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HOW TO BUILD NOTHING

by
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Abstract

This dissertation aims to elaborate on my interpretations of the areas of investigation I intuitively follow in my studio work. By exploring the ideas surrounding seriality, modularity and systematic generative strategies I hope to provide a historical and contemporary context for my work. Within this broad field of enquiry is a central interest in non-objective work with conceptual and metaphysical concerns that utilise painting, drawing and sculpture to explore internal states through material interactions, phenomenological effects and the infinite plasticity of painting.

This body of written research is personally significant in both informing and extending my practice through a greater understanding of its historical context and position contemporaneously. It is also valuable in supporting my practice of intuitively experimental and playful repetition, from which I am evolving a personal visual language through ordering systems and generative rule sets.
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Introduction

This dissertation explores the complex relationship between art and consciousness with a particular emphasis on abstraction and a personal ontology formulated through reflexive and systematic studio practice. Abstraction and metaphysics have been intuitive systems in my work but until now had only operated unconsciously. Through analysis I have expanded my awareness of these concerns as I began to question how I make decisions intuitively, what it means to make a choice through unconscious means, what are abstractions, and how can these fragments be critically assessed to discover underlying connexions\(^1\) and overarching networks in an ordered system. These thoughts, these fragments, are in my nature and I believe are fundamentally linked to my physical psychic structure. From my childhood games of puzzles, and blocks, I utilize hands-on forms of learning through play, in my studio, which is the ground of all things, like an underlying grid. In my initial reading of the works of such theorists as Mark Levy in *Void in Art*, Werner Heisenberg in *Physics and Philosophy*, Leszek Kołakowski in *Metaphysical Horror*, and the insights of how we as individuals construct a sense of self in Douglas Hofstadter's *I am a Strange Loop*, I began to intuitively formulate the framework within which my dissertation would be based.

In Part One I describe the reoccurring presence of the isometric grid as an underlying structure that links all facets of my work through its generative

\(^1\) This strange spelling of the word connection is a valid alternative and chosen for personal aesthetic reasons, where the ‘X’ operates as a visual intersection within the word itself.
properties. I refer to theorists such as Rosalind Krauss, Gaston Bachelard, and the artist Matthew Ritchie regarding aspects of the grid as used for creating diagrams, diagrams used as blueprints from which to build tangible structures in reality. My own reflections on the ordering nature of systems like the grid and symmetry, how these structures have been discerned from hallucinations that reveal qualities of our brains, especially the primary visual cortex, and how through the pairing of mind and computer the digital grid has acted as a conduit amalgamating disparate qualities and expanding the potential for the solidification of intangible thought structures in a virtual world.

With Part Two I formulate a generative word structure as a game that mirrors my approach to making work, utilizing a systematic alternation between faculties both intuitive and rational. Through accepting a starting point of words as medium I explain how I devise a process that begins with unthinking mechanisms that unfold logically with the guiding hand of a conscious entity to result in an unpredictable complex structure with the qualities of an abstract image, both vague in meaning and evocative in feeling.

I also consider aspects of my mind. My proclivity for abstract processes that stem from childhood games of building blocks as a foundation of a mechanical logic, and the origins of these kinds of learning through play from pedagogical theorist Friedrich Frobel. These forms of learning through hands on perception are continued by children today in kindergartens and are also expanded through digital technologies, virtual worlds and sandbox video games like Minecraft.
I seek to understand further the connexion between brain structure, hallucinations and non-objective abstraction through artists such as Victor Pasmore and the research of David Lewis-Williams into patterns appearing in the rock art of South African Bushmen, the San. I will reflect on the origins of these hallucinatory structures and how they arise universally because of the human nervous system that is essentially the same for every human being and is continually experienced in common hallucinations like phosphenes, visual snow and during hypnogogic states.

Part Three deals with my studio practice over the course of the MFA, acting as a diary chronologically tracing my trajectory and giving examples illustrating how the results of work are built upon, refined and evolved through drawing, intuitive systems and the experience of engaging in collaborative practice.

In this body of writing the areas of inquiry that have formed the framework of my research have been arranged into a linear structure for the adherence to academic rules. It is important to note that from my perspective this structure should appear more like a nebulous mass, cloudlike and nonlinear, revolving around the central point of my mind, like a supermassive black hole. Dynamic structures with no fixed or definite form are the intangible origin of all things, the point of projection and site of eventual, total collapse.
Vaporous Thoughts Coalesce

My writing,

will talk about what I think.

What I think are abstractions.

Abstractions fragment the whole.

These thoughts,
these fragments, are in my nature.

From my childhood games of puzzles,

and blocks,

I utilize these hands-on forms of learning,

through play,

in my studio,

which is the ground of all things,

like a grid, underlying.

The board on which all things connect,

(like Lego).

The foundation on which I build,

dynamic structures,

towards indefinite ends.
THE ISOMETRIC GRID

The patterns I work with share an origin, the isometric grid. When drawing by hand I utilise straight lines, limited to vertical, and diagonal positions. The simplest shape in this pattern is a triangle (equilateral if drawn with technical drawing instruments), and from this ground figures may extend into beam-like forms. Reasons for this selection stem back to my childhood. My work is an amalgam of influences from the 8-bit videogames I played, block lettering, skateboard illustration, cartoons, Lego building bricks and their diagrammatic instructions, and Rubik’s puzzles (the cube, the snake, and the impossible Rubik’s Magic). I look to the traditions of abstraction, how it evolved and bifurcated throughout the twentieth century as much as the experience of technical drawing classes that I attended during high school.
In the construction of my images I begin with the uniform, perfect symmetry of a grid. I view the grid as a ground for imagination, from which images may appear like hallucinations, in a realm of cubic pareidolia\(^2\). The shallow perspective of the isometric grid allows for the creation of an illusory depth that operates on its two dimensional surface. Figures drawn in this way can step back in space, fold, overlap and loop back in on themselves creating impossible figures. Diagrams drawn with angles - 30, 60, 90 degrees - give a subtle forced perspective creating this illusory three-dimensional space. Typically, diagrams are used to show as simply as possible the way in which units connect and interlock for the construction of objects in reality. I am interested in this illusory three-dimensional space as a realm for laying plans of imagined structures, an intermediate zone for the articulation of impossible objects as diagrams of thought.

"It is always more enriching to imagine than to experience."\(^3\)

\(^2\) Pareidolia is the imagined perception of a pattern or meaning where it does not actually exist, as in the appearance of faces on ordinary objects.

