Kossoff, Wollheim introduces the topic of water in Poussin's paintings. This topic is seized upon by the painter. "I was surprised" Wollheim mentions, "by the force and alacrity with which he responded." Contemplating Poussin's painting of reflections in water, Wollheim noted Kossoff saying, "Everything can melt, and yet stay strong."[377]

There is an elusiveness to Kossoff's comments. Nevertheless, I suggest they correlate to an underlying dialectic which runs through the disruptive mode and potentiality of a stuttering-thinking and visual-stuttering and, as we shall see, to the tremor-like fusions (or stutters) and crossovers associated to my use of the painted grid as a device – experienced in, for example, *Deceased Estate No. 123, part i* (Painting No. 7), (Fig. 3:1).
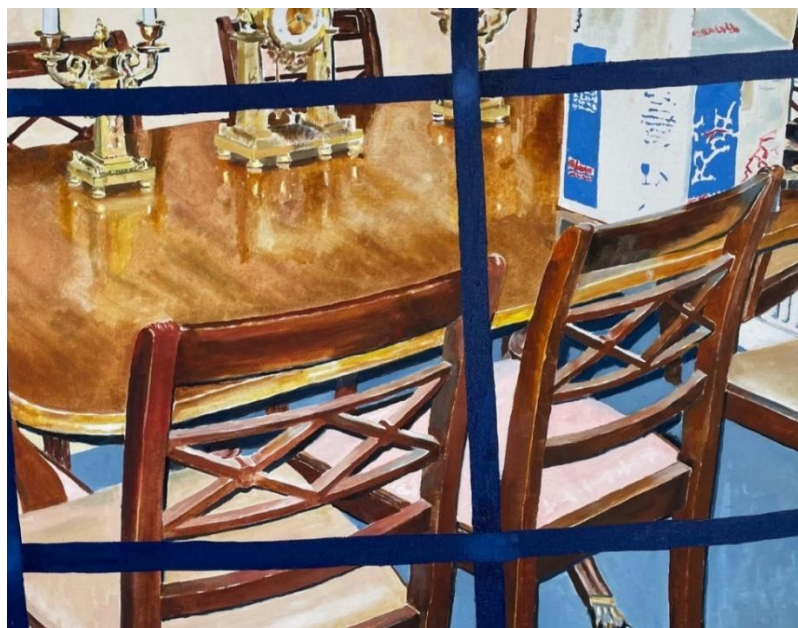
Fig. 3:1

Deceased Estate No. 123, part i (**Painting No. 7**) (detail)

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[377] Ibid.

Coming to understand, through my practice,[378] the dialectic between two opposing points of reference within specific paintings by Poussin has been critical in my investigation into how a contradictory dissonance within a painting could be used as a practical and theoretical strategy to explore where an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting resides – and, in turn, how it could be alternatively expressed.

Poussin's *Memento-Mori*

During the first eighteen months into this project my practice was preoccupied with appropriating sections of, picking apart, excavating, and trying to unveil Poussin's paintings in an endeavour to comprehend Koether's and Kossoff's observations on them, and why the paintings struck such a compelling chord for them, and for myself. I was keen to understand how they came to articulate Poussin's apparitional dialectic within his paintings. A dialectic, they had suggested, caused by his application of paint, his idiosyncratic style (or manner), and the paintings' contents and narratives. My purpose at this point was to use my practice to unpack and come to recognise Poussin's engagement with *memento-mori* in painting – and ultimately to find ways and reasons how this project's expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting could be alternatively expressed.

During this time, I focused on two paintings:

- *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake,* (1648). (Fig. 3:2).
- *Et In Arcadia Ego,* (c. 1637-8). (Fig. 3:4).

Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake has an essentially narrative association with *memento-mori*, whilst *Et In Arcadia Ego* a more symbolic association.[379] I produced a significant amount of work during these months, culminating in an exhibition I curated at Sion Hill Gallery, Bath.[380]

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[378] See Appendix, pages 251 – 256 (Figs. Il:9 – 19).
[379] See Appendix for my description of *Landscape with a Snake* in diary entry 21st September 2021, page 261.
[380] September 2022. See Appendix, pages 263 - 265.

According to the French philosopher and art critic Louis Marin,[381] Poussin launched an "entirely new idea" in thinking about *memento-mori* in painting.[382] An idea, Marin explained, demonstrated in the painter's attitude to life and death, and which Marin described as being "entirely in harmony with the formal qualities of [his] style."[383]

Fig. 3:2

Nicolas Poussin, *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake* (1648)
Oil on canvas, 118 x 198 cm. National Gallery, London.

Marin made this inference some time after Erwin Panofsky's essays were published (both titled *Et in Arcadia Ego*).[384] Although Panofsky's writing is "maybe a bit too abstract and redemptive",[385] there is a clear theme running throughout the essays; that, through his paintings, "Poussin's account of life and death is dialectical".[386]

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[381] 1931 - 1992
[382] Louis Marin quoted in: Clark, T.J. (2006) *The Sight of Death. An Experiment in Art Writing*, Yale University Press, p. 96.
[383] Marin, L. (1999), *Sublime Poussin*, translated by Catherine Porter, Stanford University Press, pp. 104-119.
[384] Panofsky, E. (1938) "*Et in Arcadia ego* et le tombeau parlant", *Gazette des Beaux-arts*, ser. 6, 19 (1938), pp. 305-306, and Panofsky, E. (1955), *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, Doubleday Anchor, p. 296.
[385] Clark (2006) *The Sight of Death*, p. 96.
[386] Ibid. (Clark reprints the whole of Panofsky's relevant paragraph on the same page).

Panofsky relates Poussin's attitude towards life to the formal qualities of his painting style describing the figures in his pictures as being connected by a "rhythmic concatenation",[387] whether they be set apart from one another or in groups.[388] Whilst, at the same time reconciling "the perfect clarity of sheer classical design with the rich vitality of Venetian colourism".[389] This dialectic within Poussin's paintings between structure in the form of classical design, and looseness or freedom in the form of rhythmic concatenation echoes, I suggest, Jutta Koether's and Leon Kossoff's observations.[390]

Koether, Kossoff and Panofsky describe in separate, yet homogeneous ways, a coexistence of a structure (architectonic) and a non-structure (emotional inserts) within Poussin's paintings. Koether concentrating more on Poussin's application of paint and style, while Panofsky reflects more on his image construction and narrative. Leon Kossoff, on the other hand, offers a more abstract, esoteric observation – yet all having the same underlying theme.

It is, I propose, this coexistence of a structure and non-structure that exists in Poussin's paintings that so resonates with my practice and this project's aims. Furthermore, the emergence, development and my subsequent articulation of a visual-stuttering, relates directly to a similar coexistence of structure and non-structure. On the one hand, there is a coexistence of rigidity allied to Poussin's pattern making (or architectonic) structure, related to fluent language – and on the other, a non-structure which nearly collapses, related to critical and clinical stuttering. With this in mind, in the same essay from 1938, Panofsky describes the dichotomy of life and death in Poussin's painting *Dance to the Music of Time* as "condition free though fate-bound, dignified though pathetic, imperishable though variable"[391] (Fig A:1).[392]

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[387] Panofsky (1938) *Et in Arcadia Ego*, p. 305.
[388] For example: *Landscape with Man Killed by a Snake* and *Stormy Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe*, (1651) oil on canvas, 192 x 273 cm, Stadel, Frankfurt am Main, Germany, and: *Et in Arcadia Ego and A Dance to the Music of Time* (ca. 1634), oil on canvas, *The Wallace Collection*, London (Fig. A:1, page 274).
[389] Panofsky (1938) *Et in Arcadia Ego*, p. 305.
[390] A point of view clarified during the course of my visit to the National Gallery's exhibition, *Poussin and the Dance*, 9th October 2021 – 2nd January 2022.
[391] Ibid.
[392] Page 274.

T.J. Clark, however, argues that *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake* encompasses a truer dichotomy in that it contains, "the moment at which the contraries threaten to whirl apart – the moment the human agent reaches out again to contain them."[393] A moment, for instance, manifested in the form of the running, stuttering, man frozen (or perhaps 'blocked') at the sight of death, while other figures beside the lake go about their daily lives.[394]

My version of *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake* (Painting No. 12) is not a direct copy of Poussin's painting, rather a mimetically-allied interpretation. It was painted using a coloured print as a point of reference, relying also on visual memory. In the top left corner is an outline drawing of Room 29 in the National Gallery where the painting is currently displayed, sourced from a photograph I took on 23rd September 2021 (Painting No. 11).[395] A linear red grid wraps the entire surface of the painting.

The painting took several months to complete due to the time-consuming way I endeavoured to emulate Poussin's delicate, almost pointillist, application of paint (Fig.3:3).

Fig. 3:3

Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake (after Poussin), (detail)

[393] Clark (2006) The Sight of Death, p. 97
[394] See Figs. Il:15 and Il:16 (pages 254 & 255).
[395] In a similar manner, *Running Man* and *Kneeling Woman* (Figs. Il:13 and Il:15) contain screenprint copies of the same photograph (pages 253 & 254).

In contrast to this pointillist application of paint, in my eye's mind the painted red grid adds a conspicuous structural element to the painting, and in doing so concurrently visually fragments the image.[396]

In contrast to Poussin's *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake*, in his painting *Et In Arcadia Ego*, three stationary men and one woman are shown interacting with a large stone tomb set within an idealised classical Arcadian landscape (Fig. 3:4). One of the figures is seen kneeling in front of the tomb pointing at a carved inscription that reads: 'Et In Arcadia Ego'. The literal Latin to English translation of the title and the inscription is 'Even In Arcadia, there I am'. The subtext being: Even in Arcadia, death occurs.

Fig. 3:4

Nicolas Poussin, *Et In Arcadia Ego.* (circa 1637-38)
Oil on canvas, 85 x 211 cm., Musee de Louvre, Paris.

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[396] See Introduction, p. 56 - 57.

"There have always been two kinds of arcadia," notes the historian Simon Schama, "shaggy and smooth; dark and light; a place of bucolic leisure and a place of primitive panic".[397] It is in these two kinds of arcadia, one ascribed to Virgil, and the other to Ovid,[398] that Panofsky ascribes two disparate meanings of the phrase *'Et in Arcadia Ego'*. Either "a bygone happiness ended by death", or "a present happiness menaced by death".[399]

This dual reading leads Panofsky to give an account of Poussin's:

> "[…] transformation of a mere Memento Mori into the revelation of a metaphysical principle which *connects the present and the future with the past and overthrows the limits of individuality* […]."[400]

Virgil's concept of Arcardy (a region in Ancient Greece), as an "imaginary realm of perfect bliss",[401] is the one that we still accept when we think of Arcadia. However, by placing a tomb in Arcadia a dissonance is created, Poussin seems to be asking how death and human suffering can be present in such perfect, idealised, surroundings.

Francesco Giovanni Barbieri's earlier painting, also titled *Et in Arcadia Ego*,[402] is both similar and in contrast to Poussin's later painting.[403] Barbieri's version shows two shepherds stumbling across a skull placed on top of an old piece of masonry on which the phrase 'Et in Arcadia Ego' is similarly carved (Fig. A:2, page 274). The skull "receives the attentions of a fly and a mouse, popular symbols of decay and all-devouring time",[404] placing the painting firmly under the traditional notion of *memento-mori*

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[397] Schama, S. (2004) *Landscape and Memory*, Harper Press, p. 517.
[398] Panofsky explains how Virgil re-tells Theocritus's account of Pan (the Greek God of the wild and of nature) travelling from the ancient 'hard' Arcardy (a bleak and chilly district of Greece) to Sicily for the dying Daphnis to return his shepherd's flute to Pan. In Virgil's retelling Pan travels in the opposite direction, since he sets the story of Daphnis's death in Virgil's version of Arcardy: 'an imaginary realm of perfect bliss', or Arcadi. (In Greek mythology, Daphnis was a Sicilian shepherd who was said to be the inventor of pastoral poetry.)
[399] Panofsky, E. (1955), *Meaning in the Visual Arts,* Doubleday Anchor, p. 296.
[400] Ibid. (My emphasis).
[401] Ibid. p. 300.
[402] Circa 1618-1622, oil on canvas, 81 x 91 cm, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica a Palazzo Barberini, Rome.
[403] Francesco Giovanni Barbieri, also known as Guercino, Italian, (1591 – 1666).
[404] Panofsky (1955) *Et in Arcadia Ego*, p. 307.

within a painting whereby the skull is employed to remind us that death is coming.[405] Whereas the lack of a skull in Poussin's painting, builds upon Poussin's alternative interpretation of how *memento-mori* could be thought about, and be represented, in a painting.

Moreover, Poussin sets the notion of *memento-mori* in *Et In Arcadia Ego* within a Virgil themed Arcadia, which has the effect of projecting tragedy and the remembrance of death, "either into the future or, preferably, into the past and he therefore transforms mythical truth into elegiac sentiment",[406] thereby moving the notion away from a linear concept of temporality into an alternative temporality associated with this project's expanded notion of *memento-mori*. This temporality, I submit, is a disrupted, non-sequential, stuttering kind of temporality which reflects, and is allied to, the perceived problem of painting's time – and this project's understanding, and my practice's use, of a visual stutter.[407]

In comparison to the red painted grid in Painting No. 12 (which acts to simultaneously structure and fragment), the heavier weave-like grid in *Et In Arcadia Ego* (Painting No. 13) also acts to trap (even embed) the notion of *memento-mori* within the painting, despite its representational content. (Fig. 3:5). (The idea of embedding a notion within a painting is explored in the following chapter through an analysis of *Self Portrait* (Painting No. 5)).

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[405] In the mid-17th Century, the human skull was often referred to as 'death's head'. Panofsky notes: "It is in harmony with the principles of Classicist art theory, which rejected 'les objects bizarres', especially such gruesome objects as a death's-head." Ibid. p. 313.
[406] Ibid. p. 301.
[407] See Chapter Six, page 196.

Fig. 3:5

Et In Arcadia Ego (detail) (**Painting No. 13**)

Due to the context from which the phrase 'Et in Arcadia Ego' was taken, the weave-like grid (in my eye's mind) acts to fragment the notion of *memento-mori* away from a linear concept of temporality.[408] By which I mean, aided by my use of the grid, my appropriation of the phrase 'Et in Arcadia Ego', taken from Poussin's tomb, places the notion of *memento-mori* into an alternative setting other than one whereby the notion is expressed with the use of an object representing a linear and finite concept of time.

For the exhibition *Memento-Mori in Painting*, both *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake (after Poussin)* (**Painting No. 12**) and *Et In Arcadia Ego* (**Painting No. 13**) were displayed in the semi-partitioned back area of the gallery (Fig. 3:6). A partial reason for this placement was for contextual purposes, as explained in the Introduction.[409] However, a secondary reason was to acknowledge and to experiment with the role a painting's 'transitivity' plays in an expanded, and alternatively expressed, notion of *memento-mori in* painting.

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[408] See Introduction, p. 56 - 57.
[409] Pages 39 - 40.

Fig. 3:6

Installation View. *Memento-Mori in Painting*: *An Image of Multiplicities.*

Transitivity

In his essay *Painting Beside Itself*, the American art historian, David Joselit gives an account of why Jutta Koether's exhibition *Lux Interior* is key to understanding how a painting can, and should, explicitly visualise paintings' networks. A thought expressed by the German artist Martin Kippenberger [410] in an interview with Jutta Koether from 1991.[411] Joselit describes how the exhibition offered a sophisticated response to the question: How does painting belong to a network?[412]

Lux Interior, held in 2009, was an exhibition revolving around one of Koether's paintings reworking Poussin's *Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe*,[413] and titled: *Hot Rod*. The painting was the centre of attention, installed on its very own angled floating

[410] 1953 – 1997.
[411] Printed in: Goldstein, A. (ed.) (2008) *Martin Kippenberger: The Problem Perspective*, The M.I.T. Press, p. 316.
[412] Joselit, D. (2009) "Painting Beside Itself", *October*, vol. 130, Fall 2009, pp. 125 – 134.
[413] 1651, Oil on canvas, 192.5 x 273.5 cm, Stadel Museum, Frankfurt.

wall, having one foot on and one foot off a raised platform that "delineate[d] the gallery's exhibition area, as though caught in the act of stepping on stage."[414] (Fig. 3:7).

Fig. 3:7

Jutta Koether. *Hot Rod (after Poussin),* (2009).
Acrylic, pastel and mixed media on canvas, 203 x 264 cm.
Courtesy of the artist and Reena Spauling Fine Art, NY/LA. Photo Credit: Farzad Owrang.

Joselit tells us how Koether used *Hot Rod* as a strategic element to actualise "the behaviour of objects within networks by demonstrating […] their transitivity".[415] "I can think of no better term," Joselit writes, "to capture the status of objects within networks – which are defined by their circulation from place to place and their subsequent translation into new contexts […]".[416]

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[414] Joselit (2009), *Painting Beside Itself*, p.126.
[415] Ibid. p.128. Here he also gives the Oxford English Dictionary's definition of 'transitive' as '*expressing an action which passes over to an object*'.
[416] Ibid.

In this instance he mentions just two transitive axes: the passage of time, and a passage which moves "out from painting as cultural artefact to the social networks surrounding it".[417] In other words, Joselit uses Koether's unique instalment of her Poussin inspired painting to describe the passage of time within and without the painting. The time taken for Koether to execute the painting is deemed by Joselit to continue, or be transitive, within the social networks it subsequently belongs. Of additional interest to this project is how Joselit used *Hot Rod* to illustrate the extended ambitions of painting's transitivity of reaching back into art history, demonstrated by Koether's seizing works by 17th Century European classicist painter Nicolas Poussin.[418]

As a companion piece to *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake (after Poussin)* (Painting No. 12) I painted a grisaille egg-tempera version of a photograph I took of Room 29 in the National Gallery in London, where Poussin's painting now hangs (Painting No. 11). Both paintings, I suggest, put a spotlight on painting's transitive aspect in that they visualise the art historical and built-environment (or social) networks from which they belong, whilst also being part of their own, enclosed, network.[419]

In the exhibition *Memento-Mori in Painting*, the painting *Room 29* (Painting No. 11) was placed immediately on the right wall on entering the gallery, close to the exhibition statement handouts.[420] It acted as an introduction (and possible question) to the exhibition in that the ideas stemmed from Poussin's painting, and the social environment to where it now belongs, instigated many of the themes encompassed within this project.

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[417] Ibid.

[418] Other examples Joselit uses to illustrate his notion of transitivity are works by the American post-conceptualist artist Stephen Prina (American, 1954-) and his commandeering of the paintings by Edouard Manet. The example given is Prina's: '*Exquisite Corpse: The Complete Paintings of Manet, 206 of 556, Mme. Edouard Manet et Paysage a Berck-sur-Mer, 1873*.' 2004.

[419] These two paintings, and *Net* (Fig. Il:8), were displayed in the form of a triptych during my 2022 Interim Exhibition. See Appendix, page 266.

[420] See page 13.

Although the two paintings were hung some distance away from each other, when standing in the far-left corner both Painting No. 12 and Painting No. 11 can be seen at once, albeit obliquely (Fig. 3:8).
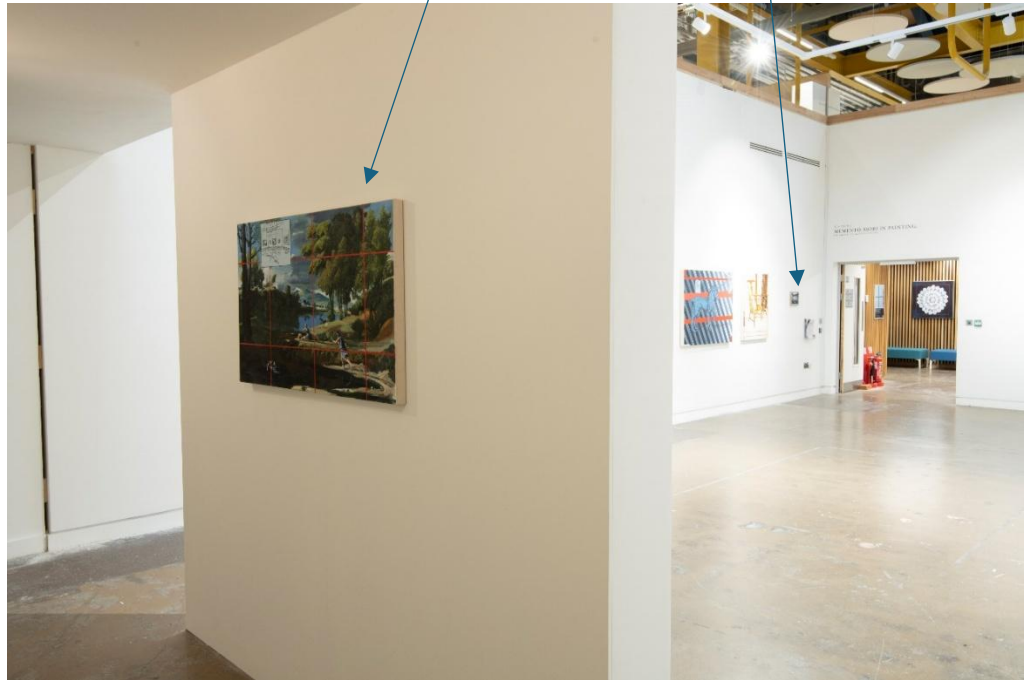

Fig. 3:8

Installation View. *Memento-Mori in Painting*: *An Image of Multiplicities.*

In a similar manner, *Deceased Estate No 159, part ii (19th Century Irish Doily)* (Painting No. 14), displayed on the wall directly opposite the gallery entrance outside the gallery's space, was painted as a companion piece to *Deceased Estate No 159, part i* (Painting No. 4).

I had initially considered displaying the two paintings as a diptych.[421] However, the exhibition provided me with the opportunity to experiment with how far the appropriation and the painted re-setting of overlooked, *memento-mori* infused, items (in this instance, a cotton doily) have held on to their original (and now expanded) notion of *memento-mori*.

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[421] See Literature Review, page 82, and Appendix, page 302 .

Or, in other words, the paintings thought through placement questioned the extent to which a notion in a painting, such as *memento-mori*, when 'transitivified' to new networks or settings, can be revealed (Map 2 and Figs. 3:9, 3:10 & 3:11).
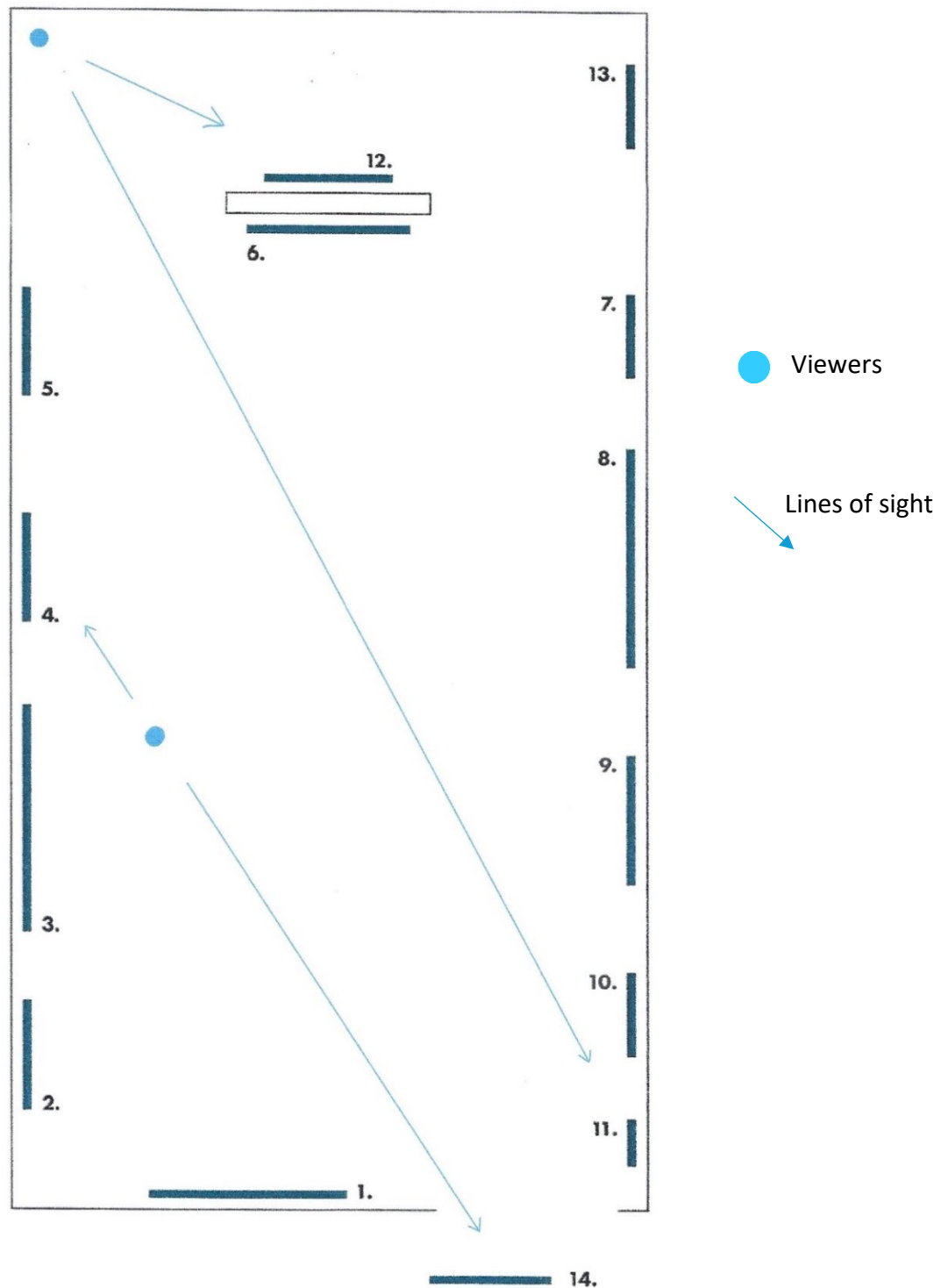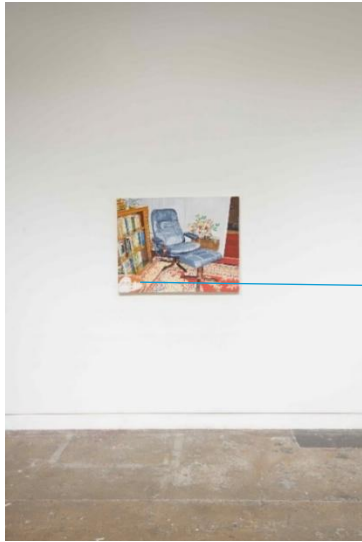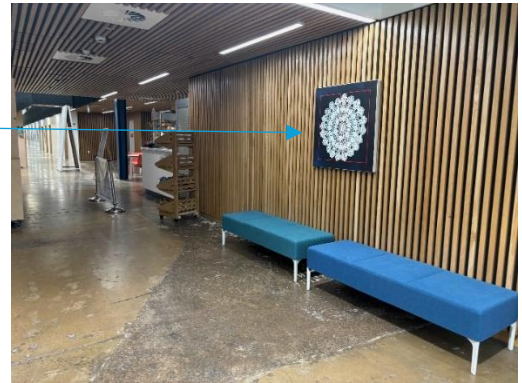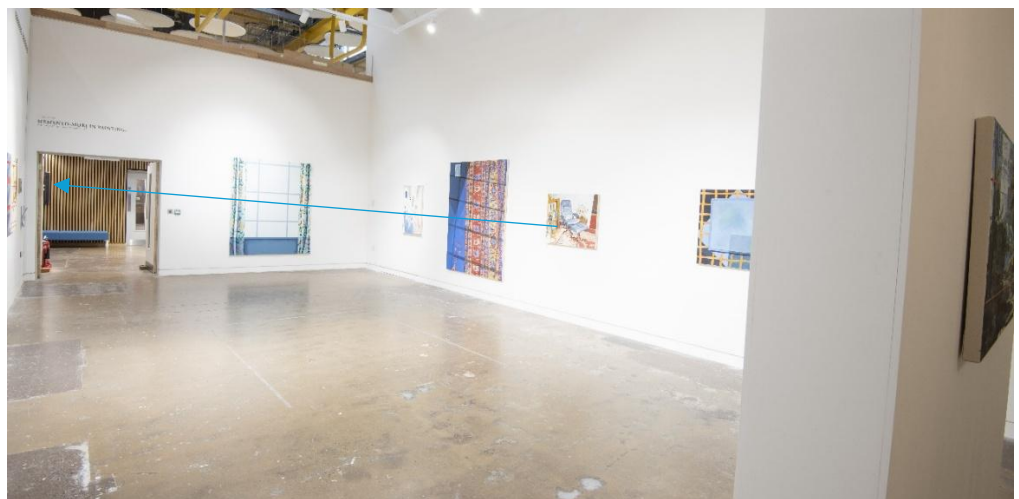

Map 2

Fig. 3:9

Fig. 3:10

Fig. 3:11

Installation Views. *Memento-Mori in Painting*: *An Image of Multiplicities.*

The arrows in Figs 3:9, 10 and 11 point to the direction of transitivity from within Painting No. 4 towards its associated painting (Painting No. 14), displayed in the corridor outside the gallery space, and where a cotton doily (appropriated from No. 4) is centrally raised right up onto the painting's surface.

<u>Sensuous Signs</u>

The notion of transitivity, I propose, additionally acts to unravel and create a deeper understanding of this project's notion of *memento-mori* in painting when reading the painting's transitivited objects as sensuous signs.[422]

In *Proust and Signs*,[423] Gilles Deleuze identified four categories of signs within Proust's novel *Remembrance of Things Past*.[424] He defined the third as a type of sensuous impression, or a sign instilled with a quality experienced as that which, "can no longer [appear] as a property of the object that now possesses it, but as the sign of an altogether different object that we must try and decipher".[425]

Sensuous signs "indicating essentially different objects from which they appear to inhibit",[426] speak to my practice's instinctive need – born out of a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering – to bring to the surface, prosaic and arbitrary objects contained within a deceased estate photograph and imbue it with (capricious) significance, such as an embroidered unicorn cushion (Painting No. 9),[427] a cardboard box (Painting No. 8) or a cotton doily (Painting No. 14).

