

**The practice of 'creative block':
making space for process**

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To my parents; whatever they become

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Abstract

The practice of creative block: making space for process explores the ‘problem’ of *creative block*, recontextualised as a concept. Thereby constituting reason for thinking and making, *creative block* may function as material to work with. This thesis is predicated on the notion that a creative practitioner requires both material and some space in which to make something of it. A space or place for practice may be variously apprehended, albeit a nomadic environment, as that of transitionary activity. In this research endeavour, the concept of *chōra* (as a matrix in some form or other) serves as a likely vehicle for creative response to its concerns. Viewed through various lenses of process philosophy, including that of Alfred North Whitehead, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, this interplay of concepts in relation to lived experience breaks down binaries, becoming a solution of activated motility. My plastic practice of printmaking runs through the work, punctuating text with images.



Acknowledgements

This thesis is my own work, and so presents my own perspectives on this research project. I have endeavoured to identify all references and source material accurately, but am responsible for any errors.

My experience as a research student at University of the Arts London has been enjoyable and important. I am am thankful for this opportunity and for all those unnamed individuals who have facilitated the programme.

I am indebted to Paul McAlinden for designing and typesetting this thesis, and much associated documentation.

There are various people to whom I would like to extend personal thanks; and acknowledgement that their influence is evident at some point in this document and my wider thesis:

- Dr Mark Ingham, whose experimental energy is infectious and who epitomises the possibilities of creative education
- Dr Jamie Brassett, who took a punt, shows trust in me, and has helped me in becoming more constructively critical
- Dr John O'Reilly, who was always interested in my stories and shows delight in things I consider relevant to creative practice
- Students, who join me in *chōric* environments. Other educators who facilitate those spaces; and allow me to be a student
- The Braves / Conversation: support network, peer group, friends, colleagues and creative co-conspirators; who launch Brave Boats with me each 30 November
- The CCW Foundation Technical Team as a body. Carla Fallen and Henrietta Simpson, for inviting me into the printroom and letting me be there. Ben Gooding for our ongoing conversation about art, and suggesting that I have something here

● Daniel Rubinstein, who leads the Art of Questioning which has underpinned my research experience; and Jo Morra who was the initial convener of Test Lab. It is due to the support, creative provocation and criticality of their seminars that I have felt able to co-curate Spotlight exhibitions and Opera Viva events

● Dave White, who reminds me not to look to the institution for validation; and to identify blocks to stand on

● Helmut Maassen, who helped me understand that I could be quite wrong; Michel Weber, who also brought images to a Whitehead conference; and Don Frölich, who asked the most pertinent question

● Bipasha Raha, Nana Hughes and Belle Yang, whose attitudes are inspirational and share their worlds with me

● Scott Grant, who has faith and makes relationships: the seeds of collaboration

● Jenny Maxwell, who demonstrates the wisdom of the Counsel of Pelicans; and brings the fecund nurture of the Heap into every event of encounter

● Arthur Ford Collins, another adventurer, who shows me where dragons may dwell

● Keith Temple, who crafts scenes and voices from thoughts and images, to engage and entertain audiences

● Joan, who listened, questioned what I was going to do with it, suggested that I make something of it

● Peter Algacs, who reminds me to laugh (and get my hair cut); and understands the 'how to' of performance events

● Paul McAlinden, who always believed in me, especially when I didn't. I owe him much more than he realises

● Ma, for her encouragement

● Dad, for his jazz

● Lizzie, for shifting the rhythms of our lives, as a Whiteheadian canine 'lure for feeling'

Introduction to my thesis

My thesis is intended to be an explication of my creative practice; as a lucid example of the workings of creative practice. One of its contributions to knowledge is a practical and experiential presentation of the milieu of creative production, which is designed as means of encouragement to others attempting to navigate such terrain. It hopes to suggest and engender creative advance,¹ by sharing experience of practice in process, with recourse to some philosophies of living which will be more or less familiar to a reader. Personal data presented as material is my own, though as a creative practitioner I have collaborated with many others over the course of study.

Creative practice / creative block research

During this research degree, I have developed my practice: one which had lain dormant for many years. Whilst I have written at various points about this experience, both in my MA dissertation and during this current research, I will limit its detail here to that which is directly relevant to those arguments I am constructing in my PhD thesis. My creative practice is concerned with making work from *creative block*, as creative response to a problem, Rather than explaining *block*, my thesis should serve as example by which to inspire others who might feel its difficulties.

Since a factor of this work is appropriation of concepts with which to practise, I will generally italicise the titular term, leaving it roman in its usual guise of obstacle to creative production, connected with writers' block for example. As such, 'creative block' has been variously explored – though in my opinion it has not been sufficiently unpacked, particularly from psychological

1. 'Creative advance' underscores practice, as I see it. It comes from Alfred North Whitehead's 'creative advance into novelty' (1985:28), one of the fundamental tenets of *Process and Reality*, his 1929 magnum opus. I will discuss this term and its context variously in the block.

perspectives: so there is valuable work to be conducted here. However, that is not the work of my study or this thesis. Nor does the thesis contextualise my study within that wider genre of research. At present, the considerable efforts there are couched in the terms of practicable approaches to overcoming block (whether creative, writers’, or otherwise apprehended): many of which are incredibly useful to those of us who sometimes get stuck (e.g. Cameron, 1984, Judd, 2000; Eno, 1970). I would recommend them as approaches to people who require immediate and viable means of ‘getting on with it’, since the various oblique strategies, scores for movement, artists’ ways, idiots’ guides and toolkits for overcoming (creative) difficulties – each in their own languages – has something to offer. Their suggestions are likely to prove in some way effective, should we choose to do the work of applying ourselves to the struggle of making work and maintaining a practice.

‘Problematic terms’ (to introduce the idea of chōra)

The considerable effort of this thesis (concentrated in its midst), is to claim the idea and conditions of ‘chōra’ as vital to creative production. The ‘concept’ of chōra is one which I intend to present of special relevance in my study; not least since it is currently under-theorised in the arts sector.² The thesis is also a contribution to that resource, as original understanding mediated by theory and practice. As extension of my conceptualisation of chōra, I explore some of the conditions for making work, which fundamentally include the ‘material’ with which we can produce. There may be resonances of the socialism-capitalism rumblings (and uprisings) of 20th-century philosophies (e.g. Marxism) in some of these terms. Whilst I will not explore sociopolitical history, it is likely that to some extent the texts I will draw upon (e.g those of Deleuze and Guattari [2003;2021] and Kristeva [1984]) are responding to the timbres of the times in which they are written. All terms are ‘problematic’ in scholarly study,³ since studies are

2. I will include titles of some of the various texts I have encountered (in early research) in a Bibliography, beyond the References to texts cited. This will render the Bibliography very long; and it need not be considered in its entirety, since so much of it sits without the scope of this thesis. However, there are very many references to chōra (in one spelling or another) in the literature, some of which I have not consulted beyond scant appraisal to assure me of grounds for exclusion.

3. ‘Problematic’ is a term which seems apposite here. Whilst a problem might be seen as something should be ‘sorted out’, a premise of my wider creative practice is that a problem can serve as a catalyst for creative response. *Creative block* is the problem which has instigated this study, generating a huge variety of work. Therefore I see a problem as less about requiring an answer, and more to do with an impetus for investigation – and perhaps thereby ‘creative advance into novelty’ (Whitehead, 1985:28).

conducted in the discourse of terms. As the thesis unfolds, I will bring quite a number of terms into play, some of which are likely to be unfamiliar, or certainly used differently to the ways in which we usually encounter them. So far as possible I concentrate my focus on making such terms contextually-accessible to the reader, involving degrees of theoretical contextualisation. Although I will concentrate on those aspects most pertinent to my intentions to render these practicable, there is space and scope for additional explication in post-Doctoral study.

My plastic practice involves printmaking,⁴ a discipline which I will introduce in the subsequent block. The roller – as a key device in printmaking process – has become a particular factor in my practice. My work over these past years has been concerned with making work; and the roller has taken me into particular dimensions of making print. As a result of this work I have developed printmaking practices in which the roller is used to generate prints more deliberately and directly than in general. I call the work made via these methods Process Prints, to indicate the primacy of ‘process’ (a problematic and therefore useful term) in their production. Making prints in this way has proven emancipatory to my practice, increasing my confidence that I am conducting relevant research in the field. Beyond this study, I aspire to take my creative practice into the world; to inspire activity beyond arts education. The vast quantity of prints I have produced to date constitutes a significant aspect of my research (as represented in the visual aspects of this thesis); and the event to come [see below].

Relative positionality

The metaphysician Alfred North Whitehead asserts that the art of life is the quest to live better (Whitehead, 1958:4).⁵ which although a straightforward evolutionary truism on the face of it, indicates deeper meaning, whereby more spiritual dimensions counterbalance the consumerist. The explications of my thesis

4. Although I use it in the title of a block in this set of texts, ‘plasticity’ is a term which I will not explore in scholarly fashion. In referring to the plastic in my practice, I mean that which is tangible, whether as artefact, output or event. Much creative production happens in the world, but in talking about the plastic, I mean to relate it more specifically to that which occurs in the environments of art, design and associated disciplines. I write primarily for an audience with an appreciation of and curiosity about the conditions of such creative production, whether students, practitioners or those with vested interests.

5. See also *The Function of Reason: philosophy and the Practice* PhD (p. 69) for further contextualisation of Whitehead’s ideas regarding creative urges and the art of life.

are all, in some way, related to the experiential workings of my own creative practice. I am employed within the environment of arts education, exclusively since 2015 – which was also the year that I reignited my printmaking practice. Here I must recognise my various privilege in terms of positionality (e.g. England, 1994). I am a queer, healthy, able-bodied, white, middle-aged, middle-class male, with various transferable skills accrued over three decades of professional work, variously utilisable in the industry of Education – and hopefully beyond. Whilst it is somewhat difficult for most relatively well-paid people to survive financially in 2024, and most of us feel the pain of money-worry, I am just-about still in the fortunate position of being able to live, first-world well, within my means. Through a process of juggling and budgeting, I have been able to fund PhD study: which is one of the most privileged of studenthoods. My ability to ‘manage’, far beyond adequately, is a benefit of having grown up (relatively) poor, but with aspirations of grander, or better; and arguably another aspect of a creative life. I also appreciate the advantage of experiencing childhood and adolescence in London. Being aware of the vibrancy of plastic production amidst the diversity of this privileged metropolis, was itself an education in the affirming power of sensory stimuli; and of the desires and appetites that inculcates, whether or not these be ‘healthy’. My dad was a commercial artist (a visualiser drawing storyboards for campaigns in Magic Marker, freelancing around the advertising agencies of Soho in the 1960s and 1970s), and whilst I was determined not to make the same mistakes as him, I was raised in an environment that valued creativity and education. To many intents I perceive myself as a visual creative; though one with keen sensory perspective (which includes the affective). I have been long-aware of my capacities for feeling and making, regardless of whether I have actually made anything of that.

Therefore I am cognisant of my opportunities: of being in the position to make work in a milieu of paid employment, where the making of creative work is encouraged.⁶ But the Research Degree

6. The printroom in which I make prints is that of Wilson Road, the college in which I teach on a Foundation course.

has been a hard-fought and critical opportunity to concentrate my practice as arts educator on the development of my own creative practice. I have made prints throughout it, but also read and written, as ongoing learning process(es). Development of my pedagogic practises, as part of my greater creative practice, have occurred amidst the formation of the Experimental Pedagogies Research Group (2020) and its ongoing explorations. I will discuss the EPRG subsequently, but less my Associate Lecturer on two courses: Foundation Art and Design (CCW, UAL) and BA Creative Advertising and Art Direction (University of Greenwich). Nor will I discuss a decade of teaching on the PGCert in Academic Practice (The Teaching, Learning and Employability Exchange, UAL), supporting colleagues developing their appreciations of pedagogic practice. I perceive my own pedagogy as situated within the arts institution, although aiming out into the world. In this context, I am very interested in Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘lines of flight’ (although these are implicit in the study, evident in my use of notes and in-text suggestions, yet not investigated here).⁷ Many such considerations of my research remain as allusions in this manuscript, and in doing so render themselves at least partially sensible, as future considerations for investigation. In presenting my practice here, I see it as emergent, in process and becoming.

7. See *Process thinking through Whitehead, Deleuze and Guattari*, n.132

Problems without answers: the form of my thesis

As the culmination of a Research Degree which focusses on my creative practice, various questions posed by my thesis will necessarily not be answered. There have been a number of findings: my realisations or discoveries during the course of research, which might typically be forefronted in an *Introduction*. However, the intention of my project has never been to answer the problem of ‘creative block’, but rather to ‘experiment with the intensities it offers’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 2021:187). In my assertion that would-be practitioners require material and space, a ‘problem’ can be perceived as a material element, to instigate

creative response – often over the course of time and in disparate spatiality. For this reason, findings should become evident over this span of this manuscript, where they are contextually-relevant. This is apposite in an articulation of my particular creative process practice. At the end of the Chōra set of blocks, I extend the notion of ‘solution’, as an approach to dealing with – which sometimes equates to tolerating – the ongoingness of process in practice, as in research (pp. 211–15). In such a notion of ‘process-substance’, salient elements are ‘motile’; which is a term I have taken from Julia Kristeva (1984:26), subsequently discussed. However the thesis as a whole ought to deliver a sense of ‘satisfaction’.⁸

It is presented across three sections (which I term ‘sets’ in the document): *Practice*, *Chōra* and *Process*. These sets are comprised of ‘blocks’ of writing, further subdivided by subheadings for ease of navigation. The tone of these blocks varies, as befitting both the particular material under consideration and the variations and modulations of the creative practises to which they relate. I make use of side-text notes throughout, and images to complement the narrative. Images are not referred to in the text and their captioning kept minimal. This layout has been deliberately developed to aid legibility, as thoughtful graphic design should allow,⁹ but from a personal sensibility. However, due to my choice of typeface (Quadraat, which has no sans bold italic), some block heads make use of inverted commas where italics would have been my preference.

In the midst of each set is a textual intermezzo: a composition presenting an event of relevance to that set. I consider these to be important findings, or realisations of my thesis, extending the thinking into a particular creative milieu. As vignettes, they may suggest ways in which my ideas concerning instances of creativity might function in other disciplinary environments; or pertain elsewhere. Whilst imbued with theory and referenced in academic fashion, they exist as stories, grounded in reality.

8. ‘Satisfaction’ is a term Whitehead uses, to express the culmination of a process through which something is created. This is the completion of an ‘actual entity’ or ‘occasion’. These terms will be discussed in more detail subsequently.

9. Due to the requirements of the formal Research Degrees process and to allow Examiners to expediently navigate the document, I also provide a screen-friendly text-only version, with separate image files.

Bodies of Work / BoW¹⁰

At the end of the written thesis is a set of images (produced in various Bodies of Work over the period of the study, as intensities of printmaking and associated projects). These serve as a counterpoint to the text. I wrote the thesis between the late-summer of 2023 and Easter 2024.¹¹ Although it might have developed in various directions through the writing-up process, its form and content is the one which feels most pertinent at this point. The focus is the relationship between *creative block* and making in a domain of creative practice, situated in the wider context of process thinking: which I take from my readings of Whitehead, Deleuze and Guattari. The products of this present study are laid out in terms which may be appreciated by anyone without specialist knowledge, though a degree of professional practice engagement is assumed. My hope is for readership beyond the institutions of education, since I believe there is value in the philosophical and practical approaches I have discovered through this work, that could be shared more broadly. Such value could be recognised through a transformation of attitude in regard to possibilities of creative response to lived experience. I contend our experiences can generate material to work with, and from.

Event: to follow

The thesis continues with an event, to take place in June 2024 at the UAL Doctoral School in High Holborn. As an unknown quantity imbued with potential, it is indicative of the general timbre of the thesis, intended to encourage. I envisage this event as another art piece, or Body of Work, the unforeseen but now obvious solution of the *problem of creative block*. As I currently conceive it, the event includes elements of show, viva (challenge; discussion; exchange), performance, material, workshop, chance occurrence and collaboration, in an occasion of emergence. My introductory writing on ‘event’ will lead into the actuality of event: as occasion to be experienced and responded to.

10. A ‘body of work’ is a term used in creative milieu to indicate the results of a project. Across the span of my PhD project I have produced various of these, in response to particular ideas, concerns or possibilities for investigation. Given the restrictions on my access to a printroom, these tend to be the outcome of temporal intensities of making. I term these Bodies of Work, to derive the acronym BoW. This is a nod to Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of BwO (Bodies without Organs): a concept which I do not explore in this thesis, although (in my reading) it has a relationship with my own idea of a BoW.

11. However, in its completed version, some elements that existed as appendices at viva stage have been subsequently included in the main text. I explain this below.

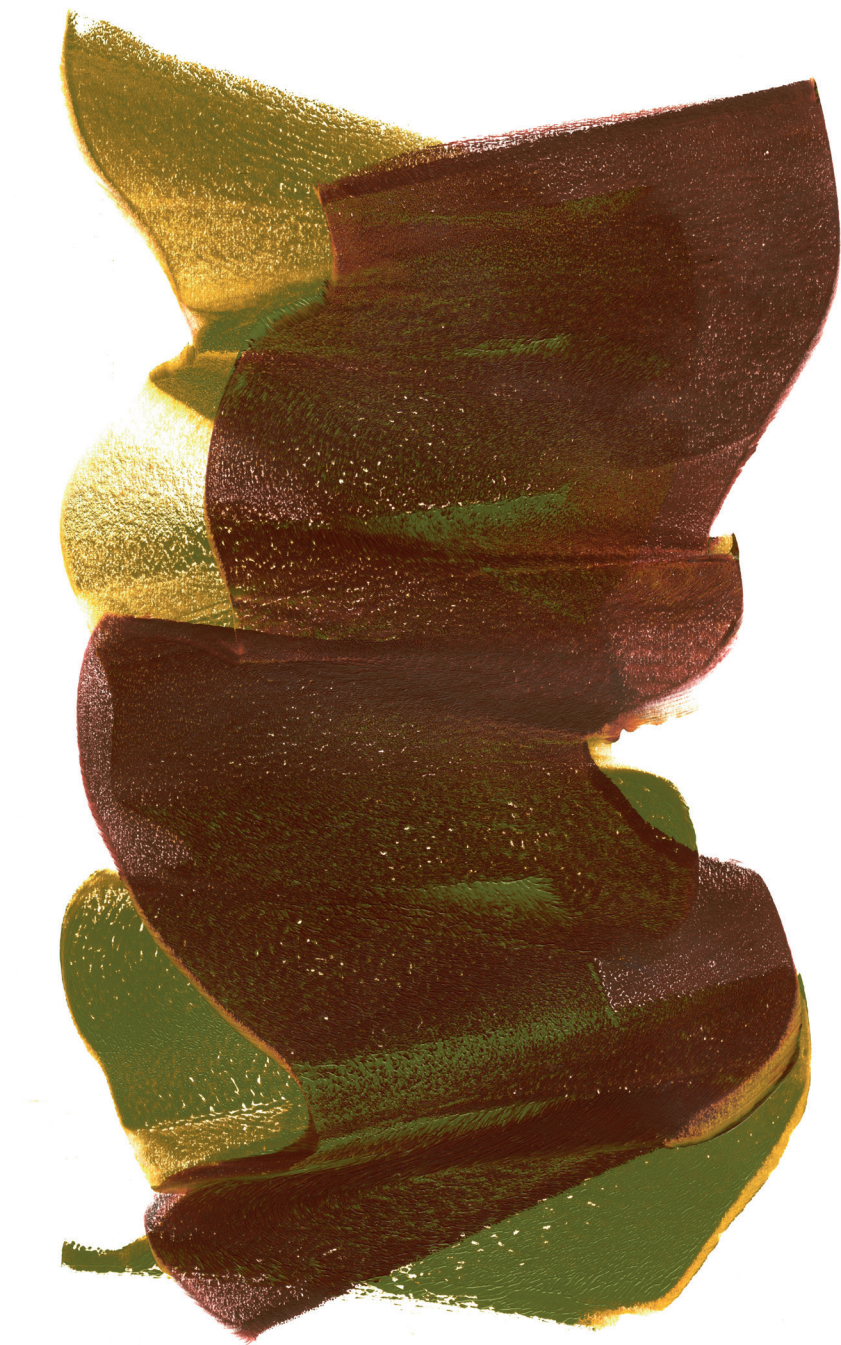
It is likely that the event will produce stories and other blocks of text, whether these function as epilogue to this thesis or prolegomenon for something other. I have some plans for this event – although philosophically, 'an event' is not planned. The writing that I have extended on such ideas (e.g. Derrida, 2007) will be present at the event, along with this manuscript, perhaps in book form; and other blocks of text produced during the course of the project. Also present will be piles of the prints I have produced, since it is an extension of my *a e o print show* (of June 2022).¹² However the title of this event will be **Creative Blocks**: intended to be as obvious, yet suggestive, as that of this thesis. That these common words are imbued with meaning which can in some sense be 'felt', should be apparent at this stage of the manuscript, as an invitation to wonder around the practice hereby presented. This sense of wonder, is I hope, coupled with reassurance that there are various possibilities of response, to any thesis or occurrence, each of which is imbued with plastic potential.

12. See also *a e o print show: an event*, p. 239.

Post-viva addendum

At the viva, which took place on 11 October 2024, the examiners suggested that I might decide to bring the appendices into the text body. The appendices had been a discussion point of the viva and I perceived their suggestion as personally significant: an affirmation of the doctoral award. In choosing to make this alteration, I recognise that the rhythm of the thesis is altered for a reader, rendered more temporally a-linear. Indeed, this last paragraph has been written after the *Creative Blocks* event mooted above has occurred ... However, the inclusion of *Recent work* (*cosmic magics*), *superficial inversions*, *Sally and Risoller* adds a dimension of practice to the thesis, which justifies this unruliness.

PRACTICE



My creative practice: a 'cosmo-psycho-analytic and deeply pedagogic' plastic practice

What might I make of creative block? What, now, next ...?

This block of text is a restart; another beginning, in the ongoing midst of my creative block. For here I begin the writing of my thesis, as an actuality.¹³ As such, it is a take on practice from my current personal perspective. From this place of understanding: practice is about making work. This attitude will set the tone for much of the rest of this thesis, though it will also veer into other territories. Such nomadic exploration, I contend, is an aspect of 'practice', which in my experience ranges, exploring the ground around which it is situated. I also consider practice as active, repetitious but constantly shifting; mobile and motile. In this block, I will introduce terminology, some of which will be explored in subsequent blocks. Whilst I hope that the terms will be legible in this context without further explanation, it is likely that some of what is presented here will initially appear oblique. I would also argue that any such sense of confusion is a necessary aspect of practice, elements of which are unclear at points. As Whitehead says: 'Sometimes we see an elephant, and sometimes we do not.' (Whitehead, 1985:4). My intention for this thesis is to articulate my research and my practice; but this will take time and space.

Research

When urged to construct a research question in the earliest stage of this project, my efforts ranged around the notion, 'What might I make of creative block?'. If this pragmatic did not suffice, nor did I feel the research as requiring a question to drive it.

13. This term is an allusion to the metaphysics which constitute much of the theoretical underpinning of my work. Although there are many actualities, which include events, objects and experiences, the written thesis is a particular form of intension, which this writing will explore.

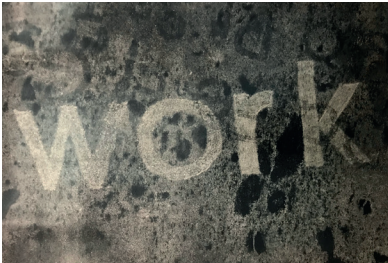


Practice research is always questioning, as a creative process which explores materials, ideas, mindsets and existing systems, in order to 'shape space' to host new work. A sensitive, responsive practitioner must find their way to creating work amidst shifting perimeters (since 'creative perimeters', just as vistas, always shift). Therefore a practitioner will be continually making the effort to attune to their environment, assessing and responding, hacking and hustling and dodging. Quietly, I therefore ostensibly abandoned the notion of 'a question', emancipating myself from normative research requirement: instead embracing process, to 'go with the work' and where it might take me. The questions and concerns raised by the practice research have indeed been plentiful, developing and extending as I do, in my pursuit of becoming practitioner.¹⁴ But my practice – which has demanded greater recognition in this study than I had afforded it at the start – was predicated on an initial notion about 'not making work'. I had speculated that the 'material' I brought with me into the project would be what I might work with, to explore that condition of not making. As I have gradually focussed research attention on the value of engagement with my creative practice – and with the onset of Process Prints,¹⁵ its impetus has morphed into making work about making work.

Making work about making work is an alternate, more prosaic title/ subtitle for my thesis, or this section of it. For someone working to any extent in the discipline or environment of printmaking, the process(es) of making will have some bearing on the work made. Printmaking tends to be process-rich, offering various approaches for the creation of a print – relief, intaglio, photomechanical, etc – each of which have at least several stages or steps involved. Such physicality of process, means that the majority of those people who turn to printmaking have an appreciation of the ways in which these activities themselves might inform the outcomes produced, and so an affinity with working in somewhat emergent ways.

14. Later in this block I will discuss the various difficulties I have in presenting myself in creative professional terms. The idea of becoming rather than being something, generally seems more appropriate in the context of (somewhat amorphous) creative practice.

15. I introduce the notion of Process Prints subsequently and refer to them throughout the thesis. Essentially, these are prints born of making prints.