Isometric perspective is the projection commonly used in diagrams to direct the construction of objects like Lego and Ikea furniture, and when presenting architectural plans, it is the view that best illustrates the proposed structure. Isometric perspective gives the greatest total view of an object on a two dimensional surface, showing three sides in one image and has been a standard projection used by manufacturing industries since it was described by the British scientist William Farish in his 1822 paper "On Isometrical Perspective."

“The diagram is not only the most basic form of drawing, but also the skeleton key of the modern world.”

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This grid is also a primary feature of vision, one of the four form constants identified in visual hallucinations during altered states of consciousness. So although we may think of a grid as a human construct employed in the pursuit of order, this suggests that it is actually an innate feature of our visual system, embedded within our brains. Form constants are the underlying structures seen in hallucinogenic visions. Related to our primary visual cortex, these types of abstract visions are a fundamental aspect of perception, and are directly formed from the actual biological structure of the visual system. The form constants were categorized by German-born U.S. experimental psychologist Heinrich Klüver in 1926 and appear as patterns likened to cobwebs, tunnels, spirals and lattices (including square checkerboard and triangular/hexagonal grids).

4. Form constants. (I) funnel and (II) spiral images seen following ingestion of LSD [redrawn from Siegel & Jarvik (1975), (III) honeycomb generated by marihuana [redrawn from Clottes & Lewis-Williams (1998)], (IV) cobweb petroglyph [Redrawn from Patterson (1992)].
The Order of Symmetry

Symmetry is the quality of being made up of exactly similar parts that face each other or that reflect around an axis. Circles are an example of perfect symmetry, and so are grids. There is something about using this type of spatial abstraction that, for me, relates to thought. Intuitively I feel thoughts to be subject to a process of articulation that emanates from a realm of pure symbol-less understanding. I utilize a similar process of articulation in the production of my work, compositions emerge from a vague space of indefinite nothingness. These spaces are wholly imaginary, with an underlying grid from which all entities arise.

“The duality of phenomenal existence emanating from the absolute.”

Objects described within this rational realm are at once able to represent tangible solids (as in the examples of technical drawings for design, manufacturing and architectural industries), and impossible figures bending in space and form as first described by the physicist Roger Penrose and featured prominently in the works of artists Oscar Reutersvärd and M.C. Escher.

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“The grid’s mythic power is that it makes us able to think we are dealing with materialism (or sometimes science, or logic) while at the same time it provides us with a release into belief (or illusion, or fiction).”

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It is on this paradoxical ground that I compose rational beams, following lines of logic to uncertain impossible ends. Two triangles connected become a diamond also known as a lozenge, or a rhombus and can be viewed as a square tile distorted by the shallow perspective. This shape is my monad, a symbol of perfection with all dimensions in equal measure; it is a symbol that represents the beginning and end of all things.


Acting as a hole or void in the grid, beams may be extruded through the lozenge, pushed out like steel girders at a foundry. These figures unfold through

7 Monad is a complex historical concept that in its simplest terms describes a single unit, indivisible and fundamental entity.
time towards an unknown end. Able to describe the limits of any given space, and yet retain qualities of their intangible origin. It is these structural beams that I am fascinated with. A single beam is the figure of attention, the element for composition, to be arranged and rearranged ad infinitum. Operating within a perimeter it is a contained form of introspection, or floating unbounded on the page it is a segment of infinity.

“By virtue of the grid, the given work of art is presented as a mere fragment, a tiny piece arbitrarily cropped from an infinitely larger fabric.”

My figures are subject to evolutionary change through series like in the work of Sol LeWitt. The beams are an expression of a process of variation in which once a limit is defined, a new direction is forged. Unlike the narrowing form of the grid, as in the work of Piet Mondrian or Ad Reinhardt, whose processes led them in a direction of ever-tightening, and regular expressions of the grid, I look forward to new permutations, amalgamations and always hope to find these through the process of exhaustive repetition.

I utilize systems of refinement, but these work within a mode of constant contracting and expanding. I follow this path in a kind of unconscious way, like breathing, always knowing its importance yet allowing it to operate like a mechanism. It is a process that unfolds through time, and only requires sporadic winding.

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8 Krauss, "Grids." 60.
Patterns are born from repeating elements, like thoughts in your mind. The simplest expression of this repetition is a grid. A pattern is an imaginary space you can dive into, a process that enacts the destruction of the world and all specific things. This is a thoughtful space, quiet and meditative. It is spaces like this I seek to create with my work, for the viewer and myself.
The Digital Grid

Screens have altered the way we think, changing the way we visually conceive space. The screen is a grid of pixels, a two-dimensional surface that offers an illusory view, like a window, into the multidimensional virtual world. The digital grid, from the realm of computer graphics, is part perspective lattice and part grid, both real and unreal. Upon this ground we are able to manifest a virtual reality that mimics the real world or turns its back on nature as a purely artificial wall. I utilize the grid with this knowledge, using it only as a space for germination that is then dismissed and recedes like a point of origin.
Building begins intuitively from the realm of imagination where all is possible, then moves to drawing where lines drawn by hand can twist and bend ever so slightly to present a sharpened image of that which was imagined, with measurement and materiality a new level of rationalization emerges, and points connect with a rigid sense of the limitations of the physical reality this thought now inhabits.

As a result of the effects of the digital grid, these figures drag along a mass of potentiality. The ground of its origin is no longer just a pictorial lattice, but a section of infinity in which a new world could be born.

My work is the physical manifestation of a search. My search for meaning, knowledge and understanding is facilitated by the creation of these abstract forms. Through exercising my imagination, I hope to sharpen my vision, both visually and perceptually. This is a systematic process of intuitive meditation that consolidates thoughts into images.

The nature of my work is systematic; I utilize my intuition and extend it through lines of logic. This mirrors my approach to understanding. Looking for and identifying patterns simplifies the complexity of the world and exposes underlying structures or symmetries. I am confident that knowledge is there to be gained by anyone who inquires.

“If one has the right attitude one can learn from everything.”

Every day I am faced with the world and all its complexity. To understand anything requires a sustained effort of observation and deconstruction, trying to break it apart into ever-smaller pieces, to look at its fundamental qualities and discover connecting elements. Through this system I become aware of the process itself as an important area of which to be critical and refine. It is important to expose the system of analysis so as to look at it with the same criticality and remove any superfluous or erroneous techniques. This is a co-creation of logic (reason) and feeling (intuition).