Exploring how these objects might indicate something else previously hidden or unconsidered, my practice has relied on a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering's capacity to transform, open-up and take apart elements of arbitrary objects, "to reveal, or rather 'develop' the quality of 'impression' enfolded within […] object[s]."[428] The curatorial process and resulting insights made during the exhibition allowed for this exploration to be worked through outside of my (hermetic) studio, and situated within a public setting.

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[422] Cotton doily (No. 14), cardboard box (No. 8), unicorn embroidered cushion (No. 9), carpet (No. 2) and curtains (No. 1)
[423] Deleuze, G. (2008) *Proust and Signs*, Continuum.
[424] Proust, M. (2002) *Remembrance of Things Past*, translated by Lydia Davis, Penguin Books (originally published in 1913).
[425] Deleuze (2008), *Proust and Signs*, p. 8
[426] Harland (2009) *A Fragment of Time*, p. 56.
[427] See Chapter One, pages 101-105.
[428] Ibid.

<u>Image Quality</u>

Towards the end of his essay, Joselit mentions works by Amy Sillman and Thomas Eggerer.[429] The image-making quality of works made by both painters naturally lie in the forefront of a viewer's attention (Fig. 3:12). A quality leading the art historian Brandon Taylor to ask whether "transitivity in such examples amounts to much more than an image-quality." Taylor continues: "[...] it is clear that facingness for Joselit is not a primary value in painting anymore."[430]

Fig. 3:12

Thomas Eggerer, New Balance (2020)
Oil on canvas, 165.7 x 132.1 cm. Signed and dated in pencil verso. (TE 20/014)
© Thomas Eggerer, courtesy of the artist and Petzel, New York.

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[429] Amy Sillman (American, 1955 -), Thomas Eggerer (German, 1963 -).
[430] Taylor, B. (2017), "Something is said...: A Conversation with Maria Chevska", *Journal of Contemporary Painting*, 3: 1&2, pp.83-99.

In response to Taylor's observation, I turn to Gerhard Richter's set of four *Birkenau* paintings based on the only four photographs known to exist explicitly showing the actions of Hitler's final solution as it was physically taking place. Richter began the paintings by copying the photographs onto four large canvases with the intention of turning them into figurative grisaille paintings. However, the most horrendous of crimes against humanity in the twentieth century could not, for Richter "be isolated and singularized [...]" through figurative painting.[431] (Fig. 3:13).

This image has been redacted by the author from the digital version of the thesis for copyright reasons.

Fig. 3:13

Gerhard Richter*, Birkenau*, (2014)
Oil on canvas, 260 x 200 cm.
https://www.artforum.com/events/gerhard-richter-25-239248/

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[431] Buchloh, B.H.D., Fer, B., Geimer, P., Kumar, B., Rottmann, A., & Wagstaff, S. (2020) *Gerhard Richter – Painting After All*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, p. 39.

The resulting, purely abstract, paintings led Benjamin Buchloh to comment "[…] only the chasm between the act of naming and the gesture of a nameless and comparatively meaningless painting can confront viewers with the actual demands to be literally faced."[432]

In no way am I equating the content of my paintings with the content and source material of Richter's *Birkenau* paintings. However, Richter's justification to move from figuration to abstraction not only questions the limits of representation,[433] but also questions Joselit's definition of transitive painting as "its capacity to hold in suspension the passages internal to a canvas, and those external to it."[434]

In this sense, I recognise that through this project's investigation into an expanded notion of *memento-mori*, my practice could have become over reliant on perceptions brought together by concepts and ideas formed beyond its resulting painting's edges.[435] However, I contend that the external factors related to this project have largely emerged from passages internal to my paintings, rather than 'passages external'.

I submit that my exhibition *Memento-Mori in Painting,* and the paintings therein, evidenced this contention. My use of the painted grid to counterintuitively connect and disrupt is a result of an intuitive stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering, rather than a way to justify the grid's purpose. Furthermore, this disruptive<>connective stuttering property which sits at the heart of my practice and this project has acted to keep my painting's transitivity in check. By which I mean, my practice throughout this project has resisted the pursuit of mere image quality in its investigation into an expanded, and alternatively expressed, notion of *memento-mori* in painting.

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[432] Ibid. p. 40.
[433] *Probing the Limits of Representation, Nazism and the 'Final Solution'*, edited by Saul Friedlander (Harvard University Press, 1992) contains a series of essays questioning whether the Holocaust can ever be compellingly described or represented.
[434] Joselit (2009), *Painting Beside Itself*, p. 129.
[435] A concern I comment on in the Literature Review relating to my interest in a psychoanalytic approach to my painting (page 65).

Conclusion

Putting into practice the knowledge and the insights gained from practice-led investigations into specific paintings by Nicolas Poussin dealing with alternative ways and narrative modes to express, think about, and represent the notion of *memento-mori* in painting, can, I propose, be used to reason alternative ways for the notion to be expressed other than using objects symbolising a sequential, and ultimately finite, concept of time.

In addition, Jutta Koether's and Leon Kossoff's observations on Poussin's paintings advocating that they possess unseen-in-between spaces, are analogous to this project's stuttering-thinking and visual-stuttering – where, on the one hand, there is a coexistence of rigidity – allied to a pattern making structure and related to fluent language – and on the other, a non-structure which nearly collapses, related to critical and clinical stuttering. In the following chapter I will explore these stylistic and theoretical unseen-in-between spaces within my own paintings; and will propose that it is here where this project's expanded, and alternatively expressed, notion of *memento-mori* operates.

Instigated from Jutta Koether's 2009 exhibition *Lux Interior*, and reflecting on David Joselit's notion of painting's transitivity, my exhibition *Memento-Mori in Painting* gave me an opportunity to appraise how far a notion of *memento-mori* in painting can be stretched or expanded away from sources imbued with the notion of *memento-mori.* In this sense the exhibition acted as a visual manifestation of my practice's methodology in its use of a network of strategies and systems.

The exhibition, and its resulting insights, demonstrated what happens when you reconfigure those systems, remove a strategy, replace a strategy, or take a shuffle to them. The exhibition led me (and, hopefully, its viewers) to consider what changes had been made to the notion of *memento-mori* in painting – and what remained of it between the series of associated (and stretched, or 'transitivited') deceased estate paintings.[436]

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[436] See Introduction, page 50.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE UNSEEN IN-BETWEEN

Introduction

In light of the themes covered and proposals made in the preceding chapters, this chapter considers the pertinence (within the periphery of this project) of Isabelle Graw and David Joselit's proposals that a unique quality of painting is its ability to signify and store things other than, and as well as, what the viewer initially reads on a painting's surface.[437]

I will give an account of how the art historian Robert Zwijnenberg's process of unravelling the dissimulated in Leonardo da Vinci's painting *St. John the Baptist* (Fig. 4:7) led me to unpack the painted grid's role as an alternative visual configuration to communicate an expanded and dissimulated notion of *memento-mori* in painting. In his essay *Presence and Absence*[438] Zwijnenberg explains how Da Vinci's painting discreetly points towards its inferred subject of the mystery of the (Christian) Incarnation by way of employing a reading associated with the haptic.[439]

Informed from ideas articulated in his essay, I introduce the idea of why, when applied under certain circumstances, my use of the painted grid points towards an expanded notion of *memento-mori* – one which does not conspicuously announce itself – and one which is similarly reliant upon, and associated with, concepts revolving around the haptic.

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[437] Set out in: In: Graw, I & Lajer-Burcharth, E. (eds), (2016), *Painting Beyond Itself. The Medium in the Post Medium Condition*, Sternberg Press, pp.11-22 & 79-102.

[438] Zwijnenberg in: Farago, C. & Zwijnenberg, R. (eds.) (2003) *Compelling Visuality. The Work of Art in and out of History*, University of Minnesota Press, pp. 112-127.

[439] As I will lay out in the following chapter, the haptic can be described as analogous to the near, the sense of touch and as a mechanism of mentally synthesising multiple, discontinuous, sensory inputs.

Reflecting on the idea that a painting, supported by a unique indexicality suggested by Isabelle Graw and David Joselit, could, under some circumstances, point towards a notion of *memento-mori* which bypasses the use of representational objects signifying a linear notion of time, I will consider how an absence of something in a painting could, counter-intuitively, suggest a presence of something.

Returning to Lacanian themes of desire and entrapment, I also examine how my use of the grid could be seen as a metaphorical interlaced weave, to cover or hide; as well as to interlink, interlace and trap (or embed) a notion of *memento-mori* within a painting.

In its role as a practical and theoretical template for some of the ideas introduced here, an account of my painting *Self Portrait* (Painting No. 5) will be given and the role it played in the exhibition *Memento-Mori in Painting*, specifically its affiliation with *Et In Arcadia Ego* (Painting No. 13) and *Deceased Estate No. 123, part i* (Painting No. 7).

In the introduction to his translation of the early 14th Century English poem *Sir Gawain and The Green Knight*, the poet Simon Armitage makes the point that some of the original poem is perfectly readable, while some, totally incomprehensible. But it is the lines, he explains, "that fall somewhere between those extremes […] which fascinate the most. They seem to make sense, though not quite. To the untrained eye, it is as if the poem is lying beneath a thin coat of ice, tantalisingly near, yet frustratingly blurred."[440]

Using a markedly visual image, Armitage observes that the uncovering of meanings from subtly hidden, or dissimulated, phrases within the known structural narrative of the poem, fascinates him the most. This fascination can be equated to, and help clarify the reason for a painting's intrigue, in that, explains the Dutch writer and curator Jurriaan Benschop, although "[…] visual art is visible, [and] should be able to convince or feed the viewer's curiosity through the eye, […] a substantial part of it is invisible; part of it is hidden beyond the canvas, and inside the viewer."[441]

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[440] Armitage, S. (2007) *Sir Gawain and The Green Knight*, W.W. Norton & Co., p. 11.
[441] Benschop, J. (2023) *Why Paintings Work*, translated by Susan Ridder, Garret Publications, p. 26.

The chapter will be dealing with ways my practice has searched for an expanded notion of *memento-mori* within the tantalisingly near and frustratingly blurred – a quality, according to Benschop, possessive of all visual art.

This (re-) search will introduce a way the notion of *memento-mori* could be revealed from within the holed-through space created out of the surface of a painting, whereby the effects of a painted grid can be understood under the precepts of a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering.

Self Portrait

Self Portrait (Painting No. 5) belongs adjacent to this project's two main bodies of work, in that its source of construction and content differ from them. Yet it acts to bridge the gap between initially unarticulated thoughts and some of the key concepts running through both bodies of work and, as we shall see, demonstrates how those concepts developed out of my practice (Fig. 4:1 and 4:4).
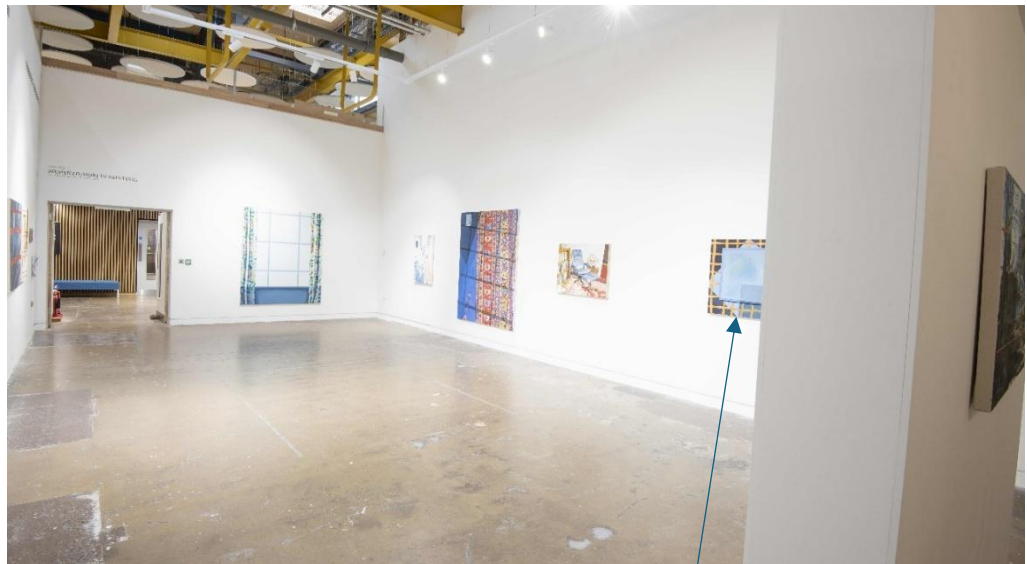

Fig. 4:1

Installation View. *Memento-Mori in Painting*.   *Self Portrait* (Painting No. 5)

By unarticulated thoughts I mean thoughts (such as a visual-stuttering, the disrupted potentiality of the painted grid, and looking for the unseen in-between) glimpsed at (or intuited) whilst painting, but not yet articulated. Or, in Deleuzian terms, some-thoughts (as opposed to some-things) which can, unknowingly "[…] destabilise clichés and ready-made ideas, in which both art and thought come alive and discover their resonances with one another."[442] Sitting between abstraction and figuration, I will give an account of *Self Portrait* with the visual artist Tim O'Riley's comments in mind.

He writes:

> "A representational picture presents a framed or bounded portion of space beyond the frame. The dialogue between these two spaces, the visible and the invisible, sets up the viewer a process of interpretation which draws on their experience of perceiving the world. […] The physical gap between the viewer and picture surface can be as full of narrative and evocative potential as the implied space behind that surface."[443]

Relying on a mirror for reference, the painting began as a traditional representational head-on self-portrait. During the proceeding months, however, I was intuitively compelled to paint over it, while also placing a weave/grid-like device behind the implied edges of the mirror.[444] It was an appealing and rewarding process and seemed, somehow, to represent a more authentic self-portrait, despite covering over any suggestion of a physical likeness.

Even though a painted representation of my likeness lies hidden beneath the top layers of paint,[445] the indication of my presence and time spent painting is still in evidence. For instance, the surface of the painting, despite and because of what lies beneath (and is hidden), points towards my time whilst painting seen via the evidence of brushstrokes (Fig. 4:6). To this end, I still think of it as a self-portrait (albeit in conflict with a traditionally held understanding of one) and have retained its original title.

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[442] Rajchman (2000) *The Deleuze Connections*, p. 115.
[443] Tim O'Riley, *Representing Illusions*, in: Holdridge, L. & MacLeod, K. (eds), (2006) *Thinking Through Art, reflections on art as research*, Routledge, p. 94.
[444] The central grey/blue/green rectangular form.
[445] Now only visible, presumably, by use of electromagnetic radiation (X-ray).

A grid, or weave-like device, sits behind a central rectangular panel, simultaneously pushing the picture plane back and forth, disturbing the painting's holed-through space. Placed upon a black ground, a light blue panel, or plane, sits behind the painted grid. The suggestion of an object belonging within the gap between the surface of the painting and the viewer is implied by a rectangular shadow in the bottom right corner.[446]

The formal structure of the painting was informed, in part, by the linear and grid-like construction of Nicolas Poussin's 1670 *Self Portrait* which incorporates rectangular spatial planes placed behind the figure in the form of framed paintings, prepared canvases, and the backs of stretchers (Fig. 4:2 & 4:3). These rectangular forms, or spatial planes, denote, in my eye's mind, hypothetical interpretive planes, indicated by Louis Marin as being discordant elements within the painting.
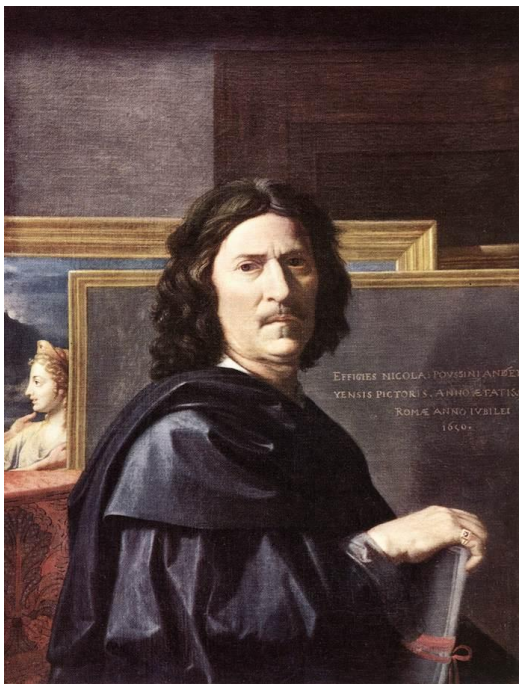

Fig. 4:2

Nicolas Poussin, *Self Portrait,* (1650)
Oil on canvas, 98 x 74 cm.
Louvre Museum, Paris (INV 7302, MR 2329)

Fig. 4:3

Self Portrait

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[446] See Chapter Two, p. 111.

Marin describes how:

> "[…] behind the monument of the figure, we find a background made up of surfaces sliding over one another toward the edges, in a state of flight or flux, an internal tension in the field of painting."[447]

By means of performing a theoretical cataract upon myself, a hope of mine at the beginning of this research project was that by the end of it I would be able to see more clearly. Jacques Lacan, however, suggests the opposite, believing that to clarify one's vision the obscuring nature of cataracts are, theoretically, essential: "Elements within the optical field must be repressed if clear vision is to be enabled".[448]

The less you see, Lacan claimed, the more you want to see – a condition he called "fascination frustrated".[449] The frustration, for example, created by anamorphosis,[450] and when associated to the grid-like motif of the labyrinth, creates, in effect, a trap. Albeit a uniquely elaborate one, and one frustrating our demand to see. Lacan wrote:

> "In this matter of the visible, everything is a trap, and in a strange way - […] - entrelacs (interlacing, intertwining). There is not a single one of the divisions, a single one of the double sides that the function of vision presents, that is not manifested to us as a labyrinth. As we begin to distinguish its various fields, we always perceive more and more the extent to which they intersect."[451]

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[447] Marin, L. (2001) *On Representation*, translated by Catherine Porter, Stanford University Press, p. 287.

[448] Scott, M. (2008), "Lacan's 'Of the Gaze as Object Petit a' as Anamorphic Discourse", *Paragraph, Vol. 31, No. 3*, (November 2008), p. 328.

The French philosopher, author and poet Georges Bataille describes a similar effect in his account of an exhibition of Joan Miro's paintings, shown in 1930 at the Galerie Pierre, Paris. Briony Fer explains that for Bataille, "a metonymic chain, where one term migrates into another, is triggered by the metaphor of dust. It is as if a mass of grains or specks occupies the field of vision and forms a veil against the light. Vision is obscured, and yet the sight is ravishing". Fer (1997), p. 77.

In *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century Vision* (1994), Martin Jay gives a detailed analysis of the idea of 'scotomization', a psychological term for the mental blocking of unwanted perceptions, and its role in 20th Century art.

[449] A term originally coined by the Symbolist poet Jurgis Baltrusaitis, quoted in: Loveless (2019) *How to make Art*, p. 85.

[450] See Chapter Two, page 259.

[451] Lacan, J. (1998) *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, translated by Alan Sheridan, Vintage, p. 93.

By covering over my painted likeness in *Self Portrait,* I was, on reflection, attempting to seek frustration in order to be fascinated, rather than negating a frustration leading to possible disenchantment. This effect manifested itself by literally trapping and hiding my likeness under paint, whilst also painterly binding, or embedding, it within a weave-like grid. A manifestation leading me to consider how far an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting could be similarly, and counter-intuitively, dissimulated and trapped, while still revealing itself.

The writer Maria Scott highlights Lacan's metaphorical use of the net as a "butterfly net" and a "fisherman's net",[452] whilst noting also that Lacan's "[...] reference to a hypothetical origin of vision as 'toils (rets)' is also strongly suggestive of a net".[453] Lacan wrote, "[as] free as I am to pursue, in the path in which I am leading you, the way that seems best to me - threading my curved needle through the tapestry [...]."[454] Not only does he use these net/grid-like schemas to evoke the idea of entrapment, but he also uses them, Scott explains, to entangle theoretical planes.

The weave, Sylvia Witney explains, "relies on a system of threads crossing each other in various ways at right angles",[455] forming a grid like structure in its manufacture – a manufacture essential in the making of canvas – and a structure whose physical nature, or materiality, has played a role in my use of the painted grid as a device.[456] With that in mind, I consider my use of a weave/net-like grid and rectangular forms (or spatial planes) in *Self Portrait* an indication of different entangled, interwoven, interpretive visual devices which act to trap my work-time spent *in* the painting, as well as my (hidden) physical likeness.[457]

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[452] Ibid. p. 76 and p. 95.
[453] Scott, (2008) *Lacan's 'Of the Gaze as Object Petit a'*, p. 330.
[454] Lacan (1998) *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, p. 70.
[455] Whitney, S. (2010) "The Grid, Weaving, Body and Mind", *Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings*, no. 60.
[456] See Introduction, page 55.
[457] Moreover, Whitney makes the point that the weave (in terms of textiles) is more synonymous to the matrix, which she describes as "a more contemporary manifestation of the grid", quoting Gwyneth Cliver, who writes: "The matrix is a structure that embeds, encloses and supports." (Whitney (2010), *The Grid*).

Reflecting on, and articulating, the different visual and interpretive planes in *Self Portrait* in light of O'Riley's description of the speculative gap between the surface of the painting and the viewer, and the gap between the surface of the painting and beyond, led me to consider how the evocative potential of the fluctuating, stuttering, space behind the surface of the painting created by a painted grid, or weave-like, device could be attuned to a disrupted non-linear concept of time.

Informed by Lacan's theoretical use of the weave and net to trap, and Whitney's suggestion that a contemporary matrixial manifestation of the grid embeds, encloses, and supports,[458] I return to *Et In Arcadia Ego* (Painting No. 13). As explained in the previous chapter, the painting prompted a way for me to contemplate how the notion of *memento-mori* could become 'trapped' within a painting – an idea partially dependent upon Isabelle Graw's concept of a painting's 'Liveliness', and paintings acting as vehicles for 'Vitalistic Fantasies'.[459]

Liveliness

In the exhibition*,* the painting *Et In Arcadia Ego* (Painting No. 13) was displayed in the partitioned section at the back of the gallery, whereas *Self Portrait*, on entering the space, was displayed in in the far-left corner of the main gallery. The idea of something, or some notion, being trapped *within* a painting is, I propose, embodied within both paintings.[460] The decision to display *Self-Portrait* within the main part of the gallery was to draw attention to the presence of an absence of something within the remaining deceased-estate paintings – specifically an expanded, and alternatively expressed, notion of *memento-mori* (Fig. 4:1 and 4:4).

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[458] See previous footnote.
[459] "[...] vitalistic fantasies need a material anchor that occasions them. In other words, they are not conjured out of thin air, but artists deliberately prompt them, in full awareness of their vitalistic effects." Graw, I, (2018) *The Love of Painting, Genealogy of a Success Medium*, Sternberg Press, p. 21.
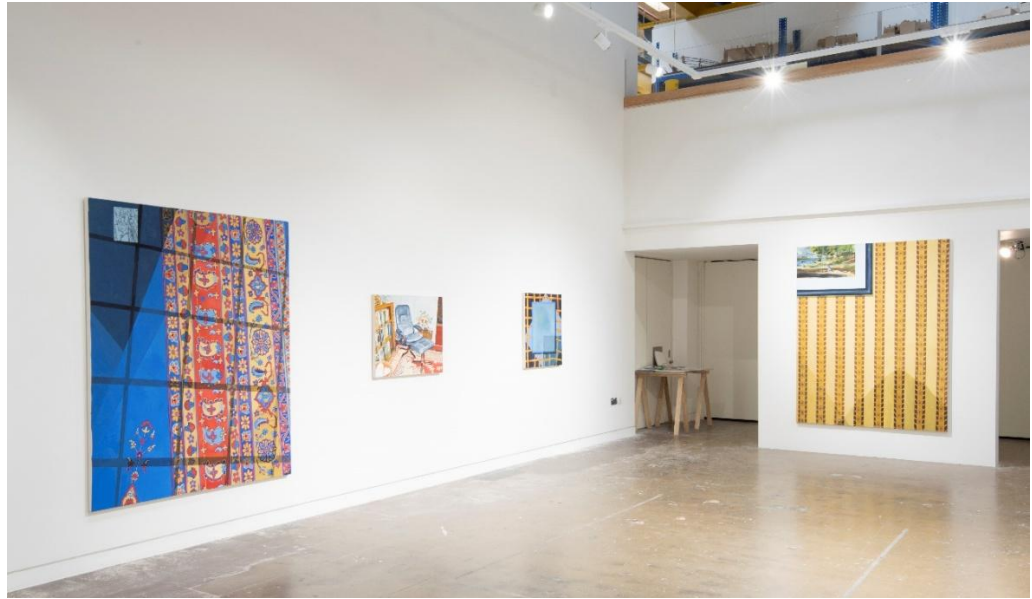[460] See Chapter Three, page 141.

Fig. 4:4

Installation View. *Memento-Mori in Painting*: *An Image of Multiplicities.*

All art-forms contain, or consist of, a multitude of signs. Furthermore, Isabelle Graw has suggested that signs in painting not only point to their signified object, but simultaneously evoke, "the ghostlike presence of [the hidden] absent author".[461] In addition, David Joselit has advocated that (modern) painting's specificity is that "it marks, stores, scores, *and speculates on time*".[462]

In the essay: *The Value of Liveliness. Painting as an Index of Agency in the New Economy,*[463] Graw expands upon Hubert Damisch's notion of the brushstroke as an indicator of subjectivity, and his belief that "painting reveals nothing but the 'traces of an activity to the eyes'".[464] Graw, on the other hand, proposes that the brushstroke is a carrier of something else other than evidence of a painting's medium, and that the something else is reliant upon painting's unique and specific indexicality.

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[461] In: Graw, I & Lajer-Burcharth, E. (eds), (2016), *Painting Beyond Itself. The Medium in the Post Medium Condition*, Sternberg Press, p.81.
[462] Ibid. p. 20. (My Emphasis).
[463] Ibid, pp. 79-102.
[464] Ibid, p.79.

Graw gives this presence the term Liveliness. Liveliness, she indicates, is present in other artforms to a greater or lesser extent, but never completely present, as in painting (even when painters pursue an anti-subjectivist agenda).[465] Graw's liveliness is not interested in aesthetic liveliness, rather the liveliness resulting from the life and work-time of the respective artists, despite their agenda.[466]

The subjectivity which Damisch evokes is not the subjectivity of the painter, but of the painting, which he describes as having its "own discourse and its own narrative".[467] For example, the feelings of the painter are not automatically passed as sensations to the viewer through the painting.[468] In contradiction to the spotlight Damisch places on the painting's subjectivity, Graw argues that because of painting's "specific language, or, more precisely, because of its specific indexicality", a finger always points in the direction of the maker, irrespective of their intentions or feelings at the time of making.[469]

Demonstrating this idea through their work are, for example, contemporary painters Ritsart Gobyn, Moritz Neuhoff, and Melissa Gordon,[470] whose practices are principally concerned with the act of painting itself.[471] The process of painting is the centre of attention in their paintings, pointing a forefinger to, and re-enforcing the idea that, according to Estonian painter Kaido Ole, "An artist is always present in his work."[472]

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[465] Graw gives Sigmar Polke and Gerhard Richter as examples, whose work opted "for procedures that undermined authorship, their works nevertheless triggered vitalist projections". Ibid. p. 81.

[466] Graw proposes that paintings store, or withhold, a Marxian concept of living labour, thus seemingly also withholding the life of the painter even though "the artist does not have to actually touch his or her canvas for this indexical effect to occur", surmising that painting's seeming ability to store labour, aided by its specific indexicality, means it takes on - and points to - Karl Marx's labour theory of value whereby "value can only be generated in a material thing if labour has been stored in it". Ibid. p. 82.

[467] Ibid, p. 79.

[468] See Chapter Two, page 82, footnote 346.

[469] Graw & Lajer-Burcharth (eds) (2016) *Painting Beyond Itself*, p. 80.

[470] Gobyn (Belgian, 1985-), Neuhoff (German, 1987-) and Gordon (American 1981-).

[471] As examined in: Gobyn, R. & Van Imschoot, T. (2022) (eds*), Acts of Painting*, Grafische Cel.

[472] Kaido Ole (Estonian, 1963-) in: Benschop, J. (2023) *Why Paintings Work*, translated by Susan Ridder, Garret Publications, p. 169

For instance, Gobyn deliberately stages the act of painting on the painting's finished surface by presenting us with a trompe l'oeil worked on 'unfinished' canvas, thus pointing directly to the absent painter and his process (Fig. 4:5).

Gobyn asks: "What do we actually look for when we try to retrace the process in painting? A glimpse behind the curtain? A revelation? A disclosure of its deceitful nature? An act of sincerity?".[473 & 474]

Fig. 4:5

Ritsart Gobyn, *untitled*, (2018). Oil, acrylic, spray paint on canvas,
Wooden frame, 182 x 132 cm. overall.
Courtesy of the artist.

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[473] Gobyn & Van Imschoot (2022) *Acts of Painting,* p. 8.
[474] And by doing so, he proposes, constitutes a common ground in contemporary painting. He also suggests, "It maybe even a source of resilience, after all the symbolic 'deaths' that have been declared, putting the process in plain sight to prove that it is alive and kicking", Ibid. p. 11. Painters investigating the act of painting through painting is nothing new, and explored in forensic detail by Victor Stoichita in '*The Self Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Metapainting*', Cambridge University Press, (2015).

Whereas Graw's term liveliness points to the act of painting in a more ghost-like manner, where "materially visible signs, like brushstrokes, are read as 'traces of an activity'".[475] (Fig. 4:6).