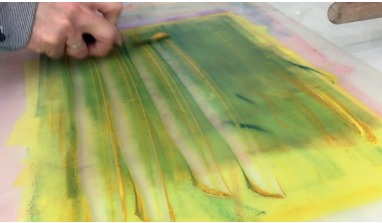


Printmaking

Since printmaking often tends towards the production of an edition, or a number of identical reproductions, generally the accidental will be brought under the control of technique. This aspect of its affordance has rarely been of much interest to me. During the course of my research it has been the feeling of the moment(s) of production which has compelled me: the instance of seeing / making / feeling something new, excitingly (visually) original, which elicits that rush of sensation that my particular creative practice continually desires. This recognition might be my reading of the process of 'creative advance into novelty' (Whitehead, 1985:349) discussed elsewhere. I would suggest it as grounds for the ongoing-ness of process in any creative reality: as the realisation of something new. Certainly in my current printmaking practice, which centres around monoprinting,¹⁶ a particular pleasure of making work is in the trial-and-error of process, the quest to discover a different effect or another vibrant combination, as moments of affect. Here I am (perhaps) fortunate that the processes I employ to make these prints continually throw up visual delights. Very often these come in the midst of making, as the results of a stage rather than any conceived ultimate intention. Mixing ink, which has a particular consistency and depth of chroma provides me with intensities of sensation, as it might for any practitioner with an interest in the materiality of colour. In prolonged practice research effort, I have been able to notice and consider that the ways in which ink responds to the actions of palate knife or hand roller as sensually seductive. One of my quests in this research, therefore, has been to capture and reflect some of this practical process, resulting in the un-editionable monoprints I have been making over these several years. In some sense these 'celebrate' such making-stages or -moments, allowing the work-in-progress (or -process) to be perceived, shown or viewed as the work itself. I call the various BoW (Body / Bodies of Work) I have generated with this understanding 'Process Prints'. As practice,



16. 'A monoprint is a singular print, as opposed to those designed to be produced in an identical edition. In this it has similarities with the processes of drawing or painting. There is an immediacy to monorinting, which although it can be labour-intensive and carefully planned, tends to express qualities of vibrancy vibrancy' (National Galleries Scotland: Monoprint, n.d.).



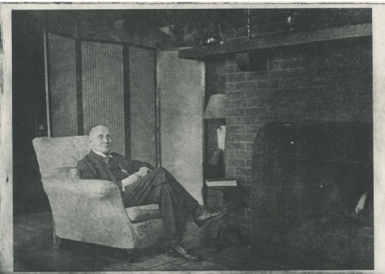
Still from rollerfilm 02.02.2022 (Confirmation presentation)

in the context of research, these prints are a key component of the contribution to knowledge articulated by the thesis.

Although the majority of Process Prints are produced directly from the roller,¹⁷ the BoW which set this approach in motion derived from the procedures of inking-up and wiping-down a polymer photo-etching plate, depicting an image of the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, quoted above. Made from an image found in the Wellcome Collection archives (Wellcome Collection 13736i: n.d.), this had a haunting effect on me when I first came upon it. A classic early-20th-century photographic portrait shot, in landscape format, the photograph is composed rather as a painting might be. It depicts an elegantly-dressed Edwardian man in a domestic study interior, seated in an upholstered armchair in front of a fireplace. A concertina screen ripples behind the chair, and a metal candlestick on the stone mantelpiece glimmers in the dim. A book has been set on the low table beside him, so I assume he has recently lain it down. The man, indicated as a scholar by dint of context, has been reading in his study. Whitehead's posture is somewhat jaunty, even in repose, one leg crossed over the other, looking directly towards the photographer, a twinkle in his eye. Something is happening in this captured-moment of an image, which a viewer may only speculate upon. Enticed by its qualities, and feeling compelled to work with it, I made a photo-etching plate from the image: the first of this type of printmaking I had done in two decades. My sense was that the 'data' in this image would be activated by the photo-etching processes and that I might uncover the secrets held within through working-away at the visual details.

However, my discoveries were not what I had expected: for it was in the process rather than the resultant image of Whitehead that I located a sense of meaning. To prepare the plate, the excess ink used to ink-up (in which it is pushed into the intaglio grooves) must be gradually removed via a wiping activity. In the course of working through these phases, I noticed that the blotting paper

17. In this way of working, the roller becomes matrix, or the vessel which carries the image, to be transferred. Generally in printmaking practice a hand roller is used for spreading ink on a plate or block or glass surface, to a desired consistency. Sometimes a dry roller may be employed to apply pressure to paper being pressed onto the matrix (in printmaking, a matrix is a plate or block from which an impression is to be taken, as the print being made). In my printmaking practice, the roller has emerged as a very direct way of making prints. This recognition of the roller, symbolically and practically, is reason for my Confirmation presentation being titled 'My conceptual tool is a roller' (2022).

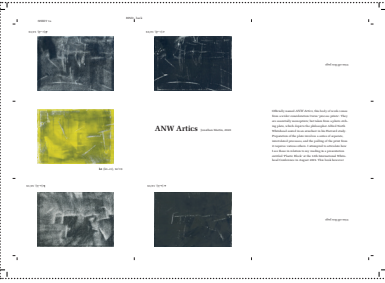
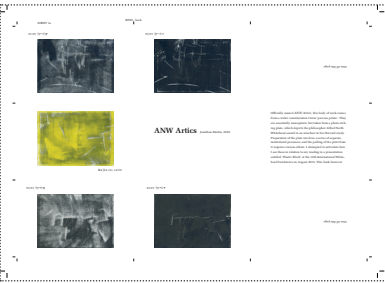


itself bore different 'imagery' – of the ink application marks on the plate rendered by the rubber squeegee; and that subsequent stages of removal rendered a fading sequence of these. So I started to take and preserve deliberate impressions of this process, laying them flat and allowing to dry, just as I would with the etchings I was preparing the plate for. This movement of uncovering and my thoughts around it is investigated in a small book I produced thereafter, *ANW Artics* (2020). Whilst on a level this discovery is unremarkable, its impact on my research has been profound. Noticing the process of making – *as work* – means that work (that of practice and research) can be appreciated as ongoing and constantly of potential.

Creative Anxiety

Although I am excited about the developments of my practice over the course of this research, and the ways of working which process thinking have afforded me,¹⁸ I am nonetheless hesitant to posit my work as having value. Perhaps this is an uncomfortable aspect of any creative practice, whereby creative practitioners are wont to question the worth of work which no-one has asked for: so can it be wanted? What indeed is the value of any work of art or non-practical design, in a world awash with products of excess and consumption? Such environmentally-related concerns aside, even in the 'art world', work which its creator deems 'new' is inherently problematic, defying the surety of ready, classification, as gauge of acceptability. These are some of my creative concerns, swilling around, which themselves may curtail making, contributing to the condition of *creative block*, as reasons not to try. A key part of the research has been to bring anxiety into the making mix: to work with anxiety, as a form of creative energy. This idea will be subsequently expanded, through the document.

My claim that the *ANW Artics* constitute prints might be challenged, since they are essentially an accident of process. Artistic practice, just as wider research, is rife with skepticism.



18. 'Process thinking' is a broader term than suggested in this usage. Whilst subsequently explored, it is often appended to references to the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead.

Catherine Abell, Professor of Philosophy of Art who writes about depiction and representational arts and aesthetics, questions whether even intentional prints can be thought of as having artistic significance. Whilst she argues that the 'diversity of printmaking practices means that many forms of printmaking are immune' to such challenge, she likewise finds that there are indeed grounds for skepticism (Abell, 2015:23). That print is not afforded the same artistic status as painting or sculpture, say, is (anecdotally) recognised in creative spheres, often due to the fundamentally mechanical reproducibility of prints as negating art's requirement of 'originality', discussed below. Even from within the discipline of intaglio, Stanley William Hayter quips: 'Why should one make a print at all? There are other means to multiply and vulgarize an image' (Hayter, 1966:15). For contextualisation here, Herbert Read in the *Preface* to this text, notes Hayter's commitment to 'the Cinderella of the arts' and his philosophy of collaborative action (which pursues combinations of the experiences of reality and imagination); in which his realisation of imaginative experience 'has depths and dimensions which extend beyond the individual' (Herbert Read; *ibid*:7–8). But from the perspective of aesthetic criticism, acknowledging the 'lack ... [of] artistic potential' in the print, Abell suggests that reliance on a pre-existing drawing (or found image, in the ANW case) as the matrix for printmaking, in a manner she calls 'drawing- ... [or] painting-dependent,' limits the capacity of a print to achieve creative significance (Abell, 2015:24). Although her identification of the rationale for this invalidation briefly refers to the relationship between artist and Master Printmaker who produces the artist's print, this thought could be variously extended in contemporary practises.

Print-dependency

Whilst in Abell's mention this reliance on a matrix is used as rationale for some creative paucity, I will subsequently discuss the vital capacity of a matrix – in some form or other; or as a concept



without any form of its own – to extend creativity.¹⁹ In the case of those individuals involved in the printmaking editioning that she alludes to, the project will develop through the working relationship. Moreover we might extend this consideration of working with others towards the inherent inclination of printmaking to actively embrace collaboration and hybridity throughout its long history. Various instances of this are evident across printmaking literature, although outside the scope of my research. Laying any internal skepticism regarding the validity and worth of my own practice aside, responding to Abell's intentionally-provocative questioning allows me to form an assertion. Printmaking, as a process-dependent art form, emphasises creative making; which to an extent my prints themselves depict. Therefore I argue that the significance of my Process Prints as a contribution to disciplinary knowledge, is that they are *print-dependent*.²⁰

Fear of wrongness; and becoming quite wrong

However, Abell's discussion also highlights the important notion of doubt in the context of practice, which although an element of the questioning that drives creative work, may also develop into a more problematic form of anxiety for the practitioner. For some time – perhaps three decades – I have struggled with how to identify myself in creative terms. When students describe themselves as 'artists' or 'designers' they are aspiring, which is laudable, as a fundamental aspect of 'becoming'. Yet beyond the structures and encouragements of a taught course, I sense requirement of a more public (or professional) achievement in order for such a title to be claimed. The professional creative world is intrinsically hierarchical, seemingly overseen by cultural gatekeepers. How to describe 'what I do' whilst fundamentally undecided of the perimeters of my practice, is an aspect of *creative block* in my rendering of it. Affects, such as discomfort, anxiety and fear – of both failure and success – play parts in the condition; including fear also of being labelled or compartmentalised;

19. At this point though, it is pertinent to introduce an adage, which has also underscored my practice and research: 'work makes work'. This is taken from the artist Richard Serra, for example the title of a 2008 show: *Drawings: Work comes out of work* (Serra, 2008). This notion also features in an address Serra made to the graduating students at Williams College, MA, which I have discovered at this point in my writing-up, but speaks to much of what is to follow:

Obsession is what it comes down to. It is difficult to think without obsession, and it is impossible to create something without a foundation that is rigorous, incontrovertible, and, in fact, to some degree repetitive. Repetition is the ritual of obsession. Don't confuse the obsession of repetition with learning by rote. I am suggesting a form of inquiry, a procedure to jumpstart the indecision of beginning. The solution to a given problem often occurs through repetition, a continual probing. The accumulation of solutions invariably alters the original problem demanding new solutions to a different set of problems. In effect, as solutions evolve, new problems emerge. To persevere and to begin over and over again is to continue the obsession with work. Work comes out of work (Richard Serra Commencement Speech at Williams College, 2008).

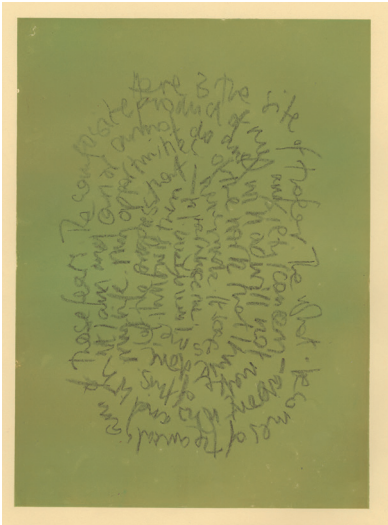
20. Beyond Abell's suggestions and my own allusions to collaboration in printmaking, I will also mention the capacity of printmaking processes and its outcomes to be diverse and include non-art world specialists. Aside from the availability of various means for producing prints (since I would consider digital prints as a method of printmaking), print is also one of the more-accessible routes by which non-practitioners (or consumers) may acquire 'art' – for it tends to be cheaper to buy than other art forms.

or of feeling forced to make choices, which somehow never feel quite 'right'. Block as I experience it involves an element of reluctance to commit in the face of sometimes overwhelming personal criticality, where the array of possibility and concerns regarding the consequences of 'getting it wrong' can obfuscate sense of direction, resulting in stasis. Tolerance – of uncertainty, of contradiction, of difference, of diversity, of a-normative queerness, of the discomfort of stumbling through it – is one of the factors of practice (and process) that could help becoming practitioners to hold all potentiality lightly, in order that we might operate creatively in the world. 'Becoming quite-wrong' has been another emancipatory realisation of my research, informed by the conceptual and physical poles of process thinking in practice.²¹

Presentation of self

Although I might grant myself mutability – or even flux-ability – regarding 'my practice' (in light of my learning), moving into a practice of making work after a long period of producing nothing necessitates continued questioning of quite how to introduce myself now ... Wariness here is compounded by awareness of and concerns around identity politics, which both contemporary existence and my developing study have brought into focus. The subjectivities we inhabit – voluntarily, aspirationally or when assumed or forced or labelled – are sites of thinking and actioning: should we choose (or locate the agency) to engage. These are some of the reasons that I have preferred to describe myself as 'becoming artist' recently, although this requires more unpacking than is possible in general conversation. Far beyond prevarication however, this is a chosen means of situating my current state of being, in which practice feels emergent-ly speculative, rather than set or otherwise established by any pre-given convention.

Although much of my work is print, I am reluctant to call myself a 'printmaker'. As a Foundation and then undergraduate art student, the printroom was where I began to discover creative



21. The context of this idea can be found in Biejódromo, p. 135.

practice. Here I mean 'my creative practice' as an appreciation of working through process: of allowing the work to direct its own development, rather than some idea of correctness, grounded in the established. Over those years of structured education I investigated the various techniques which a printroom might offer – relief, intaglio and photomechanical ways of working. But whilst enjoying these processes and the feeling of making, finding some affinity in the sense of emergence of an image, I rarely had any belief that what I was doing mattered much. Many reasons contributed to my lack of confidence, some cultural, some institutional, others personal, as aspects of creative doubt. Perhaps most relevant to my argument here though, is that I didn't attain any sense of mastery or real aptitude with a particular printmaking process. Printmaking seemed to require some discipline (in order to make technically-effective, beautifully balanced, visually-legible prints), and I wanted to breakaway from strictures and controls. Instead I revelled in the excitement of experimentation, pushing at boundaries, flaunting my lack of patience or concentration to concentrate on one thing in order to make it perfect: a variant of art school anarchist.

As a naive young person with enthusiastic aspiration, I thought I might revolutionise the medium and the way its discipline was perceived. The year 2000 was a time of energy and hope in the world, as I understood it then. Round about the time that I was working on my degree show, I saw Thomas Kilpper's *The Ring* in Southwark. This was a 'floor cut', in which Kilpper redeployed the parquet floor of an office building (which had been the site of the MOD printing press and previously a boxing ring) as a vast woodblock. The scale, materiality and attitude of this work did seem to matter, and was part of the inspiration for my terminal piece, *Jungle*: an 8x4 foot installation of a city-in-construction, an assemblage of print-made elements in a variety of materials, including salvaged litho plates that I screenprinted onto, and both lino- and woodblocks and their paper prints. *Jungle* is the



only work I have made that has ever been published in the media (*Printmaking Today*, 2000 [since it was awarded the *Printmaking Today* Student Prize that year]; *Crafts* 2003), but for a period of time I felt that I was doing something right. *Construction Awards* (2003), the BoW that developed out of that some years later, is perhaps the one I have most proud of until recently; though it has never been shown and is hidden away, on a top shelf. Here then is an example of my relationship with the phenomenon of 'hoarded gold' ... (Gardner, 1989:62).²²

Although I felt the promise, I didn't maintain the practice; and thereafter I stopped making work. In my experience, practice requires the care and attention of maintenance. When I began working again, almost accidentally, as a means of working through some conceptual problems in my MA dissertation (2015), it was in the printroom, with a collograph of found materials, thence redirecting the outcome of that study. The experience of working-through, the feeling of text and image as coexisting poles in a 'multiplicity of effort',²³ unforeseen at the outset of that dissertation, precipitated the current study (Whitehead, 1985:349). Therefore the grounding of my practice – including its *creative blocks* – in printmaking is reasonably well-established. The majority of my plastic practice has occurred in the printroom; my conceptual and physical tool is the roller; I think with ink. Yet my work is rarely shown, has never sold and therefore my professional attainment is questionable. Rather than making money from my efforts, it costs me to practise, rather as a hobby might. Since there is no evidence of my print practice online, neither it nor I as printmaker can be searched. Even as 'becoming practitioner' (i.e active producer of work), I would seem to have no presence, beyond my physical self and what I choose to show.

The question of how commercial success (or perception) relates to one's identity is beyond the scope of this study; as are the financial implications of creative practice. I am intending to articulate here that whilst I largely make work in the printroom, I



22. Philosopher of science Isabelle Stengers, begins her book *Thinking with Whitehead* with a quote from another book: *Grendel*, by John Gardner. Stengers explains that in his quest for a voice of 'nonhuman knowledge, more ancient than humankind' to give to a wise (if world-weary) dragon, Gardner turned to Whitehead's books (Stengers, 2014:2). In her reading of Whitehead, Gardner's choice for his creative problem of shifting the narrative slant from the ancient saga of *Beowulf* is apposite. We may already know what happens in the story, but in order to present 'the workings of the universe [as belonging] to what is given', Whitehead's benign assuredness makes his text fitting to be spoken by this mythical being in his bejewelled lair :

This dragon is 'beyond good and evil', beyond both the passion for constructing and for destroying illusory constructions. For him, nihilistic rage is just as absurd as belief, for everything is tied together, everything goes hand in hand, creation and destruction, lies and authenticity. And he knows that Grendel will choose excitement and violence, despite his advice, the only one he can give: seek out gold and sit on it ... (ibid).

I do not think that Whitehead is a hoarder of gold, rather a panner, or sifter. However, his texts contain many helpful perspectives for those on a quest for something ...

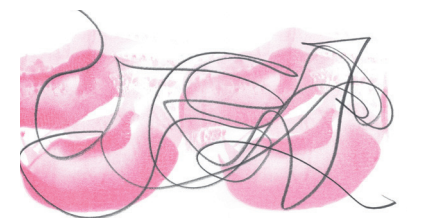
23. The dissertation tells the story of the study; which includes the realisation of choice to be made in its course of

claim no significant expertise in any printmaking process, other than in those I have 'made up' or invented – though is working directly with the roller even 'printmaking', really? Antony Griffiths, who was the British Museum's Assistant Keeper in the Department of Prints and Drawings states that: 'A print is in essence a pictorial image which has been produced by a process which enables it to be multiplied' (Griffiths, 1989:9). Alternately, from the perspective of arts educator, and questioning the possibility of a multiple being unique, Sylvie Turner reasons that whilst in the 'age old debate' the notion of 'an original print is now essentially associated with the integral participation of the artist in the process', that the print's originality 'is firmly based in the printing matrix and the acceptance of the principle of multiplication' (Turner, 1994:12). Despite the advances and subversions of creative practice, in which definitions are 'in a constant flux' (ibid), these basic premises are echoed across the literature (e.g. Castleman, 1983; Eichenberg, 1973; Lambert, 2001; Rothenstein, 1970; Williamson, 2013): a print is reproducible – and what I generally make is not. Although engagement with the literature has challenged my prejudices and provided visual stimulus and inspiration, I am nonetheless uncertain about how to term the actuality of my creative practice. This is part of the reason for my having taken the title for this block from the words of another person's reading of it.

Representation and resistance

I also recognise my innate, established resistance to prevalent forms of cultural representation. Some of this attitude stems from being labelled or categorised as early school experience, and the adolescent trauma born of the assumptions of stereotypification.²⁴ Psychical experience has a bearing on our perceptions of our worlds and therefore informs our creative responses. Questioning – of what we see, of what we are told – is a root cause of research, as is curiosity about what else we might find or the other ways in which things might function. In wider societal milieu, we must

development; and (crucially) the somewhat confessional identification of my own lack of plastic practice. I rarely spoke of this situation, since in my professional context I feared it would be unwise to admit to creative block. The collograph print, itself developed over very many impressions, came from a material representation of my sense of struggling with some of this concern, using found, textured materials to symbolise this. The experience of working through this informed my appreciation of the transformative power of creative agency: as ways in which novel insights can occur via choosing to concentrate on trying (and then developing) something currently unknown. I extend this story in *The feeling of a printroom*, p. 55.



hope that cultures of resistance always operate alongside, or counter to, those of fascism: in simultaneous response. On a level, the battles of civilisation attest to this patterning. Idealistically speaking, for every instance of atrocity, some act of reparation and its hope for regeneration is required.

Such resistances might also be seen in terms of practice, demanding of commitment and required to weather challenge. Regardless of any natural or ethical inclinations, refusal (to conform, to submit to pressure) also requires the care and attention of ongoing effort. But the effort to counter is generally arduous. This is where I believe creative collaboration can prove to be so vitalising. Working together tends to be refreshing and invigorating, however frustrating at times. Even the challenges that are encountered in collaboration are creative ones, and so intrinsically part of the work. In my experience, people who consider themselves 'creative' really want to be making work, so encounter degrees of frustration when dis-enabled. Our essential drive to bring something-into-being can become an intensity of affect. Whilst I do not overtly investigate 'desire' in this thesis, I contend that it is another vital factor of creativity.²⁵ In terms of my own creative practice, desire is broadly related to making a mark in the world. I want to feel that what I am endeavouring to make is in some way relevant to others. Increasingly, unfortunately, this seems to be bound-up in redressing damages perpetrated by destructive decision-making of our forebears. In the context of Education, the situation of my professional career for two decades, attempts to bring about positive change in recent times – to do good work; encouraging creative advance in areas such as social justice – have seemed most effective when people have felt empowered to work together, to speculate and attempt: when encouraged to not need to 'get it right'. Often this is where surprising, fruitful events have occurred.²⁶ A particular challenge is how to extend such work beyond the privileged (if problematic) environs of the arts institution.

24. For a young person lacking in self-confidence, growing up in the 1980s and 1990s in the wake of AIDS and Clause 28, homosexuality seemed dangerous. Even if it had seemed culturally permissive or attractive, I would not have dared to come out whilst at an all-boys comprehensive school. But young people are able to spot signs of weakness in their peers and exploit them, for sport or social hierarchy. I constructed an evasive front or carapace, in an attempt to deflect the sticks and stones of hurtful words.

25. Alison Ross argues that desire, according to Deleuze, is experimental and associated with an outside. The social dimension of desire, rooted in assemblage, defies dichotomies such as naturalism/artifice and spontaneity/law (Ross; in Parr [ed], 2005:63–5). This suggests desire in relation to novel direction and formulation.

26. The EPRG 24 hours ON EARTH event that we made in March 2022 (see below) is an instance of such an occasion. It was open, engaged and messy, designed to embrace the holes and flaws that would be uncovered and encountered in the event.

Therefore part of the effort of creative practice ought to be to share our experiences, for the supportive and constructive mutuality of intercommunication and cross-pollination. That I have acutely recognised this during the course of my research has had a bearing on my own wider practice, discussed below.²⁷ But I note that my practice is entangled, and that my professional positionality as arts educator is relevant to my arguments and the work I consequently produce. Contemporary Education is increasingly institutionally (and disciplinarily) stratified. State demand for quantification in the name of economic restrictions – and even, arguably, 'pedagogy' – more firmly embeds the fearful, pervasive hierarchies, amidst which educationists must practise. Agendas or drivers are far from being transparent; so educators may be variously wrong-footed or stumble into pitfalls, despite efforts to do good work for and with students. Perhaps paradoxically in such a tightening and risk-averse culture, survival seems to necessitate agility, so it is pertinent to avoid feeling set or being settled. In the creative context of portfolio careers, one ought have many strings to one's bow and be willing and able to fiddle-along in time to shifting rhythms and tempos, maestros and the score du jour. One strategy might be to open oneself to the possibilities of creating new spaces in which to explore our practices. The nurturing of supportive environments, in and around institutional milieu (be these very discrete, below the radar), has proven beneficial to my own navigation of the minefields. In some instances, the making of these spaces has proven vital to survival. Support networks operate and vibrate on all sorts of levels, reverberating into other modes of being and becoming.

One of the most important, if unlikely, events of this practice research period, has been the bringing to being of the Experimental Pedagogy Research Group. The EPRG occurred as a result of various factors, including that instance of so much professional activity moving online during Covid; but the research relationship with my now-DoS was key to its instigation.

27. See also a e o print show: an event, p. 239.



As determinedly experimental (in partial response to so much of the straitening of contemporary Education), the group is open, fluid and playful, with a growing membership from across the Education sector. Still meeting largely online, some of us will attend one or other of a pair of *now* monthly discussions to explore and wonder what we might try. Our *24hrs ON EARTH* was timed for UAL's 2022 Research Season, responding to its themes, from the conversations we had as a group and work we had been engaging with in various environments. It brought together a disparate range of international participants, practitioners and initiatives in a rolling event (on Teams and Zoom) that questioned 'how we learn to learn about racial, social and environmental injustice'. Our work necessarily continues. Latterly that event has spawned a publication: a folded broadsheet documentation / provocation, that we designed in collaboration and printed on the Heidelberg litho press at London College of Communication (July 2023).

