

1. Introduction: Unpacking Pandora's Box....

My Masters research continues a project I commenced during my Honours year. Its aim was to explore the nature of aesthetic experience from a number of perspectives including the role of beauty; the significance of material and the engagement with the sublime. It was clear to me, at the conclusion of the Honours paper, that my project was incomplete, and would always remain so. The question of aesthetic experience could not be neatly boxed and tied up with a single string. Its contents would necessarily remain gaping open and it's packaging would change hue, like a chameleon, each time I would revisit it.

The nature of my research has shifted since writing my Honours paper. My broad-ranging interest in aesthetic experience has become focused on what can be summarized as an exploration of the 'present absence' in our experience of the world as revealed through our aesthetic encounters. Perhaps, this is another instance of rummaging through the same open box.

The term 'present absence' may, at first, seem paradoxical. I mean to avoid the negativity of speaking in terms of a void, an abyss or a nothingness. My aim is to explore the gap, deferral or slippage which we sometimes encounter in our experience of the world and which, although 'absent' in the sense that it eludes thought and perception, nonetheless has a fullness and substance whose existence can be sensed. There is a presence in this absence much in the same way that we are able to sense the presence of another in the dark.

This is a complex phenomenon to describe. What is being attempted, after all, is a representation of what is essentially unrepresentable. It is an experience which cannot be circumscribed – only alluded to. In a sense it belongs to those realms whose foundation is in metaphor – the language of poetry and the arts.

Naturally, as an artist, I find myself drawn to the latter and it will be the primary purpose of this paper to seek an understanding of how this absent presence may be revealed to us in our encounter with a work of art. Specifically, I intend to explore how an artwork's disruption of our sense of spatial or temporal coherence, can serve to jolt us from our ordinary passivity and draw our attention to how we encounter the world and more particularly, to its ultimate 'ungraspability' – which I have sought to encapsulate with the words 'gap' or 'slippage'.

In undertaking this project I have drawn extensively on the works of French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose writings ranged across a number of subjects including the arts. Late in his career, he was to develop an ontology which sought to ground a sense of identity between ourselves and the world in an element, which he nominated as 'flesh'. Of particular interest to my research is that his writings acknowledge the presence of an invisible layer caught up between the layers of flesh, which he signals as the chiasm – our blind spot. This invisibility has become a reference point in my work and has been the stepping-stone for a deeper understanding of the aesthetic moment.

My paper will begin where my Honours project ended – with a consideration of how aesthetic theory has traditionally dealt with "absent presence" through theories of the sublime. Merleau-Ponty's writing will be introduced with a view to complementing these theories by providing a context to the broad generality of the 'unrepresentable', which these theories typically draw on but do not make explicit. The paper will proceed to consider how art engages with absent presence through its handling of space, time and memory.

2. The Sublime

[The question of the nondemonstrable] is, to me, the only one worthy of life's high stakes, and of the world of thought in the coming century.¹ (Jean-Francois Lyotard)

The spirit of the times is surely not that of the merely pleasant: its mission remains that of the immanent sublime, that of alluding to the nondemonstrable² (Jean-Francois Lyotard)

Although its lineage can be traced back to the writings of the philosophers, Burke and Kant in the 1700s, the notion of the sublime continues as a persistent theme in certain facets of art practice today. In his paper, The Sublime and the Avant-Garde, in 1989³, the contemporary French philosopher, Jean-Francois Lyotard, traced an ongoing correlation between the notion of the sublime and the role of the avant-garde in the development of twentieth century art practice. He went on to argue that the exploration of the sublime was integral to innovation in art practice, and remained the fundamental task of the avant-gardist.

What has become clear throughout my reading is that the notion of the sublime is one which has undergone numerous permutations, not all of which necessarily have the same relevance to my project. The theories of Burke and Kant were not specifically directed to art, and in any event, their focus on terror, vastness or immense power has minor relevance to the more intimate, subtle spaces, which I intend to explore here.

The writings of Hegel seem to offer more promise with their emphasis on the discovery of the sublime in process rather than end result, and Lyotard offers an interesting point of departure in terms of positioning the sublime in temporal dislocation. My intention is to explore these theories further with a view to determining what they can offer with regard to a further understanding of 'absent presence'.

Hegel: The Sublime as the Process of Representing the Unrepresentable

My first encounter with Hegel's writing brought both a sense of relief and consolation – for here was the notion that the sublime could be located in the enticing futility of attempting the impossible – representing the unrepresentable. This was some kind of salve to the sense of frustration and longing with which I encounter works of art, which

I would describe as 'sublime'. Likewise, the frustration, which I encounter with the completion of each of my works.

Hegel's theory is a development of Kant's. For Kant, the sublime is a function of the mind. An object overwhelms our perceptual and imaginative capacities to the extent that we cannot conceive of its totality (this causes us pain), but the fact that we can conceptually apprehend the idea of an infinite vastness or power and our insignificance in relation to it, emphasizes our cognitive powers (this gives us pleasure). To some extent, this restricted Kant's theory of the sublime to our experiences of nature. Hegel's interpretation of the sublime, on the other hand, places more emphasis on the object and thereby enabled the extension of Kant's theory to art.

Hegel emphasized that the object which precipitates the sublime experience must remain inadequately presented to consciousness in order that inadequacy can be represented.⁴ As soon as the experience of the sublime is linked with a specific object, this precludes the object from evoking an experience of the inadequacy of our sensuous or rational faculties – and thereby short-circuits the experience of the sublime.

For Hegel, the sublime experience involves two steps: the first is an attempt to express; the second, this attempt to express encounters something which is devoid of shape. These two moments are incompatible – and herein lies the sublime experience:

The sublime in general is the attempt to express the infinite, without finding in the sphere of phenomena an object which proves adequate for this representation. Precisely because the infinite is set apart from the entire complex of objectivity as explicitly as an invisible meaning devoid of shape and is made inner, it remains, in accordance with its infinity, unutterable and sublime above an expression through the infinite.⁵

A Caspar David Friedrich painting is not sublime from this Hegelian perspective. All it can do is represent a situation in nature that might inspire a sublime experience if we were there. It is not the kind of art which, *per se*, evokes a sublime experience because as an object it does not remain inadequately presented to us. Its content and meaning are specific. There is nothing about it which we cannot sensuously or conceptually grasp.

By contrast a Mark Rothko canvas, could be said to embody the Hegelian sublime. A Rothko painting invites the viewer to scour its depths. As I contemplate the clouds of light and colour I become ensconced in the work's parts and lose sight of its whole. I find myself penetrating deeper into layers of uncertainty. Rothko's canvasses confound rather than clarify. And it is this "failure" which is what makes my experience of certain Rothko

paintings 'sublime'. It is Hegel's sublime - a process flawed from the start because while the canvas tantalizes me with the prospect of the unrepresentable, I know that inherently neither the artwork nor my own faculties can grasp it.

Lyotard: The Sublime of the "Now"

Lyotard outlines an alternative approach to the aesthetic sublime, which nonetheless is consistent with this view of art as an impetus for frustration and longing.

Lyotard begins his investigation with the titles of some of Barnett Newman's paintings: *Here, Not Over There, Now* and *Be*. He argues that the sublime moment resides in the here and now – and that Newman's paintings evoke the sublime in confronting us with the very here-ness and now-ness of the canvas. "Here and now there is this painting, rather than nothing, and that's what is sublime".⁶

This 'now' is not a moment in time. It questions the time-sequence itself. In our day-to-day life we are conditioned to always think in terms of the future; in the prospect that this thing or event will be followed by another. Lyotard argues (drawing on Burke's theory of the sublime) that there is a certain terror in the threat that nothing will happen. It is in the question : 'Is this happening?' that the inexpressible resides. In Lyotard's view it is the role of art to undo this presumption of the mind with respect to time⁷.

I am intrigued by this notion though I believe that Lyotard does not make enough of his initial reference to space, and focuses too narrowly only on time. The two are inextricably linked. He does not adequately explain whether we are also threatened by the prospect of non-space? What of a hiatus not only in time but in the depth it occupies?

A second observation I would make is that Lyotard's writing implies that the threat which inspires the sublime feeling is the threat of nothing - that nothing will happen - "the sublime feeling is the name of this privation".⁸ It is absence. Whereas, as I will detail at greater length in this paper, I view the sublime experience as making contact with a presence. The initial confrontation with the possibility of nothing is followed by a conviction that there is indeed something which we label as 'nothing' simply because it lies beyond comprehension. And the delight resides in the realization of the fact that there is this something, which lies beyond our comprehension.

The Sublime as Point of Departure

So what does the notion of the sublime offer to my own research? It offers a point of departure by seeking to isolate and describe the feeling which is evoked in attempting the representation of the unrepresentable in art. It locates this feeling in numerous guises – terror, frustration, desire, delight. It points to various strategies for invoking the sublime experience in my own practice. Lyotard, in particular, offers an important insight into how the sublime feeling can be evoked by an art work through a rift in our conventional apprehension of space and time – a proposition which will become central to this paper.

But there is a real sense of disconnectedness in all this. Beyond confirming that the sublime feeling does exist, and how it is manifested, these theories offer no substantive understanding of the broader context from which it emerges. Their focus is on the viewing subject – on our subjective response to the phenomenon. They provide no insight into the source of that response – the absent presence which instigates this response in us. In a sense, they detach us from the broader context or texture within which the sublime feeling is interwoven. It is at this point that I propose to turn to Merleau-Ponty – not for an alternative to these theories, but as offering the potential for amplifying their import.

3. Merleau-Ponty: Providing a Context

We are nothing but a view of the world⁹
(Maurice Merleau-Ponty)

We are the world that thinks itself¹⁰
(Maurice Merleau-Ponty)

What Merleau-Ponty offers is another possible way for understanding the world, and our interaction with it. It is an ontology – a search for the logos or meaning of things – which personally strikes a chord because it dovetails so meaningfully into my own perception of the world and the means by which this manifests itself in my work. Merleau-Ponty gives shape to the slippages we experience in seeking to understand why and how everything is. What places his writings apart in many respects, is that his philosophy is one of positivity rather than negativity – there is no abyss or nothingness residing in the space revealed by these slippages – no transcendental; no absolute; no spiritual ether. It is brimming with the stuff of reality – the heterogeneous flesh of the world – of such depth that we cannot fathom it. Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is first and foremost grounded in the world. The immaterial has its fundamental grounding in the material.

In this chapter I propose to outline a few of the principal tenets of Merleau-Ponty's writing insofar as they are relevant to my research. My intention is to illustrate and expand on these as I proceed through subsequent chapters, with reference to my own work and that of others. However, it may be worthwhile to begin with a very broad sketch of the development of this writer's thought over the course of his career.

Merleau-Ponty is primarily known as a phenomenologist. In other words, he was concerned with the study of how we experience the world. This is most evident in his early writings, which dealt at length with the workings of perception. It was this which originally attracted me to his work, as his seminal text, Phenomenology of Perception¹¹, dealt extensively with sense experience and space – both of which were becoming central issues in my practice. As I delved further into Merleau-Ponty's writing, it became clear that his thought had developed along much more subtle and complex lines in his later years, culminating in the writing of a quite radical, but incomplete, ontology which was intended as a chapter of his (posthumously) published text, The Visible and

the Invisible.¹² The chapter in question was entitled, “The Intertwining – The Chiasm” and Merleau-Ponty regarded it as his attempt to find “the solution of the problem of the relations between the soul and the body”.¹³ This text, together with his last published essay, “Eye and Mind”¹⁴, present a formulation of our place in the world which seeks to do away with dualist notions of subject-object to discover a single unifying thread which subtends both – a thread which Merleau-Ponty describes as “flesh”. Ripples in this flesh characterize nuances and disruptions in our perception of the world.

There are a few central notions in Merleau-Ponty’s writings, which I intend to explore in this paper. I will deal with each of these separately below.

Embodied Perception

The central theme of all Merleau-Ponty’s writing is the primacy of embodiment. Our knowledge of the world is founded on the body’s relating and habituating itself to things – looking at them, touching them, handling them etc.

Our bodies enable us to perceive the world. This cannot simply be described in terms of a process of collecting sense-data. Perception is an encounter with meanings. As Paul Crowther has succinctly put it:

We find in perception not atoms of sensation or pure sense data, but nodes of ‘meaning’ which emerge as a foreground (through their proximity to the body and its interests), against the background depth of the whole perceptual field.¹⁵

Merleau-Ponty gives a description of the process of perception in terms of our glance at, say, a red dress. He describes how we understand this red in terms of how it ties up to other reds we have encountered – the tiles of roof-tops, the clay soils of a certain district; the garments of professors and bishops; the insignia of a Revolution.¹⁶ An object therefore takes on texture against an invisible background constituted by its relation to other things in the perceptual field, and our past encounters with these things.

Flesh

Flesh is a central concept in Merleau-Ponty’s later writing, and is pivotal to the discussion I want to explore in this paper. It represents the single unifying thread which draws together ourselves and the world.

When Merleau-Ponty speaks of ‘flesh’ he is referring not simply to the flesh of our bodies,

although that would be a sub-set of it. Nonetheless, the use of the word 'flesh' cannot simply be taken as a coincidence given the central role which he ascribes to the body in his earlier writing. I would argue that he sees flesh as constituting the fabric of our body and as, in his view, our body and the world are an extension of one another, flesh can also be said to be the appropriate term for describing what constitutes the fabric of the world.

In The Visible and the Invisible, the term used to describe flesh is the ancient Greek notion of 'element'. Convinced of the fundamental unity of being, the Greek philosophers tried to explain this unity with the help of the element. They conceived of the element as a general thing which is neither an abstract idea of our mind, nor a spatio-temporal being, but is similar to both in that it has the generality of the idea and the reality of spatio-temporal beings.

Flesh is a unifying medium which blurs the body-world boundary. Our unique position as both sensible and sentient beings enables us to access this unity – a fact which Merleau-Ponty elaborates using various examples drawn from our own experiences of touching and seeing. For example, when we touch an inanimate object, we are able to feel it – we come to know its textural qualities - because we can, in turn, be touched by it. This is a point of coincidence between ourselves and the world around us – a common 'touchability'. Merleau-Ponty regards this as just one aspect of flesh.

Similarly, he argues that we can see because we are visible. This is not as easily comprehended as touch but can perhaps be understood by way of a simple exploration of logic: were it possible to imagine ourselves suspended in a void, it would be clear that we would not be able to see anything because nothing is visible. It is a pre-requisite for seeing, therefore, that there be the visible.

Once again this establishes a sense of affinity between ourselves and the world – in this case, a common visibility – and offers further evidence for the unifying element, which Merleau-Ponty describes as flesh.

Approaching Being in this way, it becomes possible for Merleau-Ponty to argue that the notion of subject and object is redundant. "Where are we to put the limit between the body and the world, since the world is flesh?" ¹⁷ It becomes possible to speak of flesh as the element of Being:

Not a fact or a sum of facts, and yet adherent to location and to the now. Much more: the inauguration of the where and the when, the possibility and exigency for the fact; in a word, facticity, what makes the fact be a

fact. And at the same time what makes the fact have meaning, makes the fragmentary facts dispose themselves about 'something'.¹⁸

The coincidence between Merleau-Ponty's language in relation to flesh, and Lyotard's discussion of the sublime establishes an interesting connection between these seemingly disparate threads of thought. Lyotard's location of the sublime moment in the consciousness of a here and now, bears a useful correspondence to Merleau-Ponty's notion of the act of "perception" as one of flesh – 'the inauguration of the where and when' - opening up upon itself. This requires further explanation and brings us to a third central concept of Merleau-Ponty's thought – the incomplete reversibility of flesh.

Reversibility

Merleau-Ponty argues that flesh is reversible. When we see, our vision opens itself up to the general visibility to which we belong. Similarly, when we touch we open ourselves up to the tangible. "There is a reciprocal insertion and intertwining of one in the other".¹⁹ This is the act of perception – a process whereby flesh folds over upon itself. Moreover, and pertinently for this paper, Merleau-Ponty argues that this reversibility is always incomplete - it is always imminent and never realized in fact.²⁰

Once again he turns to the example of touch, and considers the case of one hand touching another. Although it is true that my left hand can touch my right, and that I can reverse the relation, as I do so I experience a breach in the hold that one hand has over the other. Touching and being touched cannot coincide. There is an 'incessant escaping'.²¹

This incompleteness – the hiatus or gap in our perception – is the chiasm. Our blind spot. Reversibility can never be perfect because the final unity of the body will always be hidden from me. The final hinge of everything eludes observation, because we are only a part of it.