Fig. 4:6

Self Portrait (detail)

I consider the paintings made during this project are neither wholly concerned with painting's subjectivity, creating their own discourse and narrative (as described by Damisch), nor with the subjectivity placed upon paintings by myself, their maker (as described by Graw).[476] Notwithstanding (and as this exegesis has endeavoured to articulate), a merging of both approaches has seemed appropriate – and necessary – in pursuit of the project's central aims.

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[475] Graw & Lajer-Bucharth (eds) (2016) *Painting Beyond Itself*, p. 20.
[476] See also Chapter Three, page 152.

<u>Presence and Absence</u>

Robert Zwijnenberg's essay *Presence and Absence* gives an account of Da Vinci's painting *Saint John the Baptist* (Fig. 4:7) and considers how best to describe its effect on the viewer.[477] As previously implied, Zwijnenberg's text led to a recognition of how the collision between the optic and the haptic in my employment of the painted grid could become a spatiotemporal disrupter aligned to an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting associated with a non-linear concept of time – and also with this project's understanding of a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering.

Fig. 4:7

Leonardo da Vinci, *Saint John the Baptist*, (1513). Oil on walnut, 69 x 57 cm.
Louvre Museum, Paris. (INV 775; MR 318)

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[477] Zwijnenberg in: Farago, C. & Zwijnenberg, R. (eds.) (2003) *Compelling Visuality. The Work of Art in and out of History*, University of Minnesota Press, pp. 112-127.

Drawing our attention to the hidden things present in the painting, Zwijnenberg assesses ambiguities and contradictions associated with paintings in general. Revolving around the visual and the tactile (or the optic and the haptic), Da Vinci, he suggests, uses these painterly ambiguities and contradictions to his advantage in a painting dealing with the mystery and ambiguity of the Christian Incarnation.[478]

There is no obvious narrative within Da Vinci's painting which clearly signals to us that it is a painting of John the Baptist. The "chubby", Bacchus like, androgynous body see-saws between both male and female, between Pagan and Christian. And whose expression "seems to be a mixture not only of amazement, bliss and compassion but also of irony, even sarcasm, sensuality, and detachment."[479]

These characteristics of evasiveness, Zwijnenberg elaborates, are in essence "negative" and which words such as "ineffable, absence and the unseen" are often applied.[480] Nevertheless, Zwijnenberg concludes that "the aporias of the painting are positive elements rather than failures on Leonardo's part".[481] The painting itself echoes the aporetic and mysterious nature of the Incarnation.

Da Vinci, he argues, encompasses these ambiguities in the body and figure of the painting, and, significantly, in the opposition between flatness and depth of the painting's surface. To do so he uses a piece of text, written by the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder in 1788, to effectively grasp in words Saint John's corporal presence created by Da Vinci on the painting's flat wooden surface.[482]

Herder's text is a description of the Roman sculpture of *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* in the Villa Borghese in Rome, and one where he repeatedly uses the words: *wollustig* (sensuously) and *sanft* (soft) – by doing so shapes his bodily re-enactment of the

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[478] In Christianity the Incarnation is the divine Word of God becoming flesh in the person of Jesus Christ, to which Saint John announces and is witness to. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, [...]". John, chapter 1, verse 14.

[479] Zwijnenberg (2003) *Compelling Visuality*, p. 115.

[480] Ibid. p. 117.

[481] Ibid.

[482] Herder, J. G. (1988) *Italienische Reise: Briefe und Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, 1788-1789*, edited by Albert Meier and Heide Hollmer, München: Verlag C.H. Beck, pp. 602-603.

sculpture into text using an unashamedly tactile (and somewhat erotic) description (Fig. 4:8).

What is notable to Zwijnenberg is Herder's use of such adjectives commonly associated with touch, suggesting that "In the act of touching, there is no opposition between body and mind".[483]

Fig. 4:8

Sleeping Hermaphroditus, 2nd Century AD, (restored by Bernini, c. 1620)
Marble, 145 cm wide. Borghese Gallery, Rome

The sculptural look of Da Vinci's Saint John, suggests Zwijnenberg, gives the painting a tactile property that is both there and not there, between body and mind – between absence and presence – leading him to state that the mystery of the Incarnation is represented in paint "as the tension between visible and invisible", despite, and because of, the depicted image.[484]

Zwijnenberg proposes that the mystery of the Incarnation, as depicted by Da Vinci, lies within, and is revealed out of, the contrarian nature of painting's flatness where depth and form are miraculously created. The subject of the Incarnation, whereby something

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[483] Zwijnenberg explains that Herder's text "effectively describes the corporal presence of the human body in a work of art with words that evoke the experience of touch, on the theoretical foundation of the concept of 'directness' and 'presence' [...] In the tactile experience of the human body in a work of art [...] bodily touch and spiritual feeling coincide." In: Farago and Zwijnenberg (eds.) (2003), *Compelling Visuality*, p. 122.
[484] Ibid. p. 125.

is manifestly created from an articulated idea,[485] naturally lends itself to the contrarian nature of painting.

Da Vinci's painting of Saint John represents the unrepresentable, a mystery, "not by its who – or what – ness (because that is not possible) but in a presence that can only be described by its that-ness (presence and directness), as a crucial feature of painting".[486] Or, to put it another way, Da Vinci's efforts to express in paint the mystery of the Incarnation, coincides with his efforts to understand, and use to its full potential, the art of painting in oils on a flat canvas surface.

Da Vinci's painting is a discernible representative of what painting might and could be. Within the confines of painting's formal properties, and the internal tensions created out of those properties, *Saint John* demonstrates how an oil painting on canvas can indexically point towards a notion in painting other than those suggested by Damisch, Graw and Joselit – and without the use of representational signifiers.

With that in mind, the internal tension (or visual-stuttering) created by the wave-like grid in *Self Portrait* is echoed in *Deceased Estate No. 123 part i* (Painting No. 7) – an echo highlighted in the exhibition *Memento-Mori in Painting* by displaying both paintings directly facing one-another (Fig. 4:9 and Map 3).

In the following chapters I will endeavour to articulate how this internal tension, combined with the themes raised in Zwijnenberg's essay, open an effective way into examining how a painting's subjective indexicality could, under certain circumstances, be employed to alternatively express an expanded notion of *memento-mori* – a notion asking us to simultaneously think about the past, the present and the future.

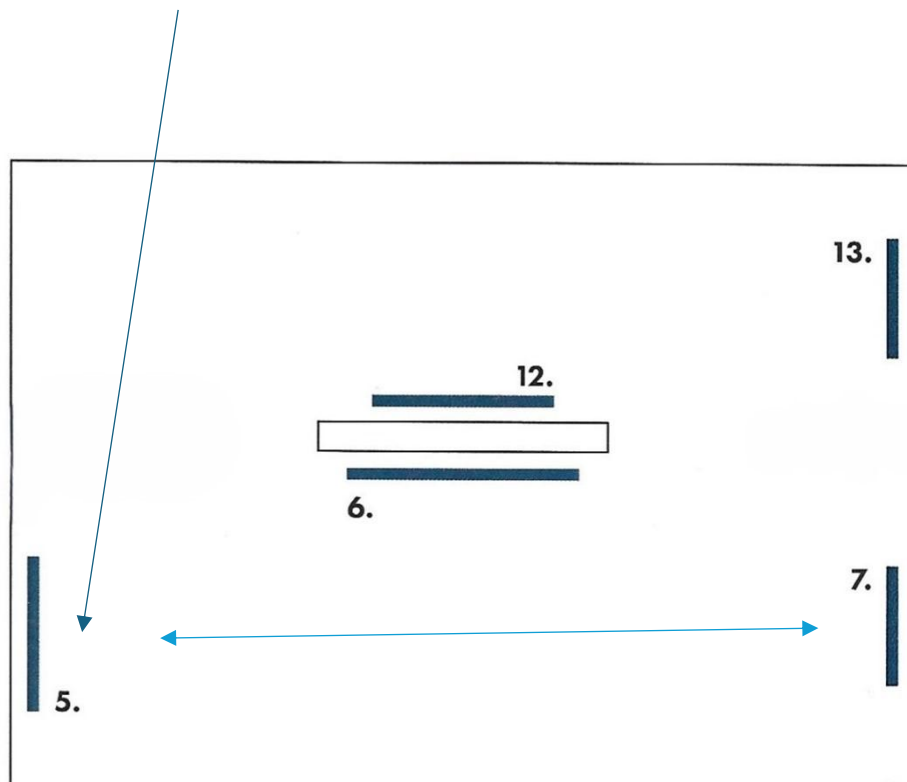[485] "The Word of God". John, chapter 1, verse 14.
[486] Farago and Zwijnenberg (eds.) (2003), *Compelling Visuality*, p. 126.

Installation View. *Memento-Mori in Painting*: *An Image of Multiplicities.*

View from *Self-Portrait* (No. 5) looking towards *Deceased Estate No. 123 part i* (No. 7).

Map 3   Direct lines of sight.

Conclusion

Allied to the idea of the Incarnation is the notion (or idea) that *memento-mori* might also be described as a mystery, of sorts. Zwijnenberg concludes his essay *Presence and Absence* by implying that any effort a painter makes to represent a mystery, "[…] entails the extreme limits of the art of painting. […] a painting is, in essence, a place where presence and absence conflate; every painting *is* a *locus* of contradictions."[487]

The themes posed in this chapter have embraced painting's contrarian nature in order to advocate that an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting, which has no singular recognised expression or act, could be said to both be embodied (even trapped) within a painting and be alternatively expressed through the content of a painting. Evidenced through my practice, and reflected upon in my exhibition of paintings, I propose that:

- A painting could indexically point towards the notion of *memento-mori*, despite its representational content.
- The notion of *memento-mori* can be metaphorically and theoretically hidden, trapped and embedded within a painting, aided by the use of a painted grid/weave-like device.
- The contradictory nature of a painting to create form out of a flat surface to indicate, for instance, the mystery of the Incarnation, can rationalise a way how a painted grid can be allied to an expanded notion of *memento-mori* associated with a disrupted concept of temporality.

Reliant on these proposals, and on concepts revolving around the optic and the haptic, in Chapter Five I will give an account of how I have rationalised a counterintuitive nature of the painted grid as a device to disrupt and connect, which, in turn, can be associated to both this project's expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting and a stuttering-thinking and a visual stuttering.

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[487] Ibid. p. 127. (His emphasis).

CHAPTER FIVE

THE GRID AS DEVICE

Introduction

Chapter One gave an account of how a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering – born out of my practice, a critical (scholarly) stutter, and tacit knowledge of a clinical stutter – beckons connections, beckons alternative spaces, and beckons things to the surface. It subsequently proposed that the articulation of these ideas set in motion a way for me to rationalise:

1. The use of the painted grid counterintuitively disrupts and connects, rather than regulates and restricts.

2. Associating a disruptive aspect of the painted grid with a disruptive notion of time allied to this project's expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting.

3. Associating a disruptive aspect of a visual-stutter with a disruptive notion of time allied to this project's expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting.

4. An expanded notion of *memento-mori* can be metaphorically and visually raised up to the surface of a painting.

Both this, and the following chapter, will be dealing with these four rationales, building on and learning from ideas previously set out and explored. Namely:

- A coming to recognise a way to think about what an alternative type of configuration an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting could be.

- How Nicolas Poussin's paintings and Leonardo da Vinci's *Saint John the Baptist* have informed a way to approach and reason the configuration of a painted grid to express, or imply, an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting.

- The idea that an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting could be looked for in the unseen in-between.

This chapter will deal with the first rationale by investigating the painted grid in terms of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's 'smooth' and 'striated' space.[488] I will articulate how these spaces might interact with Alois Riegl's notions of the haptic and the optic, making "established strategies and spaces not so much obsolete as *unresolved*".[489] Or, what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as, "abstract line / concrete line",[490] and which might also be thought of as a visual-stuttering in an effort to understand and explain how the use of a painted grid as a device can act to counterintuitively disrupt and connect, rather than to regulate and restrict.

Noting the grid's association with the visual striation of linear marks, its (latent) infinitude and its mapping properties, I will give an account of how these associations make way for a space where there is "boundless […] potential [for] movement and connectivity"[491] – attributes, I propose, similar to those created by a rhizomic kind of stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering, set out in Chapter One and explored in my exhibition *Memento-Mori in Painting.*

Learning from Zwijnenberg's reading of Da Vinci's mode of expressing the mystery of the Incarnation through his painting *Saint John the Baptist*, this unresolvedness, I propose, is advantageously negative. By this I mean it has allowed me to explore where an expanded notion of *memento-mori* may reside, and be revealed or unravelled, in a painting – despite, and because of, painting's dissimulation and contrariness.

Developing upon insights articulated in this chapter, in Chapter Six I will consider the second, third and fourth rationales. I will examine how the disruptive aspect of the painted grid, under certain circumstances, can indicate a disjointed, stuttering, concept of time – a concept associated with Deleuze's concept of a time-image and which I ally to the idea of haptic time – and with this project's expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting.

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[488] Terms described by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*, originally published in 1987. Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (2020) *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translation and forward by Brian Massumi, Bloomsbury Academic. (in: Chapter 14, pp. 551 – 582).
[489] Harland, *A Fragment of Time*, (2009), p. 25. (Her emphasis).
[490] Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, (2020), p. 576.
[491] Key, S. (2008) *Grids: Painting in Dialogue with the Digital*, Loughborough University, p. 67.

Rosalind Krauss stated that, "The grid […] does not reveal the surface, laying it bare at last; rather it veils it through a repetition".[492] There is a sense of hiddenness in Krauss's description of the grid, echoing this project's dissimilated notion of *memento-mori* in painting. In the lead up to this statement, Krauss also points to the grid's role in mapping, repetition, and doubling.[493] From the very start of this project my practice has been instinctively drawn to each of these actions which, in reflective hindsight, influenced the use of the painted grid as a formal device.[494]

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[492] 'The Originality of the Avant-Garde: A Postmodernist Repetition', *October*, no. 18, (Fall), pp: 47-66
 Krauss, (1981), re-printed in Harrison & Wood (eds) (2003), p.1035.

[493] Krauss writes: "The canvas surface and the grid that scores it do not fuse into that absolute unity necessary to the notion of an origin. For the grid follows the canvas surface, doubles it. It is a representation of the surface, mapped, it is true, onto the same surface it represents, but even so, the grid remains a figure, picturing various aspects of the 'originary' object; through its mesh it creates an image of the woven infrastructure of the canvas, through its network of coordinates it organizes a metaphor for the plane geometry of the field; through its repetition it configures the spread of lateral continuity. The grid thus does not reveal the surface, laying it bare at last; rather it veils it through a repetition." Ibid.

[494] I have been intermittently using the grid, or variations of a grid-like pattern, in my practice for the last decade, or so. In this respect I go along with Philip Guston's comment that, "To work with the rectangle, I like the feeling of what you might call the grid... I always have". (Ex. Cat. *Philip Guston Now*, not. 62, p. 241). However, I did not foresee that it would play such a significant part in this project. For reasons not entirely clear to myself, I was initially wary to formally analyse my use of it. On reflection, this suspicion was caused by the prevailing historical and contemporary baggage which accompanies it.
Jorn Heiser comments, "Something makes artists and musicians return not necessarily to the old mode of production, but certainly to what it produced over centuries and decades in terms of a discourse: a robust interplay of repetition and differentiation within the boundaries of its limits, a matured discourse that makes it hard, and challenging, to contribute something new that enriches it." (Heiser in: "*The Odd Couple: Painting, Rock Music, and their shared strategies against obsolescence in the digital age*", in: Foyle (ed), (2001) *Painting at the Edge of the World*, Walker Art Centre, p. 155).
And Craig Staff reminds us, that, "[...] although the grid has become synonymous with artistic modernism, it's history reaches back, at the very least, to the Renaissance wherein artists would use it as a device to pictorially map the sensible order of natural appearances" Staff, *Painting, History and Meaning*, (2021), p. 91.
Patience Graybill notes that it has become "the very make up of everyday reality as well as our perception of that reality". In: Eckmann & Koepnick, *Grid<>Matrix*, 2006, p. 11.

Krauss critiqued the modernist claim of authenticity using the grid as exemplary of repetition, "and therefore problematic in terms to truth and originality".[495] Despite this critique, Krauss's essays on the grid have provided an essential historical buffer for the project's development and employment of the painted grid as a device to infer connections whilst concurrently visually disrupt – or visually stutter.[496]

As I have previously implied, during painting it feels incumbent for me to point a forefinger at painting's flatness by using a variation of (according to Krauss, "highly inflexible")[497] grid like motifs, by either placing it upon (Painting No's 7, 10, 12 & 14), or merging it with and within (Painting No's 1, 3 & 6), what the Scottish artist Jim Mooney describes as painting's exotic reality.[498] A place where "[...] things are identified, selected and extracted from this world and are duly accorded an *exotic* positioning; exotic in the etymological sense of outside, *dehors*, apart from."[499]

Painting, Mooney points out, is both of this world and yet simultaneously posits a world, that is, "a world decisively separated by, nevertheless extracted from, this world".[500] In addition, lines in paintings reach infinitely out into the surrounding world, connecting the painting to the world beyond its frame, and to the body who made it.[501] (Fig. 5:1).

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[495] Key, *Grids*, (2008), p. 11.
Krauss has said of artist using the grid: "That so many generations of twentieth century artists should have manoeuvred themselves into this particular position of paradox – where they are condemned to repeating, as if by compulsion, the logically fraudulent original – is truly compelling." Krauss, (1981), re-printed in Harrison & Wood (eds) (2003), p.1035.
[496] It is worth noting Craig Owens's criticism of Krauss's 1981 text whereby he argues that Krauss "overlooks the ideological function of the modernist 'myths' she unmasks", and that throughout her texts on the grid "the empty space of ideology is occupied by the term 'myth.'"
Owens In: "Analysis Logical and Ideological", *Art in America*, May, 1985, p. 26.
[497] Krauss, (1981), re-printed in Harrison & Wood (eds) (2003), p.1034.
[498] Born Glasgow, 1955.
[499] Mooney, J. (2002), "Painting: Poignancy and Ethics", *Journal of Visual Arts Practice*, Jan. 2002, pp. 57-63. (Emphasis his own).
"Exotic: 1590s, "belonging to another country," from French exotique (16c.) and directly from Latin exoticus, from Greek exotikos "foreign," literally "from the outside," from exo "outside" (see exo-). Sense of "unusual, strange" in English first recorded 1620s, from notion of "alien, outlandish." In reference to strip-teasers and dancing girls, it is attested by 1942, American English." https://www.etymonline.com/word/exotic [accessed 25th September, 2023].
[500] Mooney, J. (2002), "Painting: Poignancy and Ethics", *Journal of Visual Arts Practice*, Jan. 2002, pp. 57-63.
[501] "[A] painting line is [...] an expression of the body, by the fact that it is already invested with the movement of the body". Key, *Grids*, (2008), p. 124.

Fig. 5:1

Installation View. *Memento-Mori in Painting*: *An Image of Multiplicities.*

Borrowing Mooney's phrase, the exotic realities present in paintings I have made during this project have (on the whole) been sourced from either paintings by Poussin or photographs of deceased estates – both sources being infused by notions of *memento-mori*. The merging, or placing, a painted grid amongst the humus of these *memento-mori* infused exotic realities, in my eye's mind, simultaneously maps and veils those realities in ways which counter-intuitively frees and opens them up to interpretation, rather than restricts or confines them.[502]

In the early stages of this project, I produced a significant number of drawings in walnut-crystal ink and acrylic, whose imagery was sourced from photographs of deceased estates.[503] They were made at a time when the exact path of my research was still unclear, whilst at the same time being confident in the validity of the project's core themes and aims (Fig. 5:2).

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[502] See Introduction, page 55.
[503] They were a partially result of the fact that at the time I had no access to specified studio space and was, instead, working on a small table in a friend's spare room. (Some illustrated on pages 247 – 249).
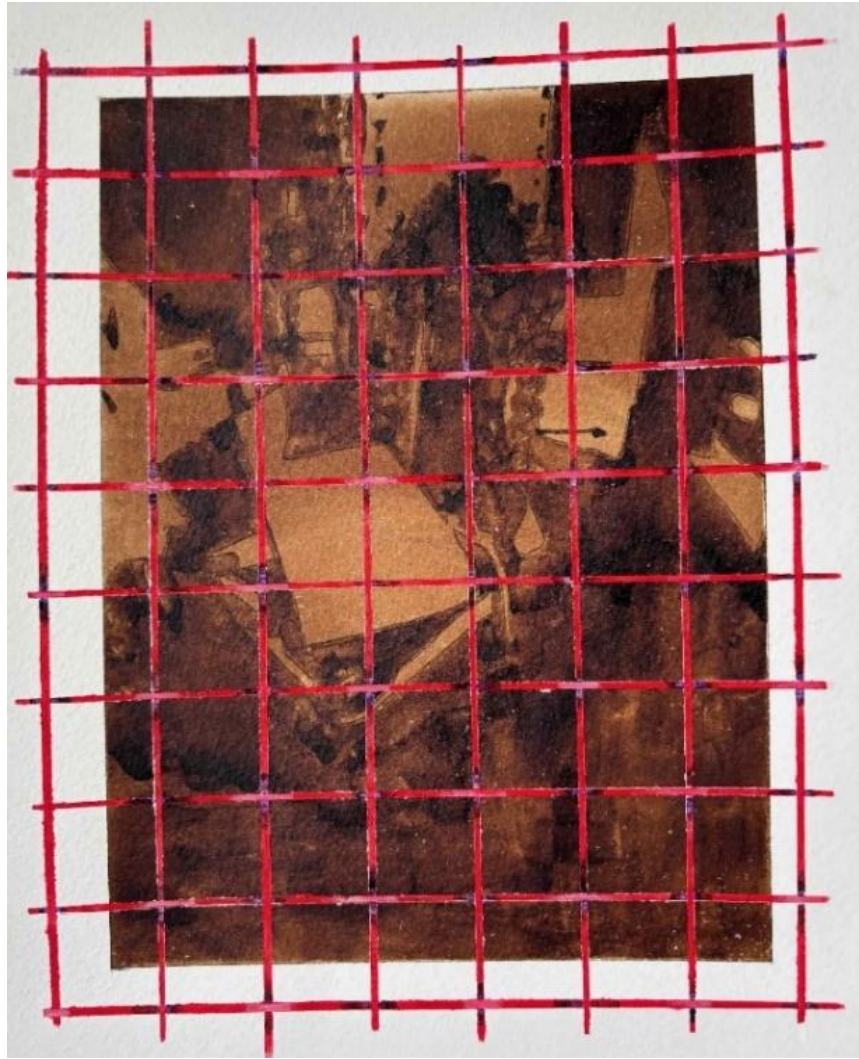
Fig. 5:2

Deceased Estate No. 138, (2021), (walnut ink series, no. i).
Walnut ink and acrylic on paper, 42 x 30 cm overall.

The linear grids in these drawings (again, in my eye's mind) skews their exotic space. By which I mean the grids in these works not only appear to freeze or catch the space and time within them, but also simultaneously seem to have a contrary effect of freeing, moving, and disrupting the space and time within them. My placement of lines and grids was more of a subjective, than an objective, choice. In other words, it felt right, but in an obtuse, interesting, and awkward way – rather than in a purely aesthetic way.

In this sense, I see my use of the grid having an affinity with the South African painter Johannes Phokela's use of the painted grid.[504] Phokela has stated that he uses the (rectilinear) grid to give, "[...] another dimension to [his] work; it is a devise to challenge the viewers perception of the image and form beneath. [...] Compositionally, the grid can unify pictorial space or even deny it".[505] Furthermore, Paul O'Kane has suggested that Phokela's use of the grid can, when used in certain circumstances, force the viewer into a "political or philosophical reading".[506] (Fig. 5:3).

This image has been redacted by the author from the digital version of the thesis for copyright reasons.

Fig. 5:3

Johannes Phokela, *Scramble for Mars*, (2021)
Oil on canvas, 91 x 122.5 cm.
www.artsy.net/artwork/johannes-phokela-scramble-for-mars

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[504] Born 1966, Soweto.
[505] Haines, B. (2003) *In Conversation with Johannes Phokela*. Interview by Bruce Haines, https://artthrob.co.za/03july/news/phokela.html, [accessed 27th July 2023].
[506] O'Kane, P. (1998) "Johannes Phokela", *Third Text, 12, no. 43*, June 1998, pp. 103.

Echoing Phokela's statement, the painted grid has the physical effect of both mapping the surface of my paintings and the paintings beneath, whilst also challenging the viewers perception of the image. In metaphorical terms a map can be used as a navigational tool whereby its user, should she want, might get lost in order to find a way through. "Grids organise or map the visible world according to a predictable system of vertical and horizontal lines", write Sabine Eckmann and Lutz Koepnick. Grids "[…] structure the world as if it entirely corresponded to geometric principles and allow us to assign exact coordinates to every element of the visual field. Grids dissect, frame, and reconstitute the phenomenal world for us."[507]

With that in mind, Deleuze and Guattari tell their readers to: "Make a map, not a tracing",[508] explaining that the rhizomic map:

> "[…] does not reproduce an unconscious closed in upon itself; it constructs the unconscious. It fosters connections between fields, the removal of blockages on bodies without organs, the maximum opening of bodies without organs onto a plane of consistency. It is itself a part of the rhizome. The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification."[509]

A map, or grid, might therefore be said to create a structure onto which research can be navigated. A structure, Otto von Busch has suggested, where one can divert from a place of "dead reckoning" as to prevent travelling, "from previously known positions [towards] a new predicted position".[510] However, von Busch also suggests that to use a map pointing only to previously explored territories is to use a map as a closed structure preventing artistic research from "find [ing] new land or to enrich the experience of travel", and would, instead, oppose serendipity.[511]

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[507] Eckmann, S. & Koepnick, L.P. (2006) *[Grid<>Matrix]*, Washington University, Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, p. 53.
[508] Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, (2020). p. 12.
[509] Ibid.
[510] von Busch, O, (2011) "Research Navigations", *Journal for Artistic Research, 0*, (2011). von Busch is a Professor of Integrated Design at Parsons School of Design, U.S.A.
[511] Ibid.

This idea is also implied by Koepnick, who comments that the grid "[...] has nothing to hide; it contains no dark secrets; it impedes our desire of getting lost, of being struck by the incommensurable, the unexpected, the allegory".[512]

My use of the painted grid acts as a metaphorical map during the act of painting influencing my paintings' image construction and, as reflected on during the exhibition, as a device to connect individual paintings to one another (Fig. LR:1, p. 63). In addition, developing ideas thought through in Chapter Four I have used the formal qualities of the painted grid and its effect on the internal space within a painting as a device to disrupt that space (for example, Paintings No's. 8 and 10). (Fig. 5:4).
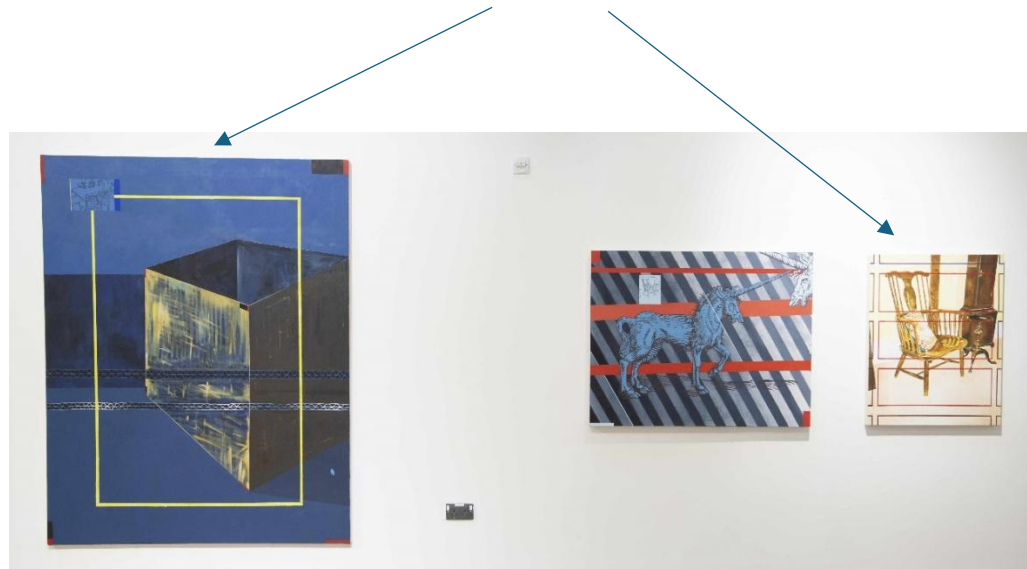
Fig. 5:4

Installation View. *Memento-Mori in Painting*: *An Image of Multiplicities.*

Relying on ideas developed out of Deleuze and Guattari's description of 'smooth' and 'striated' space, and their relationship with the haptic and the optic, I have allied my practice with this disruption – a disruption adhered to a non-sequential notion of time and a visual stutter – and that also of an alternatively expressed notion of *memento-mori* in painting.

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[512] Eckmann & Koepnick (2006) *[Grid<>Matrix]*, p. 53.

<u>Smooth/Haptic <> Straited/Optic</u>

At the beginning of the 20th Century the Austrian art historian Alois Riegl conceived categories of form,[513] "in order to differentiate varying relations of mind and object".[514] 'Haptic', he described as analogous to the near, the sense of touch and as a "mechanism of mentally synthesising multiple, discontinuous, sensory inputs."[515] While the 'optic', he described as being analogous to the distant and constitutes "a general survey of objects in space".[516] Deleuze and Guattari later developed Riegl's categories of form, allying the haptic to their idea of 'smooth' space, and the optic to their idea of 'striated' space.

Sarah Key explains:

> "Put very simply, the 'striated' and 'smooth' represent spaces that are gridded and open-ended, respectively. The gridded space of the 'striated' relates to long-distance vision and an optical perspective of space that locates the body in relation to co-ordinates and the horizon. The open-ended space of the 'smooth' is a negotiation of the world through close-range vision, a haptic response to the tactile qualities of surfaces that require a sensory response that necessarily connects the act of looking with an embodied sensation."[517]

In Deleuze's and Guattari's own words: striated space is characterised by "rectilinear or unilinear […] lines that […] express the formal conditions under which a space is striated",[518] whereas they describe smooth space as, "an abstract line [of] […] continuous variation".[519] (In my use of the gid I have used both rectilinear lines (e.g. Painting No. 14), and unilinear lines (e.g. Painting No. 12)).