Becoming process

The unexpected opportunities I have found to engage with peers during the course of this research have been variously important, for challenging my assumptions about the perimeters of practice. It has generally been encouraging to experience the ways in which a collaborative event develops sense of dimensional possibility. But regardless of the dynamics of interplay with others, I see challenge, development and possibility as crucial factors of 'becoming'. In terms of the (broader) processes of making, such becoming-ness is arguably the focus of my work. I understand making as process; and process underscores the practice I am developing through this study – which I have sometimes thought of as 'The process of *creative block*'. Even more than that of 'becoming', the philosophical nature of the term 'process' has been a revelation to me, informing the way I think about the work I make, just as it does the making of that work. The work of those thinkers who appear in this thesis – chiefly Alfred North Whitehead, though also Gilles Deleuze



and Félix Guattari, Jacques Derrida and Julia Kristeva – from the perspective of my research, is 'process thinking'.²⁸ My ideas about this will be subsequently developed, though the text and images which I present as documentation and articulation of my practice. Their various philosophies inform and thereby vitally developed my plastic practice, as well as the way that I think about the world. Process thinking underscores this thesis, as will be demonstrated through the manuscript and by the viva event.²⁹

The ways of working of a particular printroom have provided me with resources to explore the practical-materiality of my project; and the space to thereby develop my plastic practice. This printroom was also a site of my initial realisation of *chōra*: the concept which perhaps more than any other, has helped my speculations regarding process to move beyond any confines of the physical or material, allowing me to apply my practice to the thinking I read. The interplay of ideas, physical and conceptual, which the time and space of research have engendered and nurtured, continue to challenge and concern me, as provocation for creative response through its various revolutions.

Movements for change

In *Printmaking: A Contemporary Perspective*, Paul Coldwell dedicates a chapter to the *Political Imperative* of the art form. Coldwell explores 'some of the ways print has been used to register resistance or be a vehicle for change', ranging through the social critique and personal, cultural or political perspectives of practitioners including Honoré Daumier, Bartolomeu Dos Santos, Sang-gon Chung, Kennard Phillipps, Willie Cole and William Kentridge (Coldwell, 2010:103). He identifies: '[the] immediacy and urgency within print that lends itself with an engagement with movements for change' (*ibid*). The printing press is regularly cited as a technology with particularly significant impact on emancipation or communication. From historical perspective however, in China relief printing on paper for the dissemination of text had been in

28. There are many other writers (and indeed artists) that I could add to this 'category' of thinkers, including the various commentators and secondary sources that I have engaged with, some of whom will be mentioned in subsequent text blocks. But although process thought is crucially important to the development of my practice, in this thesis I will attempt to constrain my discussions to that material most appropriate to the terms of creative practice as I experience it. The point has been to make work from *block*; which then generates other kinds of work – to paraphrase Richard Serra (1994).

29. Regardless of my anxiety concerning labels and following my logic regarding the centrality of involvement with 'making' in a creative practice, the term 'printmaker' is among the most processual of all disciplinary categories. Whilst 'painter' or 'photographer' both imply activity, this discipline (along with that of film) includes the active verb in its nomenclature

operation 800 years prior to Gutenberg’s moveable-type printing press; although disregarding the role of paper in printmaking, seals used to make impressions, such as the cylinder seals that hold cuniform ‘text’, had been in circulation millennia previously. Entanglement of legislation (or doctrine), communication / dissemination, and practices of insubordination, is well-established in printmaking process, regardless of the relative speeds or slownesses of activities / results / responses. That the press is traditionally the tool of the State is an aspect of this dynamic, whether ‘State’ in our worldview indicates the particular body which publishes political propaganda, the texts of organised religion or the doctrines of governance of the institutions of Education. If it has been printed, set out in black and white for all to see and understand or be told, then it must be obeyed ... We might doubt whether even historically this was actually ever the case, since whatever people might profess in public, it is rarely the whole of their truth; and often an aspect of game-play.

As Gilles Deleuze explores in a chapter titled *The Image of Thought* in his 1968 book *Difference and Repetition*, the notion that thought (by which we might mean people’s endeavours to understand) is underscored by respectful good behaviour and aspiration to morality, reason or acceptable rightness is quite wrong. This is the authorised version of the ‘world of representation in general,’ which obfuscates the coexistence of ‘central bad nature and ill will’ within thought (Deleuze, 1994:136–7). Of course, in a world deemed post-truth by some social media commentators, thoughtful humans might be wont to skepticism regarding anything which is so given.³⁰ Nowadays, propaganda and spiritual instruction are no longer the preserve of State Authorities, apt to be manipulated by any type of social influencer with access to digital technology, for purposes of self-profit or aggrandisement. The world does certainly not seem post-Capitalism to me, despite the promise that cultural commentators such as Paul Mason saw



30. From another perspective, the Anthropocene – our geological age of climate crisis due to centuries of humankind’s poor stewardship of the planet and personal greed – is testament to a general social adherence to rules of self-interest.

in the ‘information revolution’ of the Internet (Mason, 2015). I write at a time of deep uncertainty and anxiety, of political fatigue and social dismay. These are factors of life on earth which affect human creativity, since in my experience, plastic creativity is affected by the vibrations and undercurrents of the environments in which it occurs.

Yet a process view of culture and society recognises that things are rarely black and white; and that redness is context-specific.³¹ Barbara Kruger’s 1987 ‘Shoppito’ screenprint, given as an example of dissent in Coldwell’s chapter (above; though my own nomenclature), adorns giftshop mugs and t-shirts; Banksy’s guerrilla-stencilled murals are removed from public accessibility, preserved, commodified, guarded, auctioned, self-destruct ... Although there may be conceptual and physical poles (as Whitehead suggests) in thinking and making, or societal and cultural occurrences, rather than being binary positions these are more fruitfully appreciated as sliding mechanisms. Such analogy may be extended into (my) plastic practice. The devices of the printroom, its pulleys, levers, axles and buttons, can be creatively hacked, employed for subversion. Artefacts may be over-printed or reappropriated. Conditions of opacity and translucency in the use of certain ink, allow layers of meaning to be seen through, generating novel thought or perception. The palimpsest may be a printmaking trope; but being able to perceive traces of sedimented creative endeavour or expression of others’ perception can allow a reader or viewer to expand their own perspectives regarding an object of contemplation.

Creative collaboration(s) that process thinking

My appreciation of ‘layering’ as an approach in monoprint-making, is a reasonably recent occurrence.³² But print’s capacity to involve both text and image has long been a key aspect of its importance in my engagement with it, to process life experience – which can constitute material for any would-be ‘creative’ to work

31. This is an allusion to Whitehead’s discussion in a chapter of *The Concept of Nature* titled *Theories of Bifurcations of Nature*. Whitehead is talking about nature as process (e.g. the redness of a sunset), attempting to move beyond the usual given / widely-accepted causal and apparent component theories. He will argue for relational considerations, to counter the ‘bifurcations’ he perceives in such established thinking. Such considerations, of other events need to be brought into the equation: ‘When red is found in nature, what else is found there too?’ (Whitehead 1920:21).

32. This is discussed in *superficial inversions* p. 189.

with. The text-image interplay is perhaps the most foundational tenet in my professional practice teaching graphic design; or latterly on a Creative Advertising course. Whilst in other times, if pressed I have been wont to describe myself as an ‘image-maker’, for some years now I have perceived the generation of text to constitute a significant aspect of my personal creativity and developing practice. Collaboration with Paul McAlinden, who has designed books and exhibition catalogues throughout his career over many decades, has become a significant aspect of my interest in the ‘textures’ and dimensionality of creative practice. Intelligent graphic design activates the elements it works with for effective communication; although contemporary graphic designers tend to rely on the dimensions of what they see on screen, which doesn’t necessarily translate into printed artefact. Paul’s eye was trained through practices of physical compositional in the analogue design, layout and paste-up. Much as the hot metal typographers of previous centuries, he perceives text spatially, actively creating dynamic space in his layouts that allow for the conceptual ‘breath’: thinking space. His typography allows me to appreciate the capacities of my own text. Our collaboration (mmproductions) has generated a number of publications, though as artists’ books these are extremely small-run and have not been offered for sale. However, the ways in which we have worked together with the material of my research, (for example, to create the ANW Artics book), has extended my appreciation of the very processes of research. Being able to reformat work, even as I am making it, allows it to be disseminated among peers, to be questioned and thereby extended

Opportunities to present research-in-progress have been vital for me as a research practitioner, such as those of the RNUAL (Research Network UAL) Research Degree programme where I have trialled-and-errored presentation possibilities, or external conferences such as the International Whitehead Conference in Brasilia (2019). Whether more traditional arenas of seminar,

conference or exhibition, or the more counter-cultural environs of the picnic, festival or opera-rave, bringing together different people and ideas in mid-formulation, to investigate, celebrate and generate, these events are both anxiety-inducing and deeply rewarding. A PhD project will culminate in a thesis, but much value occurs outside this necessarily partial, formalised outcome. The various semi-public events of my research period have proved of various significance, which is part of my rationale for planning an event show around my viva. Believing my research variously relevant, I would like to engage others in the possibilities to ‘make’ that I have found. A workshop idea, ‘Extend’, is currently developing, and will be outlined subsequently (see pp. 256 – 8).

Most people will not read a doctoral thesis, but might be able to appreciate the value of a single page of text, especially one thoughtfully typeset, whereby text is perceived almost as image. At one point during my research, exploring textual forms, I set myself the exercise of writing to 1000-word limits. Extending this exercise, in a BoW titled *Typos* (2021), Paul set these texts, employing a typographic range of vocal register, with breathing space to emphasise particularities and encourage consideration. Although a series, each piece evolved from our discussion regarding its character and therefore relevant styling. Perhaps this BoW might even constitute a multiple, with requisite variation and difference in its elemental repetition ... Whilst the thinking is dense and multilayered, its presentation appears inviting and accessible, playfully spirited even. In this vein we considered the *Typos*’ utility as vehicle for communication: could such text, with its searchingly-personal exposure, function in a bus stop shelter? Each *Typo* has therefore been designed in a range of sizes, from poster, through placard to postcard. Thinking about them again now, a contextual reference might be Gillian Wearing’s 1992-93 renowned photographic series in which people and text make image, *Signs that Say What You Want Them To Say and Not Signs that Say What Someone Else Wants You To Say*. Familiar devices, such as

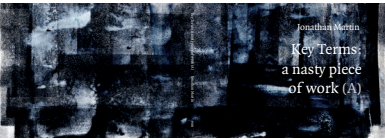


the photographic portrait or numbered figures can be utilised to express more complex intentions or underlying concerns.

‘a nasty piece of work’

A vital turn in my practice occurred during the generation of a particular BoW, which in turn developed into our mmproductions book (*Key Terms / a nasty piece of work*: 2021) It also marks a particular moment in my practical appreciation of the role of experience, as material, for creative response. During the winter and spring of 2020/21, I encountered a professional situation which affected my sense of self profoundly. One of my reactions to the tumbling sequence of events, was to produce a BoW of linocut single words (in various typefaces. I printed these in very particular colours, and in relation to one another, such as being paired in ostensible opposition. Working in this way was an act of catharsis, or working-through an intensity of feeling, in a more focussed way than I had ever done previously in plastic practice. My intention was overtly critical, utilising words from the experience that felt incendiary, as a result of the maelstrom I was encountering.

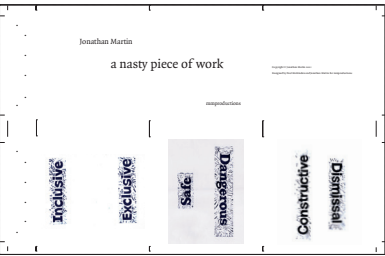
During the intensity of producing these print works, I overtly recognised my agential capacity to ‘make something of it’; but also as imperative, in the midst of a study of creative process. I worked with the small lino blocks for a period, exploring their several possibilities in my frustration, occasionally scrawling angrily into the print with other mark-making tools: realising the affect, in much the way one might in a therapeutic situation. Having made a large number of prints, I turned to Paul, my design collaborator, sifting through the piles to see whether some narrative or other rationale might emerge from the *melée*. Through processes of discussion, we identified a selection, scanned and paginated them, eventually hand-producing two versions of artist’s book, each in an edition of three. My preferred version employs a double-gatefold device; so that when opening the book at any place, the reader meets a blank spread, each half of



which may be opened-out to reveal the printed pages concealed within its folds. The content, or text-image, of the book, which is likely to appear somewhat contentious, has to be actively sought out by a curious reader.³³ Its impact is not immediate, but rather insidious, prompting a questioning of meaning and intention. As the outcome of collaborative processes, which could not have been achieved in isolation, the book was satisfyingly complete – regardless of its air of underhand suggestiveness; or of whether-or-not it is shared. Those people who have had sight of it will derive their own reactions and opinions; but for me the production of such an artefact seemed contextually-apposite, as creative response to professional sociocultural difficulty.

Process Prints

Differently relevant to the development of my creative practice was the technique that emerged whilst making these linocut prints. My working process when printmaking tends to be fairly loose, generating quantity, even if I subsequently refine some aspect that I have noticed in the course of that process of exploration. In optimal circumstances (given durational immersion in working space) I work relatively fast: the relief process of linocut printmaking itself engenders this dynamic. I might utilise several rollers of different hues simultaneously, not least since I enjoy the capacity of printmaking ink to mix with or resist other ink on the block, creating unexpected visual effects, such as the glimpse of palimpsest. My process inclines to less-methodical and more-intuitive methodology, with resultant mishaps and accidents. Sometimes the ink I have picked up on the roller is too thick to apply, gloopy rather than tacky, so needs to be offset a little – in a similar way to that of the photo-etching process articulated above (ANW Artics). Just as in that BoW, it was during the operation of offsetting ink onto some scrap paper, that I suddenly noticed a ghost of the image (of one of those linocut words) from a previous application, coming through the ink. The roller, functioning



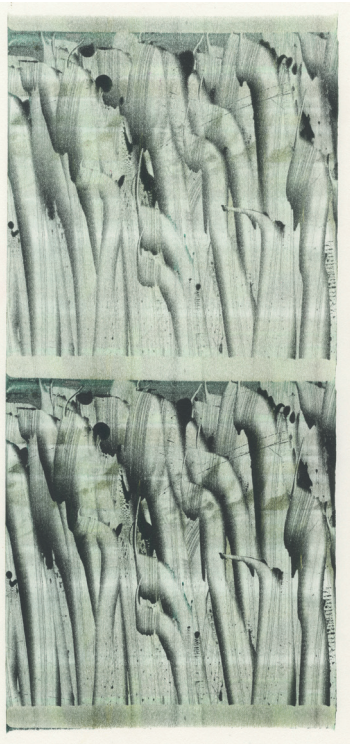
33. During this study I have bought many old books, copies of texts (which precipitated the wider *Printmade Book Jackets* BoW, in collaboration with Paul McAlinden). Occasionally some pages of these are ‘untrimmed’, in bibliophile jargon: which means that the printed pages have not been separated at the foreedge and so remain unread. It is for this reason that one may require a paper knife (thought they may have more economic value if this unreadability is preserved ...). Whilst a different formatting concern to that of the *Key Terms* volume described, this highlights the active relationship that a reader might have with a book’s content; or the viewer or participant of an exhibition or event. Interaction is a pertinent consideration in the context of creative work; as of event.

as matrix, had retained the trace of that earlier movement and brought it into this present moment of making. In my creative activity of noticing, what might have been waste product became print itself. Contextually, conceptually, this was relevant. I could begin to echo traces of other words in the current word-subject: for my purpose in this endeavour was to indicate the depth and associations of some of these terms.

From the perspective of the ways I go about making prints, this event of chance has proved yet more revolutionary. Since producing that BoW, I have largely dispensed with (or rethought) the block as matrix, to concentrate on the roller’s own capacity to transfer information or data. The technique I call ‘Risoller’ is an extension of that understanding [p. 271]; and the greater body of Process Prints are generated as a result of the realisation. Although I am reluctant to label my practice, and in spite of any equivocation or concerns regarding ‘validity’, I am very certain that these are prints. As Sylvie Turner allows in her handbook for professional practice: ‘if the artist decides it is a print, then it is!’ (Turner, 1994:13). Beyond my own practice however, my thesis is that the understandings associated with this creative turn constitutes a significant contribution to knowledge. The thesis as a whole articulates this claim: of process as fundamental.

Stories of blocks³⁴

In critically exploring my own practice during the course of this research, I have discovered much about myself. Whilst this learning is relevant to my own creative development and might make for a good story if sensitively presented, the value of my practice research has a broader basis: an approach to consideration regarding creative concerns, rooted in process. Although I entered the Research Degree in 2017 with a BoW made in the two years prior to starting it, and have generated a vast quantity in the ensuing duration, I argue that the *creative block* which precipitated



34. My Supervisors pointed me to a pertinent reference: Chris Ware’s *Building Stories* (2012). This is a ‘graphic novel’ set in a New York apartment block, comprising of a series of printed works (books, pamphlets, broadsheets) collected together in a box, to be explored as a reader or viewer will. Although my thesis manuscript has a particular form, its narrative would also lend itself to other realisations or actualities.

the study remains at the centre of my practice. Whether central or more peripheral, I am suggesting that ‘creative block’ is a factor of creative practice, to which anyone engaging with some variation of the novel, aspiring to creative advance, is susceptible at some point.³⁵

Through the processes of my research, I have understood – beyond my initial premises – that *creative block* is paradoxically fluid, in that it can morph and shift. My *block* now is not what it was then. In addressing my own creative position, being frank about what I discover, and extending my insights, I intend to render the phenomenon usefully practicable. If such aspiration seems initially unlikely, that is an aspect of its allure, as novelty. My claim regarding the ‘universality’ of *creative block* (albeit it fundamentally personally-situated), stems from the wider research of my experience of-and-about creative milieu, over the three decades since I entered art school as a Foundation student. As student, tutor and practitioner, often simultaneously, I have been party to the creative concerns of others, including resistances, refusals or incomprehensions. Whilst I started this project intending to explore some case studies, it soon became apparent that the details of *block* matter far less than the activities it might precipitate. It is fairly easy to locate lurid stories of infamous instances of not being able to make, the pains and suffering associated with that; and by association, analyses of probable causality.³⁶ If interested in such situations, many of us are familiar with various approaches to kick-starting a stalled practice, one or other of which is likely to work. My entry-level BoW about not-making work, became an mmproductions book, titled *A View* (2020); from the point of embarking upon a Research Degree I realised that my focus on ‘the block’ was itself opening up the possibilities of making work. This thesis presents that material evidence, as articulation of creative concern.

35. Since I mean for this research to generate practicable suggestions, and in spite of it being predicated on my own particular experiences, the terms I use to describe practice are generalisable – though informed by my research. Terms such as ‘work’, ‘making’ and ‘creative production’ can be variously applied or understood; so I should reiterate my context of the plastic creativity of ‘the arts’.

In my appropriation of ‘novel’, I draw from Whitehead’s ‘creative advance into novelty’ (e.g. 1985:29); but intend ‘novel’ to indicate work or making process that is driven by some individual purpose, all be that a brief or commission, rather than more mechanical operations of carrying out instructions or following directions set by others. It implies freshness, vivacity; and fun. ‘Enjoyment’ is a term which Whitehead sometimes uses, characteristically fluidly. In *Process and Reality* for example, he speaks of enjoyment in a context of ‘well being’ (1985:9), in relation to his ideas around ‘feeling’ – which approximate to Samual Alexander’s ‘use of enjoyment’ (ibid:41). His call to process is antidote to the cleaver of binary thinking, which ‘does violence to that immediate experience which we express in our actions, our hopes, our sympathies, our purposes, and which we enjoy in spite of our lack of phrases for its verbal analysis (ibid:49–50).

36. Visual artists such as Agnes Martin, Jackson Pollock, Louise Bourgeois or William Blake are famous examples. There are likewise many books and online listicles about approaches to overcoming or beating ‘block’. However, in my research I have not found any evidence of practitioners turning to their blocks as a source of creative inspiration, which has been my own novel approach in the inception of this project.

Pedagogy

In other sections of my thesis, I discuss the terms of ‘process’ as I intend it, as of relevance to deeper appreciations of creative practice. This includes the crucial aspect of ‘creativity’ – although I make no claim to fully address that term, which requires a study far beyond any single PhD project. In this present discussion of my own creative practice (as extended ‘positioning statement’ through overview of its key developments), I understand my creative practice as involving not only the plastic production of print and associated design aspects, but also of writing and presentation, including teaching and learning; and of making creative connections. Despite this being a practice of thirty years, involving associated shifts, events and extended hiatus, I sometimes reason that I am only just beginning this practice ... There is certainly an intricate relationship between learning and practice, both of which are ideally ongoing. From my experience working with educators on the PGCert in Academic Practice, even a confident practitioner will be affected by doubts regarding the validity of their practice. I suggest doubt is a necessary provocation for creative advance; although it can easily tip into creative paralysis.

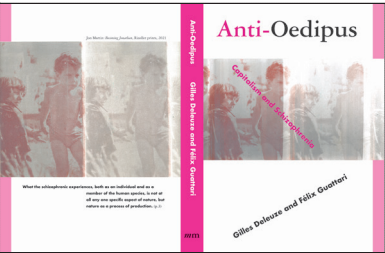
As described in the *Key Terms* instance, I have started to realise means of channeling affect into work.³⁷ The twists and upheavals of life experience have brought its elements into sharper focus at various points, though one constant throughout my study has been my involvement with the mechanisms and concerns of Education. I believe very deeply in the transformative capacity of education, and in its essential role in the nurturing of a healthier and more equitable society. Critical appreciation, if encouraged and developed, could have positive bearing on the future of our beleaguered planet. People afforded the privilege of a Higher Education have some responsibility for extending that benefit, beyond our own betterance. Those of us who have engaged in some form of creative education are likely to have

37. This is an important aspect of my own creative concern, and has been a factor of my research. It is perhaps one of the reasons for my practice being suggested as ‘cosmo-psycho-analytic’, as regarding the experience of life material for creative attention. However, I have decided not to extend this area of consideration in the present thesis, since it necessitates a level of psychological investigation or discussion which would detract from the points I am focussing on here. However, affect remains pertinent to my ideas regarding the processing of the material of experience; so my research could be subsequently directed into these environs.

learned approaches to ‘being in the world’ and skills for making something of that, and approaches to extending and sharing our findings, understandings or appreciations with others. If only we could learn to share more thoughtfully, we might collaboratively develop rather than continue to consume.

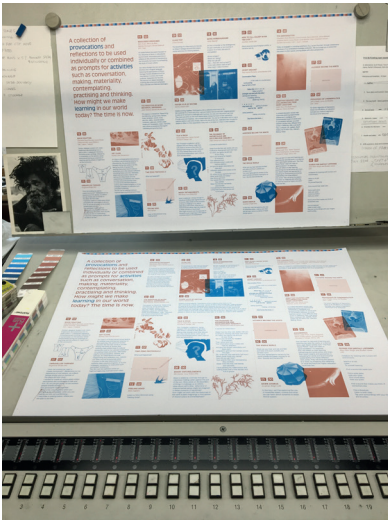
Creative education, as I see it, is worth fighting for, or better yet taking care of. For we have some choice in approaches to combat forces of fascism,³⁸ but to recognise this agency we must be continually attentive to the dangers, including those of helpless complacency, and respond to our contextual experiences with sensitivity. The variations of thinking which Deleuze and Guattari relate in terms of ‘nomadic’, recognise context and propensities; and as Michel Foucault suggests in his Preface to *Anti-Oedipus*, volume I of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, constitute a celebratory, even nurturing introduction to practices for non-fascist ways of life. (Michel Foucault; in Deleuze and Guattari, 2003:xii-xiii). If professionally I am prepared to view myself as an arts educator, it is because I am broadly concerned with creative pedagogies: the teaching and learning that occur in and around the institutional curricula, and feel a sense of personal commitment to the cause. Therefore ‘pedagogy’ here relates the wider context of my practice, and so why it (and therefore this research) might be described as ‘deeply pedagogic’. Just as ‘creativity’, pedagogy is a term with a multiplicity of meaning and intention, and is problematic on various levels; not least its etymology in Ancient slavery. Since it may be variously questioned and contested, this term acts as provocation in some quarters. Such questioning and challenge encourage the sorts of critical appreciations that I consider vital to the healthily progressive educational ecosystem to which I aspire to contribute. The environs of the EPRG have provided space for the sorts of discussions which many caring educators want to engage with; and encourage me to continue working with the group in our attempt to found a Critical Creativity Research Centre for / beyond the university.

38. I am alluding here to threats to a liberal and fluid creative education system, which can be perceived in national and nationalistic politics, as well as the diktats which emanate from operational management with its associated focuses. Much of my rationale in this opinion is a result of personal experience in the sector, presented anecdotally, as outside the research scope. There are various broader generalisations which pertain to these ongoing sociocultural or political concerns in the philosophical literature I cite (e.g. Foucault; in Deleuze and Guattari, 2003:xi–xiv).



Apart from these larger ideals, this thesis is intended to have pedagogic utility. I am employed as an educator, so Education its the context of much of my working practice. I have taught on a Foundation in Art and Design course ever since 2000 when I completed my BA: initially at Middlesex where I had been a student, then at Chelsea, and since 2011 at the amalgamated CCW course. At time of writing we are about to enter the last academic year of that, prior to UAL's pre-degree courses phased move to Lime Grove starting in September 2024; with whatever opportunities for rethinking that brings. Beyond the studio, I taught on various units of UAL's MA Academic Practice for eight years until 2020. In that same year I co-founded the EPRG with Mark Ingham, Reader in Critical and Nomadic Pedagogies.