Is it possible that what some describe as the sublime moment is actually an encounter with this chiasm? Is the artist who invokes the sublime in fact addressing the incomplete reversibility of flesh? And if so, can Merleau-Ponty's ontology provide any further understanding of this gap?

The Invisible

Although not made explicit in Merleau-Ponty's text, I would argue that this gap – the chiasm - is where the depth of the 'invisible' resides. Merleau-Ponty is at pains to emphasise that the incomplete reversibility of flesh is not a failure. It does not betoken

a void or non-being – “it is spanned by the total being of my body, and by that of the world”.²² Although invisible, it is grounded in and undetachable from the visible.

The form he gives to the invisible is that of the ‘idea’, although this can take many forms ranging from concrete to abstract. What might be loosely termed the ‘artistic’ idea²³, is naturally what interests me most. Merleau-Ponty borrows from a Proust novel, Swann’s Way, to illustrate his point.²⁴ Swann is captivated by a short melody in which he discerns the essence of love. Swann tries to analyse this melody – it consists of five notes, only slightly different; and the melody is concentrated on two of them. However, this analysis does not bring real clarity “while he is thinking of these signs and this sense, he no longer has the ‘little phrase’ itself”.²⁵ The essence of the musical phrase – the idea that underlies it – can only be discovered on hearing it played as a whole.

In Merleau-Ponty’s ontology, the idea (or thought) represents the invisible lining of flesh, and cannot be separated from it. This connection is one of degree, with artistic ideas bearing a particularly close relationship to the visible, the touchable, the hearable etc – in the sense that without these ‘carnal’ presences, such ideas would simply be inaccessible to us. However, although we come *into contact* with the idea when we encounter a musical phrase or a visual work of art, the depth of the idea is such that it can never be completely *present* to us – like feeling the presence of someone in the dark:²⁶

...each time we want to get at it immediately, or lay hands on it, or circumscribe it, or see it unveiled, we do in fact feel that the attempt is misconceived, that it retreats in the measure that we approach.²⁷

This is the invisible lining of the “little [musical] phrase” which haunts the protagonist, Swann, in Proust’s novel, Swann’s Way. It is not a void or abyss, but rather a hollow or, to paraphrase his text, an absent presence.²⁸

Where To From Here?

Swann’s project was misconceived from the start. Hegel warned of the impossibility of attempting to represent the unrepresentable. Merleau-Ponty tells us why – the invisible lies at the chiasm – our blind spot. As a part we cannot hope to access the whole. This would require that we be god – that we have an overarching view from all perspectives – rather than live enmeshed within it.

I won’t repeat Swann’s error. I have no hope of capturing the invisible essence of a work of art. Rather my task throughout the remainder of this paper will be to explore the measures by which an artistic work can trigger a contact with the invisible lining of the

visible. The spatio-temporal disruption, which Lyotard identifies as a pre-condition for the sublime moment, presents a useful starting point.

Adopting a Merleau-Pontian perspective, it might be argued that by disrupting our conventional sense of space and time, some works of art can create ripples in our ordinary interaction with the world. This can bring to our attention perception itself, which we tacitly and unmeditatively undertake at every moment. When this happens, we fleetingly touch upon but cannot grasp the absent presence, which lines our visible, material world. Merleau-Ponty is fond of a botanical allegory to describe this process – ‘dehiscence’ – the sudden, violent bursting open of a seed pod.

We will begin with space...

4. Space

Something about space evades our attempts to survey it from above.²⁹ (Maurice Merleau-Ponty)

Space cannot simply be considered an ether in which all things float.³⁰ I cannot stand outside of it and observe its exterior envelope. Rather, I am inescapably immersed in it and live it from the inside. For Merleau-Ponty, space was synonymous with depth; and depth was the structure of flesh. It logically followed that flesh and space were intertwined. If I follow this line of thought, then perhaps it becomes possible to argue that ruptures in our preconceived understanding of space have the potential to momentarily expose aspects of flesh, which ordinarily remain hidden.

Certainly, as I hope to show later in this paper, this is what the work of some artists, such as James Turrell seeks to achieve. Commenting on one of his works, *Twilight Arch*, he noted:

What at first seemed quite flat, the rectangle, now becomes an enigmatic fog that is precise in its forward edges but apparently infinite in the depth of the space beyond the aperture...it's very important to me that you see it one way first, and then it reveals itself as something else. Then you go back and see that initial way again. Seeing yourself see.³¹

The process described by Turrell captures the dehiscence detailed in Merleau-Ponty's writings – the fleeting rupture in perception, which briefly sets us in contact with the invisible lining of the visible.

In this chapter, I propose to review the work of Turrell and artists like him with a view to understanding how their handling of space can serve as a point of access to the hiatus or gap in our perception. It will also be an opportunity to consider my own work from this perspective. But first, a definitional excursion into the nature of this thing – space.

Space, Depth and Embodiment

As John Cage once insisted: "There is no such thing as silence. Something is always happening that makes a sound".³² Even in a soundless chamber, Cage was intrigued that he still heard two things: his heart and the coursing of blood through his head. In much

the same way, I would argue that there is no such thing as empty space. It is thick with our bodily associations. And for this reason, it can be said to have depth of metaphorical and metaphysical proportions.

A traditional view of depth labels it the third dimension. Tacitly it is equated with breadth seen from the side. But this presupposes that as a spectator, I can see it from all sides – that I am omnipresent. Whereas, in our real encounters with the world, I cannot be removed from any reckoning of depth. For this reason, Merleau-Ponty described depth as the most existential of all dimensions. It is not impressed upon objects themselves, but quite clearly belongs to perspective. Whilst breadth could pass for a relationship between things in which the perceiving subject is not implied, depth announces a certain indissoluble link between things and myself by which I am placed in front of them.³³

Another way of expressing this is that depth represents our ‘hold’ on things. Depth makes something seen or heard coexist with other sights and sounds by allowing some to be concealed as background. Objects in the foreground will, depending on their particular resonance for me at any point in time, either remain prominent or slip and allow others to assume my attention. Depth allows a constant shifting, eclipsing and reassembling of the perceptual field. It sets up a tension between presence and absence. When we experience depth, we experience something appearing or unfolding from behind something else.

The interplay of perceiver and perceived through this notion of depth is given more explicit form in the notion of flesh. There is a proximity between myself and the world in the unity of flesh, but the incomplete reversibility of flesh, maintains a distance, thickness or depth between the perceiver and the perceived. There is a simultaneity of depth and proximity. I believe that Merleau-Ponty’s suggestion is that only when we become aware of ourselves in the act of perceiving – as two dimensional beings, both sensible and sentient – only then are we able to access this sense of proximate-distance:

What we call a visible is, we said, a quality pregnant with a texture, the surface of a depth, a cross section upon a massive being, a grain or corpuscle borne by a wave of Being. Since the total visible is always behind, or after, or between the aspects we see of it, there is access to it only through an experience which, like it, is wholly outside of itself.³⁴

The notion of accessing a particular experience of space, which is both proximate and distant, also features in the writings of two other phenomenologists, Eugene Minkowski and Gaston Bachelard.

Minkowski contrasts two ways of living space: the distance of a visually ‘clear’ or

indifferent space (an analytic space) versus the 'lived obscurity' of dark space. He contends that there is no distance in dark space, which separates me from an object. Nonetheless, it has something spatial about it – it has depth. Not the depth that is added to length and height, but a unique dimension which "is like an opaque and unlimited sphere wherein all the radii are the same, all having the same character of depth. And this depth remains black and mysterious."³⁵ Sue Cataldi, commenting on Minkowski's view of space, writes that in clear space we grasp, in dark space we grope.³⁶ We live dark space whenever we experience ourselves as disoriented, trying to find or recover our bearings. Minkowski equates the phenomenon to feeling as if in the presence of the unknown.

Bachelard, on the other hand, raises the notion of 'intimate immensity' – a state whereby we yield to an inner state, which transports us outside the immediate world to an inner world that bears the mark of infinity:

We do not see it start, and yet it always starts the same way, that is, it flees the object nearby and right away it is far off, elsewhere, in the space of elsewhere.³⁷

This elsewhere, this immensity, he described as a feeling that there is something else to be expressed besides what is offered for objective expression. He describes it as a 'hidden depth'.³⁸ And our access to it was, Bachelard believed, proportional to the deepening of intimacy with objects or events through the 'material imagination' – an imagination that looks to the very substance of things.

Bachelard was interested in poetic imagery, and it is interesting to note that he chooses to illustrate intimate immensity through the descriptions of dislocations in space experienced by various writers.³⁹ Suffice to say, at this juncture, that Bachelard, like Minkowski and Merleau-Ponty discerned a hidden depth in the proximate, visible world, which could be approached, though never plumbed when our usual sensibilities become disoriented.

I want to now proceed by considering how the work of various artists can provide a similar scenario for such experiences.

James Turrell

I am sitting here alone, on a long wooden bench that runs around the edge of the room. I am looking at the ceiling, but the ceiling is not there. There is a hole in it, a rectangular aperture that is completely open to the sky...

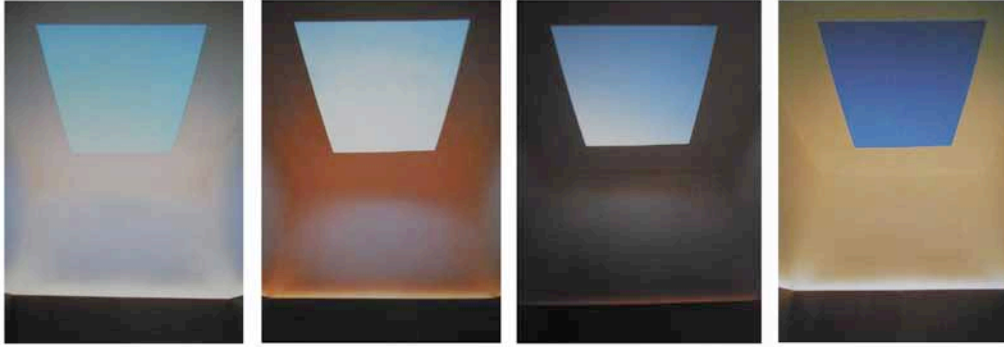


Plate 1: James Turrell, *Air Mass*
Installed at the Hayward Gallery, London

The sky is not 'out there', but actually in the ceiling. I can 'see' it and, if I could, I could reach up and 'touch' it. It hovers above me but somehow looks two-dimensional, a picture plane suspended....this is neither a distortion, nor is it a mere 'impression'; it has a physical presence. It has solidity. I am aware of an imperceptible change in its colour. Time seems to be running slow...

What am I actually looking at – the sky, or my own seeing?...

There is no division, no 'either/or'; there is only 'both' [inside and outside]. It is as if I am being suddenly shown how to look at the sky...

Its colour is so intense; I have never seen it so blue. I can touch it, not with my hands, but with my eyes. This is a drama of intimacy.

I look around the enclosed space and notice that it is now occupied, but I hadn't noticed anyone enter. I go outside, into a clear starry night. That blue is still with me, and I have a feeling it will never go away. For a moment in time, I feel I have learnt how to touch the sky.⁴⁰

This is how Richard Bright describes his experience of Turrell's installation, *Air Mass*, 1993 – an inspired take on the experience described by Bachelard as 'intimate immensity'. Our encounter with the sky is usually an impersonal one – it is a vastness well beyond our

reach. For Bright, the wonder he feels in encountering Turrell's work lies in the inversion of this relationship. Suddenly, the sky seems so close – the experience of it so personal – that he is tempted to touch it, and momentarily believes that he alone is witness to this special encounter. There is a communion between himself and the world around him, and he carries away a part of that outside reality – the intense blue of the sky – as a permanent mark on his inner being. Has Bright experienced an encounter with flesh? Has he, in Merleau-Ponty's words, recognized the correspondence between "the [world's] inside and my outside, between my inside and its outside"⁴¹?

This is an experience, which Turrell has quite deliberately engineered. In framing a section of the sky, Turrell forces us to focus our usually impatient, wandering vision and ask ourselves what it is that we are really looking at. We become aware of ourselves seeing, and in so doing come face to face with visibility, sensibility itself. I wonder, if apart from the one-ness Bright may have sensed with the night sky, he also felt a certain thickness between himself and the vastness of it. An inevitable sense that it will always remain temptingly out of reach?

Certainly, this was the overwhelming emotion that I felt in my own first experience of a Turrell installation. A sadness coupled with a strange sense of comfort. The work, at the *Space Odyssey* exhibition at the Art Gallery of NSW in 2001, was part of Turrell's series of *Space Division Constructions*.

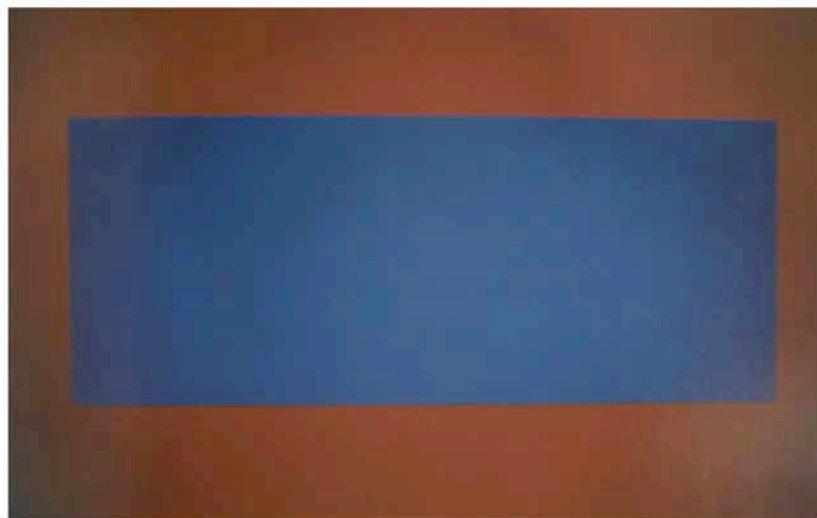


Plate 2: James Turrell
Arcus (1989), Space Division Construction
installed at Michael Hue-Williams Fine Art, London

The work was entered via a light-trapping hallway, which emerged into an apparently blackened room. Once inside it took a few minutes for my eyes to become adjusted to the surroundings, although it slowly became clear that the wall in front of me was suffused with an enigmatic light. Gradually, as my sight began to focus, I noticed that

the light was actually concentrated in a distinct rectangle. However, as soon as I thought I had the measure of it, this rectangle of light appeared to sink back into the wall, and there was a sudden suggestion of an infinite space extending behind the wall's surface, although logically I knew this could not be the case.

Although most commentary on Turrell's work focuses on his deft manipulation of light, what I find even more intriguing is its handling of depth. Light is simply the medium by which depth is made evident to us. Turrell focuses our attention on the engaging/disengaging oscillation between ground and horizon, which is our experience of depth. Once again, we see ourselves seeing. In so doing, he suggests that there is more to see than what we initially see – an invisible layer to the visible of our day to day encounters with the world. The sadness lies in the distance between myself and this invisible under layer. The comfort, paradoxically, in its proximity. That there is in fact more to be known, and that the adventure of searching for it will go on. Interestingly, the pleasure/pain paradox of the sublime experience is elegantly framed in this work.