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[513] Described by Riegl in: *Late Roman Art Industry*, originally published in 1901.
[514] Harland, *A Fragment of Time*, (2009), p. 21.
[515] Ibid.
[516] Ibid.
[517] Key, *Grids*, (2008), p. 4-5.
[518] Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, (2020). p. 578.
[519] Ibid.

Although there is some way to travel when considering the grid in painting via Deleuze and Guattari's concepts revolving around grids,[520] thinking about this project's use of the painted grid through their terms (straited & smooth) goes some way to clarify the direct association between the use of the grid as a device to connect and disrupt – and with this project's expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting, its investigation into how it could be alternatively expressed, and a visual stuttering as a mode of painting.

To begin with, Deleuze and Guattari's striated space is gridded, where: "In striated space, lines or trajectories tend to be subordinated to points: one goes from one point to the other."[521] Forms of striation, they suggest, represent ideal models for "work, efficiency and control. [...] the underpinning tenet of capitalist transactions".[522] Correspondingly, smooth, open-ended space is where:

> "[...] points are subordinate to the trajectory [...] In smooth space the line is therefore a vector, a direction and not a dimension or metric determination. It is a space constructed by local operations involving changes in direction."[523]

In socio-political terms, Deleuze and Guattari associate the striated with places and people where structure and work efficiency are primary, whereby the smooth "represents 'free action', [...] exemplified by so called underdeveloped [nomadic] societies whose economies may well be crippled by capitalist sanctions".[524]

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[520] Which are originated "within the contexts of political and social terrains", Key, *Grids*, (2008), p. 66. A notable comparison to these political origins can be found in Franco Berardi's 2012 essay *Economic dogmatism and poetical thought in the coming European insurrection*, in which he equates the contemporaneous European a political and economic dogma "transformed into techno-linguistic automatism". He writes, "This is governance at the very end". This structural (grid-like) stifling, he suggests, can be freed by the arts – which he epitomizes as 'poetry'. Berardi, F, (2012) 'Economic dogmatism and poetical thought in the coming European insurrection', *De Redactia*, 23rd April, 2012.

[521] Deleuze & Guattari (2020) *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 556.

[522] In: *Seeing Like a State: How certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed* (2020), James C. Scott argues "that the notion of the grid is rooted in the elaboration of systems such as units of measurement, language, notions of property and time." "[Scott] shows the grid to be a fundamental tool for measuring, controlling and normalising populations – all such processes being vital to the constitution and durability of state and military power." Quoted in: Fauq, C. (2023), *Systemic Love*, Press Release, Musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux.

[523] Deleuze & Guattari (2020) *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 556.

[524] Key suggests that the 'striated', in its efficiency as a structure for work, could be associated with the grid via the digital which (arguably) increases work's efficiency and productivity through time, speed and output. She notes, nevertheless, that it is paradoxical, "[...] even ironic to think of [the

Pictorially, the abstract line of smooth space neither delaminates space nor describes forms and is "boundless in potential movement and connectivity",[525] whereas striated space "is limited by the constraints of gravity, the horizontal plane and spatial connectivity".[526] Smooth space, Deleuze and Guattari tell us, is associated with the sea, steppe, ice and desert – a constantly changing scape. Whereas they associate striated space with warp and weft, harmony and melody, and longitude and latitude. Turning their attention to the 'smooth' and the 'striated' onto the aesthetic model,[527] they state:

> "It seems to us that the smooth is both the object of a close vision […] and the element of haptic space (which may be as much visual or auditory as tactile). The striated, on the contrary relates to a more distant vision, and a more optical space […]. […] this analysis must be corrected by a coefficient of transformation according to which passages between the striated and the smooth are at once necessary and uncertain […]."[528]

I suggest the uncertainty of the passages between the striated and the smooth are relatable to Jutta Koether's poetic description of Poussin's paintings, set out in Chapter Three, as being in possession of a space for thinking and feeling. The striated being allied to Poussin's architectonic structure, whilst the smooth being allied to Koether's description of another kind of material, or emotional inserts within his paintings that you can't account for. Or, in other words, where Poussin's architectonic structure is the striated space of horizons and perspective; and the emotional inserts are the smooth, nomadic, spaces comparable to a "freedom of the imagination, the senses and thinking".[529]

In my employment of the painted grid within the context of paintings thematically revolving around, and imbued with, the notion of *memento-mori*, my paintings have,

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grid] as a representative of the language of painting itself, an inefficient method of image production by comparison". Key (2008) *Grids*, p. 66.
[525] Ibid.
[526] Ibid.
[527] Having previously dealt with the smooth and the striated on the technological model, the musical model, the maritime model, the mathematical model and the physical model.
[528] Deleuze & Guattari (2020) *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 572-573.
[529] Key (2008) *Grids*, p. 67.

from the outset, strived to form an ambiguous spatial and theoretical veil or net, whilst also creating a disruptive visual push/pull effect.[530] For instance, *Deceased Estate, No. 123, part i* came out of a drawing I made in the early days of this project. The drawing (Fig. 5:5), and subsequent painting (Painting No. 7 (Fig. 5:7)) was not created in a passing instant unlike its original photographic source (Fig. 5:6).

Fig. 5:5

Deceased Estate No. 123. (walnut ink series, no. ii), (2021)
Walnut-crystal ink, watercolour, and acrylic on paper. 42 x 30 cm overall.

Fig. 5:6

Deceased Estate No. 123, digital photograph, (circa 2010)

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[530] See, for example, Figs. Il: 1, 2, 3 and 4 (pages 247-8).

During the process of painting, its photographic time (identified by Roland Barthes with emotional trauma),[531] transformed into painting's heterogeneous time (Fig. 5:7).[532]
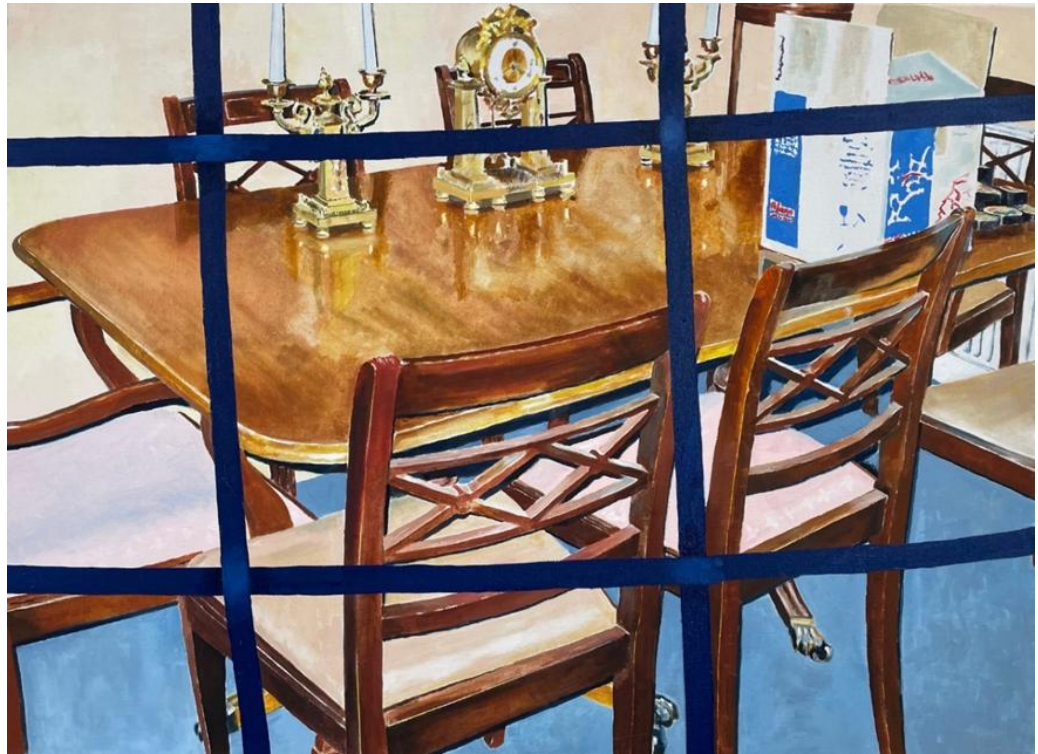
Fig: 5:7

Deceased Estate, No. 123, part i

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[531] Traditional, chemically produced, photography has been framed by an association with loss and death. Martin Jay reminds us that Roland Barthes "interprets [photography's] gaze in three ways: in terms of information (the gaze informs), in terms of relation (gazes are exchanged), in terms of possession (by the gaze, I touch, I attain, I seize, I am seized): three functions: optical, linguistic, haptic." Jay, however, suggests a more significant interpretation of photography by Barthes is his understanding of photography as "an anxious sign... [a] seeking gaze" through which the photograph becomes "essentially identified with emotional trauma". Jay (1994) *Downcast Eyes*, p. 441.

[532] The American painter Jacqueline Humphries (b. 1960) makes the point that: "Space and time are locked together in painting because the act of painting is making space in time, but the narrative of making painting and of looking at it are not the same. Paint is extremely malleable, and the trick is to make the paint in a way that it comes alive in the painter's hands, that's when it's applied it can have its own time: a gesture can register as a trace the energy and speed of the action that made it." Jacqueline Humphries in: Ruskin, D. (2018) "Painting as Event, Interview with Jacqueline Humphries", *Journal of Contemporary Painting*, Vol 1, No. 4, 2018, p. 55

Disregarding the blue grid/weave like device, the space within the painting is no different from the original digital photograph. It remains in the realm of striated space and the optic. A space that locates the body in relation to co-ordinates and the horizon. The perspective is clearly delineated by the edges of the table, the relative sizes of the chairs and the placement of the clock garniture and cardboard box.

Whilst working on the painting I repeatedly needed to stand back from the canvas to find my way around the painting. In other words, to accurately transpose the photograph into a painting I moved away from the canvas to get a clear overall view of the perspectival, photographic, image. This action was necessary to gauge whether, for example, colours and shapes were in their appropriate place and of appropriate form.

Painting the blue grid weave-like device, on the other hand, required no standing back. On the contrary, my nose was rarely eight inches away from the surface of the canvas. In other words, at a close range where a sense of the haptic and 'smooth' space presides and where, I propose, a potentiality for movement and connectivity is formed.

This is in opposition to how one might perceive the "highly inflexible" grid,[533] yet through my practice and evidenced from my paintings, this project has (counterintuitively) come to recognise the use of the painted grid as a flexible, malleable device which connects and allows new interpretations to be made – in a similar manner and allied to a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering developed out of a critical and clinical stutter.

Law of Painting

To further help clarify how I have reasoned my use of the grid as a device to infer connections while concurrently visually disrupt (qualities synonymous with this project's expanded notion of *memento-mori* and a visual-stuttering) I turn to Philip Guston's *White Painting I* (1951).[534]

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[533] Krauss, (1981), re-printed in Harrison & Wood (eds) (2003), p.1034.
[534] Philip Guston: Canadian/American, 1913-1980.

Created in a couple of hours during a single session, Guston said of its painting process: "I forced myself to paint the entire work without stepping back to look at it".[535] When standing in front of the painting I was struck by its disruptiveness, despite its muted tones and lack of a flamboyance present in many of the other works on display nearby.[536] I was, in hindsight, particularly attuned to its disruptiveness because of my current preoccupation of employing the painted grid to unsettle. Confirming my preoccupation, Guston stated: "It's the unsettling of the image that I want".[537] (Fig. 5:8).
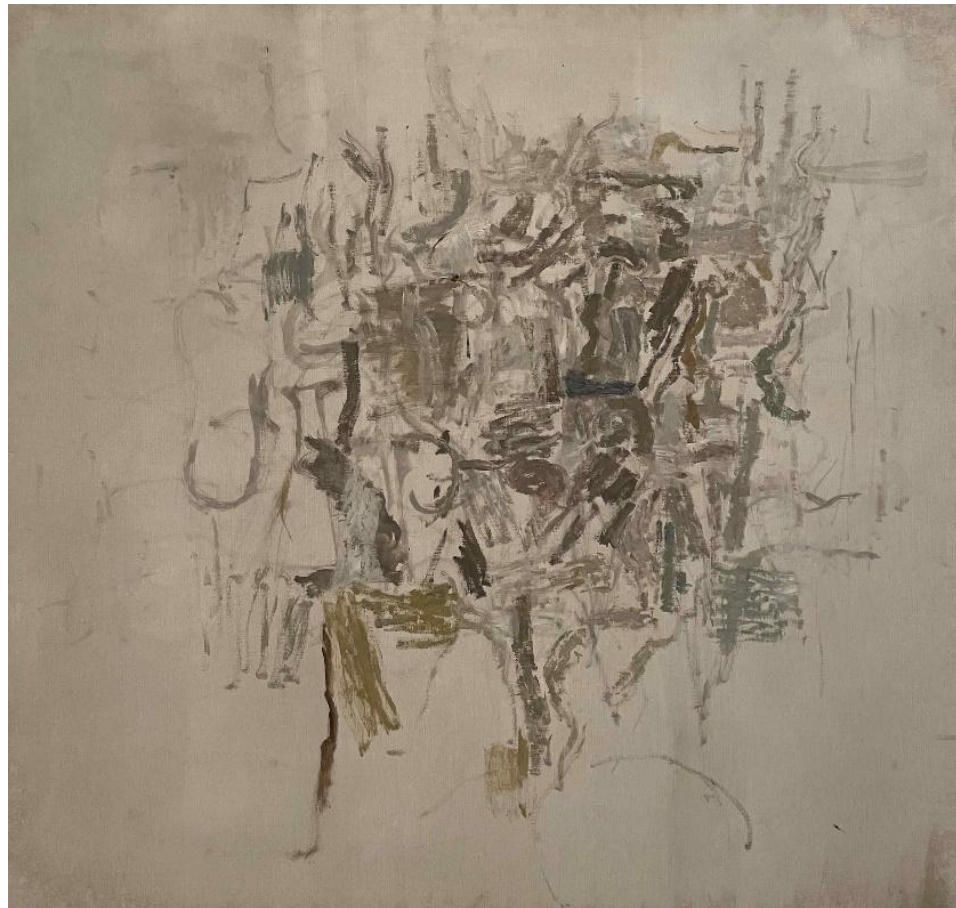
Fig. 5:8

Philip Guston, *White Painting I*, (1951)
Oil on canvas, 147 x 157.2 cm. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
© The Estate of Philp Guston, courtesy Hauser & Worth.

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[535] Tate Modern, exhibition label. *Philip Guston Now*, 2023-2024.
[536] *Philip Guston Now*, Tate Modern, London, 5th October 2023 – 25th February 2024.
[537] Guston, quoted in: Ibid. p. 44.

Although *White Painting I* is born out of a grid-like striated linear structure, its mode of production and visual presence are more aligned to Deleuze and Guattari's smooth space, in that it was painted entirely at close range.[538] For Guston, the painting marked a transition away from the use of the grid as a structural device. Harry Cooper describes how, within the painting, "[...] the grid has melted, become liquid, not solid, all rounded corners and flowing channels."[539]

The "law of painting", according to Deleuze and Guattari, "[...] is that it be done at close range, even if it is viewed from relatively far away".[540] Given they propose that "smooth is both the object of a close vision par excellence and the element of haptic space",[541] Beth Harland makes the point that they "co-opt painting onto the side of the smooth [...]".[542] This is re-enforced by their description of a mode of painting exemplified by Cezanne who, "spoke of the need to *no longer see* the wheat field, to be too close to it, to lose oneself without landmarks in smooth space".[543] Beth Harland, however, questions this point of view when considering an opposing mode of painting that is physically "[...] made at close range but in every other sense 'made' with distance, plotted as a series of landmarks, projected mechanically and retraced, seen from a distance during the process at least as often as seen close-to".[544]

In contrast to Guston's process of painting *White Painting I*, while painting *Deceased Estate, No. 123, part i* (Painting No. 7) I employed both modes of painting (made at close range and made with distance) to execute the striated space of the dining-room table and chairs (standing-back/with distance), and the smooth space of the weave-like grid (close-range).

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[538] The art critic Waldemar Januszczak has written of *White Painting I*: "His method [...] was to start and finish painting without ever stepping back to appraise it. It led to crowds of central colour, with an unsteady relationship with the pictures edge. The results are among the finest of all abstract expressionist paintings, the equal, I would argue, of Rothko and Pollock." Januszczak, "Uncancelled! Don't miss this show." *The Sunday Times, Culture*, 8th October 2023, pp. 12-13.
[539] Cooper, H., Godfrey, M., Lima Greene, A. de, & Nesin, K. (2022), *Philip Guston Now*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, U.S.A., p. 44.
[540] Deleuze & Guattari (2020) *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 573
[541] Ibid. p. 572
[542] Harland (2009), *A Fragment of Time*, p. 24.
[543] Deleuze & Guattari (2020), *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 573. (Their emphasis).
[544] Harland (2009) *A Fragment of Time*, p. 25.

As we have seen, Deleuze and Guattari imply that painting belongs to the realm of the smooth and haptic. However, they concurrently stated that:

> "No sooner do we note a simple opposition between the two kinds of space than we must indicate a much more complex difference by virtue of which the successive terms of the oppositions fail to coincide entirely. And no sooner have we done that than we must remind ourselves that the two spaces in fact exist only in mixture: smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into a striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space."[545]

Deceased Estate, No. 123, part i (Painting No. 7) is a painting discernibly consisting of two main elements:

- Photograph of a dining room table and chairs belonging to a deceased estate.
- A blue weave/grid – like device.

Notwithstanding, between these two elements there is a 'stuttering' merging and un-merging between smooth space and the haptic, and striated space and the optic – or a visual form of fluency and non-fluency – illustrated in Table 1:

SMOOTH / HAPTIC ⟷	STRIATED / OPTIC
Digital properties of the photograph.	Visual appearance of the photograph.
Process of painting blue grid/weave (close-range).	Process of painting the photograph (standing-back).
Employing the grid to facilitate and connect, rather than to impede or regulate.	Visual appearance of blue grid/weave.

Table 1.

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[545] Deleuze & Guattari (2020) *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 552.

This disruptive back and forth / push and pull between the smooth and the haptic, and the striated and the optic is, I propose, allied to a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering. By which I mean, they beckon connections, alternative spaces, and beckon things to the surface – qualities upon which this project's expanded notion of *memento-mori* is reliant.

Conclusion

I propose that by allying my use of the painted grid with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of smooth space and its relationship with the haptic, instils it with the ability to connect and disrupt, and be used as a generative and pluralistic device capable of forming notions "independent from its own structure".[546]

Moreover, by operating in the zone between the striated space of the visual, perspectival and structurally limited analogue grid, and a Deleuzoguattarian open-ended smooth-spaced grid, opens a space up to, what Sarah Key terms: "the forces of corporeality and desire, at work within painting".[547] Or, in Jutta Koether's words, creates a space for "thinking and feeling".[548]

On the other hand, this association has the counterintuitive capacity to disrupt when opposing ends of the grid's relationship with the smooth and the striated (and the haptic and the optic) interact with each other – and is further magnified when placed in close proximity to one another. For instance, when a painted grid is obtusely placed within a painted perspectival space, demonstrated in *Deceased Estate, No. 123, part I* (Painting No. 7) it causes a visual (and theoretical) push/pull, in-between visual-stutter.

In the following chapter I consider how the relationship between the perceived problem of painting's time and my use of the painted grid can, in certain circumstances, be associated with a haptic, non-sequential concept of time analogous to this project's expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting.

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[546] Eckmann & Koepnick (2006) *[Grid<>Matrix]*, p. 53.
[547] Key, *Grids*, (2008), p. 12.
[548] Koether in: Buchloh (2016) *A Conversation with Jutta Koether*, p.29.

CHAPTER SIX

MEMENTO-MORI AS IMAGE OF MULTIPLICITIES

Introduction

To reaffirm: *Memento-Mori* (Remember you Have to Die) is a notion which asks us to look back on a memory reminding ourselves of what will happen to us in the future. In other words, it asks us to simultaneously think about the past, the present and the future. With that in mind, this chapter's aim is to develop and explain how my use of the painted grid could indicate and magnify a disrupted haptic concept of time suited to an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting – a notion which forsakes relying on objects indicating a sequential, finite, concept of time – but relies instead on paintings' engaging relationship with temporality.

It will address how the relationship between the perceived problem of painting's time, implied by the art critic and author John Berger,[549] and my use of the painted grid as a device to connect and disrupt, have worked together with the aim of generating alternative ways to express an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting – ways which take advantage of David Joselit's rhetorical question:

> "How can one mark the flow of experience, first as a producer (painter) and then as a consumer (spectator). Since in modern painting, this 'doubt' is omnipresent (no canvas can ever be fully resolved into a coherent image or comprehended as an accomplished event), every painting represents an exorbitant stockpile of affect."[550]

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[549] Berger, J. (1985) *Painting and Time,* in *The Sense of Sight*, Vintage International.
[550] Joselit, D. (2014) *Painting Time: Jacqueline Humphries*, in *Jacqueline Humphries*, Koenig Books, p. 15.

Developing concepts thought through in Chapter Five, the resulting interactions between a painted grid's striated and smooth space when placed in a *memento-mori* infused painted environment – and painted under the precept of a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering – will be assessed.

Furthermore, informed by Gilles Deleuze's ideas raised from his texts on cinema's Movement-image and cinema's Time-image, an account will be given into how this project's expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting could be understood and interpreted as a form of time-image developed out of a haptic concept of temporality.[551]

This project's interpretation and use of the grid as a device is, I submit, in resistance to the grid's position within the 'Grand Narrative' of modernism, outlined by Jean-Francois Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition* (1979).[552] Instead, it has more of an affinity with what Lyotard describes as the concept of 'Little Narratives', which are "[...] resistant to claims of universality inherent to rationalist discourse and mistrustful of claims to truth. [...] The 'little narratives' represent the fragmentation of deconstructed ideologies".[553]

With that understanding, and to place my use of the grid in contemporary context, I will begin by giving an account of Bordeaux Museum of Fine Arts exhibition *Systemic Love* (April 2023 – January 2025). The exhibition brought together a group of forty-five artists whose practices have, at some point, tackled the grid – not only as a motif, but also its underlying ideology.[554]

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[551] Set out in: Deleuze, G. (2013) *Cinema 1: The-Movement Image*, Bloomsbury Academic, and: Deleuze, G. (2013) *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, Bloomsbury Academic.
[552] Bill Readings summarises Lyotard 'Grand Narrative' of modernism as: "A story that claims the status of the universal metanarrative, capable of accounting for all other stories in order to reveal their true meaning. Grand narratives claim to totalise the field of narrative so as to organise the succession of historical moments in terms of the projected revelation of a meaning." Readings in: *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics*, Routledge, p. xxxiii.
[553] Readings, B. (1991) *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics*, Routledge, p. xxxiii.
[554] The Museum of Contemporary Art in Bordeaux (Capc), France, 7th April 2023 – 5th January 2025.

The starting point for *Systemic Love* was the grid in late 20th Century and contemporary artistic practices, dealing and conversing with the grid's announcement of "modern art's will to silence, its hostility to literature, to narrative, to discourse".[555] Its curator, Cedric Fauq, comments that the grid, "and its main component, the line", have been used by artists as an ordering concept and as a motif "that would evacuate the excessive subjectivism of poetry [...]. [The grid] is unmediatedly (sic.) ideological – an antinatural symbol of order, it constrains rather than liberates."[556] Notwithstanding, he crucially adds: "A grid, however, stands *but as a façade* of neutrality and silence",[557] by which I take this meaning to imply that more is in play behind the grid's façade.

Fauq tells us that the exhibited artists have been included for their approach to the grid as a motif, and ways in which they have tackled its underlying ideology and their relationship with the grid and subjectivity.[558] Out of the forty-four artists, Daniel Buren, On Kawara and Irma Blank have specifically used the grid to problematise our conceptions of time as experience, through the grid of the calendar.[559]

For example, Buren's *120 peintures, 1967 – 1981* (Fig. 6:1) consists of fifteen paintings, each painting reliant on a system of painted stripes applied to the canvas at regulated times and manners over a period of fifteen years.[560] Krauss has suggested that one of

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[555] Krauss (1979) *Grids*, p.50.

[556] Fauq, C. (2023) *Systemic Love*, Public Booklet Text, Capc Musee d'art contemporain de Bordeaux.

[557] Ibid. (My emphasis)

[558] Out of the forty-five artists, there are a handful, to include, Wolfgang Tillmans, Nan Goldin and Dan Graham, who, as a counterpoint to the other exhibitors, do not work with grids as motifs, "but embody a certain rebellious attitude against all establishment". Fauq explains the inclusion of these artists has the purpose of examining, "[...] the relationship between grid and subjectivity". Fauq, (2023, *Systemic Love*.

[559] Daniel Buren (French, born 1938), On Kawara (Japanese-American 1932-2014), Irma Blank (German-Italian 1934-2023).

[560] Daniel Buren, *120 peintures*, (1967 – 1981): "The work *120 paintings 1967-1981* consists of 15 numbered paintings laid directly onto the floor. It was created over a period of 15 years, according to a very specific protocol. In the first year, the artist covered the outermost, non-coloured bands of each painting with white acrylic painting. In the second year he only worked on 14 paintings, in the third year, on 13, and so on until the 15th year when the last painting was left with 15 successive layers. This gesture of successive superimposition systematically cancelled out the preceding year's coat, lays bare the process of 15 years of work, with 120 stripes of white acrylic paint deposited on the white-and-red striped fabric used as canvas. On the edges of the canvases, dates have been inscribed for each 'coating'. This work, through the thickness of white paint, makes time

the grid's declaration of modernity is due to its temporal dimension, "[…] the grid is an emblem of modernity by being just that: the form […] is ubiquitous in the art of our century, while appearing nowhere, nowhere at all, in the art of the last one".[561] However, Krauss makes no mention of how the painted grid, in, and of itself, points to the passing of time, other than being a part of painting's 'Grand Narrative' within it, as exemplified and conceptually commented on by Buren.[562]

Fig. 6:1

Daniel Buren, *120 peintures, 1967 – 1981.*
Fifteen elements, 168 x 132 cm. each, striped canvases and acrylic.
Capc, Bordeaux, France.
Photograph taken, 16th January 2024.
© Daniel Buren, courtesy DACS.

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palpable, and could be seen as an alternative calendar." *Systemic Love*, Capc, Bordeaux. Exhibition Label.
[561] Krauss, (1979), *Grids*, p. 52.
[562] In an interview with Yve-Alain Bois from 2012, Krauss commented on the conceptual nature of Buren's stripes and, in her opinion, their under-whelming-ness. She said, "One of the conceptual artists who is himself of course an installation artist is Daniel Buren. This constant use of the readymade—the stripes are taken from the canvas material, the awning material, the striped cloth for all the awnings on every single civic building in Paris, France. So he simply bought that stuff by the yard, and I find Buren's work as sort of thinking by the yard. I have always found [conceptual art] immensely boring. I mean there's nothing that sparks, that gets my brain going." Krauss in: Bois, Y-A, (2012) "Art in Conversation: Rosalind Krauss with Yve-Alain Bois", *The Brooklyn Rail*, Feb 2012. https://brooklynrail.org/2012/02/art/rosalind-krauss-with-yve-alain-bois, [accessed 23rd January 2024]

The painted grid, as a motif, is a self-signifier. But as a device, how could it point to a notion of temporality other than by its conceptual association with the calendar's sequential grid-like structure, as employed by Buren, Kawara and Blank? In *Viewing Velocities: Time in Contemporary Art*, Marcus Verhagen's considers time as content within the practices of various contemporary artists.[563]

He writes:

> "If […] we accept that time is a site of conflict, that different constituencies make qualitatively and quantitatively different claims on it, then artworks, with their multiple registers, may serve to analyse, under-line and possibly reconfigure those differences."[564]

In light of this comment, it is worth noting that during *Painting in The Expanded Field; a symposium*, held at MTU Crawford College of Art & Design, Cork on 22nd March 2024, the art historian and writer Craig Staff gave a keynote talk submitting the idea that painting in the expanded field has developed from artists experimenting and exploring painting as some-*thing* else, into experimenting and exploring with painting as some-*where* and some-*when* else.[565]

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[563] None of the artists covered by Verhagen are solely painters. Instead, they are either sculptors, installation artists or photographers using a range of materials, manners, and styles. Out of the thirty or so artists, the practice of the Canadian born Moyra Davey (1958-) is, I suggest, aligned to mine. In a series of photographs from the 2000's, whisps and clumps of dust from her New York apartment are zoned in on and magnified, for example *Dust Floor*, (2007), C-print. When considering her work, Verhagen asks how can an art concerned with nostalgia and finitude avoid the condition of private reverie? "An answer to this question" he writes, "comes by way of an assessment of contemporary *vanitas* imagery, ciphers of transience and mortality in the art of the present." Verhagen, M. (2023) *Viewing Velocities. Time in Contemporary Art,* Verso, p. 177.

[564] Verhagen, M. (2023) *Viewing Velocities. Time in Contemporary Art,* Verso, p. 21-22.

[565] *Painting in The Expanded Field; a symposium,* MTU Crawford College of Art & Design, Cork, Ireland, 22nd March 2024.
Staff gave Taus Makhacheva's *Tightrope* (2015) as an example. The artist presents the work as a video which shows a tightrope walker carrying a series of paintings between two hilltops in the Caucasus mountains in Dagestan, Russia. The paintings are facsimiles of works from the permanent collection of the P.S. Gamzatova Dagestan Museum of Fine Arts. Makhacheva observed the work, "[...] ended up creating a wonderful metaphor, one that's clear to all [...]. If you watch the complete video you can start thinking about museum collections, about the histories of the arts that are visible to the wider world, but if you watch just two seconds that's enough to get that it's about the fear connected with the loss of culture, about the destruction of history." Taus Makhacheva in: Staff, C. (2021) Painting, *History and Meaning. Sites of Time*, Intellect, p. 104.