This newest development of my practice – within a group – has coincidentally and somewhat ironically, afforded me the opportunity to play a part in the generation of a printed 'multiple'. This outcome has wider reach than any project I have been involved in previously, whether individual or collaborative. As an aspect of the 24hrs ON EARTH event, some of us worked with (funded) student designers, to produce a document(ation) of the event. Offered as a provocation for teaching, learning, activism or further research, it has been disseminated across UAL, for any curious member of staff or student to takeaway and utilise as they choose. The broadsheet (printed in blue and earth-gold; packed in a bright orange envelope for mailing) has also been circulated to our international membership and their collaborators, including those in Asia, Europe, North America and the West Indies. Creating the publication has been as demanding as any collaboration is likely to be, requiring investment of time I didn't feel I had and compromise to preferences. But through this research I have learned that involvement is essential within creative practice. Whether it be resistance or extension, becoming involved affords different appreciations. A project might be speculative and what it produces may seem unsuccessful, but there will be learning as a



result. The hope of creative pedagogy involves faith in the unseen and unknowable, and in the powers of becoming, as ongoing practice. If my involvement with the publication makes something of a lie of my claim to focus solely on one-off prints (with limited accessibility for any others), that likewise speaks to the becoming-ness of my practice, which is underscored by 'learning to learn'.

The making-experience; and where it takes us

I will presently consider the way in which prints, as outcome of my practice, function to extend my practice. Yet it is important to reiterate that prints are *made*, and that the making is essential: the *activity* of practice is of primary importance. Indeed, I often feel that it is the doing of the work which is the most crucial aspect for me; so the 'space of making' is one which I have a keen sense of, conceptually (or affectively), as well as physically. Whether this is the rhythmically-repetitious building of something that inculcates a meditative calm, a painstaking crafting which focusses concentration by its physical demands, or some more speculatively expressive or experimental activity, in which one grapples with problems, making *feels* like something.³⁹ This is an aspect of why not being able to make, not finding that 'space', is so painful for those of us who have previously experienced the invigorating sensations associated with making. It is no accident that I will sometimes discuss such states of making anecdotally in relation to the intensity of the hit of some drug, as a feeling-altering experience, or by association the withdrawal and craving which accompany drug-taking, be that recreational, experimental or medicinal. Although making is an extension of the way we might be feeling outside the 'studio' (as example of a physical site of making), it can also heighten affect or change the mood, taking us beyond ourselves or deeper within.

From my experiences of the intensities both of making and not-making work, making feels like a more 'real' life experience. It engages aspects of myself, as creative being or 'creature' (e.g.



39. The association with the term 'feeling' are broad and therefore helpfully amorphous. I intend it here in relation to the affective sensation of involuntary reaction; but subsequently outline the way(s) in which Whitehead employs 'feeling' to describe an aspect of the process by which realities come into being or occur..

Also relevant to note in this making context is the work of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi on what he terms the 'Flow Concept'. Csikszentmihalyi, whose University of Chicago PhD thesis was titled *Artistic Problems and Their Solutions* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1965), discovered instances of artists being engrossed in the making of work, only to lose interest in that piece once completed. See e.g. Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi, 2002:89.

Whitehead 1985:22) that may otherwise lie dormant. Between 2003 and 2015 when I was unable to make, I felt only partially alive. Though I functioned well, kept myself busy, made money and maintained relationships, part of 'me' was missing – or rather, my sense of self was partial. In those periods of time now where I experience not-making, I am subjected to feelings of lack and craving. To some extent, creative practice may be equated with addiction. Whilst arguably healthier than some, nevertheless it must be fed, nurtured, maintained. It may become preoccupation, as Richard Serra suggests (see also p. 25 n.19).

In the rhythm of activity which I presently find myself, where / when possible I will find a way to make prints. This involves negotiation of college printmaking space and the politics around that, since I cannot printmake at home and cannot afford a studio. The need to make, the desire to feel making, drives me to find ways and means. Whilst the fear of starting or of the blank sheet is a constant, the repetition of going-back again (which Alison Green has spoken about, in relation to her practices of research with Carolee Schneemann's archive [Green, *Test Lab*: 2019]) – even as events of some compulsion or other – means that anxiety can be accommodated, another part of an experimental whole. Once one starts, momentum kicks in. The trip begins.

As the previous incarnation of Doctor Who says to human companion Donna in a recent book, when showing-off the TARDIS' capacity to navigate space-time – even when the controls have been set to 'Random' and the experience is hair-raising: Why would you not want to carry on doing something you enjoy? (Temple, 2023:26-7). There is arguably something TARDIS-like about a practice's deceptive interior expansion, as there is in the ability a practitioner has to negotiate space and time when making – and a Time Lord-ian trait in practice's regenerative potential. There is also pedagogic wisdom in the Doctor's recognition of Donna's 'fear ... joy ... [and] wonder' (ibid: 26). I will investigate the 'chōric' connection I see in this inter-relationship subsequently. It will be



Keith Temple, 2023

evident from the archive I have compiled over the past few years that I enjoy generating prints – or am otherwise deeply compelled. Yet these same archives also attest to my doing little with what I have made. As noted above, I do not sell or exhibit my work commercially. The mmproductions work (such as the ongoing *Printmade Book Jackets* [2020–]) has been an important aspect of my intention to do something with this, yet my work generally remains under wraps. Around the time of RD Confirmation at the start of 2022, I noticed that my *block* had shifted again: from not-making; into the printmaking block as matrix for making; into material for my practice; into the hoard of prints I had made (through *block*) and concealed from view – realised as an awkward emotional and physical weight. I discuss this, and my creative response to it, in *a e o print show: an event* (p. 239).

'Blocks' and events of sharing

That event of sharing caused me to wonder about the capacity of this work – my prints – to affect others, or be of different value elsewhere. Their capacity for engendering feeling or for affective transportation, might exist in different space to that of their making. Again I see testament of the propensity of practice research to raise its own questions, through itself. What is this 'work', of creativity? And: where is work made?

During the summer of 2023 I invited individual people to come and see my work, or took it to them. I perceive these as events: in both the sense that they were occasions conceived, for purpose; but also in a philosophical sense of being something more unexpected which shifts something or makes a change. One took place in the Foundation printroom at the Wilson Road Foundation campus, another in one of its studios where I usually teach, another in a venue on Shepherd's Bush Green, adjacent to Lime Grove – erstwhile site of a BBC studio complex, where the TARDIS ('Time And Relative Dimension(s) In Space') was first televised. All of these are sites of transition, places of passage. The



events as conceived, were selectively particular, and as so many post-Covid meetings, where the physical proximity of another person may be more valued, no longer taken for granted. I felt a personal, addictive need: my burgeoning craving for sharing, assuaged for some time by the *a e o* experience, had become acute. I was envisaging the prints I have made during this past year as the culmination of my PhD research, to show and be Examined at the viva. Whilst they have evolved from the preceding efforts and experiments with process, they are informed by a combination of psychological wrangling, conceptual reasoning and my developing visual vocabulary. I have written through my sense of two of these BoW, *cosmic magics* and *superficial inversions*;⁴⁰ but wondered whether the third, *Bruises and Veins*, might benefit from the discussion of interaction. Rather than work out what this work is / does through writing,⁴¹ as has been my habit, I wanted to explore how others' readings and reactions effected their meaning for me.

The people whose company I sought are 'creative collaborators', whose perspectives I appreciate and of whose criticality I can be reasonably assured. As so often, my expectations were confounded by these (conceptually and physically) chōric events with invited others. They had reactions which I would not have anticipated, made comments which surprised me and caused me to think about things I had not intended to. One of these interlocutors wondered if I had ever printed onto fabric: I had not, so his question involved me embarking on another BoW, so at time of writing, the practice for this thesis is incomplete – in the process of becoming. Another saw these efforts and recognised that they might serve a particular, practical purpose, and thus an idea for showing my work at viva.

Whitehead talks about the endeavour of creativity to transform 'disjointed multiplicity ... into concrescent unity, with its diversities in contrast' (Whitehead, 1985:348). Elements of our worlds are brought together or come together, work together, yet retain their

40. Both theses titles are quotes from texts (the first by Félix Guattari, the second by Gilles Deleuze [the *superficial inversions* text was initially an appendix, integrated into the thesis body post-Viva]). All the writing I have produced (i.e. formatted / designed, for dissemination) will be available at the viva events.

41. I have latterly begun to think of this way of working as akin to Julia Kristeva's concept of *signifiante*. As with all the concepts of others I utilise, I have processed *signifiante* through my own experiential lenses; but doing so allows me to appreciate further dimensions to practice. See Kristeva's '*semiotic chora*', p.167.



vital differences, as aspects of variation. I cannot say that any of the people with whom I shared it have 'liked' the work, but the *Bruises and Veins* BoW is deliberately uncomfortable or awkward; intentionally ugly. In watching them look at what I brought to them, in this sharing, I noticed things. Each of them responded in a way that suggested some form of creative response from me, to subsequently offer them in thanks. In an email response to that, one of them made the comment about my practice as 'cosmo-psycho-analytic and deeply pedagogic' (O'Reilly, 2023b), which I then asked permission to use as the subtitle for this block. They are not terms which I would have thought up or composed without the exchange of creative thinking, but inform this instance of writing about my creative practice. Having written a poem in and about the space another event created for me, its recipient found a poem that spoke to that in return; and suggested a film for me to watch (an event to follow). Such creative responses and suggestions inform the whole of this thesis: since whilst the work of detailing the practice of *creative block* is my own, it has been created from material effected, hewn and shaped by experience. Its findings and ideas should encourage further response.

'Making space'

One of the responses to these summertime events of concrescence (or coming together: see pp. 186–7) was that the prints I showed 'make space ...' (O'Reilly, 2023a). The resonances of that observation reverberate throughout this block, though allow me to reach no conclusion regarding meaning. But the idea is fecund. If my prints allow others to find some different space, they have value, beyond my enjoyment of their various process. The making of space, for thought, or feeling, or response, or learning, is a valuable contribution to the world we inhabit, incongruously at times: it might also be seen as essential, a creative imperative. As an arts educator, my effort is concentrated on creating a mutually-supportive environment, for the explorative experimentation of



ideas, materials and processes, to allow each individual participant in the learning experience to find some direction, or engage their interest, or open-up discussion and therefore extend perspective. I am personally more enamoured of the idea of facilitating learning than I am by particular notions of 'teaching'. Through the internet we can access much of the facts-and-figures quantitative knowledge we might need; so from my perspective the responsibility and creativity of the contemporary pedagogic practitioner is to help others (e.g. students) to apply their own critical lenses to the information we locate together: to identify what might be of use to them, how they might use it now; and to respond to their efforts and discoveries.

The TARDIS as a time-and-space travelling device allows its occupants, human or other, to explore the galaxies, to alight on some different star or new patch of ground, to see, hear, feel, experience other forms of life, different realities. Books – physical or digital – in which we can read about ideas beyond us are another transportive device; and the particular book from which I cite (above: that of the story of Ood-kind, a race of being who relate in more empathic ways than human beings are generally willing to) afforded me experiences of diverse constellations of affect as I read. In part, this was because some of the words and ideas resonated, from my own conversations and thinking with the person who had written them, who is a creative collaborator. The images (of prints) I sent Keith Temple as I produced them, inspired the planetary spaces he was writing at the time. Reading his words in that story, in which I heard 'us' as interlocutors, opened-up space and time for me, as environments for novel appreciation. Why on earth would we aspire to be any singular 'thing' (the Doctor has many names and bodies to inhabit: a forerunner of personal fluidity); might we all appreciate setting the controls to 'Random' and allow ourselves to be transported into other less-likely modes of being or thinking; why wouldn't we want to keep going?

In my experience of the practice of *creative block*, allowing myself to engage in unknown situations has often proven to be worthwhile adventure. Grounded more on the physical, human Earth, another occasion occurred yesterday, which seems to be a story worth relating. Some of us, one Doctor and two Research Student companions, convened behind the high-rises adjacent to the City Road Basin on the rim of central London. Our quest was to paint a backdrop for an event conceived by one of us (another of those creative collaborators mentioned above) – a Naming Ceremony for her daughter. Whilst looking at my prints together in the Wilson Road studio, in an experience of sharing and developing ideas, she and I had discussed her notion of creating a mountain scene, drawn from another part of her own life and experience, as a visualising device for this celebration of new life.⁴²

A scheme emerged. Although we might have used the physical environment of one or other of the colleges of our institution to create this homage to Mount Te Aroha (which means 'of love' or 'beloved' in Maori), we wondered whether outside space might prove more appropriate and enticing. So we found an accessible, open patch of ground, laid out fabric on the paving slabs, unpacked materials and references. The Doctor (a painter) sketched out a plan in chalk and we got going. As we applied paint, with brushes and sponges, we talked research, life, birth, death and practice; we wondered about whether we can make work when no-one else seems interested in our proposals or the products of our findings, when we can't afford to make work, have no space to make or store the work we have made; about how to keep going ... thinking together.

There were reasonably few answers in the midst of discussion, yet seeds of thought were sown in our consciousnesses. I suspect that much work was occurring in and around our environment. Indeed, during the course of the day, various passers-by stopped to talk, to look and question and think with us. Some paused longer, intrigued, so we encouraged them to pick up an art tool and make

42. These thoughts are folded into the poem that I wrote in response, which is called *Space for Stars*: a reference to both the baby's name and a (children's) book we had discussed. Experiments with other forms of writing have begun to be of relevance – partly evident in some of the passages and blocks in this thesis, not least due to the diverse texts I have engaged with during the course of this project. This research has informed my sense of my own writing practice having potential / being of value, beyond institutional confines. The projects of collaboration begun during this personal research endeavour seem likely to generate different creative responses.

their own marks in our collective landscape. A food delivery driver who came from Hong Kong, a young couple from Ethiopia, an American skater, Chinese grandparents with a baby in a buggy, with whom we communicated gesturally, English girls consuming takeaways from the drive-thru – all these people, moving around this un-designated public space, found reason and agency to engage. Whether their involvement was physical or more-conceptual making, they are part of the work that is created, of the planned occasion, of the multiplicitous event that is around it all. For the collective Te Aroha artwork, now rolled and transported to another place, is part of a body-to-come. It will become a factor of a different collective space: in which a multiplicity of invited guests will congregate and conresce; to ceremonially welcome a new person, at the start of her life's adventure. Regardless of what happens on that occasion, beyond that which is planned as event, I envisage this as a chōric space. Creative connections will occur, unforeseen possibilities generated, experiences perceived – all as material to work with.

A piece of work has been made; but will yet make more, through modes that may be seen, questioned and otherwise experienced. Here I can make the claim that the ongoingness is underway. Beneath the painting we created together, a print occurred: a tracing of the open sky above the mountain, where the paint we mixed had been more soluble. Soaked through the fabric, a ghost imprinted on the paving slabs and now reflecting the canal basin beyond it, until it is worn- or washed away by rain. This is not a representational image, but a trace of process that changes its environment in some small way. From this occurrence, through processes of thought, I am able to locate a sense of unforeseen creative response within our collective effort. Making work (through whatever sense we can), that creates potentiality for other kinds of work, thought, felt or practicable, might be what we endeavour to make of *creative block* ...

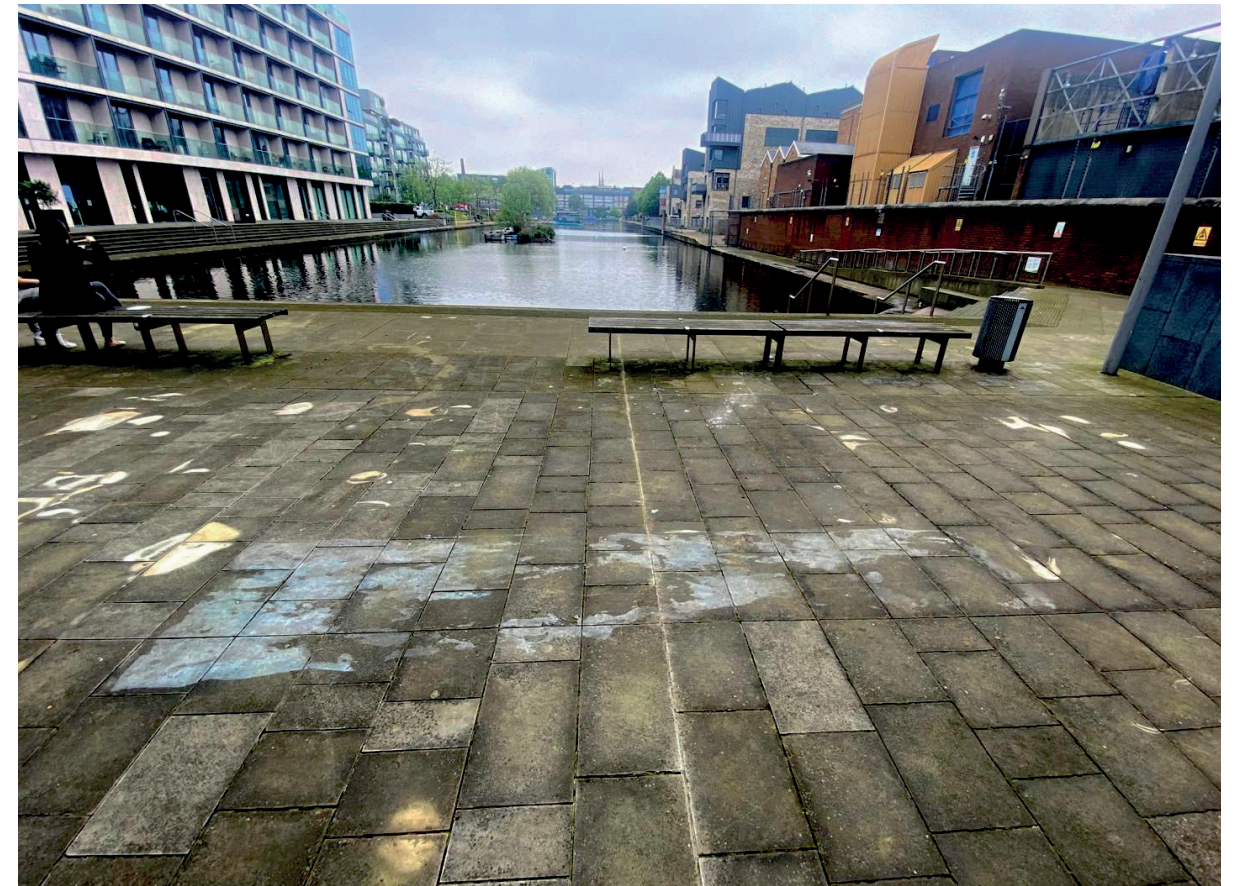


Image credit: Jenny Maxwell

The feeling of a printroom



What is it to be in a printroom? What even is a printroom? How does a printroom work; or function in the making of work? And why might such spaces be relevant in this present context of block and process thinking?

Given the recourse I make to print and to printmaking throughout my thesis, it is relevant to present my ideas concerning a printroom. So I shall do so through reference to a particular printroom: that in which I have produced the majority of the images which I am displaying in my thesis. In many senses, it is the site of my practice research, utilised to extend my understandings of creative practice. Therefore it has become a place of development – and thereby of solution – in which I have observed and worked with my *creative block*. The space of the printroom has allowed me to think of it as a matrix (a block to print from), providing means by which to process my thinking. Indeed process is the business of a printroom, I would argue; so that process thinking in-and-around such spaces is wont to generate plastic product. Due to the amount of time I have spent in this printroom over the years of my study, I might have many stories to tell about the making of my work here. Sometimes I have written about these experiences, to develop the conceptions of my project. Through the making efforts of wondering and writing, I have come to think of it as a chōric environment, where something may become of the various material elements, affects and experiences that come together (or concrese) in their potentialities of actuality. Such considerations allow me to see my readings of Whitehead in the very practical contexts of art-making. For this thesis though, having outlined my sense of a printroom environment, I will relate a particular tale: that of the occasion of actuality which instigated this research.⁴³

43. I use the term 'actuality' to refer to something which happens, or occurs, or otherwise exists in the world of experience. The usage draws on Alfred North Whitehead's process thinking regarding 'actual entities' or 'actual occasions'. There are the metaphysical instances of reality he explains in his philosophy of organism, such as its magnum opus, titled 'Process and Reality'. Whilst not adhering entirely to Whitehead's thinking, 'actuality' is a useful way for me to express 'things which happen' in my own arts practice-related process thinking.

Similarly, the term 'chōric' (above) is one that I will use at various points in my thesis; and so explain elsewhere (e.g. pp. 107–22). Whilst my own neologism, it refers to conditions of 'chōra', which I intend generally as a space of creative production, in some means or other.

Printrooms are workshops

A printroom is a workshop. As environments in which prints are made (through largely analogue process, though with digital of photomechanical capacity), they are places of active, practical, creative industry. Such creativity involves interactions, between people, tools and devices, materials and ideas. These interactions, or intercommunication between objects of experience, is a mode of 'feeling' in Whiteheadian terms, which I will explore at the end of this block. Philosophical concepts, such that of 'chōra' – along with Whitehead's thinking around 'process' – are relevant to mention here, though they will be developed through the thesis. But I am intending to introduce the printroom as space in which occasions of experience or actuality may be manufactured, or otherwise occur through intercommunication between the physical and conceptual components which are brought together, by chance or design. Although there may be similarities here to the affordances of a more general 'studio', by my reckoning a printroom differs to the openness of studio, since it should contain some elements of machinery: perhaps a press or two, for relief (raised surface) and intaglio (incised surface) printmaking. Depending on the facility, there might be screenprinting beds, washout rooms, exposure units, acid baths, drying racks (whether hanging or spring-loaded), heated cabinets, tools such as squeegees, palate knives and rollers. Though this terminology may seem to have connotations of the dungeon torture chamber, a printroom is a space for generation (or even re-generation in some sense) rather than suffering, despite the trial-and-error frustrations that may be a likely aspect of time spent in one. They have often been places where I felt like I could come alive.

My practical experiences of printrooms have occurred in the colleges in which I have been taught as a student, or where I have subsequently taught. Each has its own character and peculiarities; but the one that is my focus in this block of writing is that of the Foundation course at Wilson Road in Camberwell,

South London. On this particular campus, a Victorian-era red brick school building (previously known as Wilson's Grammar), the workshops are located in the centre of the building. The location is important, since regardless of the various studio spaces where students are taught and practise the fundamental tenets of art and design disciplines, it is the practical workshops which have become 'the core' of the campus: environments of intermingling and experimentation, moving to different rhythms and so with complementary tones to those of the studios. To get to the printroom, from the main corridor of the college, one walks through the 3D (wood and metal) workshop, the Creative Technology Lab – a digital experimentation and fabrication space – and then the sewing machine anteroom, on into the fairly low square room: which is the start of Print. It was into this space that I first stepped to make some work, after a dozen years in which I didn't produce, living with *creative block*.

In 2015, this printroom space constituted the entirety of the printmaking provision on the campus. There was a large screen printing bed (which sometimes doubled as a cutting table for fabric, since the technician who ran the area has a background in costume for theatre), two heavy black cast iron Albion presses for relief printmaking, such as woodblock or lino and a small tabletop Rochat press for intaglio – mostly drypoint, which is scratching onto plastic sheets, since there was no provision for the complexity of acid etching. Also in this room was a drying rack and a variety of glass surfaces for inking-up and rolling-out ink, atop plans chests for paper storage, a cabinet for drying screens, and a curtained-off blackout space which housed a large UV light unit, used for exposing a photographic image onto a silkscreen. Beyond this space, in an outhouse adjoined to this annexe of the original school building, was a washout room where dirty silkscreens, or those in the process of being exposed, could be blasted with a jet washer. On the end wall beside the drying rack, a pair of long-bolted double doors closed off the space from what I

heard referred to as 'The Forge'. Although not as spacious or well-appointed as the printrooms I had had access to as a student in another Educational era, our Foundation students seemed to have made some interesting work in there, during the seven years in which the course had been located on this site.

This was the space into which I was invited as part of a Staff Development Week initiative in the early summer of 2015. Coincidentally a point of relevance in my own life, when I had given up working for the market research company (where I had been employed since my own student days) to concentrate on my MA dissertation, the timing was good. This shift in the activities that constituted my working life coincided with an opportunity to spend time exploring the affordances of the printroom, after the course had finished for the year. It would be disingenuous to suggest that it was a simple matter to roll up my sleeves and don an apron, to engage in an attempt to make print. Although I had often been in this particular space over the years, it had been in my capacity as tutor, checking-in on students' progress in the development of their projects through printmaking, giving formative feedback or encouraging further experimentation. It often feels easier to help others develop their concepts or approaches than to consider my own, since the perspective of distance from the generation of work can help to encourage practical ideas. When not the originator or producer, the stakes seem lower. Yet faced with the opportunity to make work myself, anxiety of what I should produce can lead to a sense of short-circuiting stasis, when the dazzling variations of possibilities and their permeations seemingly blind me. So I had to 'style-out' entering into the printroom that week, acting as though it didn't really matter to me, playing it cool, passively and cheerfully awaiting the instruction of a workshop induction. Really though, any passivity was resultant of my belief that I had no ideas of my own anyway. My cheery demeanour was bravado, to mask these fears. Yet the draw toward the possibilities I sensed

within helped me breach the threshold. Some deeper need trumped the dread.

In my reckoning, a printroom is a sensual space. Aside from the physicality of making, there are sights and sound and smells which excite reaction or evoke response. However, whilst it might be largely considered a visual environment (in that print is a visual art), those people who have had experience of a printroom, perhaps as a memory, will often remark about the smell of these spaces. Printmaking ink as a medium has a variety of aromatic qualities – slightly industrial perhaps, like axle-grease rather than the linseed-iness of paint. Very often there are various chemical agents used in the production of the plates or blocks or screens that become printmaking matrices, which whilst a little toxic have evocative resonance, particularly when associated with the fun of experimentation or delight of discovery that is so often an aspect of printmaking practice. The smell is compounded by that of paper, of wood- or lino shavings, of the rubber of squeegees or roller cylinders. Often there is an air of dampness, given the quantities of water sloshed around in the processes, soaked into its wood and rusting its metalwork. Equipment might be quite old, industrial rather than digital, so designed and constructed to last; and therefore mustily fragrant patinas of age and use tend to permeate a printroom. The space into which I went that June morning offered some variation of that scent, though at Wilsons the inks used of more environmentally-conscious water-soluble variety and there are none of the mordants or rosins used in the more advanced forms of etching process. Yet the olfactory reminiscences acted as a semblance of balm, which reassured me in my state of concealed anxiety.