Tadao Ando

Tadao Ando's buildings seek, much in the style of traditional Japanese architecture, to incorporate the interconnectedness between ourselves and the world:

Man is not a dualistic being in whom spirit and flesh are essentially distinct, but a living, corporeal being active in the world...the world that appears to man's senses and the state of man's body [are] interdependent...The body articulates the world. At the same time the body is articulated by the world.⁴²

The work I would like to consider in this context is Ando's *Water Temple*, 1991 located in Awajishima in Japan. The Buddhist temple is located on a hill on an island with a sweeping view of Osaka Bay. The temple hall is below ground, beneath a large oval pond filled with lotus

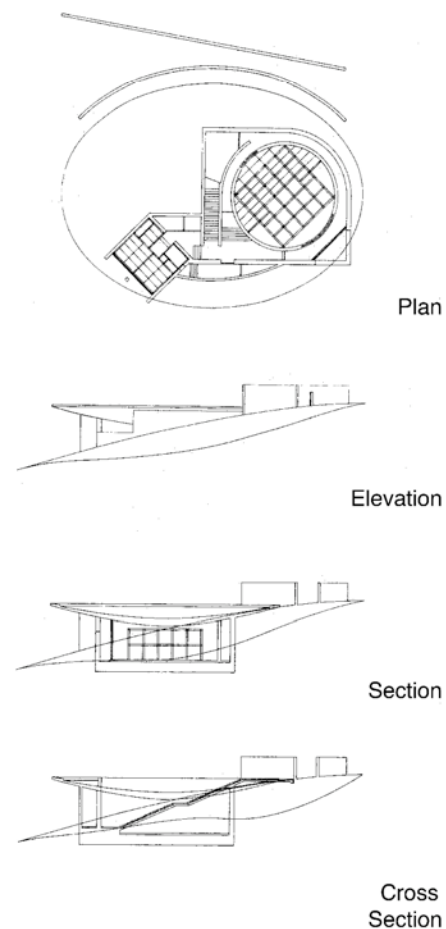


Plate 3: Tadao Ando, *Water Temple*, 1991



Plate 4: Tadao Ando, *Water Temple*
Exterior View, Awaji-Shima, Japan

plants. The deep red of the lotus flowers is echoed in the interior of the hall, which has been stained vermilion red.

There are several aspects of this architecture that I find interesting. The temple itself is not visible. It lies hidden below a pool of water, which in turn is contained by a concrete retaining wall. This is surrounded by a pebble expanse, within a curved concrete wall. The whole structure is embedded within a grassy hill. In other words, there is a succession of enclosing spaces, which alternate between the man-made and the natural as if to emphasise their intertwining.



Plate 5: Tadao Ando, *Water Temple*, Interior View

My impression of the way it has been constructed is that the temple and its grounds cannot be viewed in their entirety. The space can only be experienced by moving through it and then only partially at any one vantage point. I understand that this is a consistent feature of Japanese architecture. In Japanese, the word for space, 'ma' suggests interval; and Japanese buildings are traditionally designed in what Westerners consider a meandering fashion, for the purpose of allowing the occupants to discover the space for themselves, in parts rather than as a whole.⁴³ This is akin to the constant shifting, eclipsing and reassembling of the perceptual field, which Merleau-Ponty characterizes as our experience of depth. Like Turrell's light works, I see this architecture as providing the viewer with a context for understanding how space is sensed. In this process, inside/outside boundaries dissolve, both literally and metaphorically.

A final feature of this building, which I would like to address, is its quiet incompleteness, abruptness and imperfection. Features such as the free-standing curved wall with no apparent function; the slicing in half of the perfect circular pond by a descending staircase; and the minor imperfections in the otherwise monochrome smoothness of the concrete walls. Again, I understand that incompleteness and irregularity are traits highly

prized in Japanese culture. They are expressed in the notion of 'shibui', which apparently has no direct translation, but is said to carry us to the interior of nature and opens us up to the heightened perceptions of total consciousness of the rightness of a thing.⁴⁴ The unfinished statement leaves a space for one's own imagination. *Shibui* thereby draws the perceiver into its depths where sensation inundates him.⁴⁵

I enjoy the parallel between this notion and Merleau-Ponty's incomplete reversibility of flesh. Imperfection and incompleteness defy the inherent trajectory of human action – which is to complete and perfect. By definition, they lie outside our control. Random but persistent. An invisible lining which is not detachable, and indeed whose existence is only possible, by virtue of its attachment to the visible/the sensible/the material. Like the essence of Swann's little musical phrase, this invisible under layer coexists with the material world, but incessantly escapes our grasp.

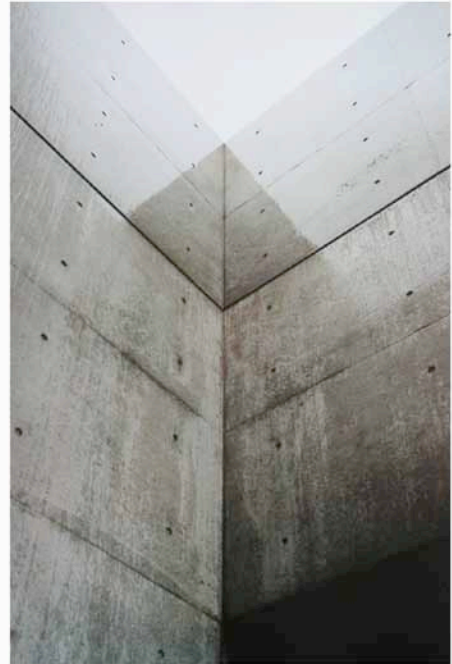


Plate 6: Tadao Ando, *Water Temple*, detail

Anne Juddell

I was fortunate to attend a retrospective of the work of Australian artist, Anne Juddell, early in 2002. Two works from the exhibition, which specifically drew my attention, were *The Singing 31*, 1999-2000 and *Mute III*, 2000, both of which I found particularly relevant to some of the themes I have elaborated here.

There is no explicit form in *The Singing*. The space is entirely filled by a textured interweaving of light and shadow. The impression is one of a complex folding and layering – although it



Plate 7: Anne Juddell
The Singing 31, 1999-2000
pencil, charcoal and wax on paper
104.5 x 84.5 cm

is tempting to draw allusions to folded fabric in fact there is nothing in my experience, which accounts for it. The layering seems to recede into a space the existence of which I sense but which I cannot touch or see. It is a space just beyond my grasp. The impression I have on viewing this work is one of being enfolded; of feeling myself interwoven into a complex, embroidered texture.

One commentator, Jacques Delaruelle writes that Juddell “shows herself less concerned with the objective existence of things, than the manner in which they become manifest”.⁴⁶ Perhaps *Singing 31* imparts a sense of the flesh that permeates all things. Indeed, Delaruelle seems to draw the same conclusion when he notes that Juddell’s work reaffirms our being-at-one with the world. As I am drawn into the work, Merleau-Ponty’s description of flesh holds a particular resonance:

...not to see in the outside, as the others see it, the contour of a body one inhabits, but especially to be seen from the outside, to exist within it, to emigrate into it, to be seduced, captivated, alienated by the phantom, so that the seer and the visible reciprocate one another and we no longer know which sees and which is seen.⁴⁷

Mute III, by contrast to *The Singing*, is dominated by a single form suspended in a void. The folding and layering is present but more subtle and contained in this instance. The form exists primarily as a source of light within the work and its lower edges dissolve imperceptibly into blackness. The form may be interpreted

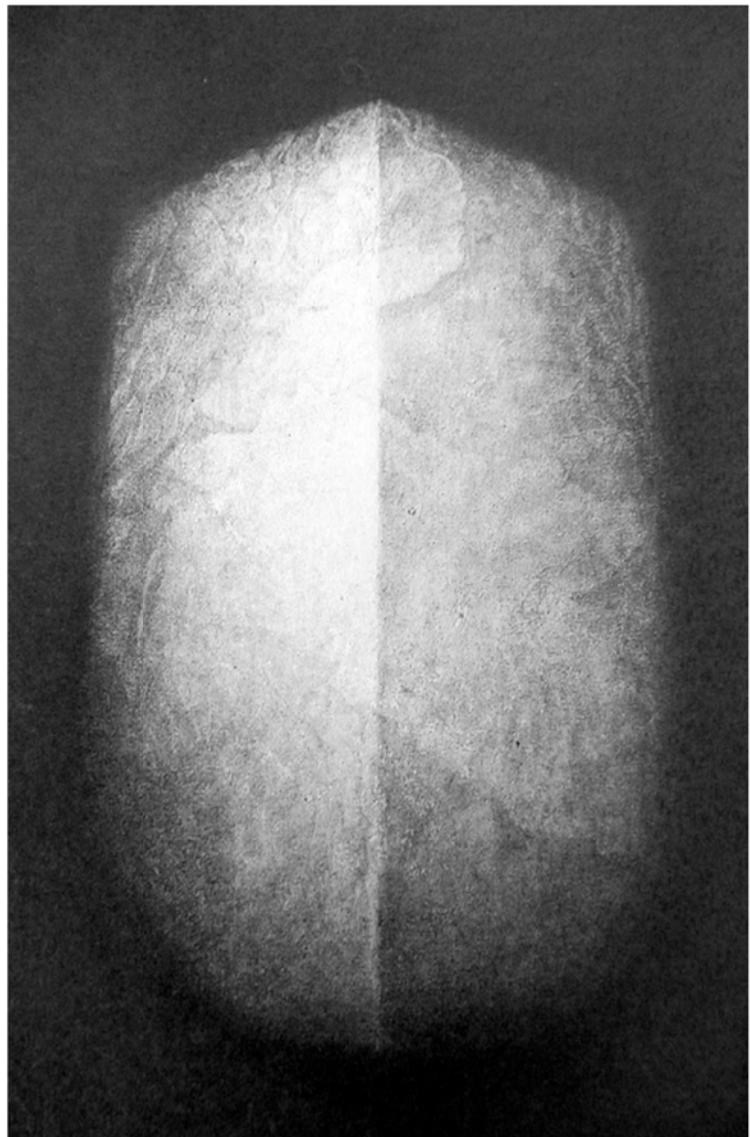


Plate 8: Anne Juddell
Mute III, 2000
charcoal, pastel and pencil on paper
117.5 x 94 cm

as a face, although again there is nothing explicit to confirm this supposition. What I *do* perceive is a sense of weight coupled with weightlessness; a sense of something both emerging and receding into a depth, the outer edges of which I am unable to grasp.

In both works, the space suggested by the canvas serves to displace our sense of spatial coherence. We are thrust into Minkowski's 'dark space' and are forced into recovering our bearings. In doing so, it draws attention to perception itself. If perception is to be understood in terms of a reversibility - as flesh folding upon flesh - then it might be argued that the hollow or cavity caught up between the folds represents the 'incessant escaping' or gap in reversibility that Merleau-Ponty wrote of. It is perhaps this gap that has its non-verbal expression in the impenetrable spaces of Juddell's drawings.

Christopher Wilmarth

Few artists are able to evoke such power in their work with so few means as New York artist, Christopher Wilmarth. The intense beauty of his work lies not in the manipulation of his materials - he was passionate about retaining the integrity of the glass and steel, which he employed in his work - but rather in their placement and juxtaposition.

Nine Clearings for a Standing Man #8 from 1973 is a good example. This work comprises a sheet of steel and a sheet of etched glass placed against a wall, meeting at their bottom lateral edge, but slightly apart at the top. The gradual inclination of the light absorbing blackened steel away from the light emitting etched glass,

results in a smooth gradation of light in and around the structure. The work is transparent in the sense that it reveals itself entirely to the viewer - there is no deception - it is simply



Plate 9: Christopher Wilmarth
Nine Clearings for a Standing Man, 1973
Etched Glass, steel and steel cable
203.2 x 152.4 x 8.9 cm

a sheet of glass on a sheet of metal. These are cold, hard industrial materials which we pass each day on construction sites. Yet, in their placement, they evoke the illusion of an impenetrable depth behind their visible surfaces.

How is it possible that I could notionally walk to the side of these most tangible of works - and see quite clearly that there is nothing there but a sheet of glass and a sheet of steel - and yet stand before them enthralled by a seemingly infinite space beyond? Perhaps more eloquently than any of the other works I have reviewed, this installation draws our attention to the interconnectedness of the visible and invisible. Wilmarth had an intimate understanding of the materials he employed, which permitted him to use their particular qualities in the most tangible of expressions. This is the power of the 'material imagination', which Bachelard spoke of, used here to suggest a layer of intangibility or immateriality.



Plate 10: Christopher Wilmarth
New Ninth. 1978
Etched glass, steel and steel cable
101.6 x 81.3 x 15.2 cm

New Ninth of 1978 has a similar impact. In this case, the metal is bent along its upper edge, and some of the material has been removed altogether in the middle of the work. As a result there is a suggestion of possibly a face? We can't tell. There is some kind of opening in the blackness. However, the single strand of steel cable reminds us emphatically that the work is 'here' - it draws us back from the depth, the opening or gap, we would otherwise be tempted to let our thoughts stray into. Like the positivity implied in Merleau-Ponty's writing, Wilmarth's work reminds us of the fact that the world is stuffed with flesh. There is no

void or abyss subtending our experience of the visible world. The invisible - which is simply not visible - nonetheless has real substance. When we experience it, it is simply as a fold or hollow where the visible of the flesh doubles up over itself.

My Own Work

As Christopher Wilmarth's work eloquently shows, glass is an exquisite medium for exploring the dichotomy of absence and presence; visible and invisible. What is singular to glass (amongst a select group of materials):

...is that the line between inside and outside is more than a barrier: it is the transition point between the public and private worlds of an object and it serves both to increase our awareness of these worlds and to heighten the tension between them.⁴⁸

My own work seeks to incorporate the metaphorical possibilities associated with the transparency of the material, but also explores the added dimension of depth by employing the refractive qualities of lead crystal coupled with negative spaces in the form. These qualities enable light to be engaged, almost as a second medium in the work. In the play of light and shadow through different thicknesses of glass, there is an oscillation, shifting, engaging, disengaging which is our experience of depth. Determinate becomes indeterminate becomes determinate again depending on the position the viewer takes before the work.

Lull (see Plate 11), a work in clear lead crystal is one example that brings this effect into play. The pebbles that are apparent when the work is observed from the front are an illusion. They merely exist as a negative relief in the rear of the glass. Yet when light strikes the work from a particular direction, these pebbles appear to have as much depth and substance as any other object we might touch.

I intended the work to be quiet – a call to pause and contemplate - much as I often find myself doing when I have the opportunity to stare into the pebble bed lying under a body of gently flowing water. In this momentary lull, my hope is that the viewer will gradually become aware of the hollowness within the seeming substance of what they are observing. That they suddenly see themselves seeing.

Merleau-Ponty recognized the unique ability of light to make the invisible become visible in this way. He spoke of it as having its own logic and coherence; its appearance disguising unknown 'forces' and 'laws'.⁴⁹ There is a poetic interval in his paper "Eye and Mind" which has a real resonance for this work:

When through the water's thickness I see the tiled bottom of the pool, I do not see it despite the water and the reflection; I see it through them and because of them. If there were no distortions, no ripples of sunlight, if it

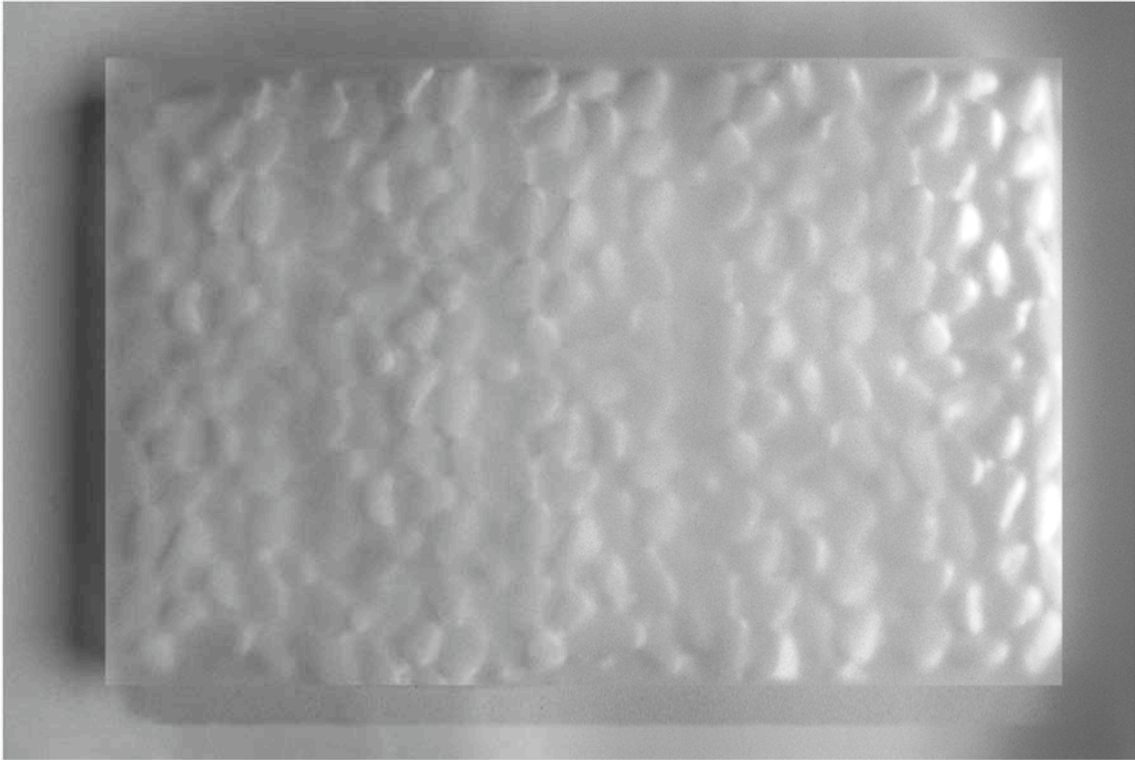


Plate 11: Daniela Turrin
Lull, 2002
Wall panel cast in glass with negative relief
34 x 51 x 3 cm

were without that flesh that I saw the geometry of the tiles, then I would cease to see it as it is and where it is – which is to say, beyond any identical, specific place. I cannot say that the water itself – the aqueous power, the syrupy and shimmering element – is in space; all this is not somewhere else either, but it is not in the pool. It inhabits it, is materialized there, yet it is not contained there; and as I lift my eyes toward the screen of cypresses where the web of reflections plays, I must recognize that the water visits it as well, or at least sends out to it its active, living essence. This inner animation, this radiation of the visible, is what the painter seeks beneath the words depth, space and colour.⁵⁰

Lull is an attempt to ‘radiate the visible’. To disrupt perception, even if only momentarily, so as to cause a viewer to question the certainty of what they see. And as a consequence, hopefully see differently. Perhaps to even catch a glimpse of the invisible lining of flesh.