<u>Timing Paintings</u>

"Time is impossible to pin down," writes Rebecca Partridge, "it is unknowable, and by embracing this, we come closer to understanding it."[566] Meanwhile, Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood have stated, "No device more effectively generates the effect of a doubling or bending of time than the work of art, a strange kind of event whose relation to time is plural."[567]

The accepted definition of time is said to be "the progression of events from the past to the present into the future",[568] and that it moves in one direction – from past, through the present, to the future. Often characterised as *The Arrow of Time*. What, therefore, characterises painting's time considering its singular still-ness, present-ness and facing-ness, when, according to Paul Ricoeur, "the present does not remain".[569] The American social psychologist Daniel Gilbert explains, "If you think that what is real is the present, you're wrong. The past and the future are both real. The present is a psychological illusion. The present is just the wall between yesterday and today."[570] In painting, then, does something else exist at the point (or time) Gilbert describes as "the wall",[571] other than the present made explicit to us by painting's still-ness. As he suggests, although the present may not be real, the psychological illusion of it appears real.

With that in mind, the philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard observed:

> "A distinction should be made between the time it takes the painter to paint
> the picture (time of 'production'), the time required to look at and understand
> the work (time of 'consumption'), the time to which the work refers (a
> moment, a scene, a situation, a sequence of events: the time of the diegetic

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[566] Partridge, R. (2012) *Time Being: Being Time*, https://rebeccapartridge.com/writing/time-being-being-time/ [accessed 02/11/21].

[567] Nagel, A. & Wood, C.S. (2010) *Anachronic Renaissance*, Zone Books, New York, p. 9.

[568] Helmenstine A.M. (2019), *What is Time? A Simple Explanation*, https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-time-4156799 [accessed 20th April 2022].

[569] Ricoeur, P. (1983), *Time and Narrative, volume 1*, University of Chicago Press, p. 7.

[570] Gilbert, D.T. (2014) *The Psychology of Your Future Self*, Ted Talk, March 2014, ted.com/talks/dan_gilbert_the_psychology_of_your_future_self?language=en [accessed 21st April 2022].

[571] Ibid.

referent, of the story told by the picture), the time it takes to reach the viewer once it has been 'created' (the time of circulation) and finally, perhaps, the time the painting is. This principle, childish as its ambitions may be, should allow us to isolate different 'sites of time'."[572]

In a similar manner, David Joselit has given an account of paintings' triple articulation of timing: the time involved in discharging a mark, or the time of making; how each painting enters a dialogue with painting's long history,[573] its intertextual appearance and contemporality; and the registration in painting of a passage of one figure to another – a migration from object (mark) to subject.[574 & 575]

John Berger, in his essay, *Painting and Time* pursued "the problem of how time exists (or does not) within painting".[576] He maintained that while paintings are static, they don't preserve a moment: "[...] the moment of a painting unlike a moment photographed, never existed as such".[577] However, the passage of time is implied, "the spectator sees before, during and after [...] the nude descends the staircase".[578] A painting's dynamism, he continued, comes through the foreseeing of "the future moments when it will be looked at [...] the painting is entirely addressed to these moments".[579] Berger concluded: "On the question of time, science is bound to be solipsist. *The Problem of Time is a problem of choice*."[580]

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[572] Lyotard, J-F. (1991) *The Inhuman, Reflections on Time*, Polity Press, p. 78.

[573] "The image" writes Didi-Huberman, "often has more memory and more future than the being who contemplates it." Didi-Huberman, G. (2003) *Before the Image, Before Time: The Sovereignty of Anachronism, in Compelling Visuality: The Work of Art In and Out of History*, ed. Claire Farago and Robert Zwijnenberg, The University of Minnesota Press, p. 33.

[574] *Timing Painting – Revising History*. Lecture by David Joselit, Nov. 2019 Timing Painting, Revising History. A Lecture by David Joselit during the Lecture cycle organized by Garage Museum of Contemporary Art and Moscow Art Magazine (Khudoshestvenny Zhurnal). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIRW__JWkac&t=1947s [accessed 5th August 2021].

[575] Neither Lyotard nor Joselit question at what point one should start and stop timing the different sites of time. Specifically, the "time it takes to paint the picture", nor at what point one should begin and end timing the "time involved in discharging a mark, or the time of making". Lyotard (1991), *The Inhuman*, p. 78.

[576] Berger, J. (1985) *Painting and Time,* in *The Sense of Sight*, Vintage International, p. 205.

[577] Ibid.

[578] Ibid.

[579] Ibid. p. 206.

[580] Ibid. p. 211. (My emphasis).

By this, I take his meaning to imply that the problem of painting's time is a problem to exploit. Or, in other words, by embracing the (perceived) problem of time as a problem of choice, the problem of painting's time ceases to be an issue. In this sense I concur with the art historian and writer Ian Heywood who notes, "Painting is not just the object of different aspects of temporality, […] painting practice actively seeks out and makes use of them, pursuing expressive and pictorial possibilities beyond the scope of everyday visual perception".[581]

This project's investigation into an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting – being associated with a disrupted non-sequential notion of time, allied to a stuttering-thinking and a visual stuttering – has presented painting's time as something to work with rather than something to resolve. Moreover, my practice has pursued, and relied upon, pictorial possibilities beyond "everyday visual perception",[582] towards an alternative 'stuttering' visual perception.

The presence of time in painting figuring in the before, during and after, is in opposition to Clement Greenberg, who expressed the opinion that the at-oneness of abstract painting and the time of its viewing, "is linked to the object maintaining and thus containing a single temporality, a temporality that would be united in the act of sheer presentation."[583] I am of the same mind as Berger and Lyotard, rather than Greenberg, in their explanation that the dynamic of time's passage in painting goes back and forth. During this project my practice has been highly attuned to the potential significance and uniqueness of painting's at-oneness and instant-ness, and how a painter and viewer might find something tantalising near – albeit simultaneously frustratingly blurred – between the passages of time found in a painting.[584]

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[581] Heywood, I. (2018), The timing and times of painting, *Journal of Contemporary Painting*, Vol. 4, issue, 1, April 2018.
[582] Ibid.
[583] Benjamin, A, (1996), *What is Abstraction*?, Academy Editions, p. 12.
[584] The problem of painting's time, as opposed to the sequential quality of language and the written word, is eloquently and hauntingly explored in Clarice Lispector's novel *Agua Viva*, originally published in 1973. The novel's protagonist writes: "It's so odd and hard to substitute the paintbrush now for that strangely familiar but always remote thing, the word. The extreme and intimate beauty is within it. Yet it's unreachable – and when it's within reach that's when it becomes illusory because once again in remains unreachable. From my painting and these jostling words of mine a silence rises that is also like the substratum of the eyes. There is a thing that

This paradoxical nature of viewing paintings and the challenge to grasp the time within them, is concisely expressed by Georges Didi-Huberman as that of "things that elicit naming and things that leave us gaping".[585] He recounts the experience of standing in front of Fra Angelico's *The Annunciation*, finding it impossible to describe the peculiar whiteness on the wall of the fresco, which in turn is painted onto the chalk-white plastered wall of the monastery's cell, (Fig. A:3, page 275).

Didi-Huberman writes:

"Sometimes it even suggests to seekers-after-representation that there's 'nothing there' – despite it representing a wall, although a wall so close to the real wall, which is painted the same white, that it seems merely to present its whiteness".[586]

In his attempt at describing Fra Angelico's painted wall, he can only manage "a very concrete '*whack*' of *white*".[587] "It is not an articulated sign; it is not legible as such. It just offers itself: a pure 'appearance of something.'"[588] To which, I submit, he could have similarly asserted: It is not an articulated sign; it is not legible as such. It just offers itself: a pure appearance of some-time.

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escapes me the whole time. When it doesn't escape, I gain a certitude: life is something else. It has an underlying style." Lispector, C. (2012) *Agua Viva*, Penguin Modern Classics, p. 65.
[585] Didi-Huberman, G. (2005) *Confronting Images, Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art*, Penn State Press, p. 16.
[586] Ibid. p. 17.
[587] Ibid. p. 17. (His emphasis).
The translator notes that this term in the original French is *'a colloquial meaning of pan, which can also mean "section" (of a wall), "panel" (in tailoring), "patch" (of blue sky – or of a painting).'*
[588] Ibid. p. 18.
The translator of *Confronting Images* notes that the phrase 'appearance of something' was originally used by Heidegger in *Being and Time* (1927), and "*rendered by his French translators as 'phénomene-indice'*" (p. 18). Heidegger wrote: "What is meant by this are occurrences in the body that show themselves and in this self-showing as such 'indicate' something that does not show itself. When such occurrences emerge, their self-showing coincides with the objective presence of disturbances that do not show themselves. Appearance, as the appearance 'of something' thus precisely does not mean that something shows itself; rather, it means that something makes itself known which does not know itself. It makes itself known through something that does not show itself." Heidegger, M. (1927) *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, State University of New York Press, (1996), pp. 25-26.

Deceased Estate, No. 159, part i (Painting No. 4) was one of the few purely representational paintings included in *Memento-Moi in Painting.*[589] The clarity of its pictorial content offers easily read visual models of time. For instance: the books indicating reading's reliance on sequential time; the clock, a measuring of time; the vase of plastic flowers resisting (or cheating) time; the well-worn chair suggesting occupied time; and the photographic source of the image capturing time whilst also being infused with *memento-mori* by pointing towards the absence of a life lived.

Fig. 6:2

Deceased Estate, No. 159, part i, (Painting No. 4)

Moreover, in its role as a 'tracing',[590] the central positioning of the painting within the gallery space acted as a reference point for the other displayed works whose purpose, within the context of the exhibition, was to explore (or 'map') painting's different times and to recognise a disjointed, stuttering, concept of time found within painting's passages of time – or painting's some times.

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[589] The other being Painting No. 11.
[590] See Literature Review, page 62 & 63, Fig. LR:1.

<u>Paintings' Some Times</u>

In *Time and Narrative, Vol.1*, Paul Ricoeur gives an account of Saint Augustine's formula for time (circa AD. 400)[591] which proposes, "speculation on time is an inconclusive rumination to which narrative activity alone can respond".[592] He explains that, according to St. Augustine, "there are three times, a present of past things, a present of present things, and a present of future things",[593] a "three-fold present",[594] and that this formula required Augustine return to an earlier contention:

> "[…] that we measure time when it is passing; not the future which is not, not the past which is no longer, nor the present which has no extension, but 'time passing'. It is in this very passing, in the transit, that both the multiplicity of the present and its tearing apart are to be sought".[595]

Meanwhile, Beth Harland has suggested that present time's requirement of the future and past for it to exist, or for the illusion of it to exist, allows painting's still-ness and present-ness to, "become animated through the future's passage into past", and proposed that "the specific quality of painting, then, is seen to be its ability to mediate between the timeless and the tangible, or transient moment".[596]

Taking painting's some-times into account (whether it be past, present, or future, or a combination of all three) and viewing the problem of painting's time as a quality to embrace, rather than to resolve, has led my practice to explore whether, under specific circumstances and regardless of their representational content, my paintings could be said to indexically point towards a notion of *memento-mori*. By which I mean: could they appropriate the indexicality similarly developed by Isabelle Graw and David Joselit in their suggestion that a unique quality of painting is its ability to signify and store things other than, and as well as, what the viewer initially reads on a painting's

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[591] Volume 11 of, *Confessions*.
[592] Ricoeur (1990), *Time and Narrative*, p. 6.
[593] Ibid, p. 11.
[594] Ibid, p. 16.
[595] Ibid.
[596] Harland (2009), *A Fragment of Time*, p. 55.

surface – and use it to point to an expanded, and alternatively expressed, notion of *memento-mori*.

In addition, I propose my use of the painted grid to disrupt painting's time by use of its formal construction (Chapter Five), alongside a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering which metaphorically and practically raises backgrounds to the surface of paintings (Chapter One), magnifies and highlights an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting – a quality made more palpable when executed within a framework of *memento-mori* infused source material (Chapters Two & Three). This disrupted, unjointed, time is, in some measure, relatable to Gilles Deleuze concepts revolving around cinema's time-image.[597]

Memento-Mori: An Image of Multiplicities

"A time-image, for Deleuze," summarises Christopher Vitale, "is an image which is infused with time. That is, it is an image which is different from itself, which is virtual to itself, which is infused with past/future."[598] Recognising this project's expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting as an image of multiplicities (imitated in the title of my exhibition), has led me to consider my paintings as images which are virtual to themselves – and being similarly infused with past/future.

John Rajchman equates Deleuze's "'spatialisation' of vision to the kind of 'disconnected spaces' explored in modern cinema [...]". Moreover, Deleuze shows us, "[...] that saying and seeing do not come related as concept and intuition, form and content, or signifier and signified [...]."[599]

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[597] Deleuze's concepts of cinema's time image was largely informed by Henri Bergson's analysis of virtual and actual time, set out in *Matter and Memory*, originally published in 1896. "For Bergson, the present is a dynamic interpretation of past and future. [...] When I hold an object in my hand, say, a coffee mug, it feels more real than the memory of a coffee mug, [...]. That feeling of being more real is what allows us to tell an actual coffee mug from one which is less real, or more virtual. An image of a coffee mug in memory, or in film, is thus a virtual image, while the one we hold in our hand at any given moment is an actual image." Vitale, C. (2017) *Guide to Reading Deleuze's Cinema II: The Time-Image*, https://onscenes.weebly.com/film/guide-to-reading-deleuzes-cinema-iithe-time-image [accessed 13th February 2023].
[598] Vitale, C. (2017) *Guide to Reading Deleuze's Cinema II: The Time-Image*
[599] Rajchman (2000), *The Deleuze Connections*, p. 129-130.

In *Cinema* 2, Deleuze makes a distinction between two modes of filmmaking: 'Movement-image' and 'Time-image', where "the former produces a causal sequence of frames, following the necessity of action, while in the latter, time escapes causality".[600] The translators of *Cinema 2* make the point that Deleuze was interested in cinema for similar reasons he was interested in painting, "[...] as with painting, [cinema] gives conceptual construction new dimensions, those of the percept and affect [...]".[601]

The series of paintings *Deceased Estate No. 138, parts i, ii & iii* (Paintings No's. 1, 2 & 3), when displayed together as a group in *Memento-Mori in Painting*, had the effect of revealing an indeterminate temporal telling of a life-lived by producing a 'causal sequence of frames' – their different frames sourced from just one snap-shot photograph of the home where a life was once lived (Fig. 6:3).
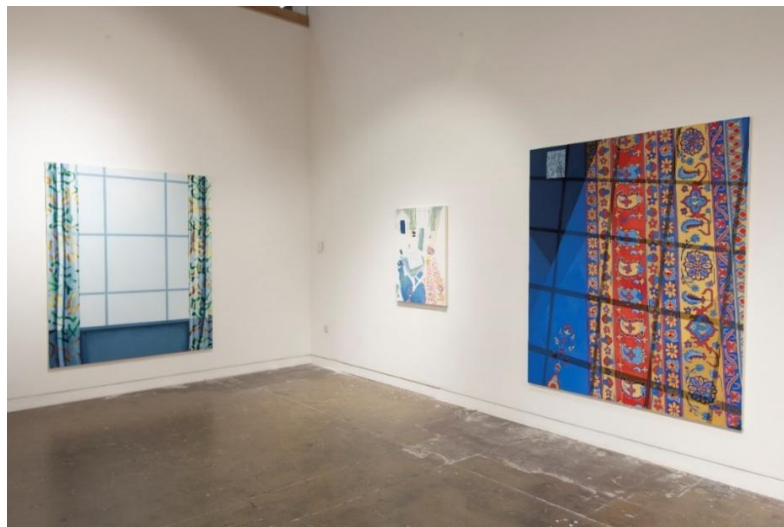
Fig. 6:3

Installation View. *Memento-Mori in Painting*: *An Image of Multiplicities.* Painting No's 1, 2 & 3.

The use of the grid within the paintings, albeit in different forms, adding a further disjointed temporal dimension within the formal makeup of each painting – reflective of the temporal indetermination of a human's life span and this project's expanded notion of *memento-mori*, being set within the precepts of a visual-stuttering.

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[600] Harland (2009), *A Fragment of Time*, p. 65.
[601] Galeta & Tomlinson in: Deleuze (2013), *Cinema 2*, p. xv. (My emphasis).

Apposite to this project, and illustrated in this series of paintings (No's 1, 2 & 3), is the way Deleuze tackles cinema as an image of thought, or "a kind of provoked becoming of thought",[602] rather than how he develops cinema's time-image into a series of signs, or what he terms chronosigns.[603] Deleuze denotes the 'opsign' as a purely optical sign, "important because [it] break[s] apart the sensory-motor link of perception, action and relation images, *disrupting the movement-image as a whole*, [...]".[604]

Deleuze gives us examples of films made by neo-realist directors which contain "purely optical and sound situations",[605 & 606] in contrast to the action image of realist film.[607] In turn, Harland gives an account of why a notion of a pure and optical sound image might be of interest to a painter because it is a "concept 'invested by the senses', thus linked to the concerns of the haptic as a viewing experience".[608]

This haptic experience is illustrated in the Smooth/Haptic side in Table 1 (page 189) showing where the smooth and haptic resides within *Deceased Estate, No. 123, part i* (Painting No. 7). In summary, these experiences are born out of:

- The 'smooth' space allied to the digital qualities of my deceased estate photographs.[609]

- The process of painting a grid or weave-like device.

- The employment of the grid to facilitate, rather than to impede or regulate.

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[602] Ibid.

[603] 'Chronosigns', described as signs: "of the order of time, of its internal relations and signs of time as a series" Galeta & Tomlinson in: Deleuze (2013), *Cinema 2*, p. xvi.

[604] Olkowski, D. (2021) *Deleuze, Bergson, Merleau-Ponty: The Logic and Pragmatics of Creation, Affective Life, and Perception,* Indiana University Press, p. 89. (Her emphasis).

[605] Deleuze (2013) *Cinema 2*, p. 17.

[606] Olkowski, summarising an example of the time-image in cinema, writes: "Deleuze cites Andre Bazin, who describes a scene in Vittorio De Sica's *Unberto D.* in which a maid enters a kitchen, cleans up, drives away some ants, begins to prepare coffee, then see the belly of a pregnant woman. At this moment, 'it is as though all the misery in the world were going to be born.' [...] In such situation, *time is out of joint*; time is no longer the sequential tracking of solid bodies in homogeneous space." Olkowski, (2021) *Deleuze, Bergson, Merleau-Ponty,* quoting from Deleuze (2013) *Cienma 2*, p. 2. (Her emphasis).

[607] According to Angelo Retivo, these neo-realist filmmakers gave us films "[...] liberated form the grip of narrative [...], aberrant movement, false continuity, so as to allow that which is seen to become charged with that which is unseen". In: Flaxman, G. (ed.) (2000) *The Brain is the Screen: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Cinema*, University of Minnesota Press, p. 175.

[608] Harland (2009), *A Fragment of Time*, p. 65.

[609] See Literature Review, pages 71 and 77.

In his consideration of the time-image, Deleuze "seeks to extract sensation from representation in favour of an aesthetic 'experimentation' through which our spatial sense and experience of temporality are changed". Through his notion of the 'time-image' Deleuze explores a "kind of 'disjointed time', which moves us from the 'extensive' to the 'intensive', towards a kind of ungrounding".[610]

I propose this ungrounding, described by Harland and implied by Rajchman, is related to the spatiotemporal visual stutters I have attributed to my paintings made during this project, formed from the push-pull effect created by 'striated' space of the optic reacting in a stuttering manner with the 'smooth' space of the haptic.

In Chapter Five I allied my use of the painted grid with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of smooth space and its relationship with the haptic, thus instilling it with an ability to connect and, in turn, be used as, a generative and pluralistic device capable of forming notions "independent from its own structure".[611] I gave an account of this this disruptive, ungrounding, effect in an analysis of *Deceased Estate, No. 123, part i* (Painting No. 7) and illustrated in Table 1.[612]

In light of Deleuze's time-image, however, the paintings *Deceased Estate, No. 123, part iii* (Painting No. **8**) and *Deceased Estate, No. 138, part ii* (Painting No. 3), illustrate how a more fluid amalgamation of these two counterintuitive schemas (connectiveness and disruptiveness) operate in a more contained way – and more in line with this project's expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting expressed as an image of multiplicities.

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[610] Harland (2009), *A Fragment of Time*, p. 66. (Her emphasis).
[611] Eckmann & Koepnick (2006) *[Grid<>Matrix]*, p. 53.
[612] Pages 183-189.

<u>*Deceased Estate, No. 123, part iii*</u>

Placed at the centre of *Deceased Estate, No. 123, part iii* (Painting No. 8) is a cardboard box-like three-dimensional form derived from its originating photograph (Fig. 6:4).[613] The painting's mode of construction is different than its associated paintings, *Parts i* (Painting No. 7) and *ii* (Fig. II:20, page 257); when beginning to work on the painting I had no clear preconceived ideas of its final outcome.

Fig. 6:4

Deceased Estate No. 123, part iii, (2023).

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[613] Photograph no. 123. Fig. 5:6, page 184.

In the lower half of the painting two wave-like strips horizontally cut the image from left to right edge, imitative of (rather than accurately mimetically representing) the internal structure of the cardboard sheets the box was made with.[614] The painting's box is viewed from a similar angled perspective as the photograph's box. Interrupting the path of a rectangular fluorescent-yellow grid-like frame (echoing the painting's edges), a painted outline drawing of the original photograph sits in the top left corner. This florescent grid-like frame simultaneously connects and disconnects the painting's space, while also mapping the image and the canvas's surface.

In 1971, Michel Foucault gave a spoken account of how Édouard Manet [615] treated "the very space of the canvas, […] the problem of lighting, [and how he] played with the place of the viewer in relation to the picture".[616] In his description of Manet's use of space in *The Port of Bordeaux* (1872), Foucault focused on the top left corner of the painting's canvas, being made up of the horizontal and vertical painted structure of boat masts, and considers how Manet plays with the masts in a "game of the weave" of the canvas (Fig. 6:5).[617]

Fig: 6:5

Édouard Manet, *The Port of Bordeaux*, (1872), (detail). Oil on canvas, 66 x 99.5 cm.

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[614] See also *Deceased Estate, No. 123, part ii*, (2023), Fig.Il:18, page 228.
[615] French (1832-1883).
[616] Published from a transcript of a lecture delivered by him in Turin, later transcribed by The Tate, London, as: Foucault, M., (2011) *Manet and the Object of Painting*, Introduction by Nicolas Bourriaud, Tate Publishing, p. 31-32.
[617] Ibid, p.44

In similar fashion to Manet's painting of boat masts described by Foucault,[618] the way the facing side of the box is painted in Painting No. 8, repeats the horizontal and vertical grid-like strands which constitute the canvas's material nature. Foucault's description of Manet's game of the weave necessitates an acute awareness of the picture surface and relies on a haptic (or smooth), rather than an optic (or striated), mode of painting. A painting's surface becomes all-important when setting aside classical (striated) perspective (Fig. 6:6).

Fig. 6:6

Deceased Estate No. 123, part iii, (2023), (detail).

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[618] Foucault explains: "These vertical and horizontal axes are really repetitions inside the canvas of the horizontal and vertical axes which frame the canvas, and which form the very frame of the picture. But, as you see, it is equally the reproduction of a sort, in the very grain of the painting, of all the horizontal and vertical fibres which constitute the canvas itself, the canvas in which it has material. It is as though the weave of the canvas was in the process of starting to appear and show its internal geometry, and you see this interlacing of threads which is like a sketch represented on the canvas itself." Foucault (2011) *Manet and the Object of Painting*, p. 42.
It is, perhaps, interesting to note that Foucault's consideration of grids in Manet's paintings contradicts Krauss's statement that the grid "is ubiquitous in the art of our century, while appearing nowhere, nowhere at all, in the art of the last one". Krauss, R. (1979), "Grids", *October*, Vol. 9. Summer, 1979, p. 52.

Elements within the painting do not necessarily lead to one another. By which I mean there is no obvious sequential narrative – lines and forms are placed on top of one another in a non-rational way – whilst still retaining an obtuse interior logic. The painting's time is a disrupted time. It escapes causally rather than sequentially, allied to Deleuze's time-image.

In *Deceased Estate, No. 123, part i* (Painting No. 7) there is an obvious, stuttering, relationship between the 'smooth' & the haptic, and the 'striated' and the optic (Table 1).[619] Whereas the same relationship in *Deceased Estate, No. 123, part iii* (Painting No. 8) is more fluid and inconclusive, with a propensity towards the 'smooth' & the haptic (Fig. 6:7) – as set out in the table overleaf (Table 2).

Fig. 6:7

Painting No. 7 (Table 1.)   **Painting No. 8** (Table 2.)
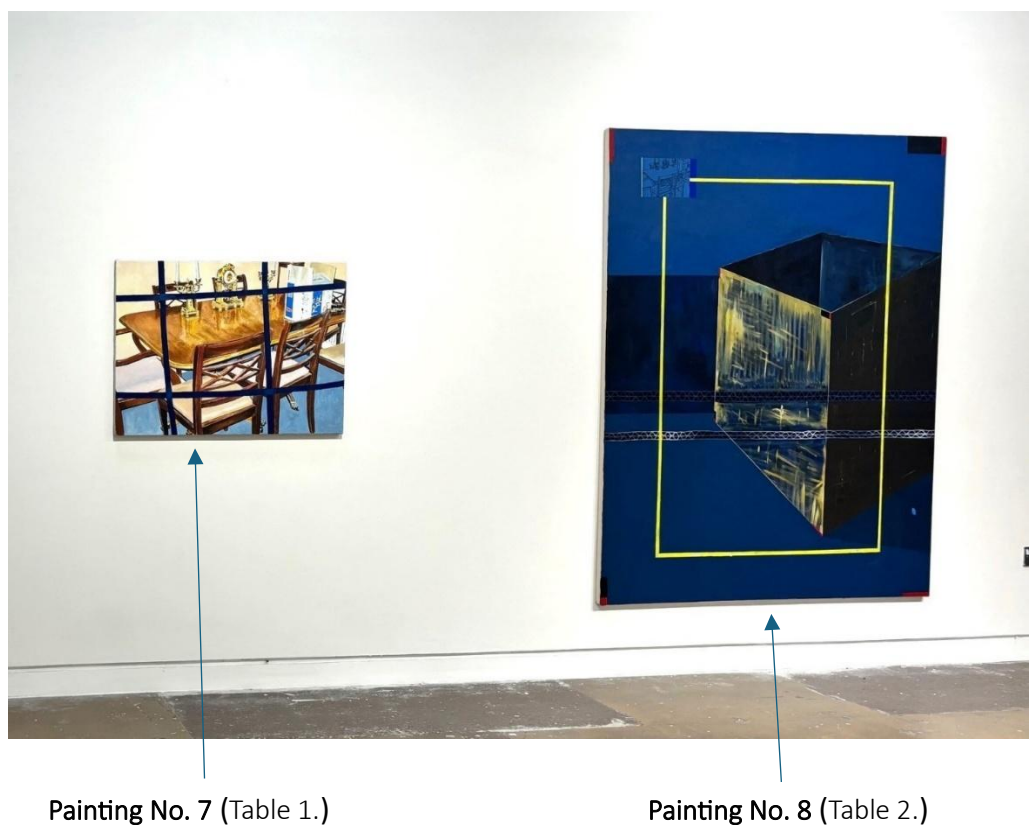
Installation View. *Memento-Mori in Painting*: *An Image of Multiplicities.*

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[619] Page 189.

SMOOTH / HAPTIC ⟷	STRIATED / OPTIC
Digital properties of the photograph from which the painting is originally sourced from.	Visual appearance of the out-line cartoon, and the perspectival angled nature of the box.
Process of painting the bright yellow grid-like frame. ⟷	
Process of painting the horizontal wave-like strips indicating the cardboard's interior structure. ⟷	
Process of painting the blue ground.	
Employing the grid to facilitate, rather than to impede or regulate.	
⟷ Process of painting the hatch-like brush strokes on the box's facing side	Process of painting the box's outline and 3-D form.

Table 2.

<u>Haptic Time</u>

"What" asked Beth Harland, "might it mean to think of the time that is produced by a painting (both the time of its making and the time which it generates within the viewer) as *haptic time*?".[620] On reflection, I consider *Deceased Estate, No. 123, part iii* (Painting No. 8) a response to her question for reasons set out here, and re-enforced further by her subsequent rhetorical question:

> "If haptic visuality can be the experience of a 'close view', without the classical perspective of distance, then might haptic time be a form of temporality that has no structure of distance."[621]

While working on *Deceased Estate, No. 123, part iii* (Painting No. 8)*,* I was keen for the viewer to have an acute awareness of the painting's surface. For instance, there is a third (hidden) wave-like horizontal strip at the top half of the painting which can only clearly be seen when close to the painting's surface, and seen better at an obtuse angle, in addition to other painterly details that can only be seen close to (Fig. 6:8). "An acute awareness of the picture surface," writes Harland, "such as is often provoked by haptic images, breaks language in a heterogeneity of time as well as space".[622]

Fig. 6:8

Deceased Estate No. 123, part iii, (2023), (Painting No. 8) (detail).

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[620] Harland (2009), *A Fragment of Time*, p. 66. (Her emphasis).
[621] Ibid.
[622] Harland (2009), *A Fragment of Time*, p. 66.

The concept of haptic time, being a form of temporality that has no structure of distance, is related to this project's development of a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering which connects multiplicities, and having the quality, investigated in Chapter One, of visually and theoretically raising the backgrounds of paintings to their surface. With that in mind, in *Deceased Estate, No. 138, part ii* (Painting No. 3) a non-mimetic, stylised pattern of a carpet (derived from its originating photograph)[623] is raised up and flattened right up to the surface of the painting, while a shadowed integrated grid (derived from the grilles of a sash window) wraps the entire canvas (Fig. 6:9).