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The work moves through defined procedures. The rules are embedded in the work as an internal logic. To begin with pure rationality an invisible grid is extended across a surface as a fertile ground intended to grow structures. Figures build on the grid, and follow their own guided logic. A shallow space is created; beams bend and overlap, alternating between above/below positions in rhythmic sequence.

My work mimics patterns of growth and sits somewhere between the evolution of an organism and the growth of a city. I cannot deny the impact living in a city has had on my work and me; this environment and its linear spaces influence me. The built environment, where almost everything is regulated and the chaos of nature is perpetually coerced into order, surrounds me with huge structures of bricks, concrete, shaped gardens with square hedges, and ubiquitous advertising is applied to all surfaces, where corporate logos act like colossal nametags.

The subversive acts of graffiti artists and vandals cut into the cities monochrome surfaces like a virus attacking cells, and I have allowed all this into my work as a conscious influence. Their use of bright contrasting colours with graphic precision, represents a frame of mind that sees the city as a canvas and challenges the authority of its megalithic weight.

Conceptually my work is responding to built space, architecture and the branded environment. Utilising formal qualities from advertising and logo design, I compose figures that hijack the mechanisms of this visual language yet remain purely abstract, detached from any specific meaning, not illustrating something or attempting to sell you any tangible thing. The forms in my work are related to logos but without products to brand they instead represent nonspecific thought processes as diagrams - diagrams of thought.
Symbols of Power

I have always been fascinated by the aesthetics of corporate design. Logos act as commercial sigils\(^{10}\), symbols with an expanding range of associations that grow from repetition to build a consumer awareness or mindshare. These graphic elements can be applied to any surface to light up cities, and direct the navigation of these complex environments. They have an innate power I wished to tap into. But how do you do this with nonspecific feeling, without anything to sell? Creating a powerful symbol to capture attention but invite contemplation, rather than spending. How do you build a calm, considered space? A space where the mind can be quiet, open and receptive, empty of thought and full of potential.

Logos are generally simple in design, utilizing geometry, negative space and minimal contrasting colours. It is qualities like these that allow logos to function as emblems of versatility, gaining their meaning through vast repetition.

\(^{11}\) Powell Peralta - Triple-P Logo, 1978.

\(^{10}\) A sigil is a sign or symbol considered to have magical power.
With these forms of design everything is logical and ordered, but I am only using these traits as influences and am aware of the opposite. The intuitive is an expressive force of equal importance and so I try to maintain a balance. Anywhere there is a dichotomy it is important to find the nexus, the point of connexion when identified may be used to cultivate a balance from the eternal flux of opposing elements (polarity).

12. Yin-yang - Zhao Huiqian (1351-1395 CE).

Psychic Structures

The work is a projection of my internal state; it reflects the qualities of my psyche at its most integrated and considered functioning. The work stems from actual hallucinations experienced that are reinforced through repetitive actions taken into hypnagogic states and is undergoing a process of evolution through conscious evaluation and unconscious intuition.
“To analyse is to express a thing as a function of something other than itself, all analysis is thus a translation.”

I am analysing myself constantly, and I believe these structures are innate forms originating from my fundamental internal structure. Each composition is a fixed variation of a dynamic system of introspection, like a mirror to my mind. Imagination also has a relationship to this structure. We dream of things experienced, yet they move with a fluid malleability that reflects the shifting physical structures of our brains.

13. Annie Besant, C.W. Leadbeater - Thought Form, An Aspiration to Enfold All, 1901.

There is no distinction between internal and external; it is a continuum that extends symmetrically in all directions, where dreams and reality are part of the same surface. The dream surface is one that all things can move through, leaving behind an essence of their interaction so as to build up an amalgam that becomes a multi-entity born of everything yet unlike any one defined thing. This is a process with tangible results, but no finite end.

“'The problem with introspection is that it has no end.'”

**A GAME OF LETTERS**

When thinking about how I would approach writing my dissertation, a type of academic work that felt overwhelmingly serious and dry, requiring great effort and focus in a medium outside my trusted practice, I wondered if there could be a way to escape my responsibility as an author by devising a generative structure that would grow the work for me. I imagined a key letter dropped on a page that would infect the surface and replicate like bacteria, quickly spreading into an intricate colony of words with a complex structure and unpredictable beauty. These imaginings are not unlike the way I think about directing my studio work, and so I am aware of the gap between imagination and reality (in reality I need to be the scientist, the incubator, and the bacteria). My thinking moved along to the next fundamental unit, a word. The simplest unit, with meaning embedded, a single word expands by definition.

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Word: word/

Noun

1. A single distinct meaningful element of speech or writing, used with others (or sometimes alone) to form a sentence and typically shown with a space on either side when written or printed.

I discovered that by choosing an initial generator word, this would expand through its own definition and become a descriptive sentence. By then running each individual word of the definition through this same process, a sentence quickly expands into a paragraph, and all the work needed to act as a composer
is looking at definitions, copying them out, and connecting sentences to establish a rhythm to mask the unthinking exponential growth.

After some initial tests, a rule set was developed:

Rules:

1) Start with the choice of a single word.

2) Copy out the definition of your chosen word.

3) Repeat step two for each word in the definition.

4) Add as few linking words to the new sentence as possible and replace repeated words with synonyms, so as to make a coherent string.

5) Start a new paragraph.

6) Repeat steps three through five indefinitely.

Below is a finite example of this generative operation. The key-word can be an arbitrary choice, but to direct a text with personal resonance choose your generator with logic or intuition. As I am interested in the process itself this example will run from the term 'expand.'

Step one: the generator.

• Expand

Step two: the definition.

• Become or make larger or more extensive.

Steps three and four: the formation of a short paragraph.
• It begins to be used to link alternatives and form something by putting parts together or combining substances. This creates lengths of considerable or relatively great size, extent and capacity. Connecting alternatives gives a greater or additional amount of variable degrees, covering and affecting a large area.

Step five and six: the full paragraph.