Glimpse (see Panel 12), another recent work in cast glass, employs an entirely different strategy to *Lull*, but seeks to achieve the same effect. Transparency has been abandoned in this case - there is no attempt to beguile the eye with negative spaces. This work is very much “here” – it can be seen from every aspect, and is extremely tactile. Nonetheless, part of it is again hidden from view – namely, the remainder of the ‘nest’ that extends beyond the margin of the frame.



Plate 12: Daniela Turrin
Glimpse, 2002
Wall panel in glass
49 x 49 x 2 cm

This work mimics photographic strategies inasmuch as it represents a snapshot of what the viewer assumes to be a much larger object. The edge of the frame has a paradoxical status because it both separates and connects the hidden and unhidden surfaces – both divides and unites them. Like *Lull*, this work seeks to explore the co-existence of the hidden and unhidden, visible and invisible but does so more emphatically - for “to perceive the persistences of surfaces that are out of sight is also to perceive their co-existence with those that are in sight”.⁵²

A nest is an envelope, an enclosure, a place of refuge. How much more dislocated can the viewer therefore feel, having visually burrowed into its core, to discover themselves surrounded by a hidden expanse. This shouldn't be. Coupled with this, the added paradox that unlike a photograph or painting, this work confronts the viewer with a materiality that cannot 'lie'. *Glimpse* thereby attempts to leave the viewer subtly off-balance. Perhaps enough to be left wanting something more – in the knowledge that whatever this is, the work itself cannot provide it.

Drawing Together the Threads

This chapter has sought to understand the aesthetic experience in terms of a rift in our day-to-day understanding of space. To begin, a definition of space was attempted in terms of 'depth' – a shift between foreground and background; proximate and distant; absent and present. Within this context, it was argued that an event (in this case an aesthetic one) which momentarily ruptures this sense of space, has the potential to make us more acutely aware of its existence...indeed, make more palpable its incomprehensibility. Such an event thereby reinforces the sense of a gap or hiatus in our dealings with the world – the blind spot where the flesh of the world and the flesh of our bodies reverses upon itself.

The discussion drew on my own experience of works by various artists to attempt an explanation of this process. In each case, the works discussed provoke some kind of spatial dislocation. Turrell's distortion of distance; Ando's hidden enclosures; Juddell's infinite foldings; and Wilmarth's ethereal manipulation of hard materials.

Finally, I turned to my own work in glass and examined how I have sought to employ different strategies – from exploiting the transparency of glass through the use of negative spaces in *Lull*, to the abrupt framing of *Glimpse* to achieve similar spatial disorientations.

What I would now like to explore is the potential for temporal dislocations in our aesthetic encounters...

5. Time

...there would be no present, that is to say, no sensible world with its thickness and inexhaustible richness, if perception....did not retain a past in the depth of the present, and did not contract that past into that depth (Merleau-Ponty)⁵²

Time seems an inherently more ephemeral concept than space. It is an invisible, known to us only indirectly through our observation of change and movement in the space that surrounds us. Indeed, time and space are intricately bound, our experience of the world spanning not only the here/there but also the past/present/future dimension. And only in the play of one against the other, can we account for our experience of the depth of flesh. As phenomenologist, Edward S. Casey notes, temporality and spatiality cannot be held apart. They intertwine, realizing a version of the reversibility of the flesh.⁵³

Memory, in turn, is the middle ground. Without a memory of spaces that have receded, we can have no apprehension of the flow of time. Perhaps it should be viewed as another sense – as sight, touch, hearing etc, enable us to grasp the space within which we are immersed, so memory enables us to apprehend time. Indeed, it is through the auspices of memory that the past becomes an ‘absent presence’ in the ‘now’.

As with the discussion of space in the previous chapter, it is my intention here to investigate the means by which an artwork can cause a rift or tearing in our sense of temporal cohesion, and thereby expose the invisible layer of the flesh within which our experience of the world is enmeshed. But first, as with the discussion of space, it may be worthwhile to diverge from this path momentarily to discuss in some further detail, the nature of this thing – time.

Time as Co-Presence of Past and Future in the Present

A traditional view of time employed by writers ranging from Descartes through Kant and Husserl, employs the notion of time as container for events, much like space was considered as a container for things. Such a view implies an absolute present. In effect, it requires that we take a god-like stance entirely outside of time itself whereas, as Merleau-Ponty argued with respect to space, we are always and everywhere *in* time.

Following this traditional view further, time is to be regarded as a monolinear pattern of

sheer succession whereby, as Casey eloquently puts it “there is dispersal and disintegration as each instant arises and dies away – instantaneously.” In other words, *no time is left over*.⁵⁴ The moment becomes a static and certain being wrenched from ongoing temporal existence to be returned to from a vantage point outside time itself.

For writers such as Merleau-Ponty, time has no such firm foundation. The past is never a “chunk of absolutely hard indivisible being”⁵⁵. It is not static, but rather an ongoing becoming. It continuously leaks into the present and assumes changing significances. To borrow from Glen A. Mazis, commenting on Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of time, “The [only] certainty of this moment...is in the fact that the future will return to this moment to find it as it was and yet as it had never been ...”⁵⁶ Merleau-Ponty rejects the notion of time as pure succession:

This past, which remains our true present, does not leave us but remains constantly hidden behind our gaze instead of being displayed before it.⁵⁷

...past and present are *Ineinander*, each enveloping-enveloped – and that itself is the flesh.⁵⁸

This is nowhere clearer in Merleau-Ponty’s writing than in the example of the red dress cited earlier in this paper. His gaze falls upon a woman’s red dress, and in that moment, he is drawn into a vortex of past reds. His gaze draws up memories of the red clay fields of Aix-en-Provence; the red gowns of bishops; the cloaks of academia; stories of the Russian Revolution; the uniforms of soldiers; and the costumes worn by gypsies of twenty five years ago....⁵⁹ There is, in other words, a reversibility between past and present. And our experience of it lies in the interaction between ourselves and the world. Or rather, to look beyond the subject-object dualism that Merleau-Ponty sought to surpass, it is an aspect of the flesh that holds body and world together.

And yet, while we may speak of the past in terms of being co-immanent with the present, they can never coincide. Their reversibility is incomplete. Otherwise we could no longer meaningfully speak of memory. There is a slippage, and therein resides the open-endedness, the ungraspability of the present. Indeed, we can never actually grasp the present, because at the moment of realization, the ‘present’ has already slipped into the past. There is an ‘incessant escaping’. After all, this is flesh.

The ‘ungraspability’ of the present can also be accounted for by our inability to comprehend flesh in its totality. The “present” can only ever be approached as an interval, rather than as a moment:

... one knows that it is not there, that it was just there, one never coincides with it – It is not a segment of time with defined contours that would come and set itself in place. It is a cycle defined by a central and dominant region with indecisive contours...⁶⁰

It follows that there is an inherent ambiguity in the 'now'. In this sense, there is some point of coincidence between Merleau-Ponty and Lyotard. Both question the time-sequence. But for Lyotard there is the uncertainty of this now being followed by another. For Merleau-Ponty there is no certainty in the now itself. It is co-immanent with the past and the future.

For Lyotard, art's directive is to undo the presumptions of the mind with respect to time. For the most part the flow of time slips us by. That is to say, it is marginal to our consciousness – pre-reflective. I would agree with Lyotard that certain aesthetic encounters can initiate a rift or tear in the temporal fabric. And just as our presumptions regarding space can be dislocated as we observe ourselves seeing and touching the space around us, so too our presumptions regarding time can be dislocated as we observe ourselves in the process of remembering. Distinctions between past, present and future dissolve just as do those between inside and outside. The gaps and slippages in our experience of the world in either case become apparent, and the sensing of the flesh that enmeshes us is an experience of the sublime.

In the following section of this paper, I propose to present practical examples of how a work of art can serve to give us an insight into flesh through temporal dislocations. I will begin by considering the work of Anya Gallaccio.

Anya Gallaccio

Time is the medium of Gallaccio's work. Although she incorporates materials as diverse as lead, salt, ice, glass, wax, chocolate and flowers in her installations, it is the effect of time on their changing form which Gallaccio wants us to observe.

My focus here will be on two works. The first, *intensities and surfaces*, exhibited at the



Plate 13: Anya Gallaccio
intensities and surfaces, 1996
32 tons of ice and half ton boulder of rock salt
3 x 3 x 4 m
The boiler room, Wapping Pump Station, London, 1996

derelict Wapping Hydraulic Pumping Station in 1996, was constructed by stacking 250 lb. blocks of ice, which were allowed to melt over a three-month period. Gallaccio buried rock salt in the center of the construction, which caused it to erode in unpredictable ways. A steaming process had also been applied to the ice, so that as it melted some slabs were

translucent, obscuring the core but radiating an inner light, whilst others were perfectly clear, momentarily catching the viewer's reflection and yet permitting a glimpse of the inner core.⁶¹

The second work, *Two sisters* of 1998, is a 60 ton column of chalk bound with plaster installed in the Minerva Basin in Hull, England. Much of the land around Hull had been reclaimed from the water. This installation operates in reverse to this reclamation, in the sense that the structure was intended to be manipulated by the tidal flow, which would continually modify its shape – revealing, concealing, dissolving and reclaiming it.



Plate 14: Anya Gallaccio
Two Sisters, 1998
60 ton column of locally quarried chalk bound with plaster
6 x 2.5m

Gallaccio's work bears tangible witness to the movement of time. Her seemingly solid and monumental structures are paradoxically impermanent and shifting. What I find intriguing about these self-destructing monoliths, is that their disintegration would be so gradual as to be imperceptible. Yet there can be no mistaking that time has passed, because it has left an indelible mark on the object's surface. Is this memory embodied?

As we encounter the work, we cannot avoid reconstructing its original, unmarred form in our minds and imagining how it will all end. Past, present and future coalesce. And as the next moment replaces the last, what was previously hidden becomes visible. Perspectives, previously out of view, offer us yet another insight – revealing that the moment is indeed ambiguous. We will never be able to catch up to these works. There will always be a hiatus in our understanding of them.

Rachel Whiteread

Whiteread's works can be more readily accessed in terms of their manipulation of space, but here I would like to consider their role in relation to memory. In her early works, Whiteread solidified the hidden spaces beneath tables and beds and inside wardrobes and hot water bottles in a manner that elicited memories of childhood.

Ghost, which was installed in 1990, was her first architectural work and represents a cast of the interior of a room in an abandoned working-class Victorian house. The resulting installation achieves an inversion of our usual comprehension of space by substituting a negative, solid form in the place of its positive, hollow counterpart.



Plate 15: Rachel Whiteread
Ghost, 1990
Plaster on steel frame
106 1/4 x 125 1/8 x 143 3/4 inches

But *Ghost* also has a temporal resonance. The final cast has an uncanny resemblance to a mausoleum. If, as Gaston Bachelard has noted, the chief benefit of the house is that it 'shelters daydreaming'⁶², then what we encounter here is decades of memory and dream solidified. It is possible to clearly make out some soot that has become embedded in the surface of the plaster cast of the fireplace. How many past inhabitants sat before that parlour fire staring into its flames and momentarily losing themselves in dreams of possibilities, and memories of things past? I hear their sighs. I can feel the sense of intimacy and security they would have felt as they sank into a chair at the end of a long grueling day's work, warm from the cold, unrelenting rain and wind outside.

Whose memories are these? Mine, theirs? They line the walls. Have seeped into them.

Is it a room from my own childhood? Am I recalling a black and white engraving from an old 19th century storybook? Is this the front parlour of Scrooge's clerk from the perennial Christmas story? Are Scrooge and the Ghost of Time lingering outside the window? Or is it my own lounge-room where I snugly retreat to sweep away my cares at the end of each day?

Whiteread's work dislocates by suspending time. Freezing its traces. We are compelled to confront it in the stained silent walls of this monolithic structure. The absent past here physically and metaphorically assumes a presence, as we catch ourselves in the process of 're-membering'. We are led to ask ourselves whether we are experiencing a time in which the previous inhabitants of this room also reside. And the sensation of time suspended in this way, is sublime.

Andy Goldsworthy

Perilous, ephemeral, momentary – these are qualities that pervade the work of Andy Goldsworthy. In a sense, the task of his projects operates in reverse to Whiteread's, for here we are confronted with the notion of a future co-immanent with the present.

Goldsworthy's medium is the natural environment – his projects intervene in and reconstruct that environment using strategies that are clearly intended to be unraveled by the natural forces that he is seeking to harness. The stone work documented in Plate 16 is a case in point.

As I encounter this image I have a pervasive sense of the precariousness of this moment. The camera has captured an interval in time that would soon inevitably unravel. I ponder on the effort and patience that preceded this moment, as the stones were carefully balanced to achieve a certain equilibrium; and am uncomfortably mindful that this equilibrium would have been undermined seconds later. The future lays siege to my perception of the present depicted in this image. And, of course, I could pursue this double-take on time even further by observing that the whole episode documented by the camera has been played out in the past.

So where do past, present and future begin and end? As I experience this image I am compelled to concede that their edges are



Plate 16: Andy Goldsworthy

*early morning calm
balanced stone
soon fell*

Heysham Head, Lancashire
November 1978

nebulous and that in a real sense they co-exist. The experience might be described as a suspension in time – a lull. And from the vantage point of this in-between interval, I am given a glimpse into a more complex and ambiguous understanding of the temporal fabric of flesh, bearing a vastness that escapes my grasp.

Janet Laurence

How can I speak to you? You remain in flux, never congealing or solidifying. What will make that current flow into words? It is multiple, devoid of causes, meaning, simple qualities. Yet it cannot be decomposed. The movements cannot be described as a passage from a beginning to an end. These rivers flow into no single definitive sea. These streams are without fixed banks. This body without fixed boundaries. This unceasing movement....All this remains very strange to anyone claiming to stand on solid ground.⁶³

This passage from Luce Irigaray is a sensitive metaphor for the work of Janet Laurence. It captures the sense of metamorphosis and transition that permeates her work. Laurence defies our misconceived attempts to arrest time; to encapsulate it; categorise it; make it solid and certain. Rather, her works embed themselves in the ebb and flow of time, quietly observing its slow but inexorable progress, reminding us to *re-member* the present-ness of the past in the material fabric of the world around us.

Again, I have chosen an artist whose work deals very powerfully with our perceptions of space. But for Laurence, space is imbued with meaning through an awakening of memory and experience. Our body may remain fixed in space, but we are drawn into an invisible dance with time – backward, forward, metamorphosis, transition. Flux.