Nonetheless, walking into the printroom on that occasion was considerably poignant, affectively redolent. Though not an unknown environment, on that first day my senses were heightened. I felt keenly aware, in a combination of excitement,



anxiety and curiosity: a state of apprehension. Although I underplayed these reactions, my intensity of perception was keen. The technicians had laid out visual references as examples of things that we might try: the processes supported by this printroom, materials to suggest or inspire making. I feigned the demeanour of printmaking ignorance, not admitting that I had once thought that it might be my medium ... The other staff (who taught Painting or 3D Spacial) that had taken up the workshop invitation were both working / exhibiting artists, so I imagined that they would be quite adventurous with process, as more recently-experienced in experimentation and productivity than me. My approach therefore, was to go with the technicians' advice of entry point via a collagraph print. This is a relatively simple technique, in which an assemblage of found objects is constructed on a card substrate, then sealed, inked-up and printed from using a relief process: pressure applied to paper which takes an impression of the surface. The objects must be flat enough to pass beneath the roller of the Rochat press, more usually used for intaglio printmaking, but which in this case pushes dampened paper down onto the inked (or blind emboss) textural forms of the assemblage. Because the collagraph has been sealed with a binder, such as shellac, or even PVA glue, once an impression has been taken, the matrix can be wiped clean of ink residue, dried off and re-inked. Inking-up a plate, or block, is a technique of trial-and-error, which produces any number of permeations. From the same matrix, a multiplicity of results may occur, as differences in the repetition of the process. But the first task is to assemble material and produce a block / matrix to work with.

At that point in my creative existence, I had come to believe I had no work in me: nothing to express, no feeling of making anymore. My subconscious, affective construction across those years of not-making had been a sense of intractable ineptitude. Not-making mattered deeply to me, so I avoided facing it by making myself busy in other ways. Yet by entering the safe-ish

space of the Wilson Road printroom that Monday morning, I had tricked myself into producing. Because I was literally 'in the room', signed up for workshop activity as a learner, I somehow contrived to channel a version of how Foundation students manage to get on with it, when I task them to 'experiment – and see what happens'. Perhaps it was due to my feigned attitude of novice with nothing to prove, but when tasked myself with putting together a composition, I responded intuitively rather than trying to come up with a good idea. String and scouring pads, elastic bands, straw and netting, cotton wool, sand paper and corrugated cardboard had been laid out for the workshop – which I selected with my hands and eyes, not consciously considering how they might behave or what the selection might conceptually imply. In the back of my mind though, was the project of my dissertation. I had reached a point in the research where a decision needed to be made: about whether to continue with the investigation of 'dsio6', an online creative learning community I had been investigating, or whether to address my reluctance to actively engage with this group and its initiatives. The problem I had been forced to confront at that point, was that I was afraid to make work to take into the dsio6 forum, in response to the group brief. As it happens, that year the community were making visual responses to the 1960s cult television programme *The Prisoner*, such as GIFs or memes that use affordances of digital technology to sample imagery, appreciatively or sardonically. Whilst I loved the idea of engaging in these activities, I had found myself completely unable to do anything about it, finding other, technical excuses to avoid risking making. In conducting research about something else, the creative block I had fairly successfully concealed over the years had thereby been brought sharply into focus. By this I mean that I seemed unable to hide from it or push it back into the dark recesses of my psyche, as I had become used to doing. So my dilemma was one of choosing how to react. In the MA research project, I could choose to explore the affordances of the community, the degrees

of belonging I perceived, critiquing its esoteric structuring – or I could critique my own fearful ineptitude.

The awkward feelings of avoidance were comfortably familiar, like pressing an old bruise. Yet it was the newer sense of dilemma that was on my mind and informing my behaviours, as I rummaged through those items of ephemera offered for staff development – and styled-out a cavalier approach to doing something with it. For the first time in a long time, I felt that I actually had a choice, and a practical choice. Latterly I have begun to recognise such choice of possibility as creative agency ... What occurred in the making, on reflection, could be regarded a visualisation of my inner concerns regarding my research. The collograph I constructed was as unsophisticated as it ought to have been, not least since it was pretty much the first attempt at art I had made in a dozen years. A young child could indeed have done it. Yet it was imbued with a great deal of myself, as something akin to self-expression: physical, sensual, entangled, troubled.⁴⁴ As I sealed it ready for printing, although it looked somewhat rudimentary, I was pleased with myself for having got this far. In the silence of the space to myself, as the others went for tea, I also discerned some remembrance of printmaking: what happens when ink is brought into the mix. For ink behaves in ways beyond total control, at least for the non-expert. From my perspective, unlike paint (a comparable material in some ways) which is deliberately applied and ‘holds’ the manner of its application – whether delicate brushstrokes or impasto daubing – ink seems to transform or is itself transformed, as it is worked through the processes of printmaking. It has materiality, which reacts to usage. Therefore I had some reminiscent sense that ink would not only activate this rather lacklustre collagraph block, but that the whole would be transformed, almost alchemically, as prints were made. These thoughts were not really conscious (since I had largely forgotten my printmaking self), but rather embodied. I felt a sense of thrill, some delirium or giddiness, which I prevailed to conceal,

44. On reflection I see a sense of the work on Antoni Tàpies in this print, whose work I have always admired, for its energy and materiality; and because whilst often produced through methods of painting or printmaking, it does not seem to neatly fit into a disciplinary category. Though I have never been interested in ‘making work in the style of’, I wonder if artists subconsciously echo work that has resonated with them. My peer, Gavin Edmonds, a painter, has written a thesis on the idea of ‘Afterwardsness’, to which my observation here relates (Edmonds, 2022).



but which caused me sensations I had denied myself for a very long time. Looking at these prints again now, I am reminded of those feelings, of the novelty of creative response, and of anxiety channeled through desire, into activity.

Over the course of the Staff Development event, I made some collograph prints, then some monoprints, using the feathers and leaves and lace suggested, pressed onto blocks of rolled-out ink. As those days spent in the printroom went on and as the affordances of the working environment become apparent, I felt more relaxed, so dared to express opinions regarding my own efforts and those of others. I saw those others achieving greater or lesser degrees of success (in our respective readings of these terms and their implications), as we worked through our explorations. Working away at something, making a succession or multiplicity of attempt, looking around, considering one’s efforts, generates new thought. For these objects have only now come into existence, through the making process, becoming what Whitehead might describe as ‘lures for feeling’, or potentials for creative reaction (e.g. Whitehead, 1985:185). From my subsequent PhD research, I see printroom as a place of process, and therefore of chōra in my conception. Appointed with various tools and devices that encourage exploration and produce visual results – relatively swiftly – it can function as environment of practical and conceptual transition. Process implies change, and in my understanding change involves affective as well as operational development and transition. My sense of what I might be capable of producing shifted as I produced, so that rather than being enthralled by anxieties, I became captivated by possibilities. But of course, the real success of this experience was my very presence in the printroom, printmaking. Crossing the threshold, attempting to make work, going back and trying again, constituted the beginning of what I now consider my creative practice. As I stumbled through the attempts and speculations and surprises of outcome, the stultifying sense of inability to make work which



I had carried with me for so long, began to dissolve into the actuality of making.

Another important event occurred during that week though, which made difference in my life: my dad died. Whilst not unexpected, since he was fairly old and had been ill for some years, this occurrence had impact on me. I did not feel especially sad about his death, but have come to recognise that the effects of such perishing will be felt, if not immediately. As the printmaking work I was now making gradually became a project, which shifted the course of my dissertation, it continued and extended beyond the allotted week. The technicians allowed me to return to the printroom into the weeks of the summer break. My creative response to the further significance of a death in my life was to continue to generate collograph prints, that now included Chêne collée (collage as part of the printmaking process). The material I used for this, once the technique had been shown to me, was some of Dad's ephemera: notes he'd made about Humph Lylletton's Jazz Records Requests tape recorded from Saturday afternoon radio, or pages torn from his paperback novels, yellowed by Gauloises cigarette smoke. My father had been a commercial artist, who worked in Advertising in the 1960s and 1970s; so after I'd discovered a long-lost portfolio behind the sideboard later than summer, I brought some xeroxes of his drawings into my printmaking mixes. All this work informed and became part of the dissertation I subsequently wrote. In this, I used as frontispiece an image of the worn and patinated matrix (that had generated the large body of prints I made), which I affectionately titled *Old Block* (Martin, MA:AP, 2015 [unpublished dissertation]). Our relationship developed through this work; and continues into more recent discoveries.

Over the intervening years I became a printroom 'regular', as circumstances allowed. The Foundation course is intensive and during term-time the space is busy, but in vacation periods, or late-afternoons when the teaching day is finished, I have been able



to negotiate access. Much has changed on the campus over this time, as wider university courses are displaced and established elsewhere. One result of such shifts was that the doors through to the Forge have been unbolted and the printroom space extended. Its footprint has been more than doubled by addition of this long, high chamber, which has an aesthetically appealing redbrick wall at one end and traces of ironwork still displayed. The printing presses and glass-topped plans chests have been moved into this extension; and the current technician has strung it with fairy lights, to soften institutionally-ubiquitous fluorescent strips. A bookcase of references and curated displays of material provide inspiration, and draws are packed with collagraph-able ephemera. Jazz often plays out over the speaker system, so this printroom's sensuality and sense of dynamism and experimentation is yet more pronounced. Due to such affordances, the scale of my work has been able to increase: if not always in format (since I often make work on A3 Fabriano cartridge paper), then certainly in quantity. The addition of a Risograph printer to the variety of processes on offer a few years ago, has played some part in the development of my thinking about printmaking and so that of the larger *Process Prints BoW* (see e.g. pp. 298–309 and *passim*). It is largely because of the opportunities of this printroom that I have discovered my plastic creative practice, and so been able to construct the research for my thesis. Yet this space will soon itself be decommissioned, as the Foundation course moves to another site. This block of writing – which tells of creation – is tinged with sadness, as anticipation of loss. In its guise of intermezzo, it may also function as something akin to a eulogy.

Whitehead's philosophy of organism as expounded in *Process and Reality*, is presented across five sections. The third of these sections (so perhaps at the centre of the thesis), is named 'The Theory of Prehensions', itself split into five chapters, each of which concern the role of feelings in his construction of metaphysical



reality. For in the philosophy of organism, feeling is a process. The process by which things occur in this ‘cell-theory of actuality’ is one by which these actualities [see n.43, above] acquire datum for their existence, through ‘appropriation’ from the universe of possibilities. This process is termed a ‘prehension’; and the means by which a positive selection is made, a ‘feeling’ (e.g. Whitehead, 1985:219–20). Feeling is therefore a fundamentally active, and activating consideration in this philosophy – one that has informed and extended my creative practice during the course of my current research. Whitehead analyses the process of concrescence – i.e. the coming together of (positive) prehensions through feeling – into five factors by which this transition occurs. The technicalities of the language used to describe this process tend to obfuscate what seems to me to be fairly straightforward to ‘apprehend’ when I relate it to the creative practices I am concerned with. Whitehead’s terminology, once tracked back through its etymology, has a certain practical logic. For example, we can think of ‘prehend’ as ‘to hold’ or ‘to seize’ (with ‘ad’ meaning ‘towards’; modified over the course of time and location to ‘ap’). Considering apprehend in its sense of grasping a conceptual or physical matter, as well as in connection with arresting a fugitive – a fleeting thought; an image or likeness one is struggling to capture – allows for the sense of Whitehead’s prehension to be extended through the actualities of creative practice.⁴⁵

From the context of another creative discipline, Philipa Rothfield has written about her reading of *Process and Reality* in relation to working in the dance studio. Her text’s *Prolegomena* to this speaks of the difficulties and possibilities of capturing dancing through various ‘technologies of thought’ and the resultant ‘duet between philosophy and dance’ as stagings (Rothfield, 2008:1). Here I am minded of my own struggles to articulate printmaking practice and the logics of sense I find in the ‘process thinking’ of Whitehead, Deleuze and Guattari, among other thinkers and

45. Writing in the *Journal of General Psychology* (coincidentally in the year that Whitehead died), John K. McCreary finds that the philosophy of organism relates well to the concerns of that *Journal*, in particular Whitehead’s ‘doctrine of feelings’ (McCreary, 1948:67). His own synopsis, given prior to a fuller explication of his findings, is helpful introduction: ‘His basic view is that the experiencing organism (or “subject”) arises out of the world which it feels, and constructs its own nature from the way in which it feels it’ (*ibid*). As most commentators are wont to do, McCreary considers Whiteheadian terminology, appreciating its particularities, as I have done (above). However, he further identifies that in the processes of concrescence: ‘the word “relation” does not express the dynamics involved ... and the word “apprehension” suggests consciousness which, for Whitehead, is not at all necessarily implied in the philosophy of organism’ (*ibid*:68). The term prehension, which McCreary considers akin to feeling, is therefore a suitable means by which to indicate the (vital) immanence of novelty in concrescence.

See also pp. 226–8 for additional discussion of prehensions and concrescence.

writers, as I grasp the roller and feel through collaborations of (potential) meaning.⁴⁶ Rothfield, who is interested in making dance practice more widely accessible, relates her moment of realisation of Whiteheadian *feeling*. This came, somehow, in the midst of her own creative block, when she had been going through the motions of a rather desolate, instrumental attempt to learn some choreography: ‘an emotionally wrought, inner emptiness populated by doomed, episodic attempts to get this bit right, that bit right’ (*ibid*:2). What she discovered, in the core of herself, was ‘a thickness of feeling’ – feeling which could be felt. Rothfield proceeds to describe how she came to appreciate this sense as prehension, ‘taking up a series of potential feelings that circled a series of relations between, say, the floor and my body (*ibid*:3). She recognises that even in the physicality of the dancer, rather than it be her process of feeling, it is the dance itself which feels these potentials and includes them in itself, as feelings.

The terms in which Rothfield recounts her sense of ‘transition’ in this space of feeling have resonance to my appreciations of the role of feeling in creative process. Although my own story brings affective factors into play, Whitehead’s reading of experience seeks to generalise the particularities into something more ‘applicable’ and ‘adequate’ for reinterpretation in other spheres of life (Whitehead, 1985:1).⁴⁷ It is relevant that in this endeavour, he refers to feeling not in relation to affect but to physical and conceptual domains. Rather than bifurcation, a trait of human epistemology which Whitehead is determined to dissolve – and perhaps a mainstay of his philosophical quest, in its various permeations – his inclusion of the operational traits of feeling promotes diversity of appreciation. For if we care to attune, we might see, or feel, means whereby feeling is at work in our own practice contexts. In dancing, Rothfield considers the processes by which feelings concresce, bringing elements of ‘the old’ into ‘the new’, in that ultimate process of what is (for me) the vital

46. Meaning’ is a problematic term, in arts as in philosophy. I use it loosely here, to indicate a sense of resonance, as a ‘lure for feeling’: prehend-able data, which may be taken up and thereby activated. ‘Lure for feeling’ is a (rather poetic) expression which Whitehead uses in *Process and Reality*, to explain the very reason of concrescence. For example, he states:

The ground, or origin, of the concrescent process is the multiplicity of data in the universe, actual entities and eternal objects and propositions and nexūs. Each phase in the concrescence means the retreat of mere propositional unity before the growing grasp of real unity of feeling. Each successive propositional phase is a lure to the creation of feelings which promote its realization. (Whitehead, 1985:224)

47. Elizabeth Kraus’s *The Metaphysics of Experience* (1979) is one of the commentaries / secondary sources of *Process and Reality* to which Rothfield refers in her paper. It is relevant to think about the ways in which the philosophy of organism draws on lived experience to form its propositions and explanations, discussions and applications, since it is an active philosophy which is grounded very much in real life, despite the seemingly abstract technicality that I am addressing here. Whitehead’s philosophy is adumbrated across his later-phase, more metaphysical oeuvre in relation to wider and/or historical events (e.g. *Adventures of Ideas*, subsequently discussed), but *Process and Reality* is the mainstay of his system of thought, and thus the main technical reference.

Whiteheadian notion of 'creative advance [into novelty]' (2008:2).

As she explains:

It's not that the new is all there is. The 'creative advance' takes something of the old with it. There is a moment of repetition in which aspects of the old are taken into the new ... Feelings are the conduit for this flow, for the link between the old and the new. (ibid).

'Something' that existed in Rothfield, in her dancing, was prehended in the moment of intensified creative advance she experienced (or noticed experiencing); so that she was able to feel something different (ibid:5). In the remainder of her paper, she will elucidate the ways in which she finds this process (a term she continues to mull) adequate and applicable in her particular duet between philosophy and dancing. My sense of that week in the printroom, subsequently repeated and extended in iterative occasions of experience, offers analogous instances of the back-and-forth passages of feeling. Rollers, which pick-up and lay-down ink, say, have increasingly become symbolic of my relationship with creative advance, in the context of *creative block*. The remainder of my thesis is one attempt to activate this interrelationship between theory and practice, experience and activity. Staging for my 'dancing' has often been the space of a printroom, where the occasions of the Forge and its feelings of process are visualised in the prints I will show.

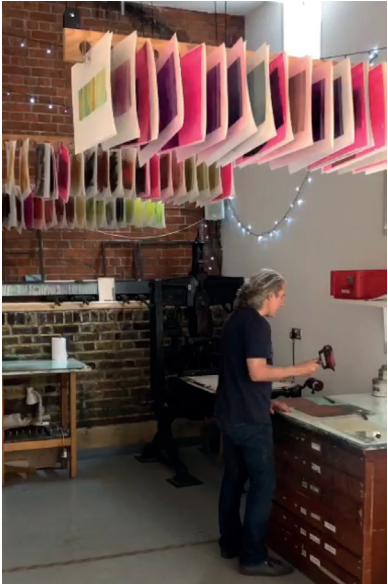


Image credit: Ben Gooding, 2022



'The Function of Reason': philosophy and the practice PhD

This block, produced towards the end of writing-up my thesis, is an overview my engagement with those texts which inform this thesis, among others of passing note. It relates the impact of reading and thinking about philosophy on the development of my creative practice; and the way this practice informs my reading. It is not a 'literature review' in traditional thesis terms (for such literature is evident throughout the project), but will develop the context of process thought and my work with creative block. Some terms introduced here will be subsequently expanded in subsequent blocks.

During this PhD I have started reading philosophy. Of course, this was intentional decision, as it will be for many electing to spend years engaged in scholarship or research endeavour. Perhaps there is a point one reaches where a decision can be made about how to engage with life, which rather than being driven by some ecological or evolutionary imperative is instead informed by the experience one has accrued and considerations of how to work with that. In my own case I have done a lot of thought work 'on myself' in therapy, and so have an advantage of criticality where my own thinking is concerned. During the decade or so in which I made no work, my fear had been that I could not think: I was stuck in a perpetual cycle of thought-anxiety. Learning to 'be with' problems, to interrogate them to deeper levels, has shifted my attitude to living; and impacts on my bearing now. The context in which I see my problems has been extended to encompass greater breadth of reason, sense and appreciation. Reading

others' readings of experience – some of the texts I will introduce here – can prove beneficial to such thought-work. An aspect of my project has involved identifying likely sources and compiling a library of resources, to be with in my continuing endeavours.

'The Function of Reason'

In a slim, three chapter / lecture volume called *The Function of Reason*, amidst a critique of accepted knowledges and their ways of realisation, Whitehead sets out a version of evolutionary theory, perhaps as a psychical counterpoint to the philosophy of organism.⁴⁸ My reading here is a partial and selective; but within these lectures' meanderings, Whitehead examines the affordances of 'Reason', speculative or practical, 'to promote the art of life' (Whitehead, 1958:4). Foretelling some posthuman concerns (e.g. Braidotti, 2013), Whitehead identifies that in the case of mankind, as exemplified throughout history, 'the explanations for ... active attack[s] on the environment is a threefold urge: (i) to live, (ii) to live well, (iii) to live better' (Whitehead, 1958:8). His slant on this involves exploring the art of life, which aims towards 'acquir[ing] an increase in satisfaction' (*ibid*). If we take his usage of 'satisfaction' here in the way it is used in the process of concrescence, when a prehending entity feels other elements of experience to bring into itself, its meaning indicates the completion of that actual entity.⁴⁹ In less prosaic interpretation, the quest for an increase in satisfaction is driving force, toward novelty. Our old (and established) ways of living become exhausted, no longer useful or relevant to us in our current contexts, so new methodologies, or angles, must be identified. Whitehead suggests: 'The birth of a methodology is in its essence the discovery of a dodge to live' (*ibid*:18). A different technique, such as using the roller to make prints, is in its essence such a dodge; and the essence of dodge informs my printmaking endeavour. Whitehead's art of life seems to me an inducement to creative response. By creative response, I mean some way of working which involves 'taking it all in',



48. The *Function of Reason* was first published in 1929, the same year as *Process and Reality*, the year that Whitehead gave the Louis Clark Vanuxem lecture series at Princeton. Their language is markedly different: Whitehead as educator, entertaining students with challenging ideas. He ranges over the events disclosed in history, making observations regarding the thinking that occurred in those instances and the advances achieved and errors perpetrated. The themes that will be dealt with are indicated in a pithy Introductory Summary:

History discloses two main tendencies in the course of events. One tendency is exemplified in the slow decay of physical nature. With stealthy inevitableness, there is degradation of energy. The sources of activity sink downward and downward. Their very matter wastes. The other tendency is exemplified by the yearly renewal of nature in the spring, and by the upward course of biological evolution. In these pages I consider Reason in its relation to these contrasted aspects of history. Reason is the self-discipline of the originative element in history. Apart from the operations of Reason, this element is anarchic. (Whitehead, 1958:np).

49. In the philosophy of organism, once an actual entity is completed, its work of prehending completed by its concrescence, its satisfaction achieved – then it will begin to perish. In doing so its data is released back out into the world, as potential for any other concrescing actual entity or occasion (e.g. Whitehead, 1985:29).

dissolving actualities in the solvency of experience, struggling through it, making something of that. Within this process(ing) of experience, there will be hardship, frustration, angst. Everything is tinged with darkness, for darkness exists within any pulse of experience. An artful life involves dodging the debris, or else refashioning it ...

Whitehead knew tragedy;⁵⁰ just as he relished the opportunities that life afforded him, working with his learning and experience, whether resultant of privilege or hardship. In the ways of thinking his writing opens for me, I perceive kindly yet urgent encouragement to move with life, to get on with it. As he counsels in *The Function of Reason*, there will be various pitfalls of 'stabilization' in the course of the quest into evolutionary novelty, some of which he terms the Ways of Blindness, Rhythm and Transience (Whitehead, 1953:20). Despite how unfamiliar his terminology sounds, he explains that these are common ways of being, which the repetitions of life engender in the living. Whilst not in themselves detrimental, resultant life choices may lead to fatigue. Yet so long as contrasts or variations can be sought and entertained, fatigue may be obviated. Whitehead uses the example of the Way of Rhythm used as a 'device' in the practices of 'music and vision', whereby 'the fundamental abstract structure of the cycle' is observed but kept fluid and vibrant through variation in succeeding cycles (*ibid*). Again here (as elsewhere in this thesis), I think of the life force of jazz, as a form of music which seems to me to be emblematic of the creative advance into novelty (e.g. Whitehead, 1985:28). By Whitehead's reasoning, jazz might be termed a 'method', whereby 'the cycle element is driven into the foundation, and variations of cycles, and cycles of cycles, are elaborated' (Whitehead, 1953:20). The same logic may be applied to the Bodies of Work that I have produced during this project (especially so considering the cylindrical motif of the hand- or printing press roller), the Rollerwaves and Rollerdances, the *Becoming Jonathans*, the superficial inversions. Each body has a cycle

50. Just as many people living through times of war, the Whiteheads experienced the loss of a family member. Their younger son Eric, a pilot, was killed in 1917.

of process at its core, but each represents movement through subsequent cycles of process, variations and a quest for some newness – that may perhaps break the current cycle of repetition and engender a fresh body.

Fatigue

There is particular threat to the upward trend aspired to by Whitehead’s Reason; which may be ‘defeated’ or neutralised by the insidious power of ‘Fatigue’ (Whitehead, 1953:23). This condition is of a peculiar character; though one with which many people may be able to identify. Fatigue excludes the opportunities of life, an accrual of inertia brought about by mere unthinking repetition, that forgoes any appetite for novelty:⁵¹ ‘The urge of Reason, clogged with such inertia, is fatigue’ (ibid). When I think of my years of not making now – I perceive the bafflement of opportunity and the build-up of inertia, precipitated by fear of the unknown or some draw towards the safety of normalcy: and it feels very much like Fatigue.⁵² Reading my experience laid out in the abstract in *The Function of Reason*, was momentous. Perceiving the sense in Whitehead’s words certainly didn’t solve the problems of the time of reading,⁵³ but it did open them out creatively, allowing me to regard ‘creative concern’ from perspectives beyond my own, or those of plastic practice.