• This used to refer to a thing previously mentioned, or easily identified by performing or undergoing the first part of any action or activity which expressed motion in the direction of a particular location. To exist having already been used in a relationship between these two things or situations, especially where one affects the other, and one or two of more available possibilities are used to introduce an additional comment or interjection in the visible shape or configuration of something, like a thing that is unspecified or unknown. By identifying the agent performing an action, we move to a place, in a particular position of an amount or section which, when combined with others, makes up the whole of something with or in proximity to any other person or people who otherwise unite for a common purpose on a particular kind of matter with uniform properties referring to the specific thing just mentioned. To cause something to happen as a result of one’s actions is the greatest. From the three dimensions of an object, expressing the relationship between a part and a whole is regarded in comparison with something else. Rather than absolutely of an extent, or intensity, which is considerably above average dimensions, including the maximum amount that something can contain or bring together. To move it into contact so that a real or notional link is established, in one of two or more available possibilities may freely transfer the possession of this something to someone with a substantial added, extra, or supplementary ingredient to which
is already present or available. Especially if the total of a thing, or things in number are liable to change. The extent to which something happens or is present in a thing, used to protect someone else’s enjoyment of oneself in a lively way with drink or drugs, and music from a region or part of a town, in a country, of the world.

**A Nebulous Mass - An explanation of vague feeling**

The results of this game is a text that flows as though it is saying something yet is constantly evading meaning - a field of unarticulated thought. This large body of words moves with energy and vague subject matter, describing something with no definite shape. It expands from your head, extending beyond in the form of a cloud or haze, a hazy giant of words that emits a sense of intelligence, indistinct and unable to be seen clearly from any one point.

Intuition is the irrational, while the process of analysis is the rational or logical. The game produces a disorientating passage with a meaning and substance general in feeling. It simply occupies space and possesses a mass, mimicking something born of the intellect. Yet it is not capable of being fully observed, it has no specific meaning that can be imagined or mentally grasped. In this way I feel that it perfectly mirrors my studio work, but in a medium of language. The confusion felt is actually translating something typically only able to be seen one bit at a time in detail (we zoom in for detail at the expense of the overview). The visible shape of this configuration, a text mass like a condensed watery vapour or dust floating from the psychic atmosphere, vague and ill-defined no matter how well it is described, it remains as an elusive vapour, an
indistinct billowing mass that sends out, produces and discharges an unusual, steady radiance of intellect without intrinsic meaning. It overpowers and leaves you powerless to perceive its totality with the eyes, yet without a doubt encompasses the feeling of making abstract work.


BUILDING BLOCKS

The block set I had as a child was kept in a blue plastic box, a large cube with one open face. The blocks lived in this box, in an orderly state, automatically arranged by the walls of their container. When tipped on the floor, a chaotic world was created, waiting to be ordered and reordered in seemingly infinite configurations. Feeling at once like an omnipotent overlooking creator the scale of perception was relative to the largest blocks, and I could project myself to the
point of view of a miniscule individual inhabitant. The blocks were arranged, vast
cities were built, destroyed and all reset, packed away at the end.

These formative experiences of imaginative play were actively
encouraged by my architect father and are an example of the acting out of
mechanical reasoning. Mechanical reasoning is a kind of logic that can be
displayed through diagrams, showing an understanding of how machine parts
like cogs will turn and affect one another in a system. Mechanical reasoning is
facilitated through hands on learning, as opposed to learning through text or
speech. I feel it is because of this experience that I am now drawn to an
abstraction of descriptive imagery, or diagrams. Visual and mechanical ways of
understanding are strongly within my nature.

There is something fundamental to these kinds of experience that relate
to the essential nature of how I perceive materiality and its potential forms.
Today I still enjoy a blank space and basic units to organize and construct structures for imagination. This is an open-ended game operating through natural cycles, like that of birth, death, and renewal.

The blocks are a finite medium with infinite variability. Something understood and put into practice by the German pedagogue Friedrich Fröbel, who devised and instituted the concept of the ‘kindergarten’ during the nineteenth century. We take for granted the ideas of free play and all it offers but Fröbel believed in what he called ‘a child’s instinct of activity’. This was seen as an innate motivation that comes through in play as a tactile, hands-on learning. As a child playing with building blocks you are learning things about reality and perception, how things go together and can be rearranged, what arrangements don’t work or go against the laws of gravity.

“The living being’s ability to sense certain aspects of its environment flips around and endows the being with the ability to sense certain aspects of itself.”

Contemporary examples of this can be seen in videogames like Minecraft, a digital world open to exploration, where every surface is a resource to be mined and collected. These virtual resources may then be reconfigured to build structures or alter the environment for whatever ends a player desires. This form of gameplay is known as a ‘sandbox’ environment, a name that suggests an open field of play where you decide how to engage with the subject, similar to children paying and making worlds within a backyard sandpit.

For me these games were reinforced through other toys like tangrams and Rubik’s puzzles. I was given something (a shape or set of shapes) that looked like nothing but through the exploration of their ability to be rearranged, their simple shapes would combine with my projected imaginings to become anything I wanted. I believe these experiences were fundamental to how I look at the world, how I solve problems and now how I approach making art.

**HOW TO BUILD NOTHING, or WHAT IS NOT**

Hallucinations are visions imposed over the solid structures of material reality. Patterns of light are projected outwards, dancing over the surface of reality, and in more extreme cases the visions pull at the fabric of the world, twisting and distorting all things. Everything man has made was once imaginary. The qualities expressed through my decisions are innate characteristics of my physical structure. The networks of my brain (neurons) interpret the world.
While hallucinating this system is in reverse, projecting internal structures outward into the space of physical matter.

Anytime you manifest an entity, an entity born of the void, it carries with it a quality of its origin, but conceals it also. Through its manifestation it has been transmuted into the tangible, a visible realm that stands in front of its invisible birth. Close your eyes and see with your mind, to draw something out is to solidify the immaterial. This is a process of degrading pure thought into matter. An image (a drawing, a painting) occupies a space between thought and matter; it is an attempt to take a photograph with one's mind. As Victor Pasmore said in describing his turn to abstraction, “Each painting is at once a physical object and its metaphysical shadow.” 14


An image made in this way is a diagram of thought, a diagram that gives directions of how to build nothing. If I attempt to build the thing it is a building away from the intangible origin, a solidification of thought. This object becomes a carrier of a quality, a dynamic or uncertain sign that holds information and yet signifies nothing.

Unlike letters or numbers, uncertain signs are figures without specific meaning. These images arise intuitively and intellectually when thinking about the origin of written languages and how to build an alphabet - a string of symbols that can be utilized in dynamic arrangements and hold information. In this way uncertain signs are carriers of vague information, notions of thought that become attached in a dynamic way. Instead of composing strings of symbols to spell out certain words or ideas, uncertain signs are composed to stand alone with many possible meanings attached and unseen. There is no spelling out as in the defined forms of learned language. Through a process of serial abstraction, I seek to mirror these intangible structures of the mind. Subtle energetic fields of cognition extend into reality through oscillations across an invisible grid, where thoughts are expressed as patterns. This realm can only be accessed through a reflexive, meditative process.