One of the first of Laurence's works, which I encountered was *The Unconscious and the Molecular (From the Periodic Table Series)*, 1995. Here, as with most of her works, we observe a fusion of opposites – in the use of disparate materials, as well as in the defiance of the grid-like geometry of the installation by the chaotic/organic quality of its content. Although I have no detail on the construction of this work, I am given the impression of salts and fluids corroding, or spilling respectively, across the surface of the metal and glass. Traces. Layers. In stark contrast, we are presented with an image of laboratory apparatus used to measure and contain.

Peter Emmett, in his 1998 monograph of the artist, describes the *Periodic Table* series as an embodiment of memory: "here is a language of materials that does not represent things but witnesses the process of metamorphosis, the suspension of matter and memory, beyond time, outside measure".⁶⁴

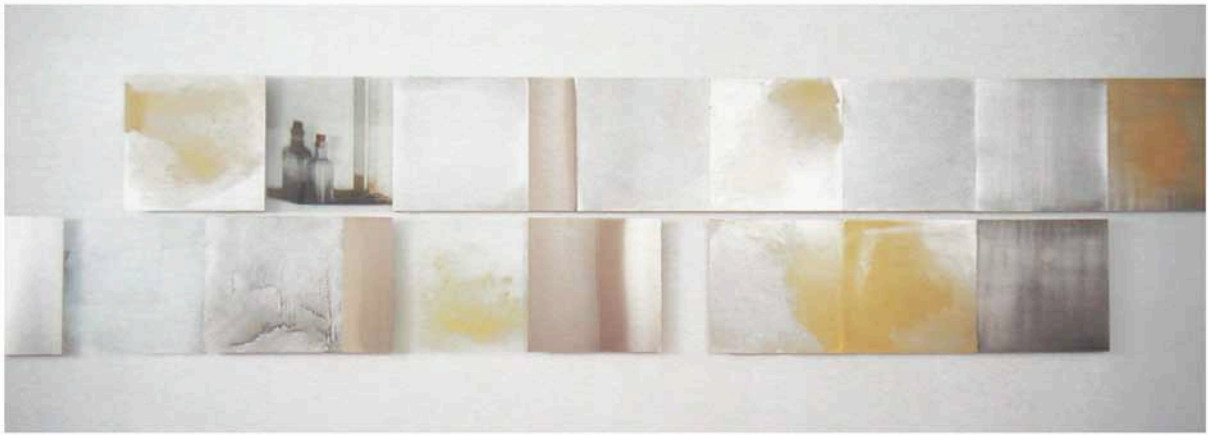


Plate 17: Janet Laurence
 detail from *The Unconscious and the Molecular* (from the Periodic Table Series), 1995
 mixed media on aluminium, stainless steel and glass
 dimensions variable

This is even more apparent in the above work, *Solids by Weight, Liquids by Measure* (*Alchemical Plates*), 1993. Here various metals and sheets of glass are etched, scribbled upon, corroded. Below each strip is arranged a collection of powders – the salts and oxides used to transmute the surfaces of the metal and glass above them? And the scribbled text: are these the musings of alchemists long past; a collection of knowledge long lost?

I ask myself why I have chosen to consider these works in the context of a discussion of time and memory. The answer is that they embody something of the primal. They are a



Plate 18: Janet laurence
Solids by Weight, Liquids By Measure (*Alchemical Plates*), 1993
 7 metals, oil, glass, various elements on shelves
 300 x 500 cm

reminder of a pre-scientific knowledge, which eludes our efforts to contain, categorise, solidify. They are a re-member-ing of a communal memory. One writer describes it as follows:

The world Laurence creates is concerned with notions of origins. It is a metaphor for the presentness of the past, and asserts the fact that it too was once a moment of origin, an instant before the metaphor crystallized.⁶⁵

And then there is an almost tangible sense of movement in these works – movement as a marker of time. It can be discerned in the dripping pigment edging down the surface of one of the metal panels; and the indelible mark of soft brushstrokes on others. I can imagine the impetuous, hasty touch that would have been needed to pounce pigment on one of the glass panels, and the gentle smearing of colour on others. These panels are not static. The oxides and salts with which their surfaces have been treated will continue to corrode and patina them.

I believe this is also the fascination of *49 veils* (Plates 19-22). These are comprised of four windows, which Laurence designed and constructed in conjunction with Jisuk Han for the Sydney Central Synagogue in 1998. The windows consist of forty-nine layers of coloured glass panels that abstractly interpret certain traditional religious and mystical themes of the Kabala, the Jewish sacred text dating from the twelfth century. In the Kabala, God is revealed through ten emanations or sephirot. These are traditionally arranged in four levels: unity, knowledge, love and manifestation, each associated with a colour. This is the framework of the four windows.

Although I am not versed in the historical and religious allusions in this work, I nonetheless find myself immersed by it. Once again there is a circular movement between past and present. At a conceptual level, it is clear from the little I know, that this is an attempt to connect the present with an ancient knowledge. A knowledge that, in turn, seeks out origins.

Physically, I am seduced by the intricate layering of colour, and the folding and swirling pigment. This heightened sense of movement could be accounted for by my visit to Laurence's studio when she was in the process of making this work – she explained how she planned to pour the transparent pigment on the sheets of glass, and then lift and tilt them upwards and sideward to achieve a floated effect.

The transition of colours and the physical traces of moving paint bring to mind a drift, ebb and flow. Backwards. Forwards. I am mesmerized by the movement, and slip into a reverie that almost suspends the present within a sense of interconnectedness of times

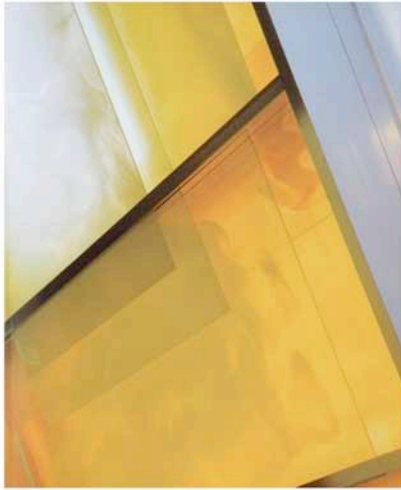


Plate 19: Janet Laurence
49 Veils, Unity 1998

First window facing northwest



Plate 20: Janet Laurence
49 Veils, Knowledge 1998

Second window facing southeast



Plate 21: Janet Laurence
49 Veils, Love 1998

Third window facing northeast



Plate 22: Janet Laurence
49 Veils, Manifestation 1998

Fourth window facing southwest

and places. Peter Emmett has poetically summed it up:

What is this special dream-like sensation? The sense of a landscape unfolding as imperceptible animation. This is the way we experience a place, a scene, a memory: a slow relation and unfolding of fragments shifting composition; like watching a substance transform itself; staring at a fire; a sheet of paper soak and sink in water; blood ooze across glass. Not just an image but a palpable sensation of substance in metamorphosis. Like the palpitations of waves and heartbeat, the shiver of pleasure and earth tremor, the shimmer of tears and light.⁶⁶

Laurence touches on the incomprehensible gap in our understanding. Her surfaces are constantly slipping away from our hold. The present and past fields of experience and memory that they touch upon can never exactly align – they slip away at the very moment they might seem about to join. But the tactile materiality of Laurence’s work assures us that this gap is not a nothingness. Rather it is the core of an all-pervasive ‘somethingness’. Merleau-Ponty would answer that this is flesh.

My Work

Much like Janet Laurence's installations, the temporal is not incorporated in my work through any specific reference to time. Rather, time is implied through references to movement; and allusions to the primal. *Hover* is one example.

This work is cast in crystal, and incorporates a negative relief in the rear of the panel. The gradation of colour as light passes through the diminishing thickness of glass, results in



Plate 23: Daniela Turrin
Hover, 2003
Wall panel in glass with negative relief at rear
75 x 41 x 2.5cm

an 'inner animation' much like Merleau-Ponty's description of the watery shadows on the cypress which I quoted earlier in the paper. In this case, the spherical form appears to hover in mid-air. There are folds elsewhere across the panel. Can these be ripples in the

ether as the sphere edges its way upward?

The sphere, which has featured regularly in my work, has archetypal connotations. In Western culture, it is generally read as a symbol of unity; one-ness. The primal quality of this image coupled with the implication of movement momentarily arrested, operate to create a sense of time and memory in suspension – and thereby offer a vantage point for quiet reflection on the invisible lining of the world. The present slips away as a defined, discrete moment, and I am confronted with the sense of a broader unknown temporal and spatial fabric – which is flesh. *Hover* seeks to speak about how presence and absence are cojoined much like the tracing out of the convex contour of a concave surface.

Caress, completed in early 2004, is the progenitor of the work to be presented for my Masters degree. Like *Hover* it incorporates a negative relief in the rear surface of the panel.



Plate 24: Daniela Turrin
Caress, 2004
Wall panel in cast glass with negative relief at rear
82 x 48.5 x 6 (max) cm

This time there is a suggestion of folded fabric caught up within the glass, although, of course, this is merely an illusion.

In retrospect this work may have been influenced by Merleau-Ponty's writings on the colour red, although this wasn't my intention in the making. Certainly, *Caress* embodies personal memory. A memory of the gentle rustle of sheets and the lusciousness of soft, smooth fabric against the skin. Of an embrace, whispers and content.... memories which evade and colour the present.

But what I enjoy most about this work is that it is not static. The folds emerge and recede within the depth of the panel depending on the passage of light across its rear surface and your own shifting position around the work. The words of Peter Emmett resound.... "This is the way we experience a place, a scene, a memory: a slow relation and unfolding of fragments shifting composition... Not just an image but a palpable sensation of substance in metamorphosis."⁶⁷ I find the notion of discovering movement within the apparently static an exquisite challenge to the concept of a present with hard-edged contours. "Now" is indeed ambiguous.

I hope to achieve a similar effect with the studio work I intend to present for examination. Entitled *Embrace*, it employs a similar concept to *Caress* but in this case the fabric form is 'draped' across five individual panels. The multi-panel format has, in part, been dictated by limitations of the casting process. But the intervals between the panels also serve to reinforce a simultaneous connectedness and disconnectedness, akin to the Japanese *ma*.

The final work I would like to address is *Lacunae* (see Panel 25), another work completed in 2004. Once again, Merleau-Ponty's hand is evident, at least in the choice of a title. A lacuna is a gap, hiatus or missing portion. It is also a synonym for an organic cavity or sac. Merleau-Ponty spoke of flesh in these terms – as the surface of the visible doubled up over its whole extension creating a "sort of...invagination", with an invisible reserve.⁶⁸

This work marks a shift in my usual approach to the glass panel. Rather than the monumental single slab of glass, my method here was to build up a grid of identical blocks of glass each encasing the same hollow organic form.

In this case, the repeating pattern and grid format would seemingly dictate the static and formal. The predictable and the orderly. And yet the work defies this assumption. There is a shift in the light and one or more of the voids will suddenly become animate. Like *Caress* I would like to think of this work as never closing, but as "always trailing off into horizons ", albeit small, intimate ones, "that can burst forth into the foreground again".⁶⁹

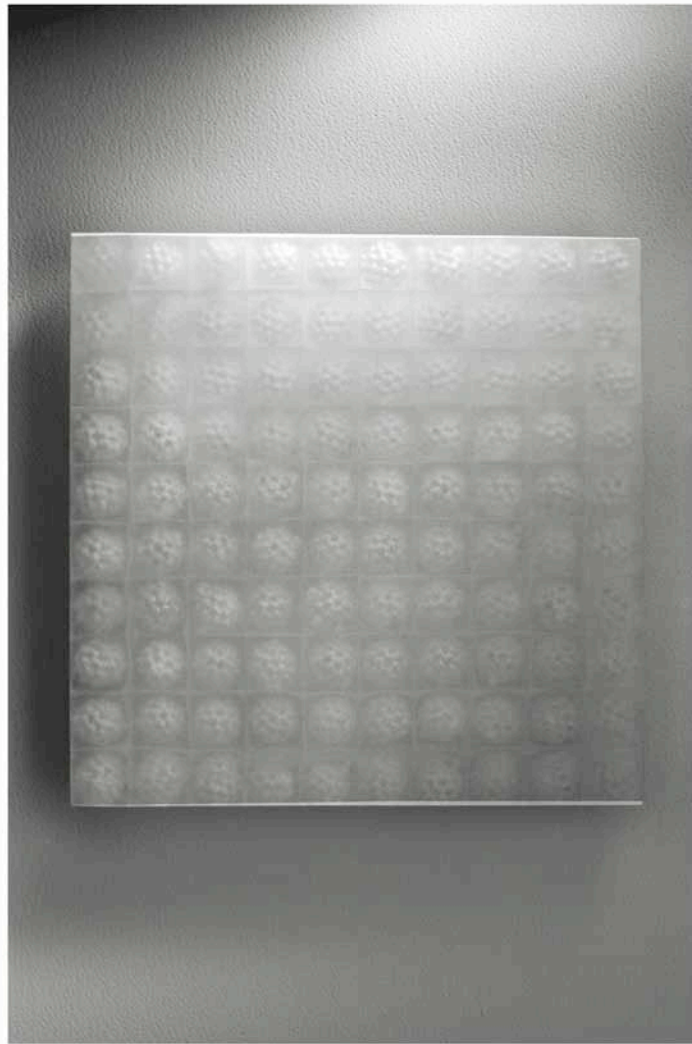


Plate 25: Daniela Turrin
Lacunae, 2004
Wall panel in cast glass with negative relief at rear
42 x 42 x 2.5cm

This is how Merleau-Ponty envisioned our understanding of depth – as a perceptual unfolding. This is depth as an essentially temporal phenomenon.

In Summary...

This chapter has sought to explore the notion that an aesthetic experience that dislocates our sense of time can initiate a fleeting glimpse of flesh. Time was explored in terms of co-immanence of past, present and future and specific attention was given to works which, in my experience, expose this particular aspect of time.

This ranged from the imperceptible disintegration inherent in Anya Gallaccio's work; the solidification of memory in Rachel Whiteread's *Ghost*; the precariousness of Andy Goldworthy's natural constructions; and the capture of materials in flux in Janet Laurence's 'paintings'.

Turning to my own work, I have suggested that by introducing movement within the seemingly static confines of the glass form, there is the potential to represent our comprehension of the now as ever-shifting, unfolding and changing...as nebulous and out-of-reach...in other words, as a chiasm in our experience of the world.

6. Conclusion: Re-Packing the box...

I began this paper with the proposition that an encounter with a work of art, can, in some cases, trigger a 'slippage' in our experience of the world – a sudden sense of dislocation or dislodgement.

I have sought to argue that this slippage is what some writers have coined as the 'sublime' moment, but taken from an alternative perspective, could also just as readily be encapsulated by the term "dehiscence" in Merleau-Ponty's ontology. Drawing from this common starting point, my aim was to examine the points of coincidence between these two, seemingly disparate, strands of thought with a view to determining whether it might be possible to gain any further insight into the aesthetic encounter through a synthesis of the principal ideas underlying these diverse models.

So what have I uncovered? I can begin with the suggestion that whether we term the experience as sublime or as akin to dehiscence, what lies exposed is a 'present absence' lining the fabric of our day-to-day interaction with the world. For Hegel, dealing with the sublime, this present absence was 'the infinite'; an 'invisible meaning devoid of shape'. For Merleau-Ponty, it was the chiasm, or our blind spot.

But, this is where the theories depart, for the writer who delves in the sublime stands silent in the face of the invisible. It is a void or abyss that we cannot step into. Whereas, what the writings of Merleau-Ponty offer is a possible insight into the nature of this invisible. The chiasm, or blind spot, is revealed in terms of a broader element – flesh – folding over (or reversing incompletely) upon itself. The invisible does not exist separate from Being. Rather, it is underpinned by the material world, and is not detachable from it. It is merely a hollow in the overall fabric of the flesh that subtends Being.

So what does this offer for an understanding of the aesthetic moment? Lyotard's writings on the sublime provide a starting point in the notion that the painter's canvas confronts us with a simple but ambiguous fact: it is 'here' 'now'.

Drawing on this, I have suggested that it is when a work of art instigates a rupture in our sense of spatial or temporal coherence, that we experience the sublime moment – the dehiscence. Merleau-Ponty's proposition that the invisible is not detachable from the visible is a valuable insight in this respect. Without 'carnal presences' – vision, touch, hearing etc (and to this I would add memory) – access to the invisible would not be possible.