Fig. 6:9

Deceased Estate, No. 138, part ii, (2024), (**Painting No. 3**) (detail).

Dorothea Olkowski talks of a "stuttering practice of an ontology of becoming", in order to "create an image of difference […]".[624] Considering Olkowski's spatial comparison of Giotto's image of hell (Fig. 1:1) with a stuttering language system to raise the background of a painting to its surface, Harland applies a temporal analogy to suggest that "we would have a *world without a point of view – in time*."[625]

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[623] See Appendix, page 268.
[624] Olkowski (1999), *Gilles Deleuze*, p. 14.
[625] Harland (2009), *A Fragment of Time*, p. 66. (Her emphasis).

Deceased Estate No. 138, part ii (Painting No. 3); Olkowski's analogy; and Harland's statement are, I suggest, manifestations of – and prescriptions which act to unlock – the idea of how a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering could be employed to visually and theoretically raise an expanded notion of *memento-mori* to the surface of a painting. In addition, I propose they act to open up a rationale to employ the use of a painted grid to disrupt a sequential concept of time associated with both a haptic time comparable to Deleuze's time-image, and this project's alternative way to express an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting.

Conclusion

In Chapter Five I considered my use of a painted grid within a *memento-mori* infused arena being in possession of Deleuze and Guattari's 'smooth' space, contrary to the grid's 'striated' optic structure. I gave an account of how they associated their definition of 'smooth' space with Alois Riegl's notion of the haptic, and in this chapter further developed the idea that haptic-time could be allied with this project's expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting.

I described the painted grid's role in a disruptive back and forth / push and pull between the 'smooth' and the haptic, and the 'striated' and the optic present in my paintings. This effect, I proposed, is informed by, and allied to, a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering. The painted grid, in certain circumstances, magnifies this disruptiveness creating a kind of spatiotemporal stutter between disconnected and disjointed spaces, similar to that described by Deleuze and Guattari as an ungrounded "abstract line – concrete line".[626] (Painting No's 7, 19 and 14).

I have since developed these ideas to explore how the painted grid could be used to facilitate alternative ways to express this project's expanded notion of *memento-mori* – a notion reliant on the 'perceived' problem with painting's time (Painting No's 3 and 8). Moreover, I propose that the notion of *memento-mori* in painting could be allied with

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[626] Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, (2020), p. 576.

Deleuze's concept of cinema's time-image by reflecting on how a painting's haptic time could be thought of as being possessive of a temporality without linear structure (Painting No's 1, 2 and 3).

John Rajchman writes:

> "[...] – there is a kind of temporal indetermination in the unfolding of a life, which is prior to the 'I think' of representations, or the 'synthesis of the manifold' on which it rests; and it is precisely this time implicated in us that cannot be put into any prior movement, linear or cyclical, which, for example, Deleuze sees cinema exploring through its time-images. [...] along with such 'unjointed time', there goes a change in space, and our experience-experiment with space – we pass from an 'extensive' to an 'intensive' spatiality."[627]

Reading my paintings with Deleuze's cinematic unjointed-time-images in mind, I propose an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting can be alternatively expressed as an image of multiplicities, revealed through a painting's unseen in-between using the painted grid to unground and disrupt the holed-through space of a painting's surface. This ungrounding, or visual-stuttering, pivots on the relationship between Deleuzoguattarian concepts of 'smooth' and 'striated' space, and Alois Riegl's concepts of the haptic and the optic.

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[627] Rajchman (2000), *The Deleuze Connections*, p. 130, (quoting Deleuze).

CONCLUSION

Summary

From the outset, this project's principal aim was to use the act of painting and the construction of pictures to investigate ways the notion of *Memento-Mori* (meaning: Remember you Have to Die) might be alternatively expressed in painting differently than by depicting objects signifying a sequential (and ultimately finite) sum of time – such as a skull, timepiece or perishable food.

Informed by an active engagement with specific 17th Century oil paintings by Nicolas Poussin which, according to Louis Marin, dealt with the notion of *memento-mori* in an "entirely new way",[628] my practice has worked with the uncertainty, disruption, and disparity between unjointed types of space, language, and structure.

Introduced, charted and illustrated at the beginning of this exegesis, I have relied on a visual analysis of my exhibition *Memento-Mori in Painting: An Image of Multiplicities* as an anchor to structure and map this principal aim, in addition to the project's subsequent questions, ideas and theories. Through this analysis, in parallel with the articulation and development of a visual-stuttering as a mode of painting, this project proposes that an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting, having no singular recognised expression, can be expressed in painting as a state of connective stuttering multiplicities.

This proposal is reliant on interpreting the painted grid as a device to counterintuitively connect and disrupt, reflecting the temporal indetermination in the unfolding of a life – an indetermination allied to both Deleuze's cinematic time-image and this project's understanding of an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting.

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[628] Marin quoted in: Clark (2006) *The Sight of Death*, p. 96.

Rather than use paintings and the construction of images to express or represent how verbal communication is affected by a stutter, this practice-led project has developed the critical and clinical stutter into a theoretical stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering mode of painting – a mode of painting apposite and in sympathy with this project's expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting associated with a non-sequential, stuttering, concept of time.

Integrating my own lived experience of a clinical stutter with Beth Harland's description of Gilles Deleuze's critical stutter to destabilise the image, this project has put into practice and developed the idea that the critical *and* clinical stutter could be visually articulated by bringing backgrounds up to the surface of images, "where form is destroyed", and where, according to Dorothea Olkowski, "[...] a highly differentiated kind of pictorial space that sharpens the viewer's awareness" is created.[629]

During the process of curating and being with my exhibition of paintings as an act of research, this sharpening of awareness was trialled and analysed, while also allowing me to consolidate the ideas and insights gained throughout this practice-led PhD research project.

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[629] Olkowski (1999) *Gilles Deleuze*, p. 17.

<u>Insights</u>

Resulting from research gathered through the act of painting and insights gained from my exhibition *Memento-Mori in Painting*, I submit the following ideas:

<u>Chapter One. Visual Stuttering:</u>

- Linking a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering to painting, beckons connections and alternative spaces; in addition to visually and theoretically raising the background of paintings to the surface.

- Born out of a physical and mental struggle, a stutterer's thinking while in conversation is infused with significance – a significance relatable to a painterly struggle which can lead to, and help rationalise, seemingly capricious decisions to focus in on, and fragment, elements within a painting; and, in turn, to construct new paintings out of that fragmentation (Painting No's 3, 8, 9 and 14).

- The empty gallery wall-space between two associated paintings can be seen as a visual interpretation of a stuttering 'block'. Curatorial decisions can have a role to play in embodying a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering as a mode of painting (Painting No's 9 and 10).

- A stuttering critical, clinical and visual glitch can be a moment of creation and affirmation – one, evidenced by this project, worth responding to as an event.

- A stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering can be associated with a non-sequential notion of time and, in turn, with an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting.

Chapter Two. *Memento-Mori:*

- A visual-stuttering and an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting can work as a symbiotic relationship within a painting practice – to ask questions differently, to defamiliarise and to disrupt.

- The idea of anamorphosis (to form again), when associated with the '*objet petit a*' (anything that desire touches, yet is itself, repeatedly untouchable) can be used to understand both the notion of *memento-mori* and a visual-stuttering as research-creational things-to-think-with within a painting practice – and may go some way to shed new light on the uneasy relationship between theory and practice (Painting No. 8).

- This project's expanded notion of *memento-mori* might act as a rebuff to Friedrich Nietzsche's implied position that a contemporary interpretation of *memento-mori* in painting might be identified as being 'insincere'.

Chapter Three. Nicolas Poussin:

- Jutta Koether's and Leon Kossoff's observations on Nicolas Poussin's paintings can be understood as being analogous to a stuttering-thinking and visual-stuttering – where, on the one hand, there is a coexistence of rigidity allied to a pattern making structure, related to fluent language – and on the other, a non-structure which nearly collapses, related to critical and clinical stuttering (Painting No's 12 and 13).

- Through an active engagement with Poussin's paintings *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake* and *Et In Arcadia Ego*, alternative ways of how the notion of *memento-mori* in painting can be rationalised (Painting No. 6).

- Poussin's disruptive non-sequential narrative structure, "which connects the present and the future with the past [...]",[630] can generate a tangible way to ally *memento-mori* with the painted grid's counterintuitive ability to connect and disrupt (Painting No's 12 and 13).

- A painting's transitivity has a role in testing the limits to which the notion of *memento-mori* in painting can be expanded (Painting No's 11 & 12, and 4 & 14).

Chapter Four. The Unseen In-Between:

- Under certain circumstances a painting might be read as indexically pointing towards the notion of *memento-mori*, despite its representational content (Painting No's 5 and 13).

- Informed by Lacanian themes of entrapment and anamorphosis, the notion of *memento-mori* can, under certain circumstances, be said to be trapped and embedded within a painting with the use of a painted grid/weave-like device (Painting No's 8 and 13).

- The contrary nature of a painting to create form out of a flat surface to indicate, for instance, the mystery of the Incarnation, can be employed to rationalise the alignment of the painted grid with a disrupted concept of temporality – and in turn with an expanded notion of *memento-mori* associated (**Painting No's 3, 7, 8 and 10**).

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[630] Panofsky (1955) *Et in Arcadia Ego*, p. 296.

<u>Chapter Five. The Grid as Device:</u>

- The painted grid's effect on the holed-through space formed with paint, when applied to a flat surface, directs a spotlight on painting's association and 'perceived' problem with temporality (Painting No's 7, 8 and 10).

- Using and reading my use of the painted grid as a device, an expanded notion of *memento-mori* could be said to be embodied within the space, or zone, created in a painting amid the junction and disjunction between Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of smooth and striated space, and their relationship with the haptic and the optic (Painting No's 3, 7 and 8).

- Reading the grid in this manner, presents it with the ability to counterintuitively connect and disrupt and be used as a generative and pluralistic device capable of forming notions independent from its own structure (Paintings No's 1, 2 and 3).

<u>Chapter Six. *Memento-Mori* as Image of Multiplicities:</u>

- Reliant on the (perceived) problem with painting's time, the painted grid could be used to facilitate alternative ways to express an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting.

- The concept of haptic time, being a form of temporality that has no structure of distance, can be associated with this project's development of a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering and allied also to an expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting.

- An expanded notion of *memento-mori* in painting can be allied with Deleuze's concept of cinema's time-image, both being possessive of a temporality without linear structure, similar to that of a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering (Paintings No's 1, 2 and 3).

<u>New Knowledge</u>

The cumulative result of the insights gained, and proposals made, whilst taking advantage of painting's inherent properties, possibilities, and perceived problems – and allying them with a critical and clinical stutter – goes some way to move *memento-mori* in painting away from being indicated by representational objects indicating a sequential (and ultimately finite) concept of time. Instead, this project has moved the notion of *memento-mori* in painting towards a counterintuitive state of disruptive-connected-stuttering multiplicities reflective of a life-span's temporal indetermination.

Georges Didi-Huberman has stated, "Whenever we are before the image, we are before time".[631] There is a significant chasm to cross to suggest that if we are before time when in front of a painting, then, regardless of what is pictured, we must also be before *memento-mori*. Notwithstanding, I propose the ideas explored through my practice and subsequent exhibition of paintings have laid down stepping-stones which could be used to cross the chasm. The employment of a stuttering-thinking and a visual-stuttering, born out of a critical and a clinical stutter, has been pivotal in laying down this path.

I acknowledge Esther Peeren's assertion that, "Scholarly [critical] stuttering should not be an affectation or something we seek to grow out of, but an unavoidable part of our critical practices".[632] I consider this practice-led project to be evidence that, in addition to critical stuttering being an unavoidable part of our scholarly practices, so too can tacit knowledge (or, even, learned knowledge) of a clinical-stutter be an integral and beneficial part of a painting practice.

Embracing and employing this knowledge can allow us to think and ask questions differently, to defamiliarise, to take time, to creatively block and un-block, to disrupt, and infuse the overlooked with significance. Out of these processes, a painting practice may gain a different understanding of something; or, even, reveal something new.

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[631] Didi-Huberman, (2003), *Compelling Visuality*, p. 31.
[632] Peeren (2017), *Stutter*, p. 183. (Assertion acknowledged in the Introduction, page 11).

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. Il:1

Deceased Estate, No. 64 (2021), walnut crystal ink, watercolour, acrylic and collage on paper. 30 x 42 cm.

Fig. Il:2
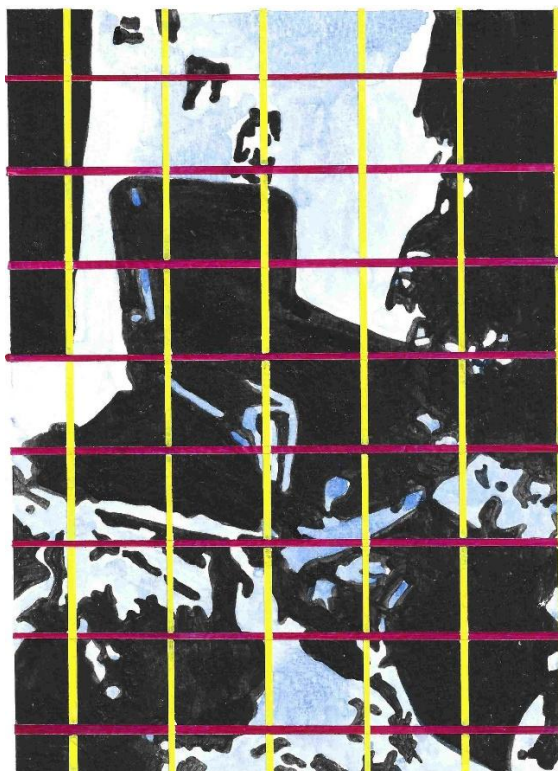
Deceased Estate, No. 7 (2021), egg tempera, watercolour and acrylic on paper. 22 x 14.5 cm.

Fig. Il:3
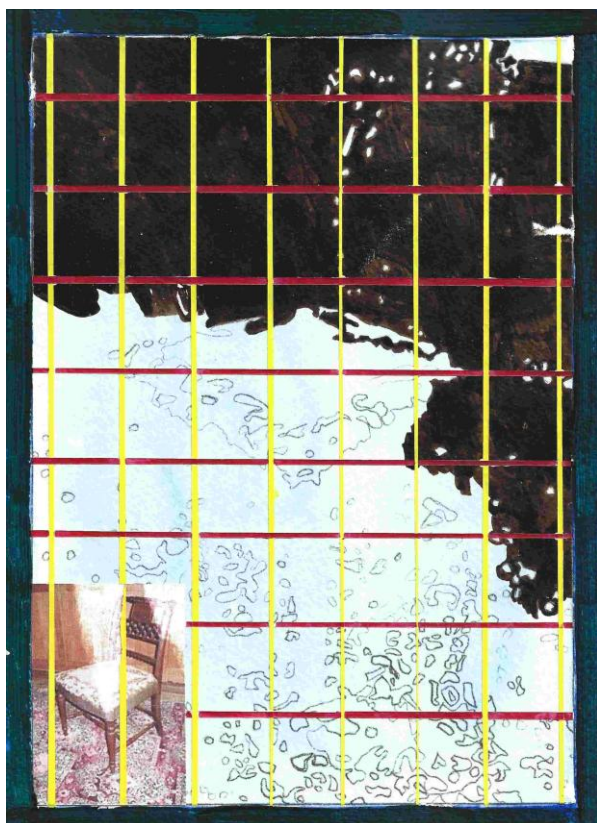
Deceased Estate, No. 47 (2021), walnut crystal ink, watercolour, acrylic and graphite on paper.
27 x 117 cm.

Fig. Il:4

Deceased Estate No. 159 (2021), (walnut ink series, no. ii), walnut ink and acrylic on paper.
30 x 42 cm.

Fig. Il:5
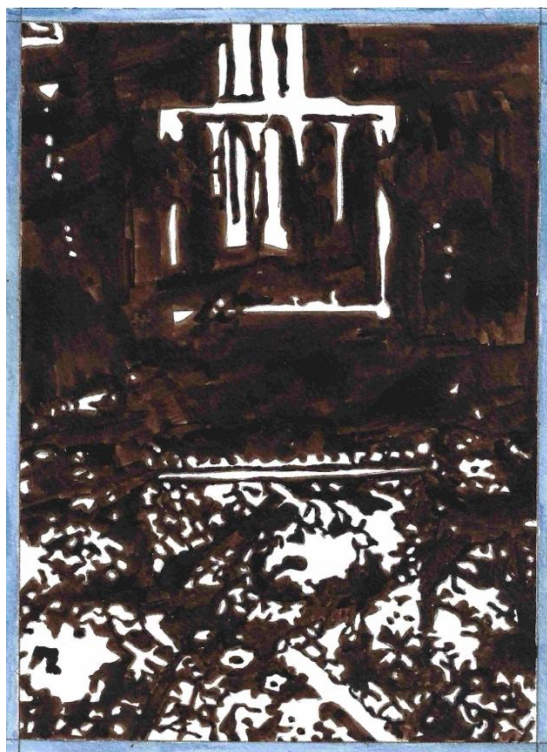
Deceased Estate, No. 46 (2021), walnut crystal ink and watercolour on paper
26 x 16 cm.

Fig. Il:6

Deceased Estate, No. 138 (2021), walnut crystal ink and acrylic on paper
26 x 16 cm.

Fig. Il:7

Deceased Estate, No. 83 (red grid) (2021), oil on canvas, 60 x 55 cm.
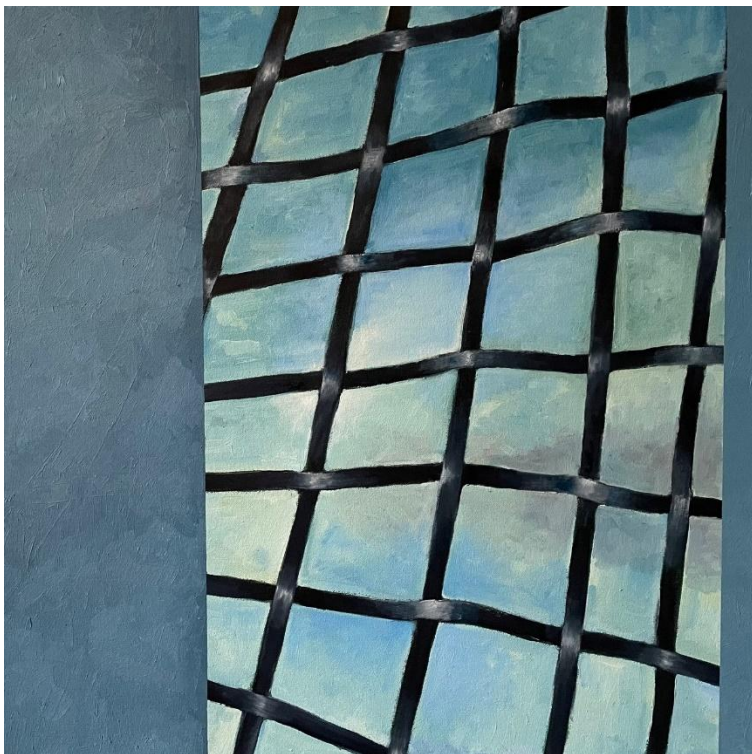
Fig. Il:8

Net (2022), oil on canvas, 60 x 60 cm.

Fig. Il:9

Et in Arcadia Ego, (after Poussin) (2022), oil on canvas, 42 x 59 cm.

Fig. Il:10

Et in Arcadia Ego, (after Poussin) (2022), charcoal on paper, 42 x 59 cm.

Fig. Il:11

I too live here (after Poussin), (2021-22), oil on canvas, 70 x 90 cm. (since destroyed)

Fig. Il:12

Room 29, The National Gallery, London, (no. ii.) (2021),
egg tempera, oil, and acrylic on board, 30 x 30 cm.

Fig. Il:13

Kneeling Woman, (after Poussin) (2021)
Screenprint, acrylic, ink and oil on paper and board, 60 x 65 cm.

Fig. Il:14

Kneeling Woman (i), (after Poussin), (2022), oil on canvas, 40 x 60 cm.
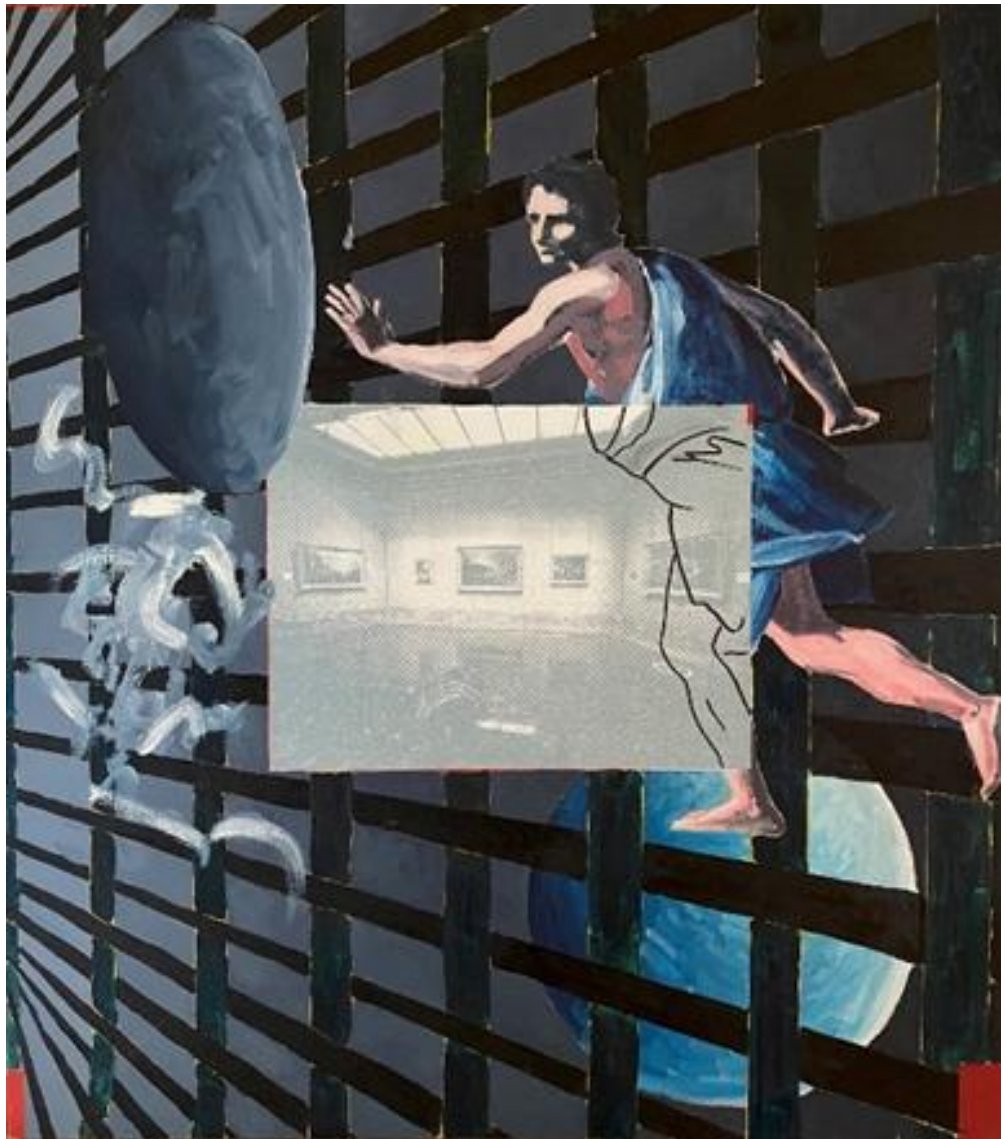
Fig. Il:15

Running Man, (after Poussin) (2021)
Screenprint, acrylic, ink and oil on canvas, 81 x 73 cm.
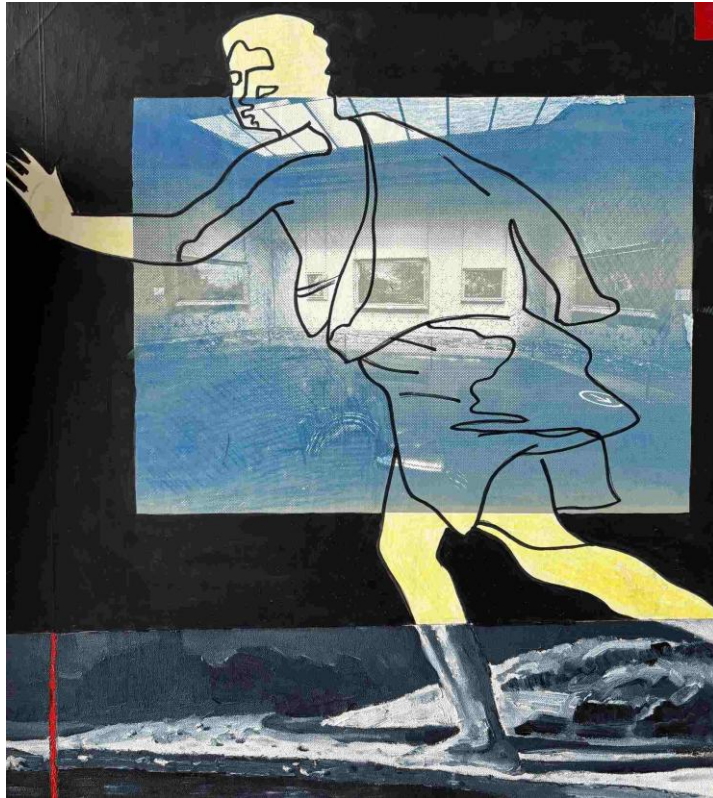
Fig. Il:16

Running Man (after Poussin) (2022), screen print, acrylic, ink and oil on canvas, 20 x 46 cm.
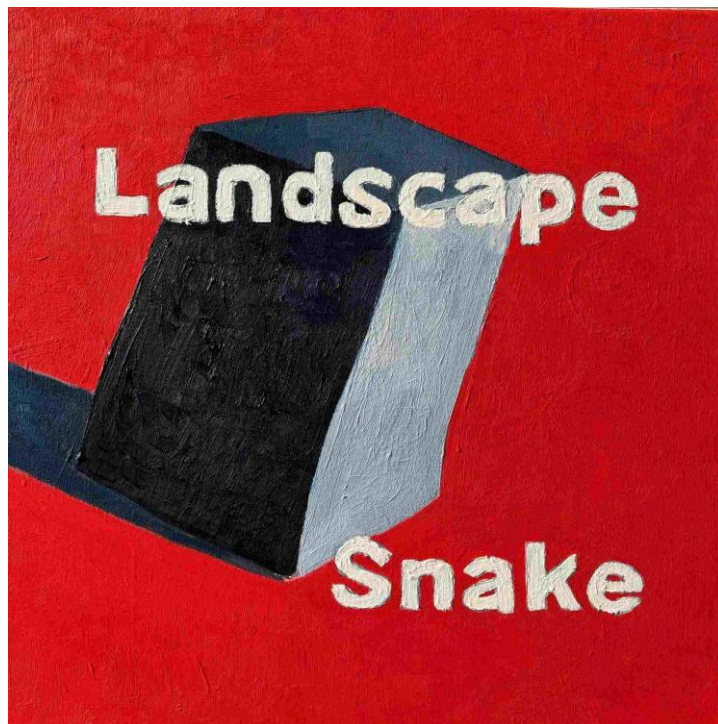
Fig. Il:17

Landscape / Snake (2022), oil on canvas, 40 x 40 cm.
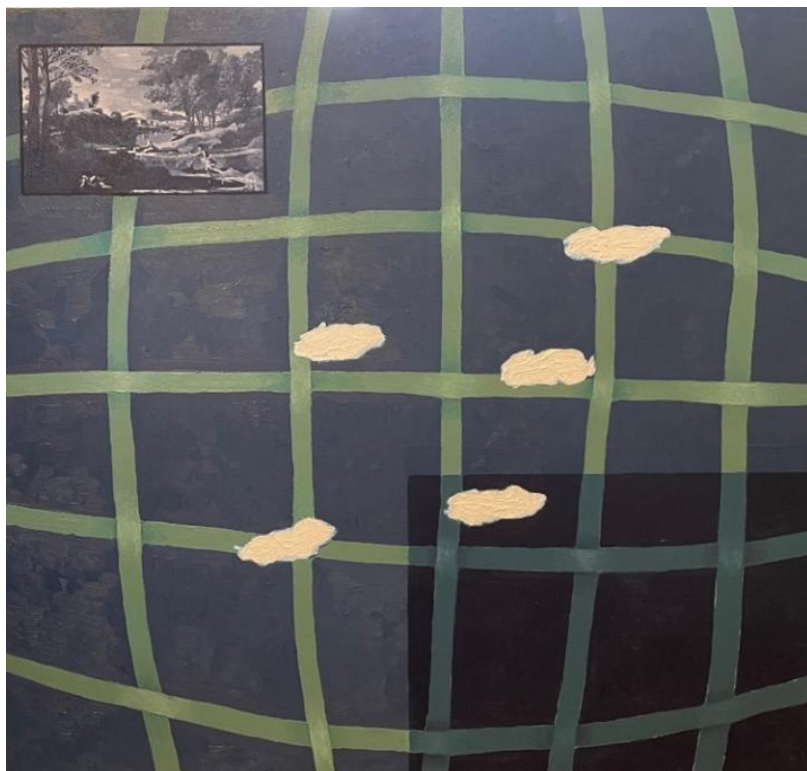
Fig. II:18

Pleiades (No. 1) (after Poussin), (2022), oil on canvas, 75 x 80 cm.