“The concept of nothing - the void, emptiness, that which has no being, the non-existent that which is not - is a rich and immediate source of paradoxical thought.”15

The primal instinct, images from mind. Dot patterns seen in prehistoric cave drawings are thought to be an expression of the types of hallucinations experienced during altered states of consciousness\textsuperscript{16}. These abstract patterns have been identified in cave drawings from numerous sites around the world, for example in places like Chauvet Cave in the south of France. Through trance states - or sensory deprivation the shaman experienced hallucinations, like phosphenes or luminous images projected outward onto the cave walls. These visions are still accessible today, because they are part of our basic visual systems, and commonly appear during states in-between sleeping and waking.

\textit{Hand Dots, Chauvet Cave, France, c. 32,000-28,000 BCE.}

\textsuperscript{16} David Lewis-Williams, \textit{The Mind in the Cave: Consciousness and the Origins of Art} (United Kingdom: Thames & Hudson, 2002). 33.
“This in-between state, waking Hypnopompia, falling asleep Hypnagogia, is characterised by the onset of sensory aberrations and hallucinations ranging from evanescent phenomena like sparkling or spinning threads of light, whispered voices, the feeling of falling Hyptic Jerk, and wafts of partially heard melodies.”

This was a mystical practice of symbol creation, signs to ward off or welcome, from which the formation of visual language was initiated, and laid the origins of magic. These figures are related to numbers and letters and are born of the mind. They reflect innate internal structures, from the neural pathways of the brain to the atomic arrangements of molecules that facilitate the very operations of thought. I am attempting to intuit these innate structures and translate them into a personal visual language of uncertain signs.

**Reality is My Medium**

Consciousness is an expanding quality of the universe, an emergent feature of nature. The intangible is best revealed through abstraction’s non-representational means. Working with reduced forms to create rhythms of pattern and structure, individual components can be manipulated by applying systems of tessellation, symmetry, kaleidoscopic mirroring, and through repetition can extend over surfaces to form potentially infinite fields. These fields represent nothing but are a translation of naturally existing intangible structures like radiation or brain waves. This process does not seek to define any one thing, but is a system that gathers emergent qualities, mirroring the mind

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and embedding non-specific knowledge or information into definite fixed entities (symbols). These symbols are dynamic and change through repetition, which is an evolutionary process that moves in series producing new generations of offspring. Each symbol shares an inherent quality of thoughtfulness able to be read intuitively by anyone, as it is clear they did not emerge spontaneously but through an intelligence or conscious agent that was responsible for their creation.

With their reduced forms and likeness to minimalism or architectural drawings these symbols are built using the most basic of structural components. I am interested in these fundamental structural components because like bones they are elemental forms on which imaginary bodies can grow, and by utilizing the most basic of illusions they give insights into how we perceive reality and how matter is built up.

“My tendency, is to reduce or develop everything to ‘single things’; things which refer to nothing outside, but which at the same time possibly refer, or relate, to everything.” 18

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I am interested in materials that have additive qualities that can be made to build up, or dissolve. These qualities share something of the intangible, representations of that which cannot be grasped. Transparent paints gather weight through repeated layering, and drawn lines of various colours can dissolve into a surface with the application of water. Through repetition you can
dissolve meaning. Children do this when they discover that the repeating of any word deconstructs its specific meaning in to an absurd nonsensical sound. By breaking down specific form we can enter the space of their innate meaning, an interconnected concept-less infinity. Through material choices I hope to indicate this understanding of all things being the expression of an intrinsic eternal substance.

“There more you look at the same exact thing, the more the meaning goes away and the better and emptier you feel.”19

To carry these ideas, it is important to show the building of qualities. Each layer added blends into the last and carries the qualities of translucent colour that emerge and immerge on the surface linking the process and exposing the work. This is intended to carry the understanding of reality as viewed through the perspective of particle physics. Energy emanating from the quantum level, builds up through unseen dimensions, atoms, molecules into microscopic levels of matter, onto the macroscopic realm surrounding us and displaying pattern and structure that unite all disparate physical levels.

“We human beings are macroscopic structures in a universe whose laws reside at a microscopic level.”20

This pure abstraction is only non-representational in contrast to the world of things, the entities of categorization that we see before us and utilize on

a daily basis, and is more representative of a system, something that is more ordered than the world around it. I am no longer abstracting images from reality, like Mondrian did over his life’s work, but rather building up structures from an intangible, hallucinatory realm. This is where I feel sympathy with visionary artists like Hilma af Klint, whose large scale paintings of patterned colour predate the establishment of abstraction, and were like diagrams composed from intuitive psychic knowledge.

The Foundation is Not Solid

I build from possibilities, as decisions are made they necessarily collapse into certainties, but they bring with them qualities of the mind. In the same way that music may be representative of emotional states, so to can abstraction be representative of internal states. An image paired down to an essence of purely abstract forms is a quiet thought solidified, held captive in material reality, to be read and recalled on observation.

“In a work where there is ‘nothing’ or not much to see ...the viewer has to slow down the mind and emotions to apprehend the work. The process is a gradual revelation similar to meditation. The work of art is a mental suspension, not a mental diversion.”

The drawing out of these forms is an architectural process of building structures as receptacles of thought, uncertain symbols that contain a sense of mind. In this way they carry a kind of talismanic power, a symbol to aid focus or offering protection and guidance. In meditative practice images can be used to aid the process of quieting the mind. These images, known as Yantra in Hindu culture, are nonrepresentational repetitive geometric structures with a central focal point. Through focusing on this ‘sacred instrument’ meditation is aided by the hypnotic undulation of the abstract form, and an awareness of the merging of internal and external landscapes may be attained.

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This is a method of dissolving the certainty of substantial structures into a realm of pure form or energy, and then reconstituting that world. Building from uncertainty to certainty, and then dissolving back. A unconscious process like that of breathing, inhaling/exhaling, which captures the oxygen for life.

**Fields of Play**

The grid is the underlying structure that supports repeating elements, reveals relationships between seemingly independent entities, and suggests the hidden connexion of the underlying reality of the Void, the great nothing, from which all things emanate, and to which all things return. I utilize this grid in my work as the generative ground from which all things arise. Whether it is fully
defined, or wholly removed, a fundamental grid underlies all things. The use of the grid is a fertile abstraction, a visual simile for the concept of potentiality.