Such beginnings of insight and forays into now-apparent opportunities are a payoff from the struggle of engaging with reading, particularly philosophical texts. Coming back to reading after many years, at points during my study on the MA in Academic Practice (2010–15), I came across thought-constructions which surprised me. There were philosophies of education, practical philosophies, articulations that resonated with what I had found myself feeling. The feeling of reading something which is (ostensibly) abstract but yet which speaks to one’s own experiences or perceptions, is stimulating on other levels or in different hemispheres. It was in grappling with some of the ideas

51. The term ‘appetition’ here is another redolent term, which may be taken through Leibniz or Spinoza, into the ‘desire’ of Deleuze. I have not expanded my ideas regarding ‘affect’ in the context of creative practice in this thesis; though I contend that its role is highly significant in the context of creative practice. However, towards the end of this block, I will briefly relate some of the key ideas concerning affect that I have been considering.

52. In a chapter on ‘The Flow of Creativity’ in *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*, the psychologist Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi used the term ‘entropy’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996:109–110). Entropy might be viewed as a more positive spin on Whiteheadian fatigue (or indeed the Ways of Blindness, Rhythm or Transience), as an evolutionary survival mechanism, though one as inbuilt regulator to the efforts expended in the urge towards creativity,. He suggests this is a ‘force’ which preserves energy, ‘more primitive and more powerful than the urge to create’ (ibid:109). I have not studied Csikszentmihalyi’s work during this research, though I believe that he makes many pertinent points which chime with my own creative experiences; so will mention these in passing as I do with various other thinkers.

53. I use the term ‘sense’ in a similar way to that in which I understand Whitehead to employ ‘reason’. Whilst sense can relate to an intellectual comprehension, it is altogether more embodied, and depending on the particularities of context might include elements of perception or knowing or feeling through the various senses. It is another of the various terms which some philosophical endeavours seek to ascertain, but which plastic creative practices tend to make more opaque. I take Edouard Glissant’s (2010) work on opacity as an invitation to extend this approach; just as

I discovered in John Dewey and Alfred North Whitehead, Martin Heidegger and Hans Gadamer, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari – small glimpses of richly complex thought – that I began to see the possibility of exploring creative block.⁵⁴ After so many years of not daring to speculate, to think beyond what I observed or ‘knew’, I realised that my own mind had the capacity to look towards other modes of being – what I might now consider as the metaphysical realm. This realisation was one of those recognitions of self which herald different ways of being, should we find the momentum to make the necessary changes, to engage in the opportunities life affords.

Texts

If I had hoped that I might understand the ‘glamorous’ texts which I aspired to read, I underestimated their complexity.⁵⁵ For these texts are full of data ... worlds of data. Over the course of the seven years of my research degree, I have engaged with lots of reading, but have actually finished reading very few of the numerous books I have acquired during this time – in fact, at points it has seemed that my research was about identifying the ‘right texts to (eventually) read’. Whilst [in a keynote at the 12th International Whitehead Conference] Michel Weber advises that the best way to read *Process and Reality* is to read it straight through (Weber, 2019), I have spent considerable durations puzzling over sentences or passages from the opening pages. It is often here, in initial passages, that (I would suggest) the most carefully articulated arguments of a thinker may be found. The key insights of their consternation and wrangling are set in language which is deliberately chosen for its depth of meaning, or precision. From this point the thoughts may be opened out; and a reader further engaged by their possibilities. The layers and strata of philosophical language – language used for thought work – are composed of all sorts of sedimented experience; the products of life lived. Sifting through texts in the sometimes awkward,

Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizomatic and nomadic thinking are so often helpful for these creative (rather than academic) explorations. See also pp. 232–5

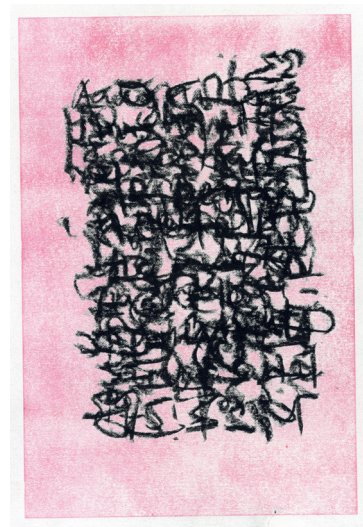
54. I typeset the term roman for my consideration of ‘creative block’ the start of my research (or prior to that point). During the course of this project, the concept of *creative block* has developed, conceptually and practically, so when discussing its centrality in my practice research, I italicise it (other than when typesetting in bold, where this is not possible). Referring to ‘blocks’ of text is an added complication; but one which I consider valid, in the context of a project which explores the dimensionality and utility of creative problems. From the creative block that instigated this study, I have fashioned various other blocks, as creative response.

55. Philosophical works are alluring. In my experience, many people – with aspiration – want to engage in the thought they perceive within and around these texts, yet many of us struggle to penetrate them. The period of my research has given me various appreciations of the value of perseverance, of breaking down and analysing, of talking around the ideas we might glean, *being-with* in relation to other work; including that of plastic practice.

challenging and frustrated ways a practice research student does (when trying to make sense in our own events and experiences), is compounded by ‘weaknesses of insight and deficiencies of language’ that impact upon encounters with complex ideas (Whitehead, 1985:4).⁵⁶ Therefore anyone desiring to engage with challenging philosophical text must devise some approach to the process of reading. In my experience of the PhD, the value of going back or perseverance is the gradual realisation that these texts and their effects have become part of my practice, regardless of comprehension.

The Art of Questioning reading group convened by Dr Daniel Rubinstein, that I have been part of throughout the PhD (online since 2020), has been especially helpful in this regard, since very often we will spend our seminars talking around such small chunks of text. The appreciations, perceptions and connections which result from our various readings and cultural context experiments (applying the thinking we read here to contemporary concerns), demonstrate to me that philosophies need not be taken in their entirety: that lines and passages might take us into unlikely territories. If something we encounter opens-up something within our own being-and-becoming, and we choose to do the work of exploring this unknown, we run the risk of being affected. Although we might prefer to stay wedded to own (often hard-fought) perspectives – in a state which Csikszentmihalyi might term ‘entropy [see n.52] – being made to feel something different can be revelatory, in all manner of ways. In turn this sense can necessitate some creative response; and this thought and feeling impact on practice. In his ‘Translators Foreword’ to *A Thousand Plateaus*, Brian Massumi describes the ‘nomad thought’ which artists and philosophers share, which allows for exploration off the beaten track (in Deleuze and Guattari, 2021:xii–xiii). With the Art of Questioning group I have worked at many other texts and their thinkers to whom I do not refer in my thesis; but the experience of dallying briefly with them has impacted on the development of

56. However, in my quotation, Whitehead is talking about philosophers rather than their philosophy. At times he will write (or speak) of his own endeavours, when preparing a lecture, say; although in the formality of *Process and Reality* he refers little to himself. Yet this introduction to the Speculative Scheme of *Process and Reality* and its metaphysical context identifies that writers and readers, forced to contend with language and all its deficiencies, have to hope for the opportunity afforded by ‘an imaginative leap’ to augment their experiences of engagement (Whitehead, 1985:4).



my ideas. In turn these have led me to other sources of wonder. In 524CE the imprisoned scholar (and former Roman consul) Boethius, wrote a text of considerable poetry, which narrates the ‘likely tale’ of a visitation in his prison cell by a mysterious force,⁵⁷ in the form of a spectral women. In relation with this wondrous creature, angel, protector and challenger, Boethius explores the state in which he finds himself, awaiting a certain violent death.⁵⁸ Here I was touched by the promise, rather than the consolation of philosophy, with which to explore, or appreciate, living life.

Writing

Within philosophical texts, alongside ways of seeing that encourage us to consider what we experience with other attitudes than our instinctual we might encounter novel expression. Often the mode of writing philosophy is extraordinary. Most creative people enjoy reading good prose, particularly if we ourselves aspire to write. Delighting in a well-crafted phrase has bearing on the ways in which we receive the words and the thinking they contain. In my experience, philosophy is a discipline in which writing is acutely considered, since written language speaks to its potential reader allowing them to engage with its thinking.⁵⁹ An artful passage can help its reader to rethink their own endeavour, whether creative, philosophical – or any other variation of the ‘reason’ I understand from Whitehead. In turn, reading this thinking has informed my writing; so in constructing this manuscript, I am wary of adopting others’ expression in the attempt to present my research outcomes. As practice researcher, I must find my own words and turns of phrase, to articulate my insights through writing. Although I make no claim to be writing philosophy in my thesis, my ideas have been variously impacted by philosophy. Therefore I perceive requirement to form adequate means by which to express my expectantly practicable thoughts to others. Aspiring to lucidity, I am nevertheless aware that in the attempt to express the complexity of experience, my rendering of

57. As elsewhere in this document, ‘likely tale’ or story is an allusion to the *Timaeus* of Plato; which will be subsequently discussed. In this context, of Boethius’ almost-mythological visitation, it seems particularly apposite.

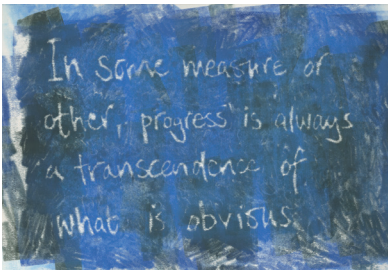
58. Boethius; and H.R. James and John S, Bowman (2008). *The Consolation of Philosophy*. East Bridgewater, MA: Signature Press.

59. This is an idea which Julia Kristeva explores, though in *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984), her intention is to view certain contemporary literary / poetic works, as a means of appreciating the transformative capacity of language. Whilst I am not concerned with semiotics in this thesis, some of Kristeva’s thinking is very pertinent in my developing understanding, so I mean to continue my thinking regarding her notion of *signifiance* to which this text has introduced me, perhaps also in relation to the ways in which it may be understood through Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*. See also Kristeva’s ‘semiotic chora’, p.167.

language may at times challenge the reader’s understanding of the points I am endeavouring to make. Yet I intend for the reading experience prove worthwhile effort. Just as in viewing (or making) art, the twists and turns of philosophy take us into adjacent spheres in which we find the unexpected. Although glimpsing gold may be a matter of some chance, in order to really appreciate the richness of this new potential – and its transformative capacity – we are likely to have to do the work of being with challenging language; or that in which is woven difficult ideas.

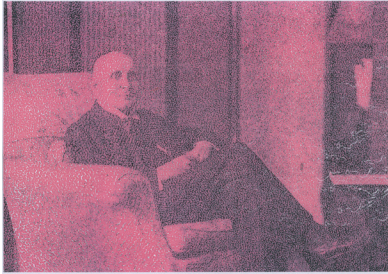
Why Whitehead: relevance of philosophy for practice research

Alfred North Whitehead’s significant text, *Process and Reality* (1985) is notoriously difficult to read (e.g. Weber, 2006:xii–xiv); but likewise many commentators remark upon the wit with which he imparts whatever wisdom he may have accrued, even in this most technical of his books (c.f. Johnson, 1947, Lowe, 1968, Kraus, 1979). Within the first few pages of *Process and Reality*, a reader may perceive the remarkable breadth of Whitehead’s experience as thinker, set in language of disparate hues and tones. It is not unreasonable to speak of Whitehead’s writing in such visual terms, for I feel the colour of his work. Although it is exaggeration to suggest that reading him has informed my own colour choice in my plastic practice printmaking, I speculate that my desire to experiment with unlikely combinations is a result of appreciating what an enquiring, ranging mind will entertain. The experience of reading him has helped me to appreciate that putting together things which may seem incongruous might activate a sense of possibility in the reader, or viewer. My research has given me particular appreciations of Whitehead the person, and so my reading of him is imbued with these sensibilities.⁶⁰ Yet because his language is so tricky, any reader is likely to have to grapple with it, to sift or pan; and in so doing, begin to form disparate understandings of what he might have to offer us.



60. In an earlier phase, I became rather fixated with the idea of the person who created the text; and so in a series of ‘pilgrimages’ visited places where Whitehead had been. This was part of what I discussed at the conference in Brasilia, documented in my *Plastic Block* book. Michel Weber (who also spoke at the conference) suggests that: ‘if your philosophical temperament lures you towards Whitehead, you will find material here to allow you to meet him in person’ (Weber, 2006:xii).

I believe that Whitehead – or his process philosophy, has value for creative thinkers, the practical applicability of which has yet to be appreciated. Whilst work has been published in this broader context (e.g. Shaviro, 2010, Rapp and Wehl,1990, Sherburne, 1970), its focus is on the (philosophical) aesthetics angle of ‘creativity’. Reviewing the extant literature, I find that plastic practice research has not yet significantly contributed to this scholarship, besides some texts from dance (e.g. Rothfield, 2008).⁶¹ Whitehead is a well-regarded source in other research areas, especially in the *Process Studies* circles (the academic journal from the Center for Process Studies at Claremont Graduate University [Philosophy Documentation Center:2024]), which have The Center for Process Studies reference as their fulcrum (The Center For Process Studies: 2024). The International Process Network (International Process Network a:2024), who organised the Brasilia conference I attended (International Process Network b:2024), are a part of this constellation. Within the *Process Studies* sphere, Whitehead’s work is considered and utilised disparately, generally aimed towards making things better in the world (such as in the work of eco-feminism (cf. Christ., 2008; Howell, 2000), often with a theological character; and sometimes with particular relationship with Eastern thinking, balancing the Western-centrism.⁶² The question of why Whitehead lacks impact beyond these particular studies has been variously debated (c.f. Lowe, 1968; Sherburne, 1970), but in my purview, Whitehead represents a very particular sort of figure, too Anglo-American analytic for Continental philosophy tastes, too white and male for others. From my perspective as someone who wants to use available material productively, such partial, representational thinking rather scuppers itself (among other achievements and perpetrations), by failing to read the text for its own merits, instead searching out ways to undermine it. The practice research I would encourage, requires allowing ourselves to ‘be with’ a text, to let it infiltrate the machinations of our doings. In being with



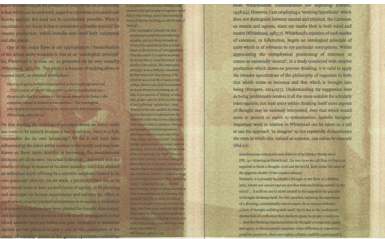
61. Aside from Philip Rothfield (discussed in *The feeling of a printroom*, p. 55) I recall a presentation at the 12th International Whitehead Conference which discussed contemporary dance from a Portuguese academic; and one that related to painting, from North America. I have been unable to find published documentation of these presentations.

62. My contention is that such binaries need dissolving rather than balancing ... I will explore the problematic of binary ‘either/or’ thinking subsequently, though not the Eastern thinking that I mention here. In a more Whitehead-focussed thesis (rather than mine which is concerned with practice), I would be inclined to explore the relationship between the philosophy of organism and Taoist philosophy; which is a fascinating area of research (e.g. Wyman, 1960; Neville, 1982; Yu, 2005).

something difficult, we can sometimes appreciate connections – interconnections – that imbue experience with deeper resonance.

Mine is a Whiteheadian thesis in that I have read Whitehead throughout it, if not for periods during that. But I have continually returned to him, to try again to penetrate his thinking, sometimes gaining more acute or broader perspective from the effort. His process thinking has most certainly informed my own, in relation to the creative practice concerns of my research. Across his writing I read the invitation to try afresh, as lure to feeling, thereby advancing – creatively – into novelty, such as reappraising the way things currently seem to be or are usually done. In Whitehead there is always more to be appreciated and worked with. For the maximalist (e.g. Ercolino, 2012),⁶³ the complex richness of Whitehead’s work may be taken as encouragement to consider everything: to examine all the intensities one discovers on the particular patch of land on which one finds oneself (Deleuze & Guattari, 2021:187). This is an allusion to a favourite passage from *A Thousand Plateaus*, which I read as a suitable basis for practice research.⁶⁴ There are similarities in the process thinking approaches of Whitehead, Deleuze and Guttari, which others will hopefully continue to research (e.g. Shaviro, 2010, Robinson, 2009, Keller and Daniell, 2002). Although my research might well have developed through the nomad thought of Deleuze and Guattari (and the practice of this research has been variously enhanced by reading them), the choice to concentrate on penetrating Whiteheadian philosophy of organism, comes from my feeling – as sense of reason – that there is ‘something in it’ for my work and deceloping practice.

My way of working involves returning to Whitehead for thinking inspiration, often in relation to the provocations of other texts. From recurring instances, I am now assured that I will find something which will speak to me in some way, some phrase, idea or percept. It might bear some relationship to what I am currently concerned with, challenging me to make sense just as



63. In his article *The Maximalist Novel*, Stefano Ercolino uses the term ‘chorality to indicate that narration in the maximalist novel is systematically carried out by a multiplicity of voices that prevents one character or one narrative thread from becoming dominant’ (Ercolino, 2012:246). An allusion to voice and character is also relevant to my own conception of chōric space as a non-hierarchical environment of creative becoming, where the various components that come together bring and investigate their potentiality; and produce something as a result.

64. Reading, discovering this passage (during Lockdown) was a crucial event in my research. For in it I perceived a practicable method for practice research, particularly my practice of creative block:

This is how it should be done: Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times. It is through a meticulous relation with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of flight, causing conjugated flows to pass and escape and bringing forth continuous intensities for a BwO. (Deleuze & Guattari, 2021:187)

it consoles me: heartening me that I am indeed on to something. Such momentary buzzes,⁶⁵ that occur in a moment of realisation are intense and precious. For whilst the delight will not endure, the feeling of interconnection, of sense-making, is such that it can be held – within the solution of process. Such realisation constitutes an event, in Whitehead (e.g. Leclerc, 1958:10). Events, as moments of reality, intensities, or conglomerations of possibility, have become a key appreciation during this research, upon which I will expand in subsequent blocks. But an event of making is an intensity for creative consideration. The trick, I am beginning to appreciate, is to actively motilate it (e.g. Kristeva, 1984:26),⁶⁶ prodding, nurturing, dissolving, extending; making fluid, inducing flow. For an activated solution lubricates the machines in and around their workings; and can pass between them.⁶⁷ Through some process which might be seen or thought of as research, or practice, one can concentrate on feelings, trying to work with them. In plastic creativity the result is likely to be something sensorial, that can be externalised, as matter of fact (or fiction) that may also be shared.

The efficacy of graft

This is fundamentally hard work. I would argue that the work of making art can be equally challenging to that of reading philosophy. Indeed, the viewing and reading (as ‘perception’) of art might be brought into this equation, as the literary theorist Viktor Shklovsky wrote in his essay ‘Art as Device’ (Shklovsky, 1991:6).⁶⁸ Writing in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century (around the First World War and the Russian Revolution) Shklovsky brings us the term and technique of *ostranenie*, translated as ‘enstrangement’: making strange (Bulatova, 2017:164). This is what happens in the creation of new art forms, which encourage their audience to re-conceive habitual perceptions and thereby really appreciate their experience. Shklovsky writes about a common ‘algebraic method of thinking, [in which] objects are grasped, spatially,

65. In one discussion of his process philosophy (as antidote to orthodox subject-predicate logics) Whitehead notes his debt to William James when he writes: ‘We find ourselves in a buzzing world, amidst a democracy of fellow creatures ...’ (Whitehead, 1985:50). The idea comes from James’ *Principles of Psychology*, in which he identifies the ‘great blooming, buzzing confusion’ in which humans come to form their impressions (James, 1950:488). This is a relevant idea to both Whitehead’s theory of concrescence; and what I will presently explore regarding the condition of chōra.

66. In *Revolution in Poetic Language*, (a product of her doctoral thesis), Julia Kristeva uses the term motility in the explanation of her theory of semiotic chora (1984:93-94). Motility here is a term drawn from a psychoanalytical context, into that relating to the formulation of a subject-in-becoming. I read her as referring to process as I understand it, not least in her description of ‘motility’s gestural and vocal play (to mention only the aspect relevant to language) on the level of the socialized body’ (ibid:94).

67. This is another allusion to Deleuze and Guattari, who discuss little machines – perhaps other actual entities – in the world, functioning away, desiring, producing and consuming intercommunicating and breaking down. See for example ‘The Desiring Machines’ in *Anti-Oedipus* (Deleuze and Guattari, 2020:1–8).

68. Shklovsky has pertinent points to make about the practicality of art that resonate with my study. This essay, written as a young person (in his mid-20s) full of fervour, serves as a polemic against the passivity of acceptance of things as they would seem to be, through habitual recognition. It calls rather for an active examination, a

in the blink of an eye’ (Shklovsky, 1991:5). In such automated comprehension, we do not really look or see, merely recognise a surface positioning. The device of art (Shklovsky’s concern here is particular contemporary literature and poetry) is to make our experience of life meaningful, by helping us to grasp our objects of experience. But Shklovsky makes a case for this being laborious activity, as reaction against ‘the economy of creative effort’ which has become a sought-after styling for prose (*ibid*:3). Leading in turn to economies of thinking, he posits such stylistic choices as resulting in mental complacency. The work of creating should have equivalency with the work of perceiving.⁶⁹

Affect (in passing)

In Shklovsky’s essay there is a scant reference to William James’ theory of affect (dismissed by ‘a single reference to the general rule of mental economy’ by a detractor [Berlina, 2015:160]). Whilst I will not overtly explore ‘affect’ in my thesis – nor the work of William James, although he has much of value to contribute in discussions concerning the experiences of creativity – the reference is nonetheless notable. James’ own journey through thinking is in some way comparable to Whitehead’s, tenure as Professor of Philosophy at Harvard being one instance. Both may be categorised as speculative philosophers; and across his work, Whitehead often remarks upon variations of James’ ‘adorable genius’ (e.g Whitehead, 1925:3).⁷⁰ In an early essay (critiquing aspects of Herbert Spencer’s psychology), James expands the evolutionary theory of survival, to include more of the colour and dimensionality of existence, as broadly affective. Survival, he writes, is but one of a plethora of interests: ‘... social affections, all the various forms of play, the thrilling intimations of art, the delights of philosophic contemplation, the rest of religious emotion, the joy of moral self-approbation, the charm of fancy and of wit – some or all of these are absolutely required to make the notion of mere existence tolerable’ (James, 1890:7). This

processing of perspective. He identifies art as tool or device for really engaging with the world:

And so, in order to return sensation to our limbs, in order to make us feel objects, to make a stone feel stony, man [sic] has been given the tool of art. The purpose of art, then, is to lead us to a knowledge of a thing through the organ of sight instead of recognition. By ‘enstranging’ objects and complicating form, the device of art makes perception long and ‘laborious’. The perceptual process in art has a purpose all its own and ought to be extended to the fullest. Art is a means of experiencing the process of creativity. The artifact itself is quite unimportant. (Shklovsky, 1991:6).

69. Although I have generally referred to an earlier translation by Benjamin Sher, due to the resonance of some of its terms, a 2015 translation by Alexandra Berlina is more pertinent with regard the making of art. On her rendering:

A thing passes us as if packaged; we know of its existence by the space it takes up, but we only see its surface. Perceived in this way, the thing dries up, first in experience, and then its very making suffers ... (Berlia, 2015:161).

Berlina speculates that puzzling as Shklovsky’s intention here is, to a native Russian speaker, ‘the making of a thing’ seems to refer to artistic creation and perhaps also to artistic perception’ (*ibid*).

70. Michel Weber has noted ‘a *mysterium conjunctionis*’ between James and Whitehead, since despite their differences of ‘philosophical temperament ... they basically shared the same organicist founding intuition’ (Weber, 2006: xviii).

allusion to the multiplicity of factors that might contribute to human experience, reminds me of Whitehead’s ‘art of life’: which it is the function of reason to promote (Whitehead, 1958:4).

I should emphasise that through these various thinkers and the ways whereby they have contributed to my learning, I understand reason as not confined to some notion of mind or intellect, but rather the holistic endeavour of practice research. Whitehead is a relatively recent challenger to the philosophical tradition of dualism (e.g. Cartesian), as that mode of thought which separates and stratifies mind and body, for example. Benedict de Spinoza is an earlier example of a philosopher who recognises that human drives are complex and embodied, and in his seventeenth-century treatise on ‘the Affects’ makes a pertinent claim to holism:⁷¹ ‘All these things, indeed, show clearly that the decision of the mind and the appetite and physical drive of the body naturally exist together or, rather, they are one and the same thing, which we label differently according to the context’ (Spinoza, 2017:53).⁷² This emphasis on the interconnectedness of things is of vital relevance in practice research, where neither thinking nor making are privileged, but all function as aspects of the work. I am also much taken with Spinoza’s observation on the contextualisation of classificatory systems. It would seem to be inevitable that humans are liable to label (things, others, states of affairs); but it is helpful to be in some sense conscious of our particular situation of perspective when assigning terms. Perspective is coloured by many factors of experience – James’ plethora – which includes affects and drives. Yet, so given, a term may also shift.

My fascination with Whitehead acknowledged, thinking about these various contributors to the art of life, or creative experience, has also often brought me to consideration of the work of Deleuze and Guattari. These philosophers are often associated with creative practice research, since (in my reading) much of their thought relates to the concerns of creative process. Simon O’Sullivan has written variously about the relevance of this relationship, from

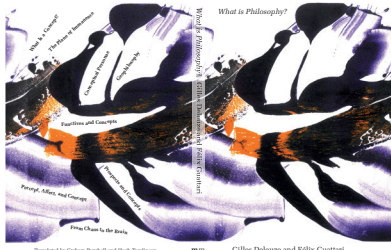
71. I mean this to indicate wholeness and interconnection of parts, rather than the philosophical theory of Jan Smuts.