Pursuing this line of thought, what I have sought to establish in this paper is that when a work of art operates to make us aware of these carnal presences – in other words compels us to perceive ourselves in the act of perception – then this is the sublime moment, the dehiscence. For as we observe ourselves seeing/touching/hearing/remembering we begin to question our pre-conceptions of space and time, and immerse ourselves in ponderings on the boundaries of inside and outside; and present, past and future.

The result is a fleeting glimpse of the flesh; a sudden realization that it will incessantly escape our grasp; and a certain delight in knowing that the depth of the world surpasses our conceptualization. And so, traveling around this moebius strip I am back to where I started. The present absence.

Have I found the definitive perspective on the sublime moment? This is not possible. The contents of this chameleon box will continue to slip out and, no doubt, on my next encounter I will discover that once again its packaging has changed shape and hue. The prospect is delicious...

Endnotes

- ¹ Lyotard, Jean-Francois, "Presenting the Unpresentable: The Sublime" in Artforum, April 1982, pages 64-69 at page 69.
- ² Ibid, at page 69.
- ³ Lyotard, Jean-Francois, "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde" in The Lyotard Reader, ed. Andrew Benjamin. Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1989 at page 196.
- ⁴ This discussion draws extensively from a paper by Hooker, Richard "Sublimity as Process: Hegel. Newman and Shave" in The Contemporary Sublime, Sensibilities of Transcendence and Shock, Art and Design, Academy Editions, London, 1995 at page 43.
- ⁵ Hegel, GWF Aesthetics, trans. TM Knox, The Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1975, Vol 1, p.363.
- ⁶ Lyotard, "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde", op.cit., at page 199
- ⁷ Ibid, at page 211.
- ⁸ Ibid., page 211.
- ⁹ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice Phenomenology of Perception, translated by Colin Smith, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1962 at page 406
- ¹⁰ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice The Visible and the Invisible, edited by Claude Lefort, translated by Alphonso Lingis , Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1968 at page 136n
- ¹¹ Op. Cit.
- ¹² Op. Cit.
- ¹³ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, The Visible and the Invisible, ibid, at page 233
- ¹⁴ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, "Eye and Mind" in The Primacy of Perception, translated by Carleton Dallery, edited by James M. Edie, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1964
- ¹⁵ Crowther, Paul "Merleau-Ponty: Perception into Art" in British Journal of Aesthetics XX11/2 (spring 1982) pages 138 - 149 at page 139
- ¹⁶ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, The Visible and the Invisible, op.cit, at page 131
- ¹⁷ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, The Visible and the Invisible ibid. at page 138
- ¹⁸ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, ibid. at page 140
- ¹⁹ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, ibid. at page 138
- ²⁰ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, ibid. at page 147
- ²¹ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, ibid. at page 148
- ²² Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, ibid. at page 148
- ²³ This is terminology I have borrowed from commentator Remy Kwant, although Merleau-Ponty does not use this term himself. Kwant, Remy C., From Phenomenology to Metaphysics, An Inquiry into the Last Period of Merleau-Ponty's Philosophical Life, Duquesne University Press, Pa, 1966 at page 82

²⁴ Proust M, Swann's Way, translated into English by CK Moncrieff, New York, 1928, page 503

²⁵ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, The Visible and the Invisible, op. cit. at page 150

²⁶ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, *ibid.* at page 150

²⁷ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, *ibid.* at page 150

²⁸ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, *ibid.* at page 151

²⁹ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice in "Eye and Mind", op.cit., at page 134

³⁰ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice in The Phenomenology of Perception, op.cit., at page 243

³¹ Andrews, Richard and Bruce, Chris James Turrell, Sensing Space, Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle, 1992 at page 11

³² Sontag, Susan Styles of Radical Will, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York 1969 at page 10

³³ Merleau-Ponty, The Phenomenology of Perception, op. cit., at page 256

³⁴ Merleau-Ponty, The Visible and the Invisible, op. cit., at page 136

³⁵ Minkowski, Eugene Lived Time: Phenomenological and Psychopathological Studies translated with an introduction by Nancy Metzger, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1970 at page 406

³⁶ Cataldi, Sue Emotion, Depth and Flesh, A Study of Sensitive Space, State University of New York Press, New York, 1993 page 49

³⁷ Bachelard, Gaston The Poetics of Space, translated by Maria Jolas, Beacon Press, Boston, 1964 at page 184.

³⁸ Bachelard, Gaston, *ibid.*, at page 186

³⁹ For example, Bachelard refers to the experiences of writer and deep sea explorer, Philippe Diole. Diole uses his experience of deep sea diving to describe his first experience of the desert. His passages display an intimate familiarity with the material substance of water:

"...as I walked along, my mind filled the desert landscape with water! In my imagination I flooded the space around me while walking through it. I lived in a sort of inverted immersion in which I moved about in the heart of a fluid, luminous, beneficent, dense matter, which was sea water, or rather the memory of sea water....My inner images were bathed then in a sort of gentleness, and in the passage thus reflected by dream, water appeared quite naturally..."

Diole concluded that to go down into the water or to wander in the desert is to change space, and by leaving the space of one's usual sensibilities, one enters into a communication with a space that is psychically innovating. Bachelard, Gaston, *ibid.*, at page 206

⁴⁰ Bright, Richard James Turrell Eclipse, Michael Hue-Williams Fine Art, London in association with Hatje Cantze Publishers, Germany, 1999 at page 9-10.

- ⁴¹ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, The Visible and the Invisible. Op. cit., at page 136n
- ⁴² Pare, Richard Tadao Ando, The Colours of Light, Phaidon Press Limited, London, 1996 at page 14
- ⁴³ Ching-Yu, Chang Japanese Spatial Conception, PhD Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1982 at page 224
- ⁴⁴ Ching-Yu, Chang, *ibid.*, at page 16
- ⁴⁵ Ching-Yu, Chang, *ibid.*, at page 16
- ⁴⁶ Delaruelle, Jacques in Anne Juddell, 1992 – 2002, Campbelltown City Bicentennial Art Gallery, January 2002 at page 23
- ⁴⁷ Merleau-Ponty, The Visible and the Invisible, *ibid.*, at page 139
- ⁴⁸ Frantz Susanne K. in The Glass Skin, The Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, NY, 1998 at page 12
- ⁴⁹ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice The Visible and the Invisible, op. cit., at page 149
- ⁵⁰ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice in “Eye and Mind”, op. cit., at page 142.
- ⁵¹ Gibson, James J., The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Hillsdale, NJ, 1986 at page 209
- ⁵² Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, The Visible and the Invisible, op. cit., at page 240
- ⁵³ Casey, Edward S., Remembering, A Phenomenological Study, Indiana University Press, 1987 at page 169
- ⁵⁴ Casey, Edward S., *ibid.*, at page 182
- ⁵⁵ To borrow a phrase used in the describing the visible in Merleau-Ponty, The Visible and the Invisible, op. cit., at page 132
- ⁵⁶ Mazis, Glen A. “Merleau-Ponty and the ‘Backward Flow’ of Time: The Reversibility of Temporality and the Temporality of Reversibility” in Merleau-Ponty, Hermeneutics and Post Modernism edited by Bosch, Thomas W. and Gallagher, Shaun, State University of New York Press, 1992 page 53 at page 55
- ⁵⁷ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice The Phenomenology of Perception, op. cit., at page 83
- ⁵⁸ Merleau-Ponty, The Visible and the Invisible, op. cit., at page 268
- ⁵⁹ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice The Visible and the Invisible, *ibid.*, at page 131
- ⁶⁰ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice The Visible and the Invisible, *ibid.*, at page 184
- ⁶¹ Lewis, Clare “Sublime Spaces, being and nothingness in contemporary installation” in Contemporary Visual Arts, issue 19, page 21
- ⁶² Bachelard, Gaston A Poetics of Space, op. cit., at page 6
- ⁶³ Irigary, Luce “When our lips together speak”, This Sex Which is Not One, translated by Catherine Perter and Carolyn Burke, Cornell University Press, quoted by Janet Laurence, Element/Elemental, MFA Thesis, University on New South Wales, 1993, page 2.
- ⁶⁴ Emmett, Peter Janet Laurence, An Art and Australia Book, Craftsman House, Sydney, 1998 at page 17
- ⁶⁵ Haynes, Peter “Impressions, Janet Laurence” in Art and Australia Vol 26 No 4 Winter 1989 pages 607-609 at page 608.

⁶⁶ Emmett, Peter *ibid.*, at page 21

⁶⁷ Emmett, Peter *ibid.*, at page 21

⁶⁸ Merleau-Ponty, The Visible and the Invisible, *op. Cit.*, page 152.

⁶⁹ Mazis, Glen A. in "Merleau-Ponty: The Depth of Memory as the depth of the World" in The Horizons of Continental Philosophy, Essays on Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, edited by Hugh J. Silverman et al, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, Boston, Lancaster 1988 at page 231

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Singer, Linda The Mystery of Vision and the Miracle of Painting: A Critical Examination of Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of the Visual Arts, PhD Dissertation, State University of New York, 1981

Sontag, Susan Styles of Radical Will, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York 1969

Steinbock, Anthony J "Merleau-Ponty's Concept of Depth" in Philosophy Today 31 (Winter 1987) pages 336-351

Tawa, Michael 49 veils : windows in the new Central Synagogue Waste Publishing, Darlinghurst, NSW 1998

Turrin, Daniela "Figuring the Unresolvable (or an ontology of a little patch of yellow wall)", Bachelor of Visual Arts with Honours Research Paper, Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney, 1998

Vasseleu, Cathryn Textures of Light: Vision and Touch in Irigary, Levinas and Merleau-Ponty, Routledge, London & New York, 1998

Wakefield, Neville "Rachel Whiteread: Separation Anxiety and the Art of Release" in Parkett 42 1994 pages 76-82

Curriculum Vitae

Exhibitions

- 2005 Finalist, *Ranamok Glass Prize*, travelling to various locations throughout Australia
- 2005 *Verge: current works in glass by emerging artists*, topfloor multi-purpose artspace, Adelaide, SA
- 2005 *Hatched: National Graduate Show*, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, Perth, WA
- 2005 *Material Instincts*, Manly Art Gallery and Museum, Manly, NSW
- 2004 *SCA Postgraduate Exhibition*, Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney, NSW
- 2004 *Castaways*, Glass Artists Gallery, Sydney, NSW
- 2004 *Reflections*, Sydney College of the Arts Survey Exhibition, Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, NSW
- 2004 *four:04*, New Works in Glass, Quadrivium Gallery, Sydney, NSW
- 2003 Finalist, *Ranamok Glass Prize*, travelling to various locations throughout Australia
- 1999 *New Directions, Emerging Glass Artists in Australia*, Quadrivium Gallery, Sydney, NSW
- 1999 *Art of Glass Students: National & International Work*, Visual Arts Centre, Porstmouth, Virginia, USA
- 1999 Finalist, *Presiding Officers' Craft Prize*, Parliament House, Canberra, ACT
- 1998 *This Way Up*, Centre for Contemporary Craft Sydney, Tamworth City Gallery, Orange Regional Gallery, NSW
- 1998 Finalist, *Resource Finance Corporation Glass Prize*, travelling to various locations throughout Australia
- 1997 *Nota Bene*, graduating exhibition at Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney, NSW

Publications

- 2005 Featured in *Australian Glass Today* by Margot Osborne, Wakefield Press, Kent Town, South Australia
- 2005 Finalist, *New Glass Review 26*, Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, New York, USA
- 2004 Finalist, *New Glass Review 25*, Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, New York, USA
- 2004 Featured in article by Margot Osborne: "Ranamok 2003: Beauty, Poetry and the Everyday", *Craft Arts International*, No.61
- 2004 Featured in catalogue essay by Andrew Brewerton: "The Ranamok Glass Prize 2003", *Ranamok Glass Prize Catalogue*
- 2000 Featured in article by R Whiteley: "Glass Stars: Rights of Passage" *Object 2/99* page 60.
- 1999 Featured in article by Beth Hatton: "Innovation and Excellence", *Craft Arts International*, No.45
- 1998 Finalist, *New Glass Review 19*, Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, New York, USA

Qualifications

- 2005 Master of Visual Arts, Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney, NSW
- 2004 Glass casting workshop with Richard Whiteley, Wanganui Polytechnic, Wanganui, New Zealand
- 2003 Director and Treasurer of Ausglass (Australian Association of Glass Artists) Limited.
- 1998 Bachelor of Visual Arts (First Class Honours and University Medal), Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney, NSW
- 1998 Glass carving and engraving workshop with Jiri Hrcuba, The Studio of the Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, New York, USA
- 1998 Zelda Stedman Young Artist Scholarship, Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney, NSW
- 1997 Casting workshop with Jaromir Rybak, Ausglass Conference, Sydney, NSW

Catalogue of Work Presented For Examination

- Image 1: Daniela Turrin
Embrace, 2004
Five wall panels in cast glass with negative relief at rear
210 x 41 x 6 (max) cm
- Image 2: Daniela Turrin
Embrace (Side View), 2004
Five wall panels in cast glass with negative relief at rear
210 x 41 x 6 (max) cm
- Image 3: Daniela Turrin
Embrace (Panel A), 2004
One of five wall panels in cast glass with negative relief at rear
59 x 41 x 6 (max) cm
- Image 4: Daniela Turrin
Embrace (Panel B), 2004
One of five wall panels in cast glass with negative relief at rear
37 x 41 x 6 (max) cm
- Image 5: Daniela Turrin
Embrace (Panel C), 2004
One of five wall panels in cast glass with negative relief at rear
17 x 41 x 6 (max) cm
- Image 6: Daniela Turrin
Embrace (Panel D), 2004
One of five wall panels in cast glass with negative relief at rear
31 x 41 x 6 (max) cm
- Image 7: Daniela Turrin
Embrace (Panel E), 2004
One of five wall panels in cast glass with negative relief at rear
54 x 41 x 6 (max) cm
- Image 8: Daniela Turrin
Embrace (Edge Detail), 2004
Five wall panels in cast glass with negative relief at rear
210 x 41 x 6 (max) cm

Image 9: Daniela Turrin
Embrace (Detail), 2004
Five wall panels in cast glass with negative relief at rear
210 x 41 x 6 (max) cm

Image 10: Daniela Turrin
Embrace (Detail), 2004
Five wall panels in cast glass with negative relief at rear
210 x 41 x 6 (max) cm

Image 11: Daniela Turrin
Embrace (Detail), 2004
Five wall panels in cast glass with negative relief at rear
210 x 41 x 6 (max) cm



Image 1:
Daniela Turrin
Embrace, 2004
Five wall panels
in cast glass with
negative relief at rear
210 x 41 x 6 (max) cm



Image 2:

Daniela Turrin
Embrace (Side View)
2004

Five wall panels in cast
glass with negative relief
at rear
210 x 41 x 6 (max) cm