“The grid shows the ground hyper-activated for the appearance of the figure, the image, yet still empty, suspended at the moment of hyperactivity just before the forms appear, and before infinity is compromised.”


22 Ibid. 157.
The grid was fundamental in the work of Agnes Martin, with her sensibilities of reduced form and translucent colour operating on a grid typically ruled out by hand in pencil. Martin said of her work that she was painting ideas, and often used titles that suggest the subtleties of quiet meditative emotions. But unlike Agnes Martin, who used complex mathematics in the scaling of a composition, my hallucinatory grid is flexible and intuitive.

The grid is a universal shape of logic. Any point can be laid on a grid, and it can be used as an armature from which complex things grow. Although the grid is a simplification of reality, it is still the most precise way of transposing visual information. All patterns simplify. Maps, models, all reduce the complexity of reality to present a certainty that is reproducible and prescriptive. All predictions are illusory. In this way it is a logical structure, bound to make sense. I utilize the grid as a stage for simulation, a membrane of understanding.

When I am drawing out lines it is the expression of a search, the search for nothing. Searching for solid entities, projected like a hologram, by an invisible grid. In these entities I am looking for symmetrically ordered figures, the perfection of balanced paths, describing finite forms loaded with infinite potentiality.

“The desire to reach the utmost limits of being is inherent in our minds; but we know that all the words and images we use in the attempt are bound to be wrong for they describe contingent properties of the world of finite things.” 23

Through repetition and exhaustive variation, I am embodying a process like that of evolution. Mistakes will happen, affecting the process with its chaos, and mutations will occur. As events like this build up, forms evolve in unpredictable ways. My work is a personal expression of this. I have not chosen abstraction; it has simply emerged naturally as my best attempt to synthesize knowledge, and understand the world.

“Our mental processes have evolved as they have precisely because they reflect something of the nature of the physical world we inhabit.”

RULES

Utilizing the immediacy of drawing and a process of evolutionary variation I work towards the formulation of a set of rules to guide and refine my visual language. This began with a logical sequence of unfolding simple shapes into chaotic complex states and then the refinement and tidying up towards an order of unknown, indefinite ends. These recursive actions are methodically redrawn in various mediums. This is a process of discovering fundamental abstract elements and qualities that can be manipulated into finite compositions of figures or multiplied in fields to extend across surfaces of various sizes. This systematic way of evolving related works in series is connected to the history of serial art, minimalism and conceptualism through artists like Sol LeWitt and Robert Ryman with their underlying regulations or principles that govern the procedure within a particular area of activity.

"Using a simple form repeatedly narrows the field of the work and concentrates the intensity to the arrangement of the form. This arrangement becomes the end while the form becomes the means."²⁵

Sol LeWitt’s variations of the cube and utilization of a square grid were rules he imposed upon his work, so as to direct attention to the idea as primary material. His choice to remove surfaces and work primarily with skeleton structures in a limited pallet (typically restricted to white), were limitations he used to minimise what he called ‘distractions.’ Through these restrictions LeWitt was making an effort to defined a set of rules that would lead towards a refined personal aesthetic that operates like a musical score, indicating the playing out of his ideas. By maintaining a practice within the confines of these rules, Sol LeWitt

succeeded in creating a language of ideas, removing qualities of the hand-made, so as anyone could execute his ideas and the results would maintain his signature aesthetic.

With predefined rules a field of play is created, like a game board. By establishing these personal rules, a space is made that is easy to leave and re-enter without the question of how to begin. In David Cronenberg’s 1986 science-fiction film The Fly, the protagonist an eccentric scientist Seth Brundle is asked why his wardrobe contains five identical suits, he answers that it’s something he learned from Einstein.

“This way I don’t have to expend my thought on what I have to wear next, I just grab the next set on the rack.”


26 David Cronenberg, ”The Fly,” (20th Century Fox, 1986).
In each drawing the point in which the action starts is not clear, but through orderly or systematic behaviour the mechanism will gradually develop, and be revealed as a definite rule set. Related things follow each other, and simple elements repeat into intricate states.

Through these actions a process of discovery is played out. Repeated methodically I choose and refine elements in a concise or systematic way so as to breed a similar or related series of work with explicit or understood regulations or principles embedded within. The governing the procedures are emergent qualities that start from simple choices within a particular area of activity. Through repetition the elements reselected are refined and either grow more complex, or become simplified indicating the point at which a new action can start. The orderly or systematic behaviour will gradually develop and be revealed intuitively. Repeating elements are chosen in no particular order, yet related things follow each other, following their own direction. I work quickly making creative decisions a form of mental exercise until something unknown or unfamiliar is revealed. This process is ongoing, lasting for an unknown or unstated length of time, and will continue until the furthest or most extreme part is reached or a desired result occurs.

Currently the rules that I utilize revolve around the compositions of the line (beam) that follows the hidden, underlying isometric grid. I make a perimeter shape, with the intention of this being a painting board. A line is composed inside this area in segments arranged symmetrically (from top to bottom, and moving inward to the centre).

27. Adrian De Giorgio - Untitled (Evo.II), 2015.


31. Adrian De Giorgio - Untitled (Evo.VI), 2015.
Once a line has been composed it is outlined to become a defined beam. The areas of overlap are decided systematically, and alternate between above and below positions or are placed where a fold is made. The more elegant the composition the better this alternation is played out. Corners are made following illusory contours. Where the projection of one line would intersect another a turn is made. This is a quality that hints to the underlying grid. I am looking for the description of the three plains (two vertical one horizontal) and trying to describe them in an interlinked chainlike way.

As well as overlaps, folds are positioned in a way that hug an existing beam. This flattens the composition, while subtle shadows are placed to heighten the illusion of depth. A tension of depth and flatness is paradoxically desired.

Joseph Albers is another artist who worked with variations of a theme, making many drawings and studies to refine and evolve a composition. In the composition Tenayuca of 1943 (plate 32), Albers has composed a figure directly inspired by the restored Aztec pyramid of this ancient Mexican city. The left hand side of the composition lies on a flat plane that recedes back in pictorial space yet remains connected to the right hand side where a vertical shift is made. The whole composition is connected by a single line that loops back upon itself with square corners that sit tightly within the outer edge, adding to the visual energy, and making the whole painting oscillate between the static two dimensional surface and the dynamic illusory three-dimensional depth. This picture was evolved from photographs taken at the site, into many line drawings and then
colour studies. These formative processes are something that I have also intuitively arrived at through repetition in my studio practice.