72. This is quote is taken from a translation (available online) by Jonathan Bennett. Older translations (e.g. White and Stirling (c.1923/2001), or Shirley (1982/1992), render the Latin in slight variation, each with potentiality for appropriation. Bennett’s is apposite with regard considerations of contextual labelling.

his perspective of an arts practitioner. In his 2001 paper on *The Aesthetics of Affect*, O’Sullivan makes to reclaim ‘the art object’ from the critical discourses which have appropriated it in the twentieth century (e.g. Marxism and deconstruction [O’Sullivan cites Derrida]). Whilst not challenging the discourse, his point is to recognise what art does, and ‘does best’ (O’Sullivan, 2001:125). Art, he proposes, produces affect: ‘moments of intensity, a reaction in/on the body at the level of matter’ (ibid:126). Beyond knowledge or meaning or signification, affects are ‘immanent to experience’. Whilst an art object might produce affect, it is also *made of* affect, of intensities and experience. O’Sullivan draws on Deleuze and Guattari’s chapter on ‘Percept, Affect and Concept’ in *What is Philosophy?* here, to introduce the role of the spectator in this dynamic, who will be affected by it – just as the art object is itself activated by being considered, O’Sullivan suggests. Deleuze and Guattari themselves introduce an art object as a thing created, and as a ‘compound of percepts and affects’ thereby preserved, but which is thereby ‘independent’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 2015:165 [italics in original]).⁷³ Such ‘a bloc of sensations, a pure being of sensations’ must be wrought from the materials used in its making, through some method, which ‘varies with every artist and forms part of the work’ (ibid:167).

Trying to stand up

In this (as in much of Deleuze and Guattari, or similarly Whitehead) I read renditions or variations of reason that chime own experience and research endeavour. Finding a nugget of meaning that illuminates one’s own understanding is thrilling. It is similarly thrilling, for me, to see a print coming off the roller which has *something* about it – often a result of toiling away for some time, making acceptable but ‘thinner’ prints.⁷⁴ This is less an observation regarding ‘quality’ but rather to do with something that I appreciate from the chapter referenced above, in which Deleuze and Guattari discuss work that ‘stands up’ as



73. This autonomy of affect is an interesting conception, in relation to the creation of art as a ‘bloc of sensations’:

Sensations, percepts, and affects are beings whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived. They could be said to exist in the absence of man because man, as he is caught in stone, on the canvas, or by words, is himself a compound of percepts and affects. The work of art is a being of sensation and nothing else: it exists in itself. (Deleuze and Guattari, 2015:165).

We might therefore think of the instance of sensation, percept or affect as constituting an ‘actual entity’, in Whitehead’s terms. This notion will be discussed subsequently.

74. The term ‘thinner’ in relation to print might be expanded upon, though I shall not do so in this thesis. However, I note its relation to the ‘thickness’ that Philipa Rothfield noted in a particular sense of dancing in relation to Whiteheadian feeling (Rothfield, 2008:3, see also *The feeling of a printroom*, p. 55).

‘a being of sensation’ (Deleuze and Guattari 2015:167). Although O’Sullivan’s research provides me with an angle by which to refer to these important discussions, my intention is to note the sensations of – as experienced within – process, rather than engage in some rationale of aesthetic concerns. For my study has been one which looks at making, as a very obvious result of not making: the counterpoint to fatigue. If appropriately shared, this research might serve to encourage others experiencing fatigue to try making, by utilising their experience as material or method. But its particular result for me, is that I have chosen to live, better, both with and through my work.

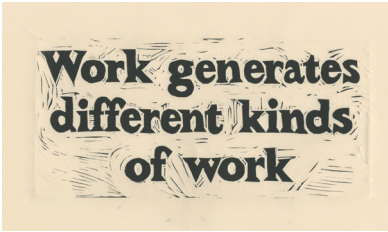
This is a large statement, but a relevant one to make in my thesis. Becoming-artist, focussing on creative practice, means choosing making work over any safety of ‘normalcy’. A sensible life-choice is to ‘live well’ (Whitehead, 1953:4), by pursuing a profession with a regular income and some chance of inflation-linked promotion. To make work is to constantly risk failure or disappointment; and by perverse consequence, to put oneself in danger of not having the wherewithal to actually make. There are economic requirements to living, and to making work, which can sometimes seem impossible. This is part of the reason that many people with huge potential are scuppered by the circumstances of existence, and obliged to succumb to requirement, rather than necessity. It is part of the reason that I look to examples of creative practitioners – people, as active agents – who have achieved something, the doing of which they have been able to share. Examples may be located as much in metaphysics as in memoirs or manuals. These are all labels of categorisation, to simplify contextual location. Much of the work I draw on in my thesis reflect elements of any such approaches to sharing experience.

Meaning to share

People who manage to make a living from their creative practices, those who show or publish and sell their work can seem

intimidating models, but might also reassure those of us who are not yet in that position. By regarding their work as process (or event), we might be able to share some sense of the activities which precipitate work. This is a factor of my rationale for attempting candid presentation of the dimensionality of a creative practice in this thesis. Whilst practices are necessarily individual, I contend that some form of block is an aspect of any practice. My attempt to share experience and whatever is formed from that (i.e. the various artefacts and events – as blocks or bodies of work – that make up this thesis), could be seen as contribution to resource available to others. Mine is not a case of providing any template or answer to another’s problem, but rather one of laying out material for re-appropriation.

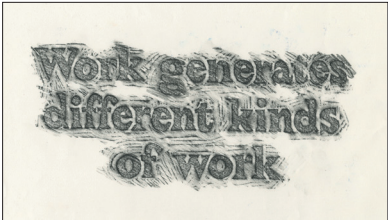
To try to understand other methodologies by grappling with its output – in the context of its production – is to ‘work with’ other thinking. Achieving a modicum of comprehension may be a key to a transformed approach to consideration of one’s own experience, allowing us to explore that which we encounter in our movements through life. What means something and what does not (from what we engage with or encounter) is a matter of some chance. An aspect of my research is the recognition that I require a degree of understanding of the endeavour behind the work to really be able to comprehend the ‘how to’ learning potential of it. Deleuze and Guattari’s discussion of the effortful work of artists or writers, bringing forth percepts and affects as blocs of sensation, is an instance of how such methods may be appreciated (2015:167–76) The insight and personhood of those I perceive as real thinkers (those who penetrate, or channel, real life experience) is as enviable as that of the artists and designers and musicians who make work of brilliance: that which feels like creative advance into novelty. It is these sorts of people who inspire me. Many of us aspire to create something rather brilliant, regardless of our views on what constitutes value in creative output. In the philosophy with which I have expended most energy engaging over the



years of this study, I am able to glimpse the travail that results in their journey through text; a sense of their struggle. As Deleuze announces to his student audience at the start of a lecture on 03 March 1987 (‘On Leibniz and the event’ through Whitehead): ‘On *travail* [we work / we are working]’ (Webdeleuze [Sur Leibniz: Les principes et la liberté], 2020).

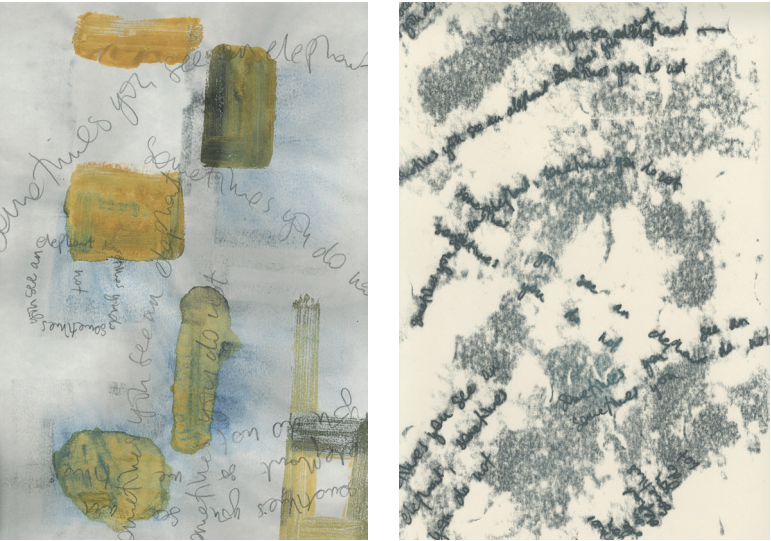
Trying (again)

Any practice, making, listening, or reading, requires the discipline of graft. Another aspect of insight afforded by my practice research has been the recognition that such practises require repeated effort: the practice of ‘going back’ (Green, 2018). My reading and pedagogy mean I am confident in suggesting my recognitions here are applicable to others who want to develop their practice. Trying again is monotonous (on some level), rather like making the effort to engage in any sort of physical training. We appreciate that we are likely to feel better as one result of it; but we may not relish the prospect. Even after a dozen years of near-daily swimming, I experience only scant moments of ‘oneness with the water’: fluently competent swimming akin to a moving meditation. The Art of Questioning; the EPRG, printmaking, teaching, writing, swimming, can all feel like unwelcome effort at times. Reading can prove infuriating or tedious, and the effort of searching for the golden nugget may threaten to overwhelm any promise of reward. Sometimes we just don’t get it: this text is too hard, oblique, does not chime with us. Therefore we might need to move on to another section of the text. My reading practice is sporadic, not having yet acquired the sort of fluid regularity to which I aspire. I desire a variation of the flow state that Csikszentmihalyi’s research shows to be obtainable through conscious effort, that ‘optimal experience’ of life which suggests Whitehead’s better living (e.g. Csikszentmihalyi, 2001:89). But still, there are moments, or intensities of pure sensation, events, that keep me going back. As Csikszentmihalyi demonstrates:



creative flow (or however we choose to term it) must be 'something that we make happen' (ibid). Moving on is sometimes the better option when the meaning evades us. It might be that we return to that sticking point on another occasion when we have a different headspace.

Listening, in the way in which one might hear a lecture, likewise involves the practice of repetition, of deciding to engage, of applying oneself, of putting aside one's current preoccupation in order to be with the speaker (or the art work; or the text). As I now understand it, philosophy is a practice of reading, writing and listening, enquiring and perceiving, trying and trying again, moving on and going back, just as it is one of thinking. Requiring time and patience, its rewards are uncertain – fundamentally so – yet deeply relevant if/when attained. As Whitehead wryly observes: 'Sometimes we see an elephant, and sometimes we do not' (Whitehead, 1985:4). I have been puzzling over his meaning here for several years. But like Dürer and his rhinoceros, if or when we see it, we can visualise it, in some form or other.



Recent work (cosmic magics)

December 2022

I have started to think of the recent Body of Work (BoW) of *Process Prints* as 'cosmic magics'. This title is taken from Félix Guattari; and seems relevant both in terms of the thinking that I am engaged in (attempting to get my head into or around 'affect') and the aesthetic impressions that are coming from the roller: as extension of the 'intensive and intensional'.⁷³ Whilst these are variations of the RollerWaves and Rollerwastes that I have been making for the past two years, their makeup is a definite departure. For one thing the colours within these prints are more deliberately varied: whilst previously the ink has been of one hue, perhaps then with the introduction of another to the first as tentative addition, in the work I have done since *Opera Viva* and certainly in *Affective developments*, the palate has increased dramatically. We had a pink-purple scheme in the *Opera*, for our virtual Zoom background, that software-glitch-merged with the orange and black goldfish print on the viscose shirt I was wearing: the realisation of this virtual effect prompting me to extend my discussion of the *a e o* show experience into interpretive dance, remixing physical and digital. The prints I felt inspired to make immediately after the performance obviously used those colours, laid down in a somewhat spiky and fractured fashion to reflect my state of mind at the time. The summer and autumn since then have offered various situations of being-becoming: highs and lows; joys and pains. My feelings, those emotions I experienced, my affective states in (through) those periods are to some extent reflected in the prints I made: the deliberately ugly 'obfuscations', the more refined and deceptively laboured 'negations', further ripples, waves and dances. For the movements of the roller in my hand

73. As the color of the human soul, as well as the color of human becomings, and of cosmic magics, affect remains hazy, atmospheric, and, nevertheless, perfectly apprehensible to the extent that it is characterised by the existence of threshold effects, and reversals in polarity.
Guattari; in Genosko (ed.), 1996:158

express my reaction to making work – in which I aim to channel my states of mind and thinking-being.

The way in which the colour acts and interacts is another, delicious aspect of ink, and of the RollerWave/waste processes. The relief printing ink I use has a particular intensity of pigmentation, which is super-concentrated when squeezed out of the tube and then gradually dissipates as it is spread and rolled and re-applied. There is a mid-point at which one might see the colour as it is usually intended – as it appears on the indicator icon on the tube – but the variations of saturation around this offer a strata of hues, eventually becoming pale as shadow. Mixing colour is another factor in the magic, since whilst we might know how it operates and have a degree of control in our endeavour, the vagaries of ink mean that most printmakers are likely to experience surprise at times, by what happens in action. Colour mixing is both an art and a science – and also an alchemical process, if one is able to embrace the potentiality of the materials. In these *Process Prints* the steps and stages are deliberately visible, so visualised in the prints. Layering extends the potentiality of this colour, in whatever phase of transparency or opaqueness it is operating at the time, whether on one plane as the activity of Rollerwaste process (the ‘dirty roller’), or as effected in this recent work, in which I allow a second or third pass of the roller across the initial printed block. I note that these *cosmic magics* are all rectilinear blocks, of varying dimensionality, being an extension of the roller across a paper plane; but whilst thus contained nonetheless feel expansive. The interactivity of ink colour is suggestive of the complexity of the emotional charges connected with colour: I am suggesting here that we (‘creative people’) have formed associations over time and experience, and will often channel this through use of colour in making art to ‘express something’. Or perhaps, following Guattari’s thinking about affect – who was responding in turn to Spinoza: that colour is reflection of some cosmic force which is available for drawing from, or channelling, through the rituals

of practice; in which the practitioner is effected and so affects (Guattari, in Genosko (Ed., 1996:158). Just as we rarely feel only one way, be that a sensation of pain or joy or satisfaction (if we consider our feelings more carefully, most emotions are at least tinged with others ...), so the ways of printing ink are indicative of our affective assemblages. My movement into over-printing in recent work, with subsequent roller passes as a layering process, is also a conceptual recognition that ‘states of mind’ are intrinsically poly-; and shift.

Since I started making work again in 2015, my use of colour has been a vital aspect of making work, whether or not overt consideration. For the composition of images, prints or text always seems to involve an interplay of the light and dark chroma that excites the eye and stimulates some form of response. I think that I intuitively use colour spatially, and dynamically. But whilst I may start out in the printroom with a particular chromatic intention – and am parsimonious with the raw material so that I endeavour to get maximum usage out of one squeeze of the tube (which was a factor in my invention of the Rollerwaste technique) – I find myself being seduced and so led elsewhere by the hues and tones of ink, the ways in which it behaves, suggestively. This most recent work recognises this behaviour also as misbehaviour: as queer, beyond (though involving) human control and thus very much about becoming. The atmospheres that these shades of printing ink evoke are generally surprising to me, as the person ostensibly responsible for the creation of this work: in instances of the moment that the print ‘appears’ I am delighted, at others disappointed. Colours mix, or smear, or glitch; they are revealed as highlight, or disappear when forced out or under by others. Though I may set an intention, my interaction with the ink and roller brings about unexpected effects and thereby, visual and conceptual directional shifts.

Printing ink also has textural qualities, as intrinsic material capacity. Somewhere between solid and liquid, a fluid that will

set to stasis (in an unknown duration: days, months, longer), ink feels in-transition, liminal. When we are using it, whether with knife or roller, its responsiveness is likewise seductive and exciting, for it may either bend with or resist the manipulations of the tool and make marks that are quite particular to printmaking process. To my mind, a painter's palate is nowhere near a source of such visually exciting interactions. It is some of these effects of raw process which I am attempting to capture / intending to present in this work, as an aspect of the work. Working ink, as part of the process of printmaking, brings about all manner of textural effects, as the material is worked on the block, whether glass surface, acrylic plate or wooden board. As the steel of the palate knife cuts through and spreads out the wet mass to slickened medium, it might smear, break-up, spatter or stutter across the block. Typically, the roller is then brought in to even-out and flatten these echoes of movement into a cohesive, sticky plane, so that the resultant hue can be applied to the surface to be printed. Yet in focussing on the process(es) of making work, I am attuned to the phases and stages, the data of concrescence; and seeing this making as the art of creative process, my intention is to allow it to be seen – by others, who have not been in the making process. For the making is exciting! When I am in the process of making work I perceive numerous visual effects on the block, causing me to consider, extend thought, make connections. The ripples and splutters of colour that become with each movement of the knife have the potential to make me feel something: the power of aesthetic impact. If I can extend these moments of feeling, share them and encourage engagement, this making process might demonstrate its transformative capacities.

The ways in which the roller functions in these prints is crucial. Whilst *cosmic magics* is further development of the ongoing, larger body of *Process Prints*, it is definitely a continuation of *Affective developments*, as the awkwardness of the way I was feeling during the time in which I was making that BoW has rounded-out into

more balanced and reflective attitude of considered experience. Therefore the way in which I manoeuvre the roller extends this state of being, and rather than the visceral, obsessive movements I was making as 'embodied affect', these are somewhat cooler and lighter, more playful, or pensive, even though the resultant prints may appear dramatic or violent. In any pulse of experience there is always much going on beneath the surface, extra-appearance, of which one need not be aware to appreciate the vitality of this vibrant tumult. Making work processes feeling (which suggests that for me *creative block* itself is [also] feeling ...) and the processing is made manifest, evidenced in the marks the interaction of roller and I effect. To an extent, thinking of this BoW as *cosmic magics* – in the context which this title appeared to me: reading thought whilst trying to understand affect – affords me licence to employ the range of my roller effects, which are themselves growing as I go. Or perhaps synthesising, since RollerWaste and Rollerwave techniques are brought together in the 'rippular' effect which smears and splays the lines of ink scraped-together at the end of a session. And here some conflict arises in the work(ing): I feel somewhat ambivalent about these ripples, which although visually pleasing and emotionally confluent have something of the arabesque quality of decorative cake icing about them, thus rather at odds with my affective intent! Yet such intensities of conflict, awkwardness and anxiety are factors of making work; and of becoming. The work emerges through the process and the processing, so perhaps these ripples are characteristic of movement into other existence. When I rest at the end of my lengths in a quiet pool, the surface of the water is rippled by the echoes of my exerted interaction with aquatic environment, welling-up from within ... As with so many of the roller techniques I use, these new print ripples appeared, as unexpected visual effect which surprised and delighted me, prompting attempts at repetition and the consequent exploration of its results; reflection on action; praxis.

Perhaps more pertinent (or acceptable, for me) is the trace of the roller movement on the block, which like the Ghost Strata prints is the vestige of its previous course. Using the roller as device for both laying down and picking up, I have now begun to collect this roller movement from the block (with a fresh, clean roller), laying it down either as Ghost Strata or overlay on a previous pass. Captured in this way, the movements – or their visual effects – are indicative of shifts in affect: now overtly on the surface, now an echo or reverberation or memory of affective state. Therefore the construction of these prints becomes more complex than in those of previous BoW, since rather than regarding them only scantily, as 'pulses of emotion' (Shaviro, 2009) or moments of aesthetic response that are all about the process of making, I am now starting to understand the recent prints as more durational, as 'compound of percepts and affects' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994:164). The roller has a memory function, as well as one of embodied movement. This can be utilised sequentially, as in the relation between the RollerDance and Ghost Strata pairs or groups, or more individually in deliberately-planned Risollers. With *cosmic magics* this recording may be the more directly processed replication of the working marks made on the block, as the ink is spread and scraped, the roller passed over (through) this and then onto paper. Inevitably, unfortunately, in some instances these feel flat, muddy, or thin, so the sense of excitement or provocation that is required in (this) art is not apparent. Yet the flatness of disappointment can be mitigated against, or reinvigorated, by considering colours and textures and movements that will compliment this hazy basis, with a second or third layer of roller pass. When this concretes satisfactorily, the magic happens, the print 'stands up on its own', as the subsequent pass brings the initial one to life, almost alchemically; though this is essentially just an example of the visual effects of ink (Deleuze and Guattari: *ibid*). In the case of capturing (or more appropriately, channelling) the serpentine movement of the roller on the block, which is akin

to that I use in the 'negation' prints, laying these ghostly echoes on top of a muddy print animates the moribund, as it assumes this form of the physical roller movement, activating the mire.

Layering in this way is a more recognisable trope of 'proper printmaking', where often an image will be constructed in consecutive strata, probably planned in advance. Any such skills, of working in reverse, born of disciplinary technical expertise, are without my fairly rudimentary printmaking capacities, which are more about sense of feeling for the materials and processes of production. In the work of *cosmic magics*, any planning is in response to what has just happened or appeared, rather than working towards particular creative vision. Aesthetic responsiveness instigates the majority of my printmaking, certainly in the *Process Prints* (which as emergent, techniques – even improper – I will claim as contributions to knowledge); but in previous BoW I have been somewhat resistant to layer-up. My concern was in capturing the purity of the creative moment of making, apprehensible as the movement of the roller on the paper reflecting or mapping the instance of my particular making state. However, understanding states as assemblage – the actual entity as a particular prehension (selection) of all the data available for its becoming (Whitehead, 1985) – liberates me from this self-constraint, providing license for addition and augmentation. Emancipation engenders the pleasures of delight; and for me, the potential for hedonistic exuberance, such as I have found in the realisation of 'becoming quite-wrong' and the consequent slew of (inherently questionable, improper) creative response to an occasion of experience. So in this work, I have also embraced the very plasticity of ink, which more correctly ought to be rolled to sticky flatness for efficiency of drying. Yet any printmaker may experience the secret delight of watching their ink silkily spreading and stretching and rippling and morphing on the block, as the desired colour is mixed, prior to it being tamed into structured utilisation. This process is usually quietly covert, almost meditative, though one is entirely

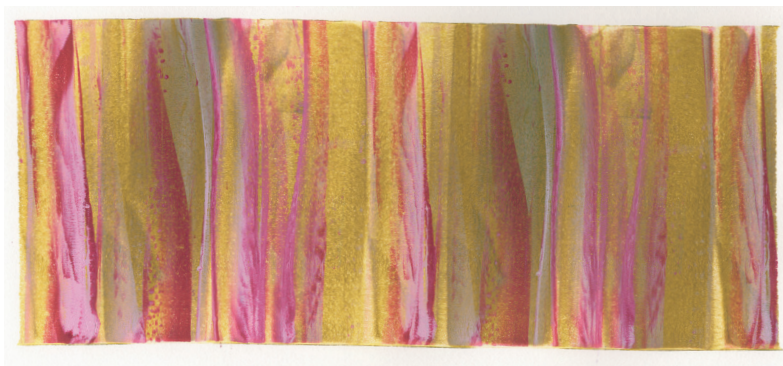
present and engaged in the making moment, witnessing these shifting ink effects as co-participant. My recent, current work celebrates those movements and reactions of becoming too, only harnessing them for their ability to reactivate. I acknowledge that there is some glee of gluttony in the activity of capturing these more private, interim instances of making print: picking up ink-in-process and somewhat wantonly applying it to paper, not conforming to protocol. When I get the thrill of seeing something exciting occurring, rarely sated, I crave more; and more again.

Any indulgence comes with a price tag: in this case it is drying time. A thicker consistency of ink takes time to dry, maybe weeks or even months. Therefore the printroom racks have been decked with my sticky prints for some time now, so it is fortunate that none of the students have yet started to produce the volume of work that requires this facility ... Of course, this drying circumstance necessitating patience also presents opportunities. Since they hang there as I move in and out of the space, I see them – if obliquely, back-to-back, suspended two feet above my head – over the course of time, in different lights, so have increased latitude to consider what they might 'need'. When I brandish a roller with a particular configuration of ink colour movement on it, there is now a further span of contemplation to engage with: which of those interim prints might benefit from what I hold in my hand? Given the fundamental speed of production of most *Process Prints*, such slowing-down is a relevant development, for I now spend time with these prints as prints-in-progress, rather than merely glancing at them, as the plastic aspects of my making process. Quite how this will effect my relationship with this work or my practice more generally remains to be experienced; but for the moment I am feeling a rather different sense of work than previously. Whilst still receiving the comfort of instantaneous gratification, as the delight of some vibrancy revealed by the revolutions of the roller in a 'moment of reveal', as well as that from a growing BoW to reassure me that I've 'got something'

here, this affect is compounded by an increased awareness of those sensual effects of *cosmic magics*. To an extent I am attempting to hold the entirety of this BoW in my mind (through my eyes), as I develop it, more keenly perceiving the parts of the whole. Fast-and-loose as it may be, this is involved work; and in my view very much a reflection of human becoming. In the light of *a e o* – a show of becoming – I have noticed a further advantage to the enforced slowing of drying time. Hanging on the racks, at least partially observable, renders them to some extent shareable, open to the scrutiny of others. In my developing appreciation of *creative block* I now understand this as a factor of relevance. The students who likewise move in and out of the space are curious, visual people, and they wonder about what this work is. Their questions are not about what it means; but rather how it is made, what is happening here. Deceptively simple as the process is, it produces results that make us wonder. In this time of intensity where nothing is very clear and we can feel ourselves being pulled in different directions, the hazy and atmospheric effects of process stimulate synapses to further work.



PRACTICE 96



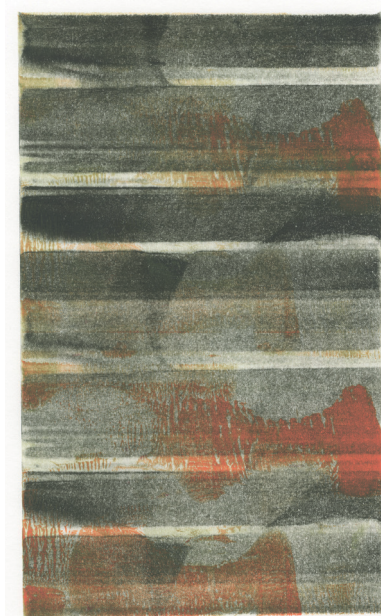
Recent work (cosmic magics) 97



PRACTICE 98



Recent work (cosmic magics) 99



PRACTICE 100



Recent work (cosmic magics) 101



PRACTICE 102



Recent work (cosmic magics) 103



CHŌRA

A chōra (of the manifold)

Across this thesis there are allusions to and mentions and descriptions of 'chōra'. It has been the key philosophical concept in the development of my project, with various practical implications. In this set of blocks, I will present aspects of its wider philosophical context (including their contested 'origin', in Plato's *Timaeus*). My discussions here are necessarily partial, given the breadth of scholarship on chōra, but are those most relevant to my ideas concerning plastic creativity. Within this current block of writing, I will start by articulating my appreciation of this notion, suggesting that it may be useful for other practitioners to consider: perhaps even as 'creative necessity'. My contextual rendering of it is a factor of the contribution to knowledge that this thesis presents. I will also introduce thoughts of other commentators, whose contributions to the discourse on chōra I enlarge upon in subsequent blocks.