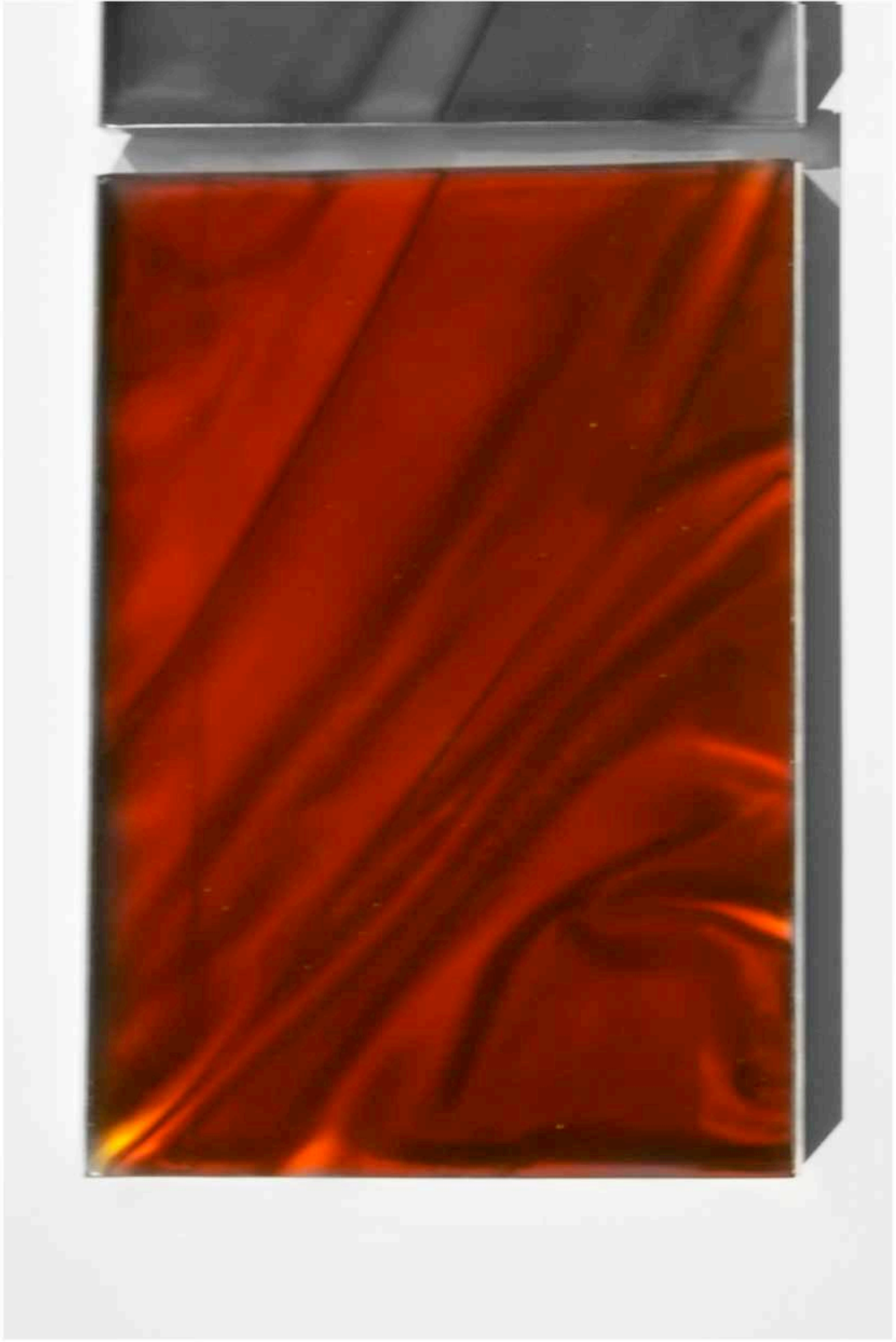


Image 3:

Daniela Turrin
Embrace (Panel A),
2004

One of five wall panels
in cast glass with
negative relief at rear
59 x 41 x 6 (max) cm

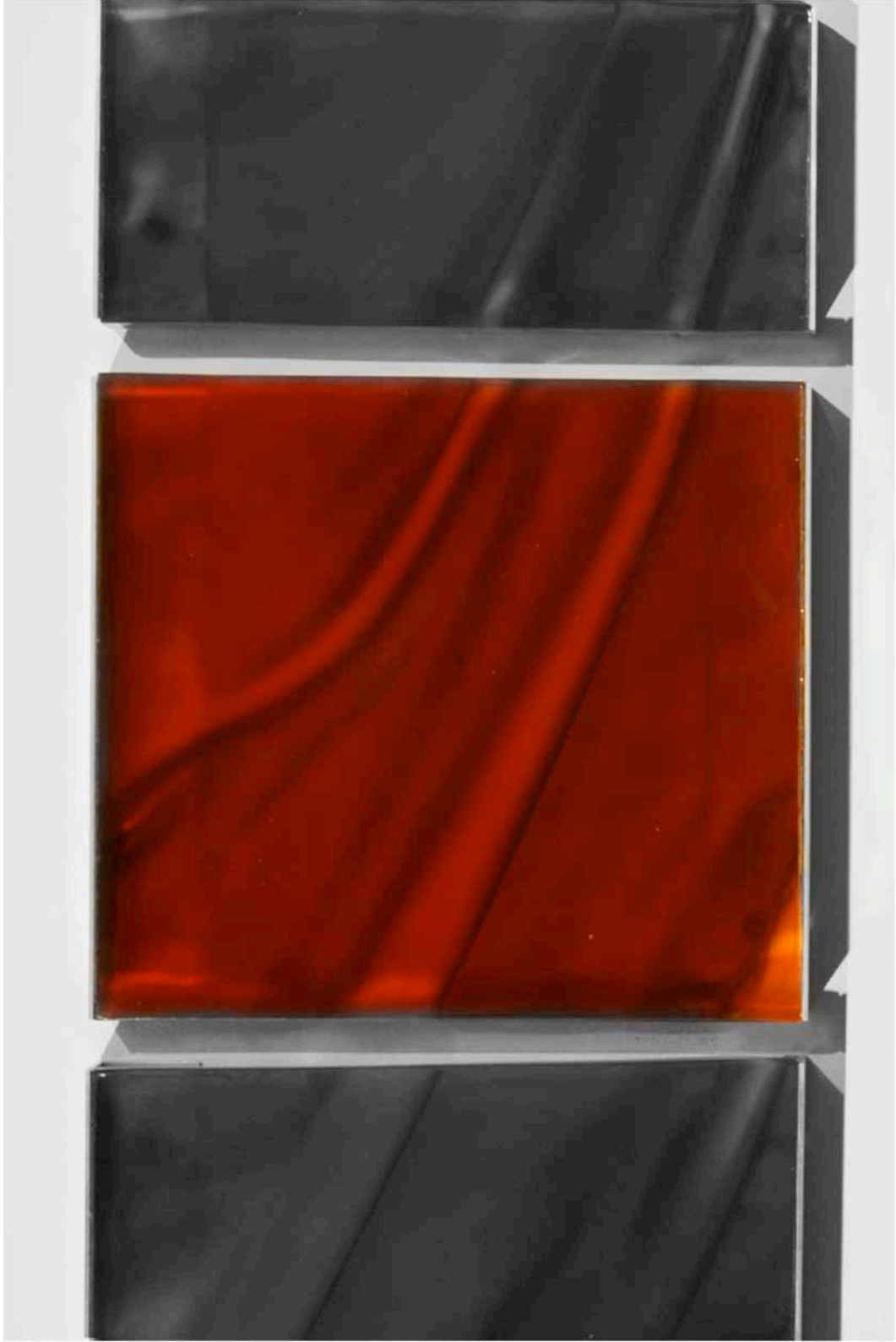


Image 4:

Daniela Turrin
Embrace (Panel B), 2004

One of five wall panels
in cast glass with
negative relief at rear
37 x 41 x 6 (max) cm

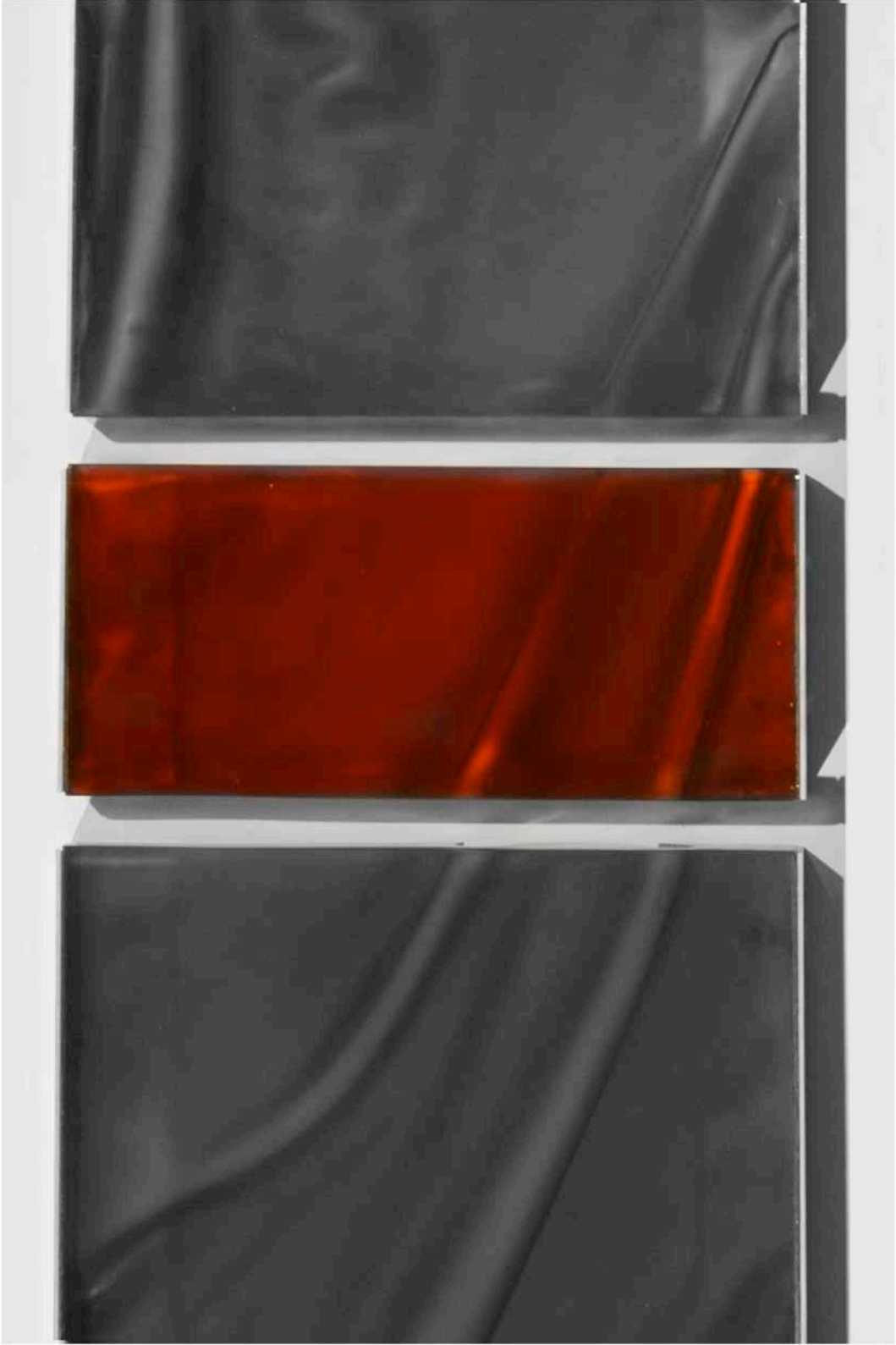


Image 5:
Daniela Turrin
Embrace (Panel C),
2004
One of five wall panels
in cast glass with
negative relief at rear
17 x 41 x 6 (max) cm

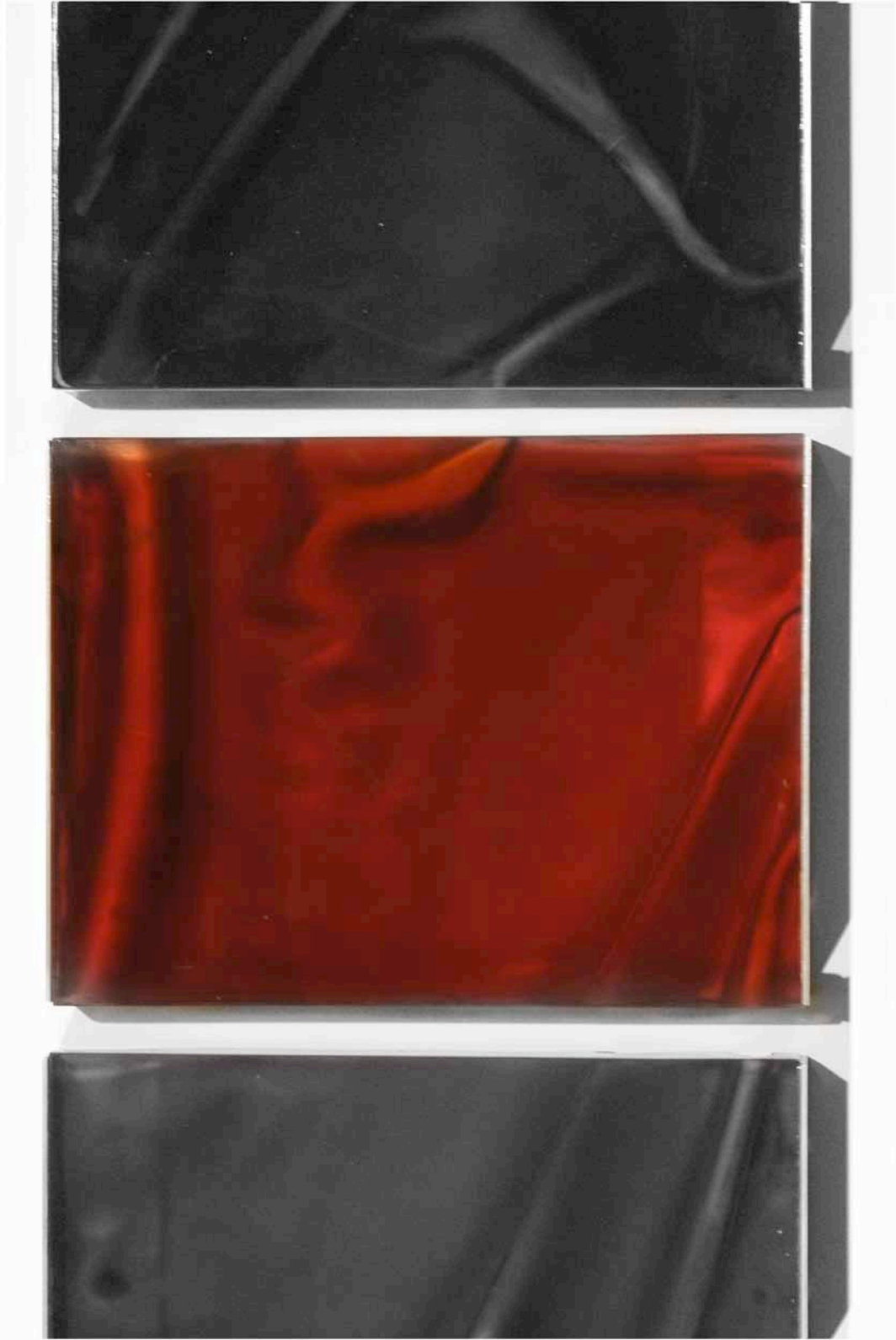


Image 6:
Daniela Turrin
Embrace (Panel D),
2004
One of five wall panels
in cast glass with
negative relief at rear
31 x 41 x 6 (max) cm

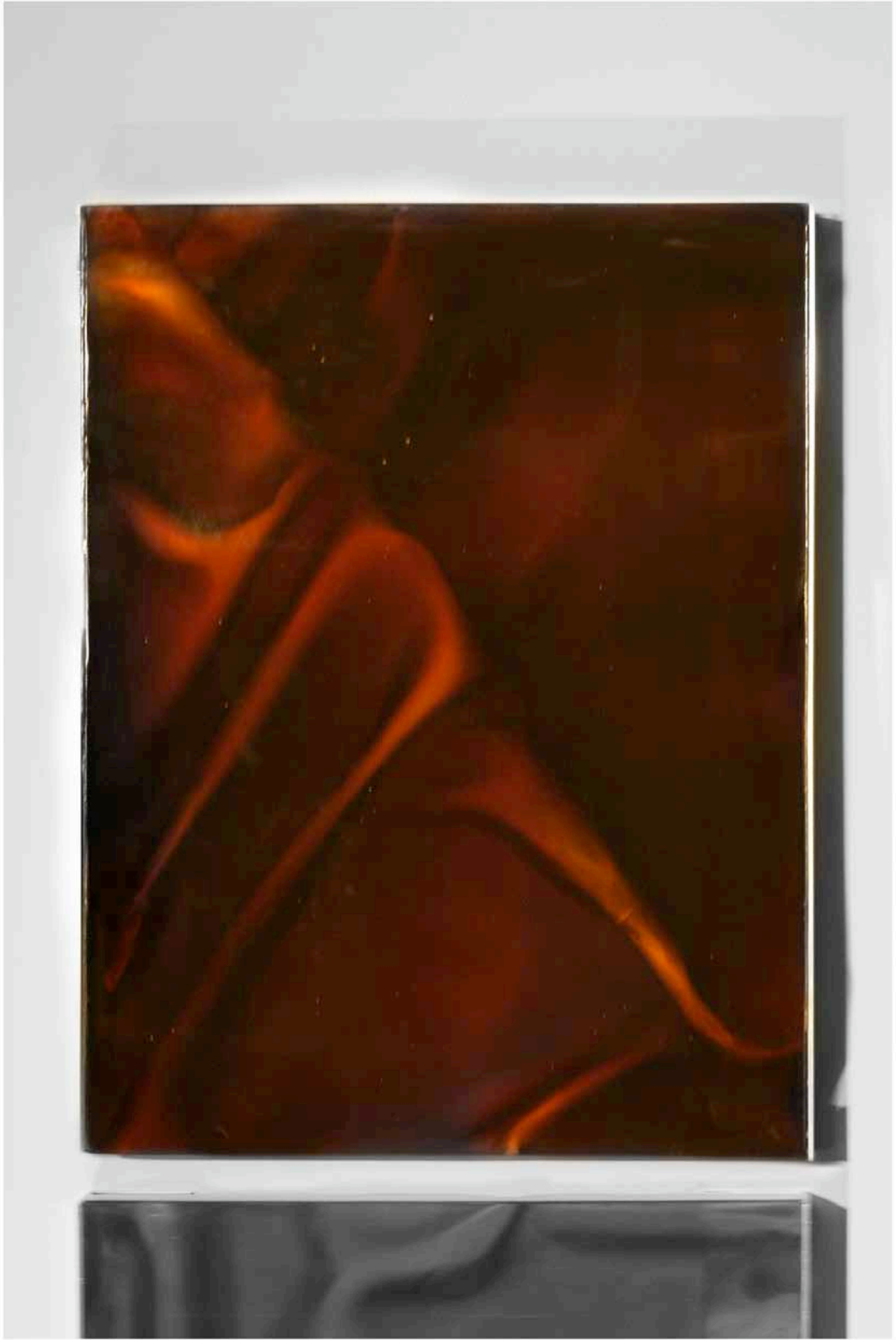


Image 7:

Daniela Turrin
Embrace (Panel E),
2004

One of five wall panels
in cast glass with
negative relief at rear
54 x 41 x 6 (max) cm

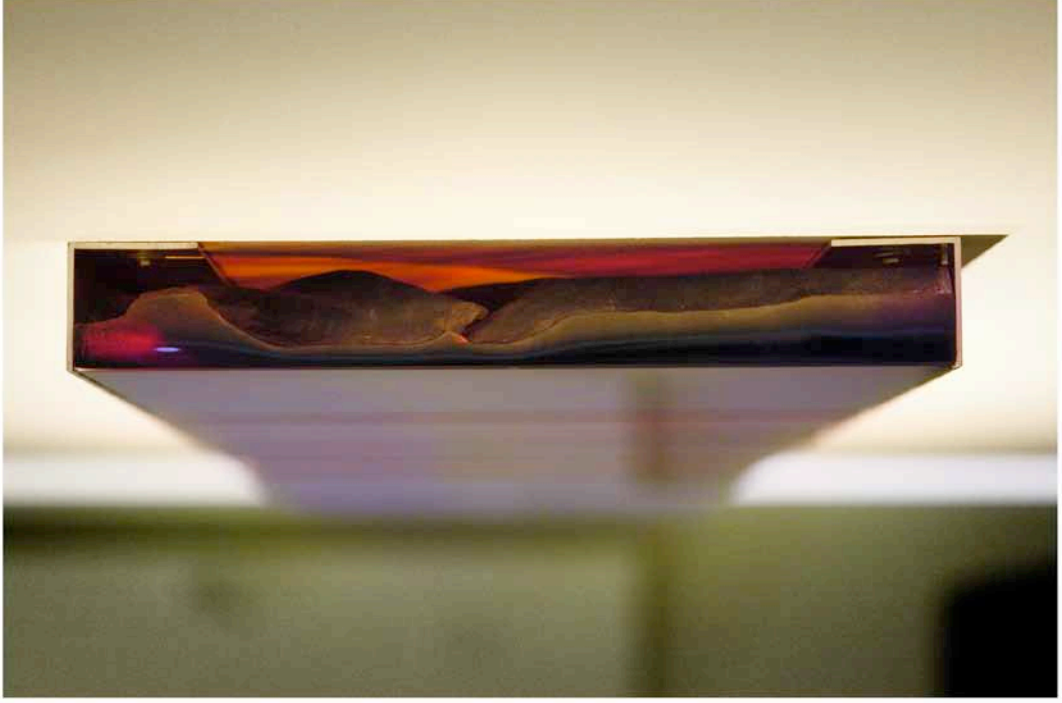


Image 8:

Daniela Turrin

Embrace (Edge Detail), 2004

Five wall panels in cast glass

with negative relief at rear

210 x 41 x 6 (max) cm

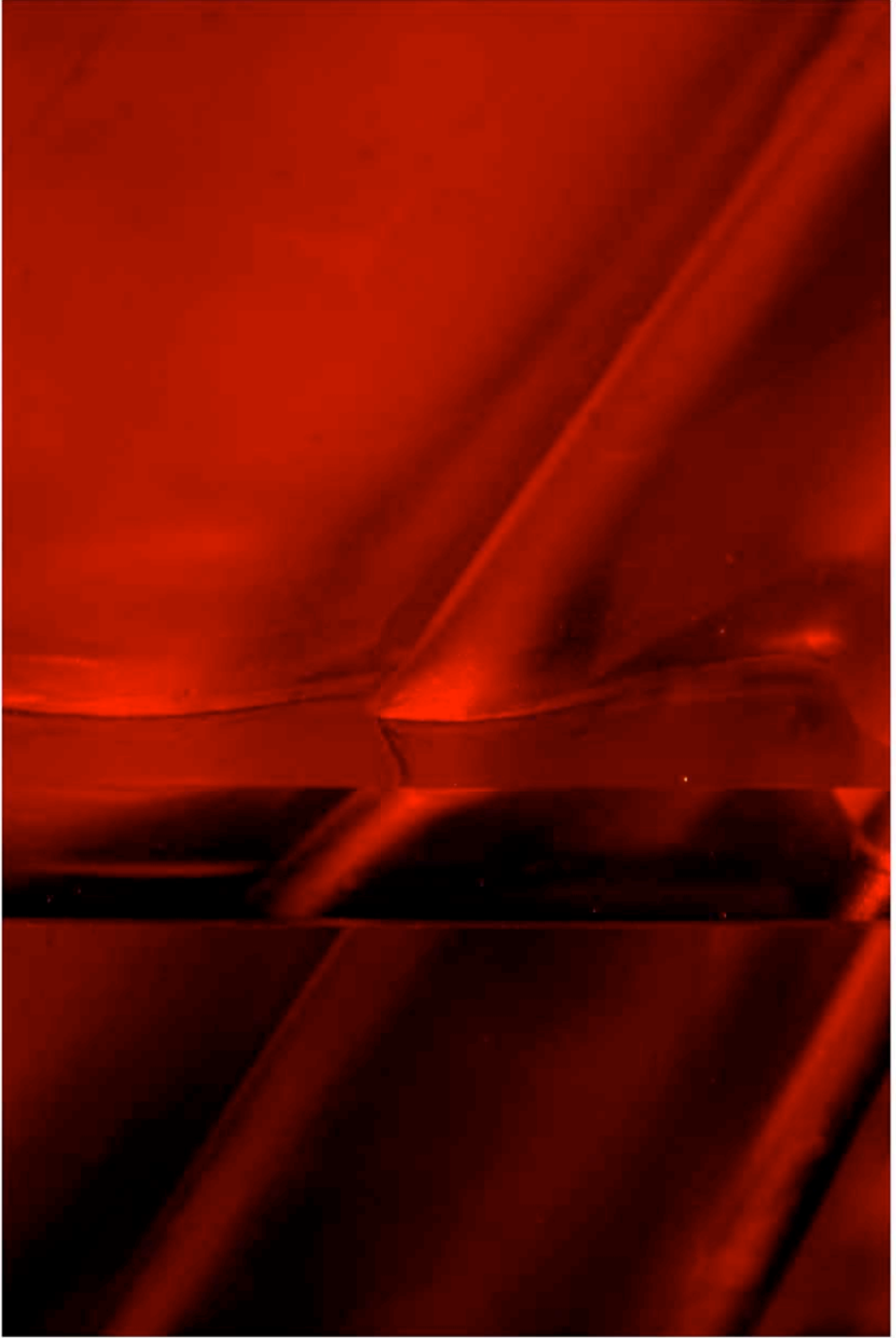


Image 9:
Daniela Turrin
Embrace
(*Detail*), 2004
Five wall
panels in cast glass with
negative relief at rear
210 x 41 x 6
(max) cm

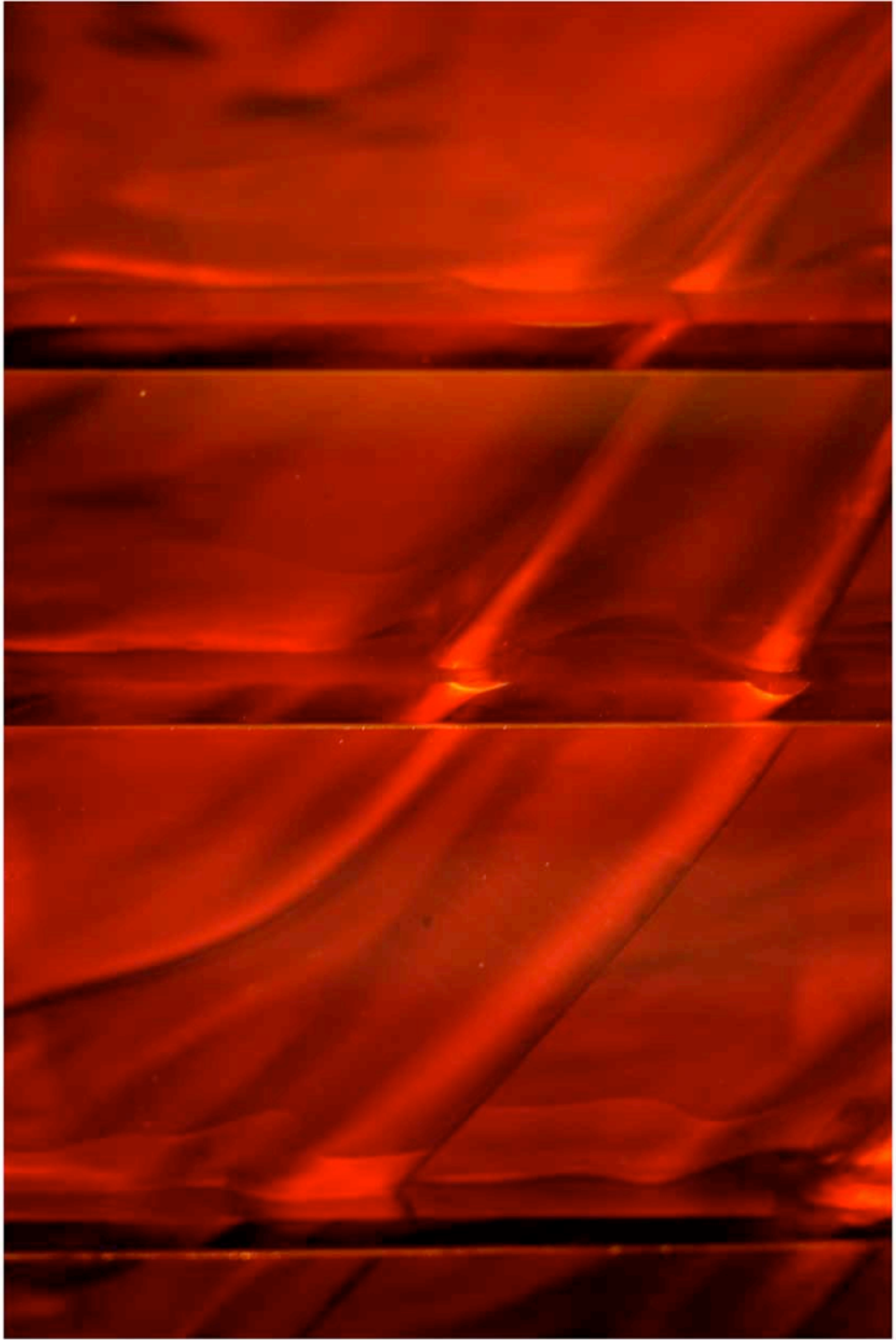


Image 10:
Daniela Turrin
Embrace
(*Detail*), 2004
Five wall
panels in cast glass with
negative relief at rear
210 x 41 x 6
(max) cm

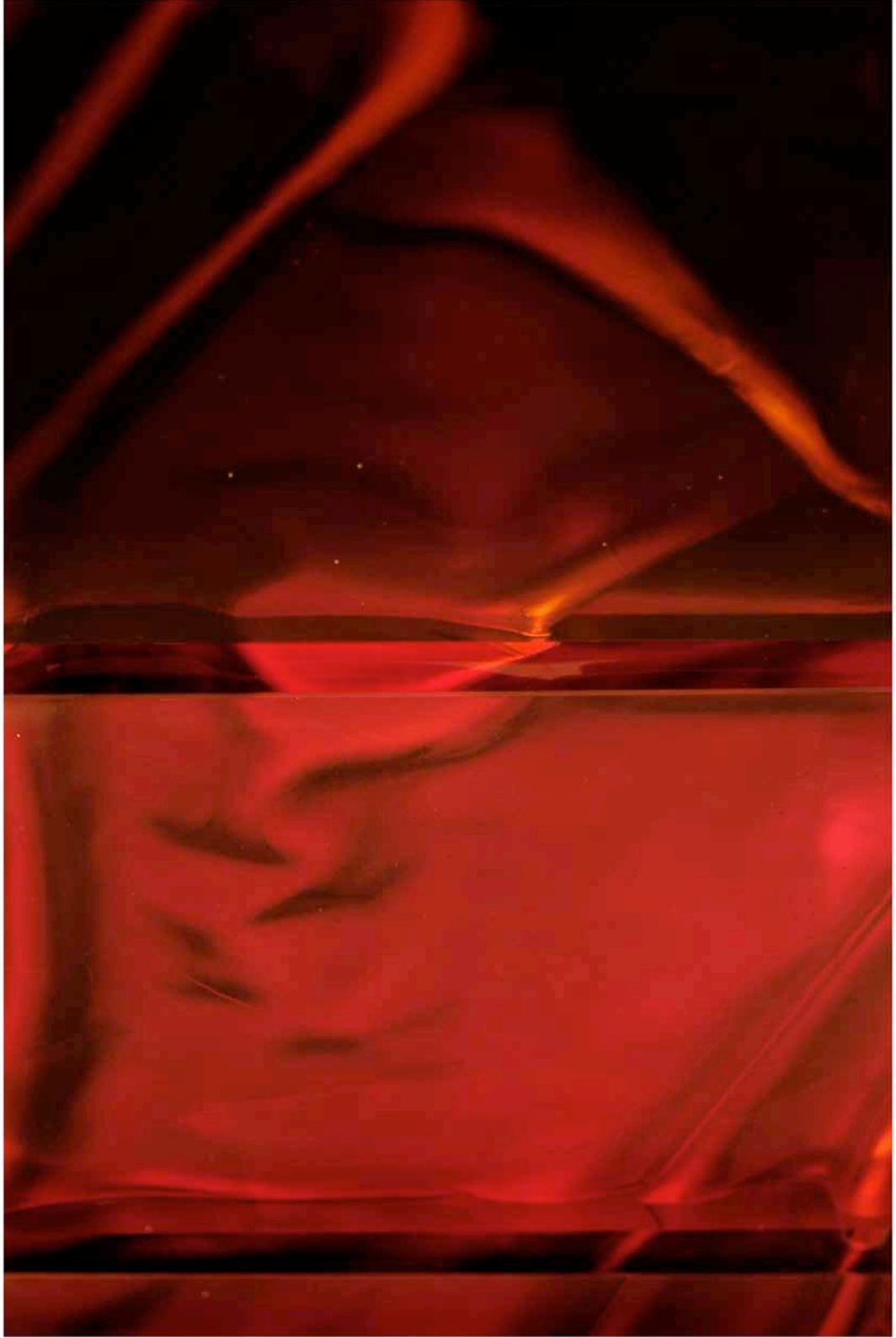


Image 11:

Daniela Turrin
Embrace

(*Detail*), 2004

Five wall

panels in cast glass with

negative relief at rear

210 x 41 x 6

(max) cm