Fig. II:19

Pleiades (No. 2) (after Poussin), (2022), oil on canvas, 70 x 90 cm.
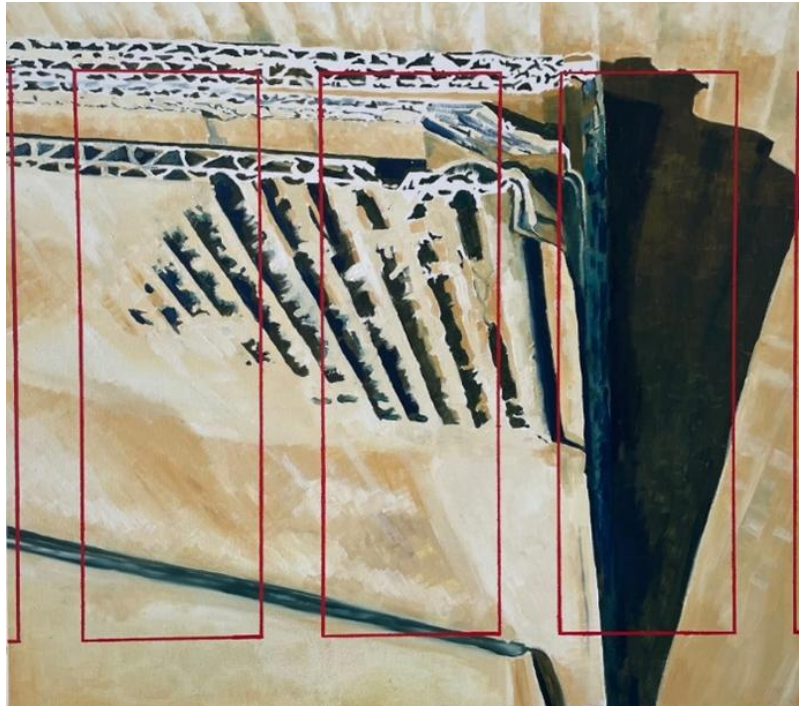
Fig. Il:20

Deceased Estate, No. 123, part ii, (2023), oil on canvas. 73 x 81 cm.

Fig. Il:21
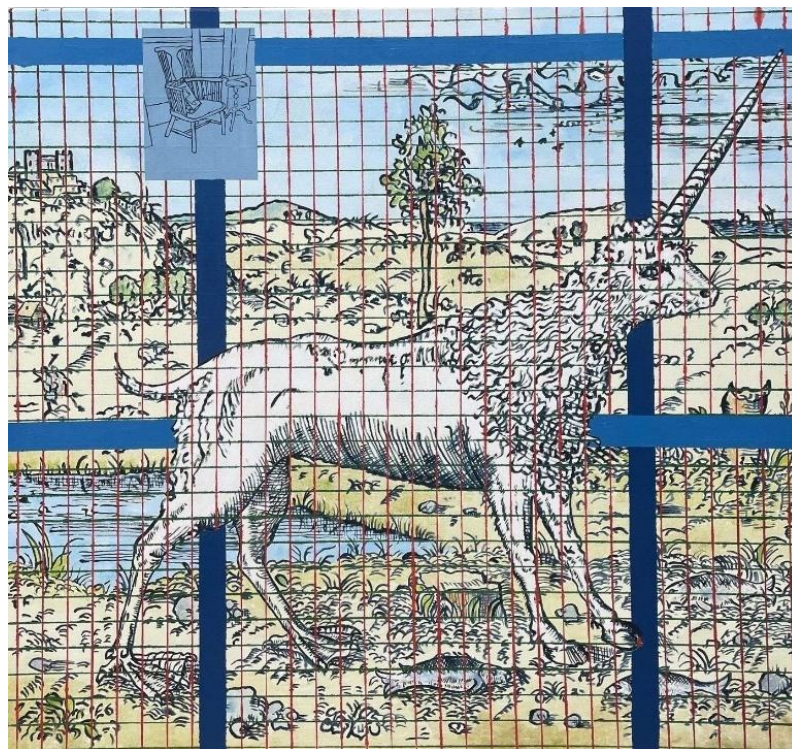
Deceased Estate, No. 125, Part iii, (2023), oil on canvas, 75 x 80 cm.

Fig. Il:22

Vanitas, oil on board, (2022), 74 x 60 cm.

Fig. II:23

Deceased Estate No. 83, part i, (2022-23), oil on canvas, 90 x 70 cm.

Fig. Il:24

Deceased Estate No. 138, part iv, (2024), oil on canvas, 120 x 105 cm.

Diary Entry – Thursday 23rd September 2021:

"Woke early after a restless sleep. Dropped off Pippin. Caught the 07.16 from Malvern to Paddington. Dipped in and out of '*The Sight of Death*'. Arrived London 09.30. Took Bakerloo Line to Charing Cross and got to Trafalgar Square by approx. 10.10. The sun was already unseasonably and unreasonably hot. Ate an apple on a smelly bench. Looked at people. Sauntered. Entered the National Gallery via Sainsbury Entrance at 10.30. Walked up the stairs, turned right and entered Room 29.

My first impression was how dark *Landscape with a Man* is. The darkness accentuated by the contrast of entering a lowly-lit room coming out of a clean and clear late-summer morning's sun. The reproductions in Clark's book present a much lighter, fresher, painting. I had looked upon the painting numerous times before, but it had never been my centre of attention, nor sole reason for entering the gallery (as it was today). I can imagine on previous occasions walking past it after being over-stimulated by showier paintings while suffering from gallery-fatigue.

The painting depicts a fallen man in the foreground having been killed by a snake which is coiled around his corpse. The ditch, or spring, the man has fallen into can only be seen by the picture's viewer and a man running beside the ditch, his outstretched hand raised in horror or shock at the 'sight of death'. The central figure is a woman kneeling on a path set behind the running man. She cannot see the dead man, only the running man's reaction to the dead man. Beyond her a classic Italianate landscape settles into the canvas – a place where life continues despite the foregrounded horrors. Fishermen throw nets into the lake, bathers bathe, walkers walk, and clouds pass overhead.

The kneeling woman was an immediate point of interest, possibly because she was directly at my eye level. I was struck by how delicate Poussin's use of the brush was. Poussin's mark making is entrancing. Relatively few brush strokes form the kneeling

woman. The canvas weave can be clearly seen in the areas of mud around the woman. The frame appeared simultaneously bulky and fussy and felt an unnecessary distraction. After ten minutes of looking at the painting I took a number of photographs of both the painting and its environment and left the space.

Swiftly walked through the gallery. Was keen to see some Dutch Still-Lives. However… an enthusiastic group of school children distracted me and persuaded me otherwise. Left the gallery at approx. 11.30. Walked to the Southbank. Entered the Hayward's '*Mixing it Up. Painting Today'* at approx. 12.15.

John Berger asserted that, "One might be tempted to say that paintings preserve a moment. Yet on reflection this is obviously untrue. For the moment of a painting, unlike a moment photographed, never existed as such. And so a painting cannot be said to preserve it."[633]

My experience of seeing the painting happened; it 'existed'. Poussin's painting has not preserved a 'real' moment. Notwithstanding, by taking photographs of the room and of the painting I preserved (or more accurately 'stored') the event of looking at the painting. This diary entry is further 'evidence' of the event taking place.

"After an Event, nothing remains the same".[634]

[633] Berger, J. (1985), *Painting and Time,* in *The Sense of Sight*, Vintage International, p. 205.
[634] Zizek, S. (2014) *Event,* Penguin, back cover copy.

INTERIM EXHIBITION: SION HILL: 26th August – 6th September 2022[635]

The exhibition loosely followed a clockwise direction on entering the space, with the purpose of exploring how a transitive train of thought could be transferred from one painting to another. This narrative was not formed chronologically, nor formed in the studio while painting, but formed connectively and non-hierarchically while hanging.
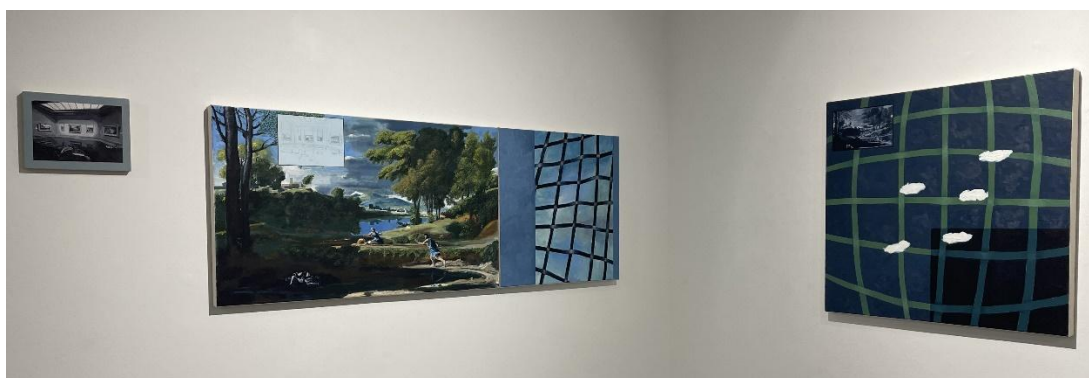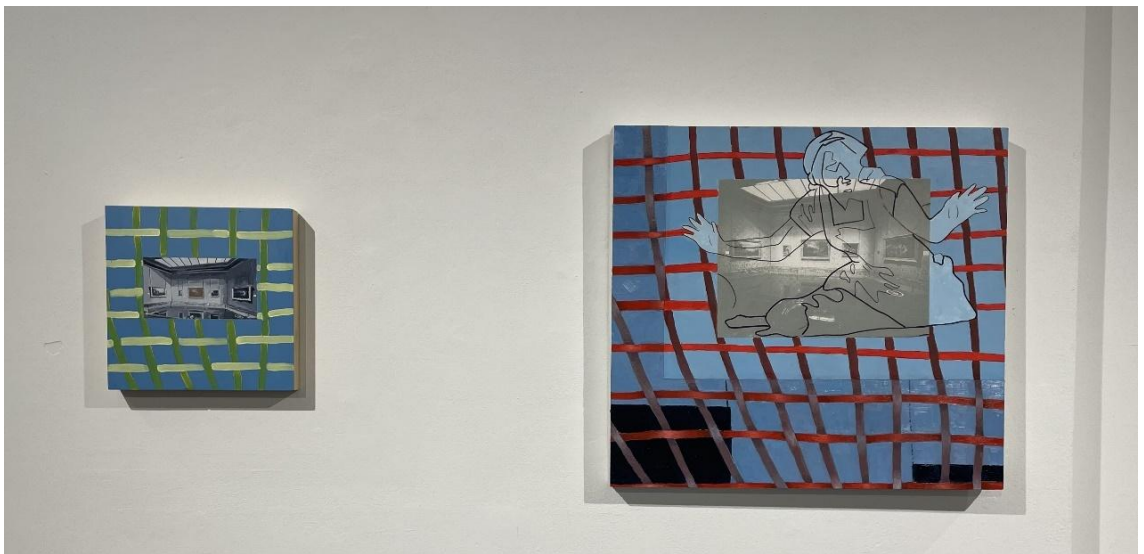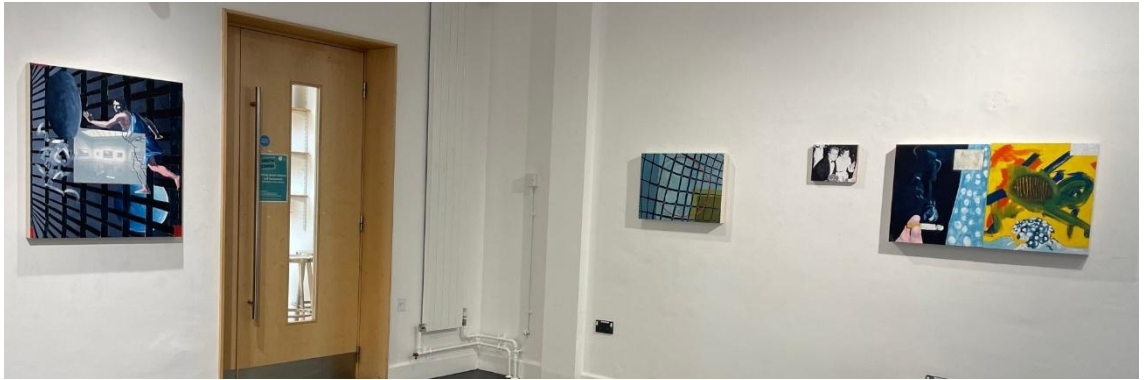
Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake: Title Paintings, 2022.

Each painting: acrylic on paper, 29.7 x 42 cm.

1. Landscape
2. Landscape with a Man
3. Landscape Man
4. Landscape Killed
5. Landscape Snake
6. Landscape with
7. Landscape by
8. With a Man
9. With a Man Killed
10. With a
11. With a Killed Snake
12. With a Snake
13. With Killed
14. With a a
15. With by
16. A Man
17. A Killed
18. A Snake
19. A Killed Snake
20. Killed by
21. Man Killed
22. Man Killed Snake
23. Man by a
24. Man by
25. Killed by a
26. With a by a
27. With a
28. By a
29. A by a
30. A a
31. A by
32. By a Snake
33. Landscape by a
34. Landscape with a Kill
35. Kill a Snake
36. Killed by a Snake
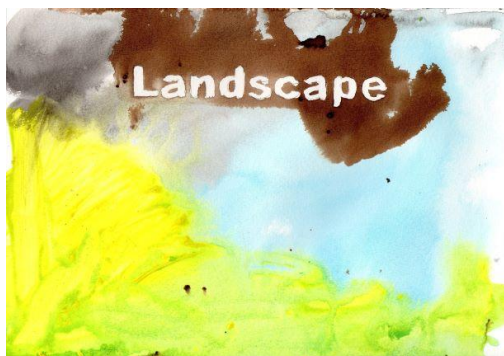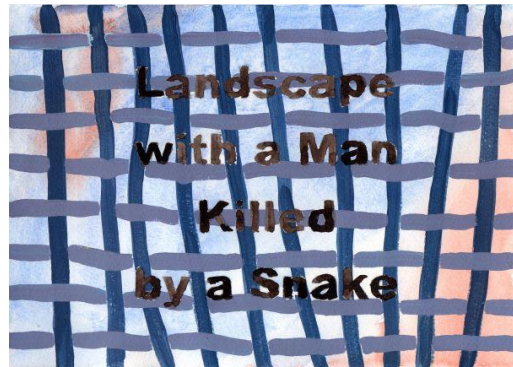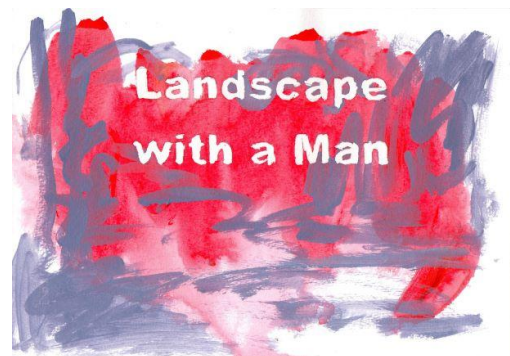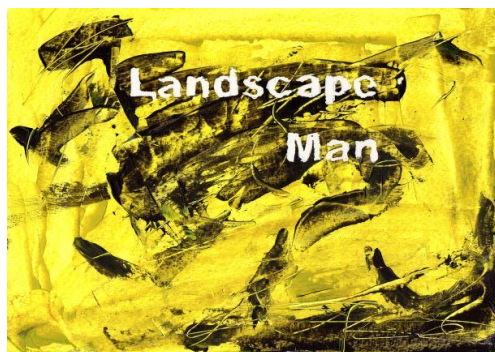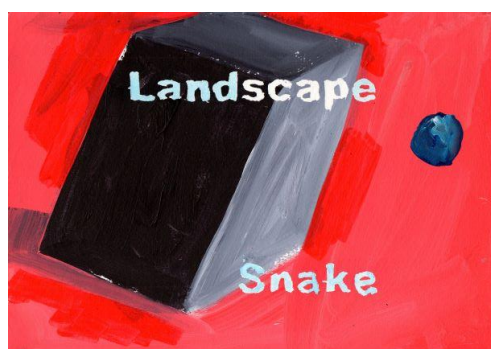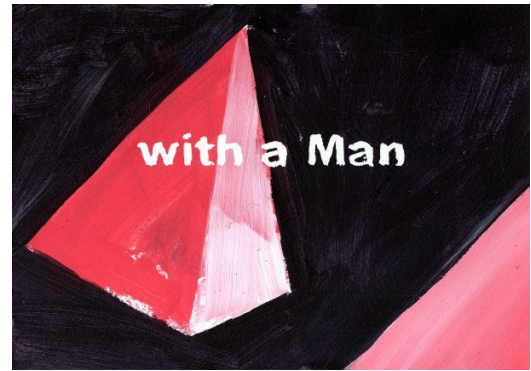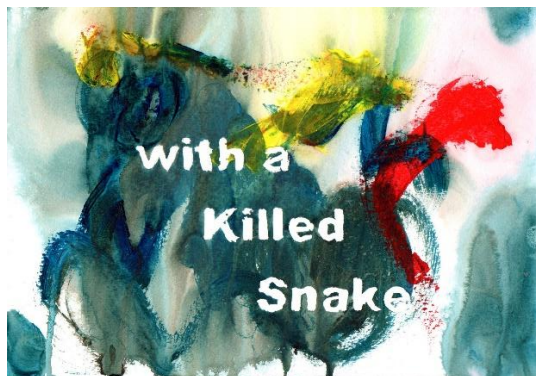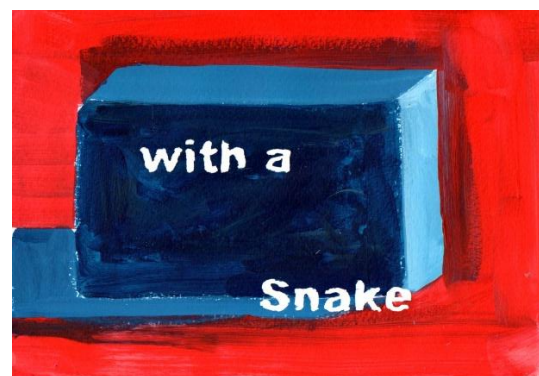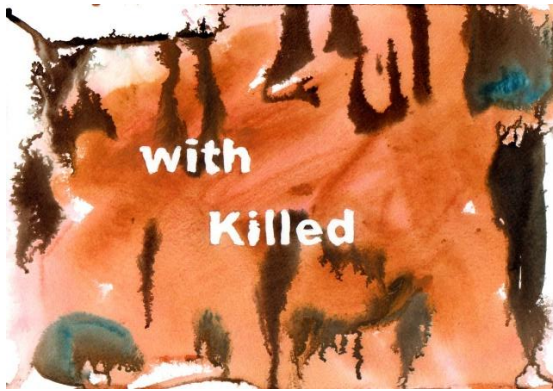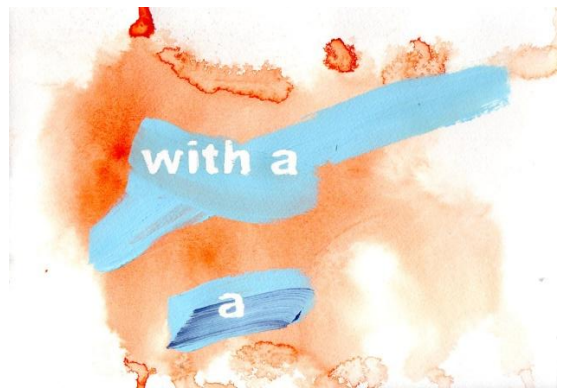
Landscape
with a Man
Killed
by a Snake

Landscape

1

Landscape
with a Man

2

Landscape
Man

3

Landscape

Killed

4

Landscape

Snake

5

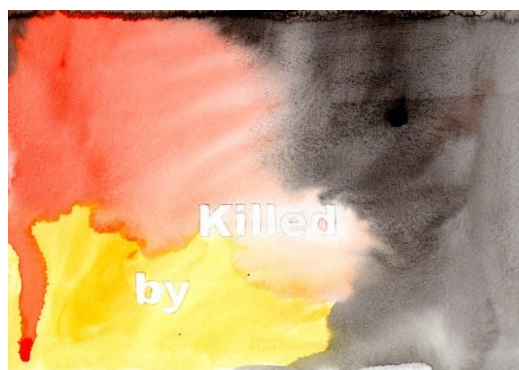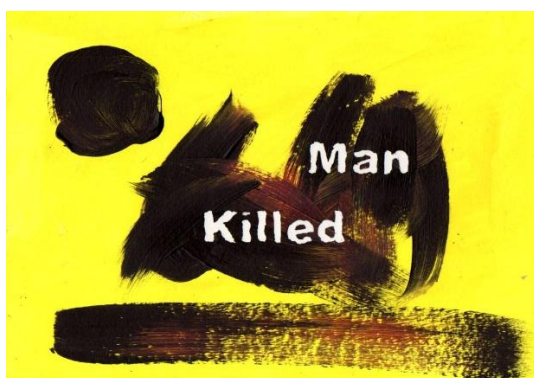Landscape
with

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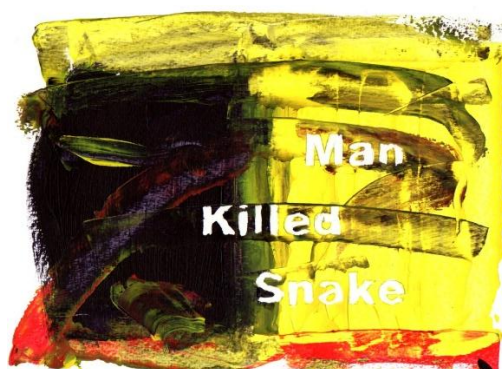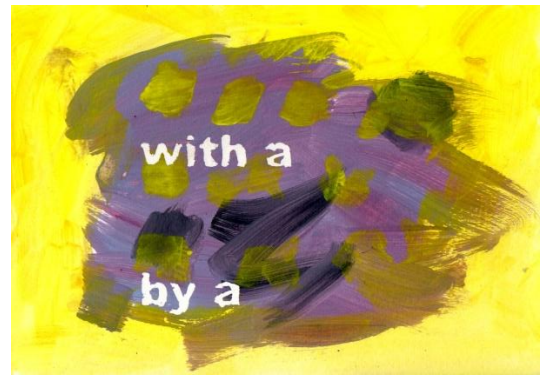

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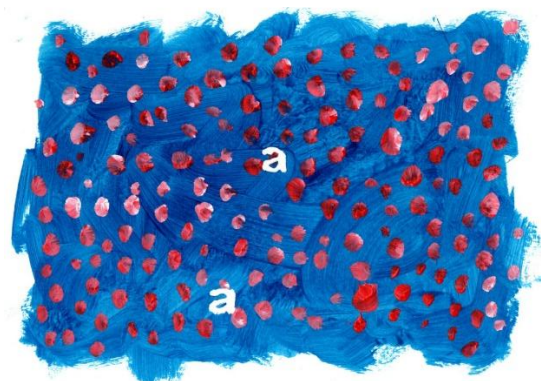

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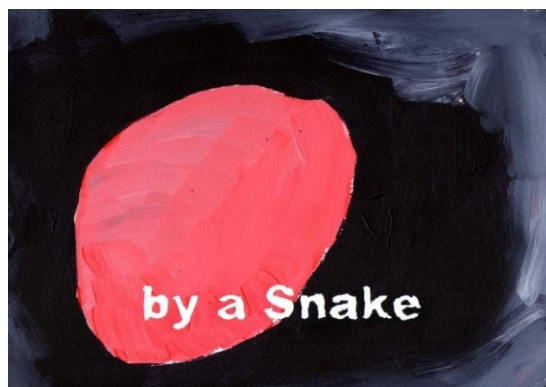

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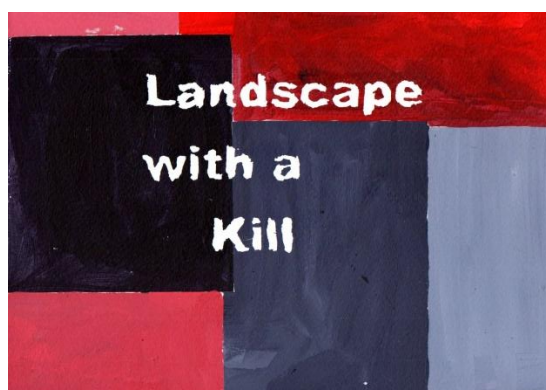
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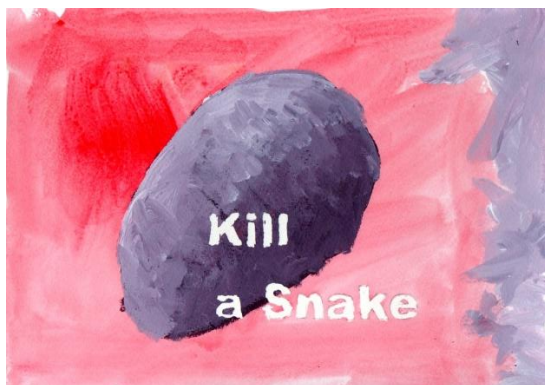

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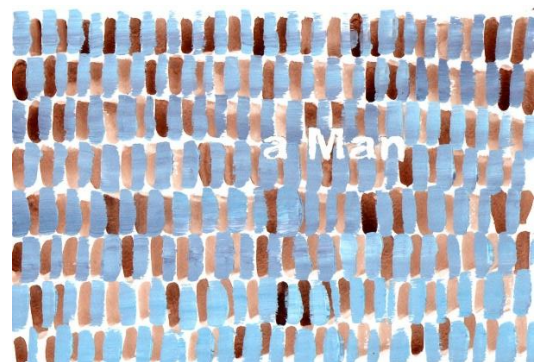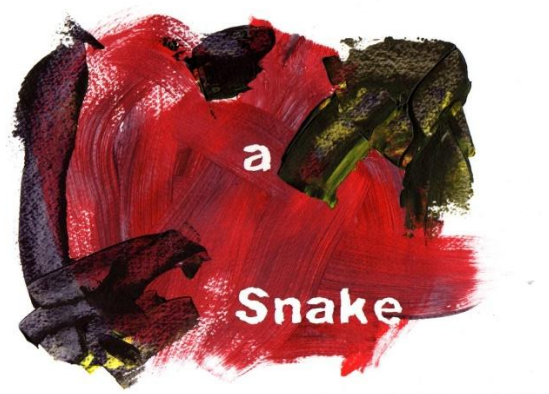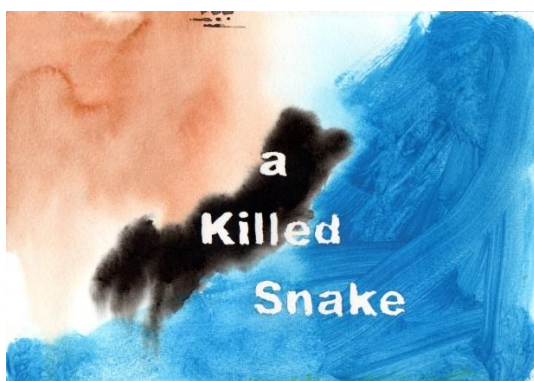
The process of painting creates a constant stream of interior readings. Once described, a painting "loses its status as an object and becomes a text on which successive readings are deposited".[636]

GRIDS: Both a pictorial structure and a critique. Use the grid as a net to capture what could fall through the gap. Trying to capture memento-mori. What's left behind once you take everything else away...? Is it Didi-Huberman's 'whack' of white paint, or the gesture that 'dazzles' the narrator in Kundera's 'Immortality'? Using the grid to cover (or catch) the gap between the heaviness and lightness of a phrase that both means so little and so much.

Does memento-mori operate outside of a painting's temporality?

A contradictory dissonance – trying to 'set free' a notion at the same time as trying to fix it / capture it. With the removal of a grid the whole thing falls apart.

The grid as a trickery against dying – a kind of Deleuzian un-mourning?

Weaves, nets, waves, webs, grids: How volume is created, contained, fixed and captured.

Words and letters as complicated shapes. (How) Do words from a structure that could keep every - *thing*, unnecessarily or detrimentally, under control? Is writing harmful to a practice? Is writing instructive or destructive to *my* practice?

Painting's Immanence: the fact or condition of being *entirely within something*. Where does that leave memento-mori in a painting?

In painting there is an architecture which allows morphing. Is a strong structure / construction needed for an image (painting) to remain 'standing'.

Why am I attracted to Poussin's painting's strong '*architectonic structure which nearly falls apart*'?... Because its strength/depth is in its weaknesses and vulnerabilities.

In what way is the studio a place of thought?... The studio is a physical manifestation of that place where things nearly fall apart.

Memento-mori exists between a grid's structure and a painting's emotional inserts. How can I explore and manifest that space?

Is Memento-Mori a symptom of painting, or is it a prodrome?

Do paintings ever have an end point. They are constantly being transformed and have other stories embedded in them, behind their facing-ness.

Are paintings, essentially, an incomplete form?

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[636] Marin, L. (1999) *Sublime Poussin*, translated by Catherine Porter, Stanford University Press, p. 30.

How far can a notion in painting be expanded/stretched before it disappears? If it disappears, where does it disappear too?

The facing-ness is the primary thing in painting. But there is also a secondary other thing (or theme) that's nagging at it, at me. There is an antagonism with the other. What is the other? Is Memento-Mori the other?

Fig. A:1

Nicolas Poussin, *A Dance to the Music of Time,* (c. 1634), oil on canvas, 82.5 x 104 cm. The Wallace Collection, London.

Fig. A:2

Francesco Giovanni Barbieri, *Et in Arcadia Ego.* (circa 1618-1622), oil on canvas, 81 x 91 cm. Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica a Palazzo Barberini, Rome.

What is it that allow Poussin's paintings to be open for a 'space for thinking and feeling', and where does appropriation, transformation & excavation fit in. Does it allow for manipulation?

Fig. A:3

Fra Angelico, *The Annunciation*, (circa. 1440).
Tempera wall fresco, Monastery of San Marco, cell 3., Florence, Italy.