Once a composition is completed it may be redrawn without a container perimeter. This allows for its distortion, so as to evolve the structure. Between the elements of composition, a balance is weighted. Beams are rigid elements of ordered logic, and the background is organic and chaotic.
THE IN-BETWEEN AND THE ELSEWHERE

I started with shaped boards, shaped boards to contain a geometric figure, a geometric figure that followed an underlying grid, the grid isometric also underpins the shaped board, and all things emanate from the perfect symmetry of the grid. The wallpaper was the chaotic manifestation of pattern, pushed through a kaleidoscopic lens; this too followed the paths of the invisible isometric grid.

As tests for the geometric figures I made drawings, within a closed shape that acts as the outer edge, the perimeter of the imagined board, a line like a beam extends from a starting point and rebounds from an edge causing a fold in
the line and sending it in another direction along its path. One line with two ends, bent and folded in imaginary space, an illusion of shallow space, an isometric space of three dimensions, within a shape, finite, and symmetrical.

Soon my focus moved directly to the line, the line as a three dimensional bar, a bar like an extruded steel girder folding on itself, moving through diagrammatic space, lines of thought, sections of infinity. In its simplest form a straight line became a zigzag, an angular wave solid, or floating with a shadow on the page. The zigzag, not unlike the letter ‘S’ has a property of symmetry in that if it is rotated 180 degrees on its centre point, it looks the same, it cannot be
upside-down, it is a figure of rotational symmetry. Something happens when looking at an image of symmetry; it draws your focus, like a pair of eyes, staring.

Through a process of expanding and collapsing complexity, an unknown thing, a mystery veiled in complexity, can be reduced, coming to a place of understanding, we see this thing in its simplest form, a point of origin identified, from which all growth begins, reaching out to a total structure, like a single brick as the simplest unit in relation to the entire building.

The works on paper became an obsession, with the discovery of each new figure the feeling of a secret revealed (intuitively not every line was a compelling
form), like the identification of a new character in an unknown alphabet. Slowly an understanding of properties began, a limitation of interactions between illusory plains, one vertical, two diagonals, indicate the difference between a figure described on a single plain, or a more dynamic figure that twists through multiple plains. Folds that follow illusory contours, yet remain broken, or separate, creating cues for corners and lengths, describing qualities of the hidden grid, and the geometric figures the grid is able to produce.

These operations are highly logical, following intuitive rules that emerge through this investigation; the rules provide a set of limitations that are to be tested to discover what is possible, until all options are exhausted. At the point of exhaustion, the system is known, or understood, and from a starting point of invisible nothingness the unfurling of all possible forms can be predicted, through an effort of imagination, in this state the mind is quiet, full with potential, and sits waiting like a blinking cursor at the beginning of an unwritten text document. It is at this moment a mutation is needed to spur on the evolution of the system, a chaotic element to disrupt the known, like an enzyme, a catalyst for change.

Addition and removal, the boards had been quite simple, regular shapes (a hexagon, a triangle). With the deeper understanding of the line figures (beams), complex folded bars with a property of rotational symmetry, the perimeters (containing geometric figures) could be informed by negative spaces that move around, or hug the outline of the beams. The figure on the page, the page a rectangle, a complex beam could always be contained by a simple polygon, but drawn in to the perimeter, looking at the negative space of the
beam, resulted in a compelling highly complex form (polygon). These container polygons became a new concern in the construction of a composition; the board would become a complex polygon with a direct relationship to the painted beam, operating like corners on a racetrack, directing the driving line.

A new set of rules needed to be discovered for the constructing of a polygon. Again the underlying grid dictated all possible forms, degrees of angles are restricted to 30/60/90, so that only two diagonal edges, and one vertical are possible. There is also the dynamic interplay between polygon and beam, so that one can follow the other, or both arise simultaneously. A method of reduction is one tactic, describing a regular shape, like an elongated hexagon. A composition of line work is added, and areas of negative space removed. In this way a shifting composition is worked through until a final result is arrived at.

Through the development of this working process, addition and removal of elements in a diagrammatic drawing were applied to material reality. The drawn image becomes a plan for construction, and in this way a board is prepared, and shaped by drawing out the polygon on regular, rectangular boards, removing sections and applying a backing frame. The frame as intended to provide structural integrity to the board soon became the focus of an additional concern. By continuing the struts of the frame beyond the edge of the board, another manifestation of the invisible grid was revealed. The struts follow the board’s edge, the board’s edge follows the invisible grid, through an extension of the strut beyond the edge, a physical embodiment of the illusory beam could be described, folding back on itself and reuniting with the edge, the
struts outline an actual void, a tangible hole, alluding to the drawn process of removal and negative space.

Something in the subtle colour of the beams, their translucent paintwork applied as a series of washes, contained a quality of light, an illusory light, interacting with the figure in illusory space. The tangible substance of the boards, interacting with physical light, casting real shadows relates directly to illusory representations. By adding a fluorescent strip of tape to the inner side of the board’s struts, a further interaction with light is illustrated. The tape is not seen directly, but remains hidden by the strut, only the reflection of new light particles (photons) is visible, as a diffused gradient of fluorescent orange. This was a technique I had experimented with previously on small cardboard maquettes, but it had remained an independent offshoot, not yet fully integrated into the central line of my studio work.

This building up of layers, each layer with its individual concerns, each layer connected through an overlapping of geometry, rule sets, and the interactions of the underlying grid, is a strange loop of interactions, new knowledge of one layer, informs new knowledge on another, a reinforcing circuit like the two hands of Escher drawing one another.

Through meetings and critiques within the MFA programme a collaborative project emerged between Ciaran Begley, Consuelo Cavaniglia and myself. Our shared concerns including form divided systematically, utilizing geometries and colour to define and defy perceptions of space led us to our first project TURN/ FOLD/ FLIP. TFF centred on the idea of the book as a geometric object, and presented three individual works, resting on and self-supporting each other. This project served as a path to the merging of our individual practices.
Our second project *Form and Fold* increased the level of collaboration. Through a series of meetings, we evolved the ideas of *TURN/FOLD/FLIP* and expanded our intentions for the work. Continuing with the idea of book like structures, we conceived an approach of large-scale works. Plywood sheets and entire walls would themselves be worked on as pages, with my compositions extended over folded surfaces. This led me to working on a much larger scale, extending compositions across rectangular formats a number of metres wide. Having these paintings then cut and folded to Ciaran’s specifications, and applying paintwork to coloured surfaced airbrushed by Consuelo.
The collaboration pulled me though unfamiliar circumstances, which allowed me to view recent work with a new perspective, and stirred up visions of new potentials. The symmetries I had been working with had horizontal divisions from a central point of rotation and the appearance of figures or letters of an unknown runic alphabet. Through working on regular formats I now had a vision of bounded structures that grew inward from the containing shape. Making drawings that began with a defined outline, rectangles of various proportions to contain a beam that begins on opposing sides and meets in the middle. Within the boundary, a coloured line begins from a corner or from a point of division along the vertex of the boundary. Mirroring the movement of the line, a second beam emerges from the opposing side. The beams will reflect as they hit edges or may fold as they intersect trails from the inverse. Two beams will always become one, as they meet in the middle.
The newly (re)discovered mode of composition was furthered by a striking hypnopompic vision one morning. With lucid clarity I had a vision of work not yet made. A composition familiar and inline with that which came before was mutated, an accelerated leap of evolution. Colour and pattern filled my line work with a glittered, metallic high gloss as it cut across a plane of speckled stone, or bright crystalline fractured ground. To draw this vision out I decided to use found photos from the internet, images of rock surfaces, crystal cross-sections, and polished car ducos could be collaged together using vector masks and digital line work. I quickly built my first composition with Adobe Illustrator, a programme I have used previously for digital drawing. The result was an image that closely resembled the hallucinatory vision that flashed through my mind’s eye.

I saw the line again with shallow depth but now with a new rigidity. This
line insidious, projects itself across all things. This success enlivened my
obsession for composing more and more. I saw that these digital images could fill
screens or be produced as posters; they had qualities of the elements they were
composed from, the luxury of the super car paintwork, the weight of the stone
slab. They were enigmatic signs, like logos of consumer culture, engravings on
tombstone memorials, and industrial schemata for the circuits of unknown
mechanical devices.

40. Adrian De Giorgio - Composition for iPhone, 2015.
I saw that these images were indicators to a new direction of painting; I wished I could execute such complex patterned qualities. First I begin with format. I chose one regular unit of thin MDF and halved it, the result being two squares of identical proportions. Contriving a space for experimentation I drew up two compositions, identical down a line of reflection. This was not intended to make a diptych it was simply to allow the freedom to make mistakes. I built up the composition with coloured line and knocked it back with a coat of gesso, the ink line bleeding back through the gesso in a predictable manner. I saw that I wanted the painting to echo the digital images, which are stacked in virtual layers on the computer allowing you to move up and down in layer order. The line would be the first layer, defining the composition then masked a background layer would be filled in above. I masked the line and covered the board in a painterly grey, recalling the experience of painting atop Consuelo’s sprayed board during our collaborative work. A gradation of light to dark moved across the surface diagonally from corner to corner, and with stick and brush I chaotically applied a spatter of various white, grey and black dots in a faux stone painting effect researched from YouTube D.I.Y. tutorials.

Peeling back the tape to reveal the masked beam was like a laser cutting through the opaque surface. The beam retained its chalky translucent colour, while the solid foreground/background filled all negative space with its stone like solidity. This twin image had been an experiment in total painting, and now a point of expansion into a new way of working.
It was after these successful experiments that inspiration came in bursts. The simple idea to paint two images as mirror twins spawned the desire to continue making paintings in diptychs. This is something that expanded the volume of work and challenged my abilities as a painter.

Through my continued practice of drawing figures to make paintings of I had the thought of extruding the line in space away from the page. In making these drawings I saw how to extract a sculptural form, somewhat like a standing cabinet from my compositions of flat lines. Immediately after making these new
drawings I was also able to identify a way to make a unique block set, something that I was interested in but was unsure how to approach. By drawing a figure in two-dimensional space, one with rotational symmetry, I could then extrude the line up into three dimensions, marking the cabinet-like structure. Now looking at the negative space within the cabinet, lines dividing the space could represent blocks housed within these spaces. I now felt like I had identified the work I desired to present for exhibition. A series of paintings on shaped board, a standing sculptural form and a set of interactive blocks.

42. Adrian De Giorgio - Space Cabinet (Marquette), 2015.

44. Adrian De Giorgio – MFA graduation show, 2015 (Installation view).
Conclusion

Through the course of writing this dissertation I have opened up a further awareness of the theoretical frameworks that situate my practice both historically and contemporaneously. Through utilizing the intuitive processes that inform my studio work I have accessed the fundamental structures I use in drawing and painting, to describe universal patterns which I believe are common to the physical structure of the human brain and defining my understanding of nothingness and the intangible. Taking that which is hard to explain, and elaborating upon it as best I could.

These patterns can be experienced naturally as hallucinations through the altered states of consciousness caused by sensory deprivation, trance states, hypnogogic states and psychoactive substances. By extending our minds into reality we have shaped the world around us, through the formation of language and complex visual systems. This re-emerged in modernity as the innately human desire to find patterns and order and manifest itself through different attempts to find systems both natural and artificial.

This work has lead me to find contemporary theorists such as Francis Halsall who are performing research to bring to light alternative histories through the understanding of systems theory. Any structure that displays order is a system, and by defining these systems it is suggested that this then becomes something coherent that can be understood in totality, by making sense of the complexity of the world through looking at the interactions of the whole, and their total relationship. A system simplifies complexity and presents this information to us in a way that is understandable, like a model.
There is a beauty in discovering order, the elegance of prediction allows for expanded vision through the past, present and future. Underlying laws attract chaotic action into ordered patterns. The artwork reflects the mind of its creator and its state of order illustrates the cognitive order of its maker.

Through sustained reflection, I have been able to identify the interactions of disparate areas, tracing the paths to reveal fundamental connexions. With large international exhibitions like the Istanbul biennale, The Forever Now at MOMA and The Black Square at Haywood Gallery London, I see that my intuitive process is mirrored by a current resurgence in a questioning of the importance of abstraction, what it has to offer as a system of understanding and order. It is the qualities of infinite plasticity and unreproducible materiality that continues to sustain painting as a 21st century practice. The attempts to codify the present with terms like post-minimal, provisional painting and zombie formalism show us that there is still a place for abstract painting, through practices converging with neuroscience, hallucination and digital media.

I have been fortunate to find myself with thoughts isomorphic to these contemporary modes of enquiry. I am becoming aware of how I utilize systems as structures to elucidate metaphysical questions of reality, perception and ontological questions of being, through an ever expanding practice of personal semiotics. I am like my predecessors and contemporaries, able to stare into the void, reach in and solidify intangible phantasmic abstractions.
FOOTNOTES


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