1. Scan colour thumbnail of chair in black and white.

2. Print out scan onto an A4 sheet of paper. Size of scan roughly 14 x 21 cm.

3. Draw outline of scan on tracing paper missing (or simplifying) pixilated areas.

4. Transfer outline drawing onto 300gm textured paper.

5. Block out dark areas in B or 2B pencil.

6. Scan black and white version of pencil drawing.
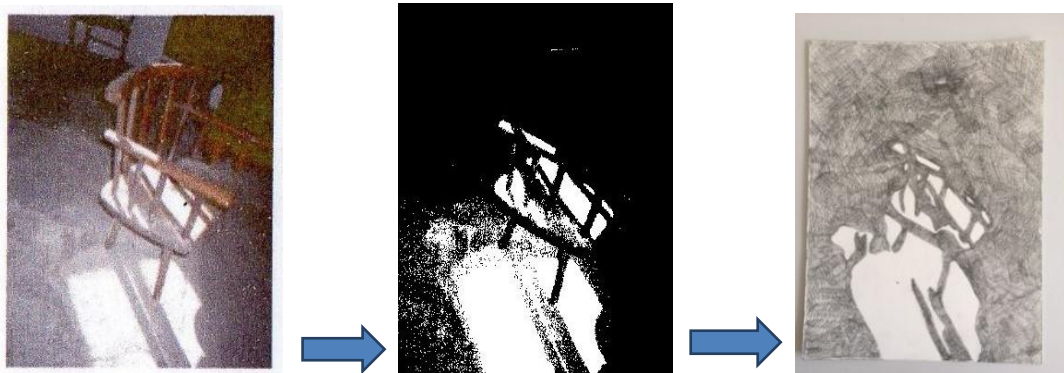
Seen in isolation what does the pencil drawing (potentially) re-present? The pencil cross-hatching gives texture, but no distance, no 'seeing-in'. Possibly a shadow of something, or direct sunlight. It looks as if the shapes have come from somewhere… it has a source. How does knowing it came from a photo of a rustic, stick-back, chair affect the experience of looking at it? How would not knowing it came from a photo of a rustic stick-back chair affect the experience of looking at it? There are gradients of certainty / uncertainty.
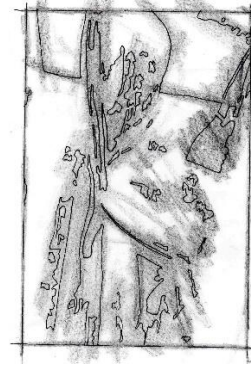
> Extraction, excavation, expansion, stretching.
>
> Things, dust, objects, weaves / nets / grids.
>
> Structure / Non-structure.
>
> Surface, flatness, smell, fading.
>
> Old stuff, Paint as stuff.

Where does the notion of *memento-mori* in painting sit in relation to a world in which the image as data in the form of digital photography is working alongside contemporary painting? A re-thinking of painting is needed as well as 'a re-seeing' of experience…?

How far can the painter manipulate the viewer into thinking what she is thinking? By bringing an image 'out of itself'. TAKING APART – STRETCHING EXPANDING – BRINGING OUT.

> "Tactics for not knowing might strive towards stripping away things,
> paring them down in order to make manifest a gap or a space."[637]

There is a tension between what a painting is of (the image), and what it is made of (the object). What is that space, how can I address it? Do I need to address it?

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[637] Emma Cocker in: Fisher & Fortnum, (2013) p. 128

DECEASED ESTATE No. 123 CATEGORY No. 49

Photographs with TIME PIECES

Sign ↳ Memento-Mori

SMOOTH
SPACE

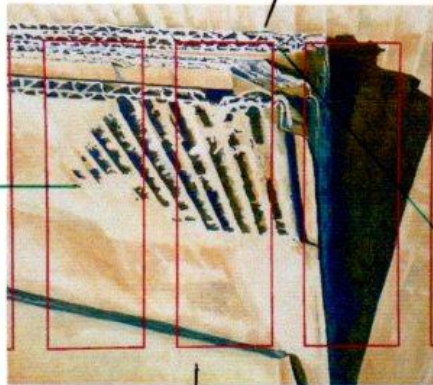CONTAINER
FOR PACKING

SMOOTH + ←——→ STRIATED   BOX

CARDBOARD   GRID

3D   Structure   2D
      frame
Peeling back the surface
Looking UNDER

STRIATED SPACE

WAVES
WEAVES
MAP — MATRIX

HAPTIC ↔ OPTIC
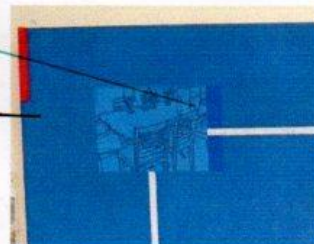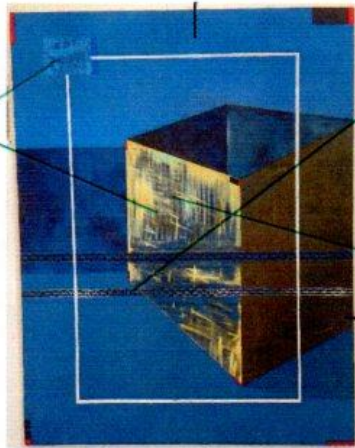
TRACING

(Rhizomic) CONNECTIONS

Mind map (handwritten notes):

- TEMPORAL THINKING
- DELUZE . RHIZOME — beginning / MIDDLE
- FRAGMENTS
- AMBIGUITY
- EXCAVATION TRANSLATION / INVENTION — NEGATIVE CAPABILITY
- WEAVE / NET — MOVEMENT / RIGIDITY
- TRAP, HOLD, SUPPORT, CATCH, MOVE, COVER, PROTECT, INTERWEAVE. INTERTWINE, ENCOMPASS, CONNECT, TOOL, MECHANISM. NETWORK
- CONTRADICTORY DISSONANCE
- → (a place for thinking + feeling)
- Architectonic Structure / Hidden
- x Seeing / Hidden
- Knowing / Not Knowing
- Past / Present / Future
- JUTTA KOETHER, LEON KOSSOFF
- JOHN BULL
- KEATS — Negative Capability
- BERGSON — non linear time, Beth Harland (Proust)
- BERGSON — Non linear time, Film, Proust, Chairs, Photos etc?
- What am I bringing to the painting
- PAINTING'S CONSTRUCTION (My)
- SEEING HIDDEN THINGS
- Material . Size . Style . Manner
- TIME: Expansion, Reflection, Excavation, Translation, Invention
- Painting — x What happens here? x
- FACINGNESS v. LIVELINESS
- Writing, Reading, Looking, Copying, Reflecting, Travelling to
- ACTION
- POUSSIN'S L.M.K.S.
- SUBJECT OBJECT:
- AS: SOURCE, THEORY, CONTENT, NARRATIVE, TOOL
- ANACHRONISTIC?
- HISTORY OF PAINTING
- POST-MEDIUM CONDITION
- PAINTING AS SUBJECT:
- INDEXICAL SIGN
- GAZE — Lacan?
- ???
- MEMENTO MORI — un- MOURNING
- MARX (Grund)
- CANVAS — object. NET / FISHERMEN — SUBJECT
- TIME. LIFE WORK — ANAMORPHOSIS
- STORE
- CofU. Suspend Time.
- REFLECTION
- SEEING THINGS HIDDEN
- WOLLHEIM
- HOUR GLASS, SKULL, CANDLE
- "SITES of CRITIC time"
- Pliny etc + "death of painting"
- DEATH, LOSS, ABSENCE, MOURNING — FREUD
- WILLING . NIETZSCHE
- LACAN
- KNOWLEDGE GAZE DESIRE OBJECT A 'THING'
- PRACTICE NAVIGATION
- METHODOLOGY
- PAINTINGS AS ART THEORY
- Paintings as theory as source.
- Paintings as Exegesis
- WHAT CAN BE REPRESENTED?
- (FRIEDLANDER + RICHTER + ART BEYOND REPRESENTATION)
- THE MOST SIMPLE, YET THE MOST COMPLEX
- PAINTING

One Hundred Categories of 200 Photographs of Chairs

taken by me whist carrying out Probate Valuations (circa. 2010 – 2014)

"Submission to the logic of a rule or instruction can operate as a device for not knowing, as a way of surrendering responsibility, absolving oneself of agency or control within a practice in order to be surprised. The rule becomes adopted for its capacity to produce unruliness, for generating outcomes that the conscious mind could never have planned. To follow the rule is thus not always based on obedience or diligence, but rather demonstrates a desire to be led astray."[638]

1. Chairs with upholstered seats.
2. Chairs with solid seats.
3. Chairs with no seat.
4. Chairs with wicker seats.
5. Chairs with square legs.
6. Chairs with turned legs.
7. Chairs with square and turned legs.
8. Chairs with carved and/or shaped legs.
9. Chairs with metal frame.
10. Chairs with antler frame.
11. Photos with parts of (dead) animal.
12. Chinese chairs, or influenced by Chinese design.
13. Photos with objects belonging to me.
14. Photos with mirrors.
15. Chairs with solid back.
16. Chairs with single bar backs.
17. Chairs with ladder backs.
18. Chairs with open backs.
19. Chairs with vertical bar backs.
20. Chairs with pierced backs.
21. Chairs with vase backs.
22. Chairs with rope twist backs.
23. Chairs with inlaid decoration.
24. Photos with carpets and rugs.
25. Photos with fitted carpet floors.
26. Photos with tiled floors.

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[638] Emma Cocker in Fisher & Fortnum, 2013, p. 129.

27. Photos with wooden floors.

28. Photos of single chairs.

29. Photos of multiple chairs.

30. Chairs with floral pattern, or floral carving.

31. Photos with a floral pattern anywhere.

32. Photos with books.

33. Photos with pictures.

34. Photos with dogs.

35. Photos with dog basket.

36. Chairs with drop in seats.

37. Chairs with cushions.

38. Photos with (human) feet.

39. Photos with any part of a person.

40. Photo with hand.

41. Photo with shoes.

42. Chairs with carved back.

43. Rocking Chairs.

44. Chairs with arms.

45. Chairs without arms.

46. Painted chairs.

47. Photos with tables.

48. Photos with curtains.

49. Photos with timepieces (4): **83,123,125,159**

50. Photos with a phone.

51. Settees.

52. Photos with chest of drawers.

53. Photos with windows.

54. Photos with plants or flowers.

55. Photos with wallpaper.

56. Photos with ceiling.

57. Photos with a door/doorway.

58. Photos with camera cord obstructing.

59. Photos that are (obviously) out of focus.

60. Photos taken from right of chair.

61. Photos taken from left of chair.

62. Photos taken straight on to chair.

63. Photos taken from back of chair.

64. Photos with cropped chair backs.

65. Photos with ceramics.

66. Chairs with the colour blue.

67. Photos with cups.

68. Photos with cardboard boxes.
69. Photos with candle boxes (3): **138,165,166**
70. Photos with an electric light or lamp.
71. Photos with a wall light switch.
72. Photos with glassware.
73. Photos with walking sticks.
74. Photos with a computer.
75. Photos with a water source.
76. Photos with fruit.
77. Photos with waste bins.
78. Photos with fire-places.
79. Photo with chainsaw.
80. Photo with tennis ball.
81. Photo with vacuum cleaner.
82. Photos with electric sockets.
83. Photos with televisions.
84. Photo with a dress maker's mannequin.
85. Photos with clothes.
86. Photo with an electric organ.
87. Photos with radiators.
88. Photos with stairs.
89. Photos with electric heaters.
90. Photo with an elephant's foot.
91. Photo with tool-box.
92. Photo with a stick of glue.
93. Photo taken 'landscape'.
94. Photos with a tape measure.
95. Chairs with wheels/casters visible.
96. Chairs with geometric design to the upholstery/seat.
97. Photos with musical instruments.
98. Chairs with a wing back.
99. Chairs with a button back.
100.   Hall Chairs.

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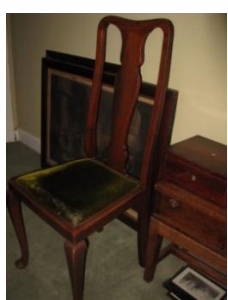
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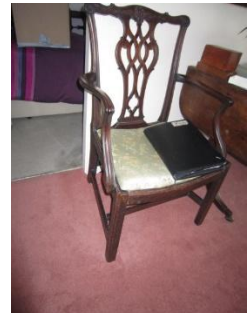

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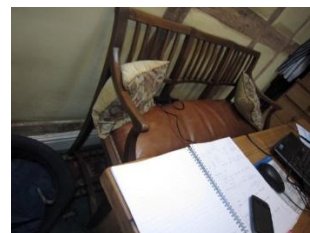

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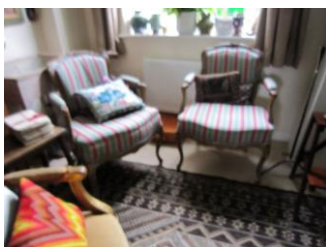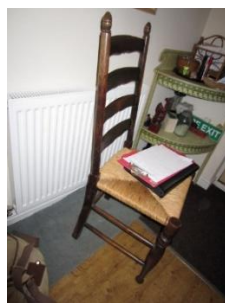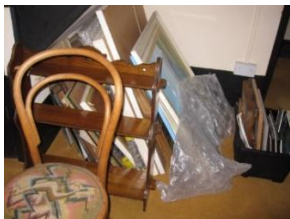54

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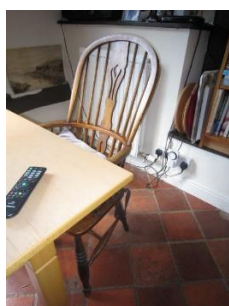

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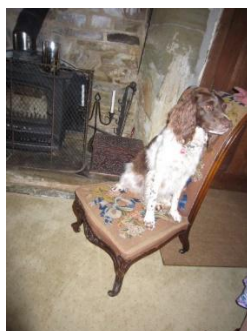

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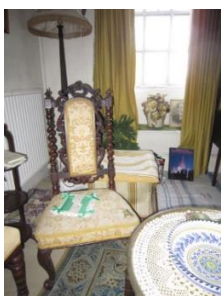
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Dear Colin,

Thank you for your email..., and for the reading material which was very helpful...!

Can I ask how far apart you feel the two paintings in your diptychs could be 'stretched' or be (un)-related to one another before they might start to make no sense as a pair... or before a new sense, or understanding, is created other than the one you initially intended?

Furthermore, does there always have to be an element of just pareidolia between the two paintings, or are other concerns present in your choice of (photographic) image used? (Such as the look, colour, texture (haptic & optic) or 'speed' of the paint within the abstract/chance element of the diptych; or/and other non-visual notions which that element might evoke.)

Very many thanks.

Best wishes,

Tom

Dear Tom,

No one has asked me your question before - or not so clearly.

All my work uses chance-based strategies to avoid what I will call 'aesthetic decisions'.

Like most everything I've made since about 1975 one part of the work is quick and the other [requires] some kind of slow deliberation […].

The paintings are made with traditional means: acrylic paint/cotton duck being the principle means of 1960's modernism and oil paint on linen having been invented to construct physical and atmospheric illusions.

Currently I have a large number of 'starts', having spent last summer on new canvas starts varying in size from .75 to 2.5 meters long and using 'primaries' Red/Yellow/Blue or 'secondaries' Orange/Green/Violet paint with varying amounts of gel medium. Together with those I already had, the total is now about 100.

[...]

[...]

To come to your question: sometimes there is a kind of 'rhyme' - *Tulip* 2022; sometimes a weak suggestion of a form - *Ear (Evander Holyfield)*, 2000. Often the colour is important - *Oil (caribou migrating)*, 2004, and for the flower paintings. Looking through the paintings, it seems to me these characteristics are all present to varying degree.

What matters to me is the act of looking - so if a viewer can't see the connection, it's up to them. Some may be quite tenuous. Few are as obvious at *Nixon* 1999.

Once a connection is seen I find it difficult to 'unsee'.

I am working on a painting at the moment which involves an image which happens to have been the subject of pareidolic publicity, but this is the first time, and I didn't know when I chose it.

I hope that is some help.

Best wishes,

Colin.

<u>Thoughts and Responses to Tom Mence, Richard Baker, 2023</u>

TM: As I mentioned to you the other day one of my concerns is how far a notion in painting, such as *Memento Mori*, can be stretched and/or extended.

RB: Infinitely I would imagine. In the same way that traditional notions of what painting is now includes what is termed the expanded field of painting and which is seemingly limitless, any notions that *Memento Mori* cannot be stretched, extended, or reinvented similarly would seem to be mute. The future habitually disproves notions of limits and/or boundaries as people will inevitably always strive to stretch them or recategorize them.

TM: Within the boundaries of this concern, I am repeatedly finding myself grappling with the plethora of extreme contradictions painting apparently possesses, for example: between structure and non-structure, the seen and unseen, and between absence and presence.

RB: When I paint, I use the notion of structure and anti-structure in a very real and physical way. I alternate between a process of exactitude, using measurements to transfer images from photographs and precisely laying down paint. I use a lot of masking tape to control the paint's movement and I show great concern for the final "finish" of the painted surface. By contrast, on different layers, I will attack the surface with sandpaper in an aggressive and gestural manner, I also wipe off paint using rags which are difficult to control, and the process offers uncontrolled results. It is exactly this tension between structure and anti-structure, resulting in a fragile harmony, that makes a successful painting.

It is my belief that all successful painting (and art in general) is imbued with the "correct" percentage of these binaries. However, they are never in stasis, they are constantly shifting and often unpredictable. It is the artist's job to find the particular harmony of each that is necessary in each work.

The same is true of pictorial subject matter or balance in an abstract work. A certain percentage must be revealed and a percentage hidden, a percentage present and a percentage absent.

TM: In my dealings with the notion of *Memento Mori* in (my) painting I have become preoccupied with the nature of painting rather than the notion of Memento Mori and how it manifests in painting.

RB: I think, maybe, that all painting contains the notion, or is the evidencing of the notion of *Memento Mori*. Berger states that: "Painting is, first and foremost an affirmation of the visible which surrounds us, and which continually appears and

disappears. Without the disappearing, there would perhaps be no impulse to paint...." (Berger, 2002, p. 14). Painting for me has a lot to do with permanence. A permanence that we all desire but are continually denied in life, and would probably dislike if it were ever attained, is ever present in painting.

As painters one of our key concerns is permanence. We laboriously prepare supports of high quality and durability, only using the best materials and proven recipes that will avoid deterioration. We then coat the object with layer upon layer of the best quality paints and varnishes as an act of resistance to the transience of things in a statement of (ultimately futile) defiance. The painting's subject / content is not passively complicit in this act of defiance but is a motif which relishes and celebrates it. The subject is offered a new existence and the memory of it is ensconced in new surroundings.

TM: It occurs to me that your paintings seem to deftly 'straddle' these two concerns.... is that a correct assumption to make and, if so, was this your intention, or a result?

RB: It wasn't (consciously) my intention. This was a result. When I originally began the series, my only concern was the depiction of the object (for various reasons including an aspiration to own them and an interest in the design philosophy of modernism). It was only when the paintings were exhibited that the viewers decided that my work was about the absence, both of the figure not depicted, and of the time the viewer inhabited when they knew the object. This couldn't have been further from my truth, however, I realised during my MA research that once you put a painting out into the world you must cease to claim sole authorship or attach a singular "meaning" to it. Contemporary painter Tom Palin states (and I tend to agree) that all paintings have three meanings: The intention of the painter, the meaning projected by the viewer, and the painting itself (The physicality and the history of painting itself).

TM: In the press release you mention that the 'objects depicted bear witness to sensuous activity' – a description that could also be used to described the process of painting itself.....e.g.: 'the paintings bear witness to sensuous activity' (thus conjuring up Isabelle Graw's idea of 'liveliness' or 'vitalistic fantasies' within painting). This train of thought led me to consider Alberti's oft cited dictum that 'Painting... make[s] the absent present' in relation to your paintings - despite their subject matter.

RB: Graw's idea of 'liveliness' is very important to my thinking, and I agree with Alberti's dictum. These notions manifest in my paintings in several different ways. The objects themselves were never actually present (I paint from photographs). They were also fulfilling a transitory necessity (The photos were from eBay as the objects were transferring ownership and histories). Then when the paintings are concluded and shown they trigger memories in the viewer of times and objects lived and lost.

So, there is a constant and changing dialogue between presence and absence in the image, the object and the painting.
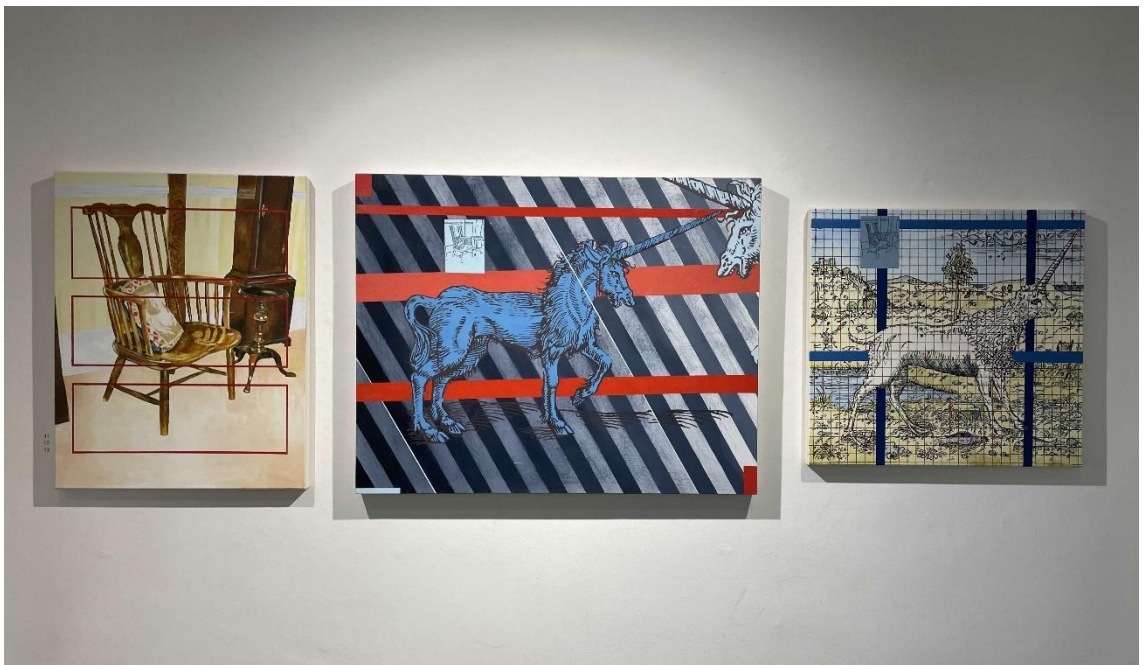

TM: In this vein I would be interested to know as to how much you consider the idea of 'presence and absence' is, on one hand, imbued within the paintings themselves, and within the act (or process) of painting (if at all)…… And, on the other hand, within the subject matter (or content) of the paintings (eg. empty interior spaces… etc.)?
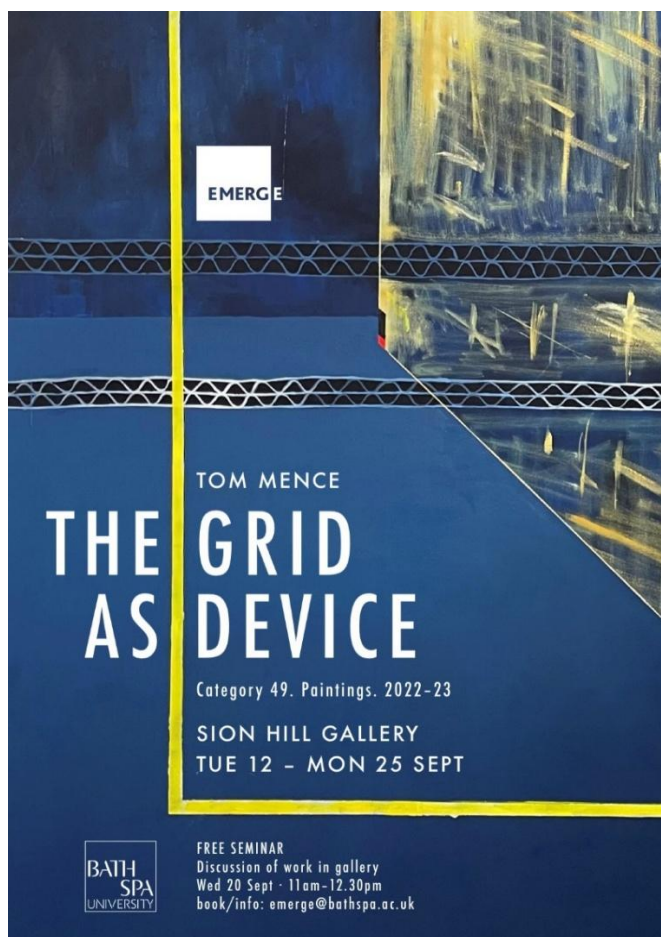
RB: I would agree that absence and presence is imbued in the paintings themselves (as objects) and also in the subject matter to both a greater or lesser degree depending on the subject matter. As Graw states, the artist makes themself present (through process, application of paint and time spent) and yet is always physically absent (when the work is viewed).

In terms of subject / content, my paintings themselves are not consciously imbued with the idea of presence and absence but, perhaps unwillingly, these notions are played out on them, like empty stage sets (which is how I have come to view them) in need of a narrative. I have found that viewers seek a narrative, and it almost always refers to human beings. Where there are no people, the viewer will always find one and where there is no narrative the viewer will invent or recall one.

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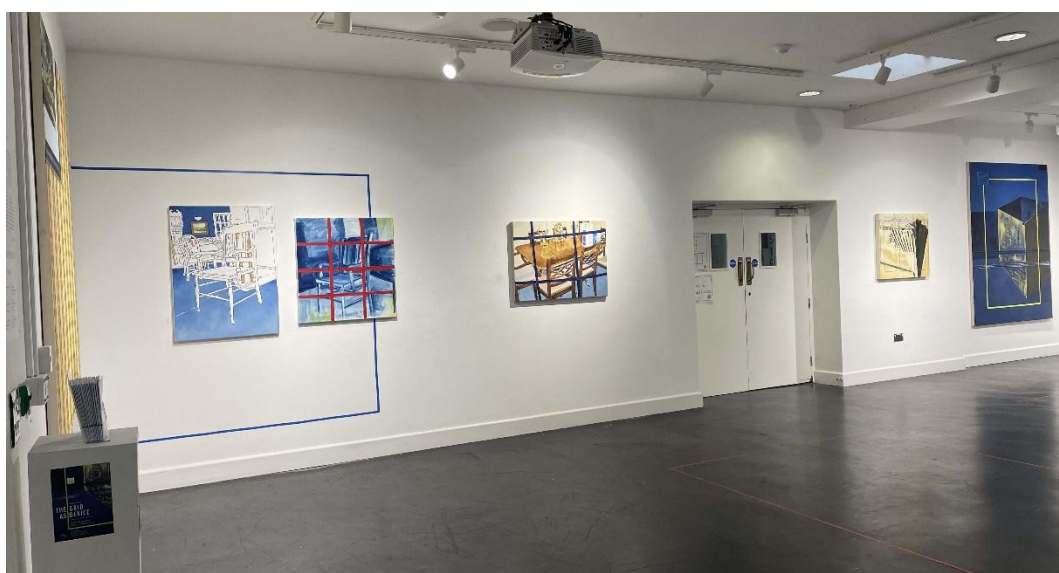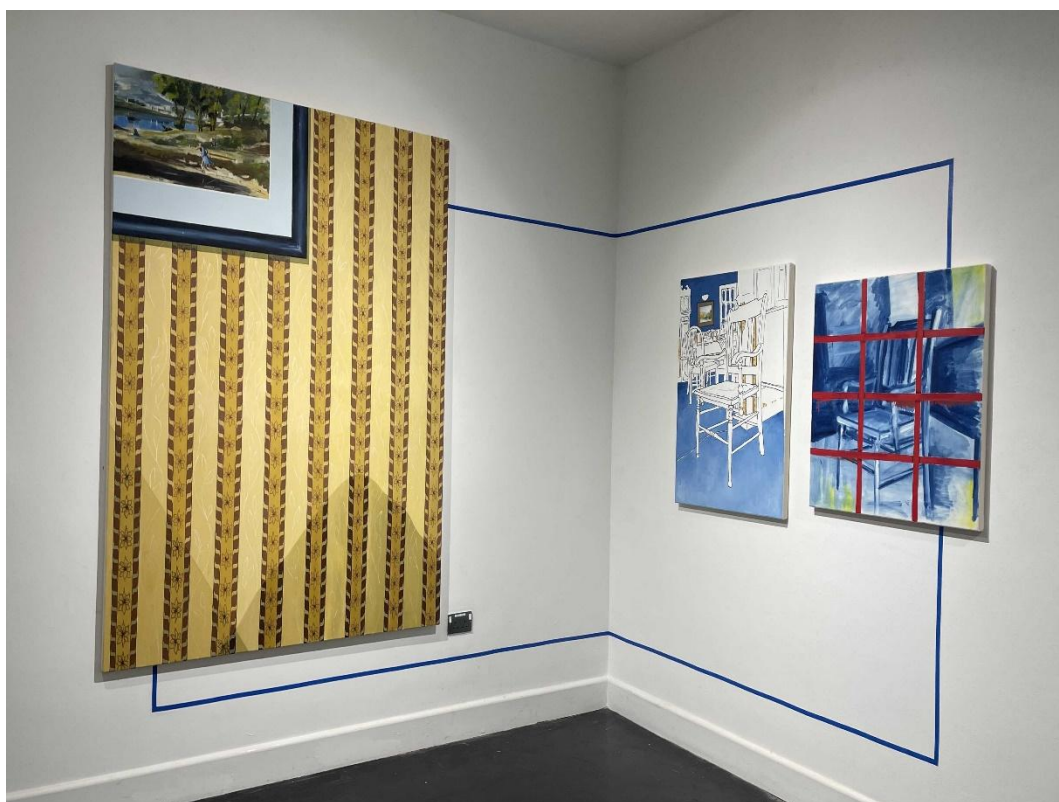
[639] Photo credit: author

Flyer designed by Matthew Downing.