As indicated by the spelling I prefer, with an accent on the ō, chōra is a Greek word and has a common usage meaning.¹ In other contexts subsequently related, it is spelt in different ways. This is the nature of translation and cultural shift, as of re-appropriation or preference. Such variation is particularly apposite for this term, since chōra is a notion apt to be differently-appreciated and repurposed. However, its immediate sense to a contemporary Greek-speaker is likely to be of place, or space, or site. This suggests its relevance in my thinking about creative practice, which arguably requires the context of some physical environment, even if that is the present location in which the practitioner (or would-be practitioner) finds themselves.

My thesis is predicated on the assertion that the initial key practitioner-necessities are material to work with and space in which to utilise that material.² I suggest these are the basic essentials by which to generate 'creative advance' (Whitehead,

1. This spelling allows me to conjugate the term (is verbal noun; or perhaps a nounal verb) into 'chōric', which I will use to express a situation or event that has chōra-like quality. My usage may be criticised for various reasons; yet I claim it as appropriate in the context of my study of creative practice and its applications. In any discussion, chōra (as philosophical concept) is intrinsically tricky to define and almost impossible to apply to anything else, yet many continue to make the attempt, just as I am doing here. Finding means by which to modify it affords me a greater sense of agency, just as it might any creative practitioner. This consideration is developed throughout this set.

2. Such 'space' involves the space and time to 'be with the work'. As previously discussed, making work is variously demanding, including of time; and often requires the toleration of long durations of uncertainty about what the work might or should be. This is most certainly a factor of the practice research of a PhD, which in my case has required seven years of 'study'. In periods of this time, little work has seemingly taken place, though I have always felt invested in the project. My thesis indicates the depth of my engagement.

1985:22), in any area of creative endeavour. The reasoning of thought or action might follow such material necessity, just as it may proceed it; but these are the elements of creative process as I understand it. 'Material' could be the physical cache of paper, ink, fabric, wood, clay, data or mark-making / forming / engineering devices, but equally the material of experience: the stuff of one's life to work with or through. Certainly in my own practice both physical and conceptual aspects are necessary,³ though in other disciplines or practices requirements might differ.

space or place of practice

I would apply the same logic of the multiplicity within a single term, to the idea of space, or place of practice. Creative practice, as disparately understood and practised, requires flexible terminology, with particular and different utility, across those various contexts in which they are employed. Conceptions of space certainly figure in much of the reckoning around practice as I appreciate and intend it.⁴ Ideally a practitioner will have some room, to move: to unpack or layout the material, to be able to see what they have to work with. This might be 'mental space' or 'breathing space', space in one's day or life, space (or time) for oneself, an actual space, inside or out, where one can 'be creative' or 'do one's thing'. Sportspeople need places to warm-up and practise, before they go out onto the field of play or stadium. A becoming-band of musicians finds some form of garage to jam in. Rehearsal rooms, studios, patches of common ground (or fenced-off golf courses), rooms-above or basements or outhouse sheds, urban squares, hillsides and foregrounds may all become practice space. Or the headphones we put on, or a book we open, wherever we are to engage with material that transports us.

As previously indicated (*The feeling of a printroom*, p. 55), the particular workshop environment I have been able to access during this research is a space which has proven vitally relevant to the endeavour. I have processed and explored much of the material of

3. The issue of 'necessity' requires further examination, especially since it is an important theme in the classical context of 'chora'; so will be revisited subsequently.

4. In my utilisation of the term, practice involves practise and practises. It is the ongoing endeavour, whether or not stalled, stagnating or dormant, as all-encompassing effort of being involved in making work. It also relates to the agency of the practioner or would-be, becoming practitioner.

my experience there, to make something of these resources: both the material I bring and the space of processing. Durations of time in that physical space, the possibilities I perceive as a result of its 'feelings' and the work I have produced there, have altered my conceptions of myself as becoming artist or -practitioner. It has thereby facilitated my penetration of creative practice, in order to present the important findings of this thesis. This printroom has been a site of physical, visual, material, affective exploration, in which I have located the conceptual space to question and think, through the repeated going-back and trying-again of practice. Indeed the environment has felt so essential, that when unable to be in there, I have felt withdrawal symptoms of craving.⁵ In a different sense, as the research has developed, the college studios where my professional practice with students takes place have become increasingly redolent as spaces in which I can appreciate the dimensions of my practice. By extension, the Wilson Road Lecture Theatre, where I was able to layout my hoard of prints for the *a e o print show* in June 2022 is another environment of process (see *a e o print show*: an event p. 239). These two intermezzi within my thesis present the printroom and lecture lheatre as making-work spaces within my place of work.

The space or place-ness of chōra is therefore an initial pertinence for this thesis. Yet unlike my appreciation of the multiplicity of 'material' connotations, its spatial resonances have taken more time to become apparent. Indeed, this is not the meaning of chōra by which I first came acquainted with the concept, nor that which is generally discussed in philosophical treatises, which highlight alternate meanings or appropriations.⁶ An exception is its application in architecture, a very practical philosophy of space and spatial issues. The McGill-Queens University Press book series of books under the title 'Chora: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture', explores the role of architecture in the context of everyday life. The series editor, Alberto Pérez-Gómez often writes about architectural representation, including issues of perspective

5. At the time of writing, this space is no longer available to me in the way it has been. My creative practice is now predicated on writing and re-reading, and so the thought experiments which take place amidst the adventure of ideas. I will consider this in relation to Kristevan signifiante presently. Consequently my working environment has shifted: to the various coffee shops which punctuate bicycle journeys between the other physical locations of my life (home, colleges, the swimming pool, the library, the Doctoral School at High Holborn). The building in which the Doctoral School is located is of significance to an erstwhile part of my professional career, tutoring on the PG Cert. Situated in the seminar rooms used by that course, this new centre for practice research is apposite as site for my PhD viva event scheduled for June 2024.

6. Indeed, some commentators are scathing of the ostensibly rudimentary 'spatial' interpretation' seen as obscuring or undermining the more general or metaphysical readings that become opened up when it is not grounded in this fashion. For example, in his commentary, Francis Macdonald Cornford warns that 'we shall do well not to anticipate' with regard the 'third factor' of the Receptacle; and that 'Plato does not use the word "Space" until the conclusion of his discussion' at 1352a (1997:177).

and projection, more recently in a worldview mediated by digital technologies (cf. Pérez-Gómez 1992; 2005). But to my mind, the most interesting collaboration in this field was that between architect Peter Eisenman and philosopher Jacques Derrida, which resulted in 'Chora L Works' (Derrida and Eisenmann, 1997). I will discuss this project in the subsequent block.

Simultaneity

However, one of the reasons for thinking about their collaboration in my thesis, is that it highlights the role of process in creative practice, At one point in the book of the project, Eisenman highlights that it is the operational rather than the material (such as the conditions of place) as key consideration. The importance of material, whether absent or present, figure or ground, is that it be identified in order that it may be destabilised – or processed (Eisenman, in Derrida and Eisenman, 1997: 135–6). He will discuss many aspects of chōra (in the spelling he prefers), but of particular relevance to me, is how it might be seen to operate on the level of some paradox:

Chora exposes the contingency and conventionality in the value of place but does not neutralize it. Rather, it allows it to be active within a multivalency that is no longer dialectical, that is no longer concerned with resolution. (ibid:136)

This evocation of 'simultaneity', even as a play of words and meanings, or its seeming emergence through the efforts of practice, is a factor of the irresistibility of the notion of chōra for me. In my project of interrogating *creative block* – in which 'block' is simultaneously or occasionally material and obstacle to its own utility, reason for making and prevention of action – allowance of simultaneity is essential. Tolerating the ambiguity and potentiality of coexisting 'conditions' within one term (which is also a concept), is an aspect of the creative move that allows work to become.

Academically- or philosophically speaking, such sleight might be seen as tricky, or avoidance of rigorous analytical work. But I would argue that work bent toward allowing its thinker(s) to maintain a firm sense of truth or correctness, is a move toward Establishment positionality, that will lead to the types of fascist thinking which need countering in our current, troubled world. Rather than being one thing and subjugating the other, those of us with the agency to effect change might do better to encourage tolerance of 'many', including the paradoxical, within the same body or idea. Though the certainty of 'right' might afford a sense of security, or of holding the intellectual/moral high-ground, an experience of being quite-wrong can open up the possibilities of experimentation. (See also Biéjodromo, p. 135).

Becoming quite-wrong

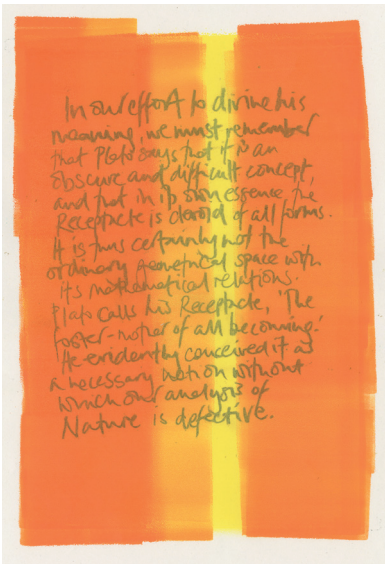
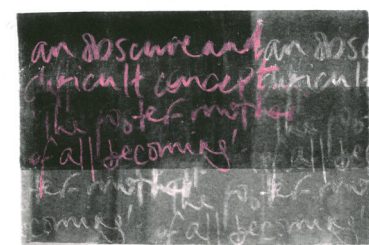
When I work with students in the studio, I often find that they are enslaved to the notion of perfection, which I speculate is an effect of a grade- and league table-obsessed compulsory education. My quest in these instances is to help free them of this 'A* pressure', whereby they can appreciate the messy joy of the process of making; rather than fixation on the outcome of officialdom. For in these making processes (which includes the writing of text), we discover things that 'feel right', though they may be dismissed by those who know better, as not 'the done thing'. Yet such feelings of connection, extension or promise, pulsate with *something* ... unknowable but redolent. From my perspective (that of some obsession with the intensities of 'creativity'), this is the thrill of *being* in, or *with* the work. The work may not 'work': it can fail to achieve the outcome we might hope for. The ideas we have discovered may prove underwhelming, or less-imbued with creative potential than we had envisaged. Although this is disappointing, frustration may still lead us into other areas of investigation, since ideas can be developed when we have cause

to re-think. My point here though, is to claim that holding the diverse possibilities of a term or concept – holding loosely – is likely to allow for development, rather than enforcement; and that simultaneity and uncertainty are fundamentally emancipatory. In my reading, this prevarication is essential to the ‘meaning’ of chōra, which is various. As Whitehead says in one reference to the Receptacle:

In our effort to divine his meaning, we must remember that Plato says that it is an obscure and difficult concept ... He carefully varies his phrases in referring to it, and implies that what he says is to be taken in its most abstract sense ... [the Receptacle] may be conceived as the necessary community within which the course of history is set, in abstraction from all the particular historical facts. (Whitehead, 1933:192).

‘Plato’s Receptacle’ is likewise chōra. ‘Chōra’ as such is not discussed in Whitehead, though he recounts various of the other names given to the concept, and occasionally employs both the Greek words *μυθοχρη* (receptacle) and *χωρα* (chōra). As many commentators have relayed (e.g. Derrida, Eisenman and Tschumi [in Derrida and Eisenman, 1997]), the concept of chōra is first located in the writing of a man, whose influence on the course of the history of thought has been prevalent, pervasive and problematic. This alone makes it worthwhile; though my interest is not in Plato, his philosophy or his Socratic Dialogues *per se*, but rather in the context of the particular ‘Dialogue’ in which this concept appears. The *Timaeus* is one of the later Dialogues of Plato’s *oeuvre*, written at some point of maturation. Given that is considerably over two millennia ago now, a fair amount of scholarship has been given to it, attention to which I will limit to suit my purposes. Indeed Jacques Derrida, whose study *Khōra* is purposeful and intensive, states:

We will never exhaust the immense literature devoted to the *Timaeus* since antiquity. It is out of the question here to deal with it in its entirety. (Derrida 1995:94).



The *Timaeus*

Therefore nor will I refer directly to my own reading of the *Timaeus* beyond preliminary comments, since this thesis has not developed in that direction.⁷ Although there is much in this engaging, complex, esoteric text, beyond ready comprehension, that may be fascinating to explore through the lens of practice research, it is necessary to train my attention on its aspect towards chōra, which may be applied to the concerns of practice. Indeed, such is the articulation that Socrates (in the background of the discussion for once) asks of his interlocutors (Plato, *β* 20). The various commentaries that I will draw upon are those scholarly readings that given their particular bent, allow me to expand my thoughts in relation to this specific theme, which has become a focus of this thesis.⁸ Where necessary I will indicate the section from the Greek text where the matter under discussion occurs, regardless of translation, unless direct quotation is required. However, it is diverting to note that it was the only one of the (approximately) 35 of Plato’s Dialogues translated into Latin from Greek: in part by Cicero, two centuries later in other part by the physician Galen of Pergamon; and therefore the sole Platonic source available for Medieval study, until the twelfth century CE (Zeyr and Sattler: n.d.). Earlier scholars are therefore likely to have considered Plato as a philosopher of Natural Science, with a peculiarly geometrical bent. This Dialogue itself subsequently fell out of fashion, but resurfaced again for translation and commentary in the late-nineteenth century. The twentieth-century commentaries are those that I have considered most widely, given their interrelationship with the thinking of Whitehead, who considered it of considerable relevance. In 2007 ‘Plato’s *Timaeus*’ was the subject of a conference that itself spawned a book (Mohr and Sattler [eds] 2010; see n.8).

To a contemporary reader with access to the wealth of critical response, the *Timaeus* is an extraordinary book, whichever of its multifarious parts one is concerned with. Various accounts of the text identify its problems and possibilities; but I note Derrida’s

7. There are various English versions of the text available, the most recent being Robin Waterfield’s from 2008. My reading has generally been that of Desmond Lee’s 1965 (1977) translation; though at various points in this thesis I quote from Benjamin Jowett’s translation (c. 1870), available online. This is for linguistic stylistic reasons: for example Jowett’s rendering of ‘bastard reasoning’, which is picked up on by other commentators (e.g. Sigrídur Guðmarsdóttir, in Faber and Stephenson [eds], 2011)) and has a particular resonance, which I am keen to exploit. Although Lee’s ‘spurious logic’ (e.g. Plato and Lee, 1977:71) works well in certain contexts, bastard reasoning has (for me) connotations of a-heteronormative approaches to living. In my experience, through wider research, this reasoning relates to queerness; and also suggests becoming quite-wrong.

8. The two main twentieth-century commentaries in relation to the Dialogue are A.E. Taylor’s *A Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus* (1928) and Francis McDonald Cornford’s *Plato’s Cosmology*, published in 1935. These are often refereed to by subsequent scholars. Whitehead makes reference to the Taylor in the *Preface to Process and Reality*, regretting that he had not been able to make better use of it when writing (or preparing the Gifford Lectures), and it is evident in the biographies that he was excited by its imminent publication (cf Lowe, 1985, Price, 1958). Cornford meanwhile (a Fellow of Whitehead’s *alma mater*) refers to Whitehead in his own *Preface*, citing him as the example of the sort of reader who takes Plato’s thought and bends its to suit their own ends (in relation to his spatiotemporal appropriation). Therefore I consider my own appropriation to be in good company,

recognition of the ‘artifices, boldness, or secrets of formal composition: the art of Plato the writer! ... [which] interests us and ought to do so more still ...’ (Derrida, 1995:106). Ostensibly set on the day following the discussion which constitutes the *Republic*, a series of orators are tasked with responding to Socrates’ request for some contextualisation of the ideal city state. This takes the form of various narrative stories, starting with Socrates’ own recapitulation of his speech regarding this vision of urban and social order. He expresses the desire to see this theoretical rendition illustrated by the practice of a city – one in a fit state to wage war; but claiming that his lack of experience prevents him from making adequate representation, prevails upon his statesmanlike responders to provide (verbalised) images of the city in motion. This is essentially Socrates’ part in the philosophising plot: thereafter Critias, Timaeus and Hermocrates are to give their accounts.

A likely story

It transpires that those recounted by the first two named are not from personal experience; but from tales told to these men by others. ‘Likely tales’ in some readings (c.f Andrew Gregory, in Plato and Waterfield, 2008:xxxiv–xxxvii; Lee, 1977:10–14), and we can assume calculated to tie-in with the political agendas of these who Socrates introduces as philosophers rather than sophists, by dint of their education, training and social standing (β19D) (e.g. Cornford, 1997:28–32).⁹; but fabulous accounts for all. Critias’ preamble concerns of the founding of pre-Ancient Athens as a glorious nation, and its defence of Hellas from invasion by the island-state of Atlantis – subsequently submerged in the ocean, its power dissolved. But before he goes into detail (for there are many delayings and backtracks in this Dialogue), in order to establish the psychologies of the people who will go on to inhabit these structures, Timaeus will relate the story which proceeds it:

however spurious my reasoning may be (and has been) judged.

In the latter part of the last century, the commentary was picked up again, by Derrida, Grosz et al, to which I turn in subsequent blocks. Perhaps as one result of this critique, the Dialogue appears to have enjoyed a resurgence of interest in recent decades. In 2007 a conference was held at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, ‘Life, the Universe, Everything — and More: Plato’s *Timaeus* Today’, with contributions from the disciplines of philosophy, theology, physics, literature, engineering, architecture and film. A resultant volume of essays, *One One Book, The Whole Universe* was published in 2010.

There is another reasonably contemporary text which is more relevant to the theme of this set. John Sallis’ *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato’s Timaeus* was first published in 1999 and is a richly dense, scholarly response to its source. A review by Colin C. Smith following its 2020 republishing (as the first volume of the *Collected Writings of John Sallis*) cites it as ‘a distinctly ancient Greek anticipation of the philosophical interests of continental philosophers like Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, Derrida, and Gadamer ... [in which] reading Plato entails tracing a self-showing (*phainesthai*) of the truth (*alētheia*) as it makes itself manifest through the movement of the text’ (Smith, 2020). For this reason I will not respond to it in this thesis, other than in associated comments – although from my perspective it is **the** commentary, certainly for anyone interested in exploring the concept of *chōra*. Sallis discusses *χώρα* (*chōra*) throughout the book, but his ‘chorology’ is in the middle, echoing the positioning of the concept in the *Timaeus*. Therefore it is almost impossible to isolate this discussion from its wider context – which includes, for example, considerable explication of the role of The City in the context and dimensionality of the

that of the becoming of the universe itself (β27b6). And this is where it all begins to get really tricky ...

In a study of *creative block*, which has at times seemed heading towards investigating the very notion of ‘creativity’, a philosophical creation story such as that of *Timaeus* was likely to be of some interest. If intrigued by the allusions in some commentaries and so curious about what I might learn, in the reading I have discovered much to perplex me. The mythical Demiurge, craftsman-creator of the universe, is a fascinating premise in the context of creative practice where a practitioner (arguably) dreams up or fashions their own world from the materials available to them. That Plato’s artful universe is fashioned from the Platonic Solids – devices of his own creative practice – is understandable, but unfathomable for me beyond superficial appreciation. It is a complex thesis requiring interpretation – although some readers, especially mathematically-minded ones, will be more able to navigate the theory.¹⁰ In this respect the *Timaeus* functions very much as a piece of art, which will offer viewers diverse possibility for interpretation. We need not ‘get it’, understand all of it (or see it as intended), to feel something or be encouraged to think again.

When I first read this Dialogue in 2019, my response to some of what I was grappling with, was to utilise these geometrical forms (or my expressive rendition of them), in charcoal or Conté crayons on the monoprints I was simultaneously generating. Making such marks as I worked and thought gave me a sense of fashioning meaning, amidst the uncertain logic of these entangled narratives. The concept of *chōra* had become apparent to me at some point in the year before that (though I cannot say exactly how), reading around the plethora of texts and commentaries and papers that I spent the earlier parts of my research amassing. Although evident that I would need to read the *Timaeus* when I recognised it as the ‘source’, it took me additional time to be prepared to bring Plato into research that I wanted to feel contemporarily relevant.

narrative. The city (as constantly developing entity) was a significant theme of my earlier practice, although not a focus in this project. However, see images pp. 27–8

9. In this account – or recounts – it is necessary to appreciate the context of the Dialogue. These contemporary Ancient Athenians trading tales, are recounting stories about the origins of their society. Critias’ ostensibly recalls a time nine-thousand years previously, around 1350 BCE (and *Timaeus*’ from considerably before that!). The Athens of these men’s forebears was founded by Athena, goddess of intelligence and of war (β23E; 24D). Nations tussled for supremacy, waging war, subjugating peoples, claiming territory, imposing will. Therefore the attributes of wisdom, will and warfare are relevant to bear in mind when considering what is presented, as key to their contemporary political agendas. This is a different international societal vision to that of today, perhaps.

10. Cornford’s is a particularly useful resource here, since it includes a commentary interwoven with his translation. His intention, given in the *Preface*, is to render the complexities of the Dialogue accessible, without resorting to any temptation to interpret Plato from a contemporary perspective as others, such as Taylor and Whitehead have done (Cornford, 1997:v–x). Working through the text by taking a section of Dialogue and then unpacking its context, his own explanations run to many times the volume of Plato’s prose (or is it poetry?). Even with such careful attention, the mathematics, with its relation to Harmony, is beyond any ability I have to comprehend. Yet the Ancient Greek thought that he endeavours to bring to the modern student (of theology or philosophy ...) chimes with my appreciation

On reflection this was ignorant prejudice, for as in much of the relatively archaic texts included in this research, here I discovered a vivacity absent from much contemporary writing. Nevertheless it is a challenging read. Whatever my comprehension, I had understood from Whitehead’s take on the text that Plato himself seemed perplexed or ‘dazed’ by the ‘fragmentary system’ he has devised (or ‘discovered’) in this Dialogue (Whitehead, 1933:187–8). In this, I recognised something of practice: *the feeling of being with work*. Therefore I sensed that this might be an example of those important moments when a creative person is ‘moving on’.¹¹ Beyond being a creation myth, the *Timaeus* is a plastic rendition of creative process in action. I can also recognise my prints of that time as being a transitory stage in the development of my practice.

Necessity

At the start of this block I mention various necessities of creative practice as I experience it, including space – as that which involves time – and material. I contend that good work can be derived without a clear *a priori* idea: indeed that ideas may develop through the process of making work, which then allow that work to develop. This has been my experience, whether in the printroom or when writing; where practice involves the processes of selecting, refining and editing to achieve (in some sense) solid or shareable outcome. Whilst some practitioners require a plan of action or system to pursue their craft, my own creativity tends to responsiveness, marked by rhythms and pulsations of activity and reflection, which include not-knowing and getting it wrong. When I talk to students about making work, I stress that all these conditions, or allowances, are necessary in processes of creative production, which is counsel designed to reassure them. My preference is to regard making work as ‘a process of becoming’: speculative endeavour in which something unforeseen may occur, as opposed to formulaic plan towards calculated success. It is in the mistakes and happen-chances that I have often found the

of creative process. In the *Epilogue* to his study, Cornford reiterates his intention to show that ‘Necessity must be recognised as standing for a factor in the existing world never completely subdued by Reason ... There is at all times some chaos in the cosmos’ (*ibid*:361).

11. This is another statement which would benefit from unpacking; although to do so properly would require another study. However, my immediate experience of creative practice (my own and also being with others attempting to make work) is that at certain periods of intensity we will experience a ‘type of production’, whether an individual piece or a larger body of work, which is transitional. Very often when making such work we are uncertain about what we are doing and may feel degrees of anxiety. The outcome might appear ‘beyond us’; yet we recognise that our practice has in some sense shifted. There may even be a sense of stasis in this state, whereby not seeing development causes us to believe we are ‘stuck’. I would also consider this experience of intensity as an instance of *chōra*, to indicate the event of bringing together of ‘material’, where it is held for a duration, prior to becoming channelled or transformed into something with further potentiality.

most creative satisfaction. The byproducts of chance discovery feel like the ‘creative advance into novelty’ (Whitehead:1985:349), the sense of appetite that now often drives my practice (e.g. Whitehead, 1958:15; see also *The Function of Reason* ... p. 55).¹²

In the *Introduction* to his translation of the *Timaeus*, Desmond Lee sets the scene for what is to follow. He explains the idea of the divine craftsman, fashioning his (our) cosmos from the elements (or ‘indeterminate substance in confused motion’) in the ‘Receptacle of Becoming’ –which is one description of *chōra* (Plato; and Lee, 1977:10). Lee indicates the uncertainty as to the nature of this material given in Plato’s Dialogue, in which the substance is also the Receptacle:

Indeed to call it a substance is an over-statement and it is subsequently described as space (p.71), though as space in which disorderly motion is taking place (p.72). It is also closely associated with necessity or the indeterminate cause (*ibid*).

In this introduction to the metaphysical premise of the Dialogue, concerned with being through becoming, he goes on to explain that the role of this craftsman in the myth is to account for the ‘intelligibility’, or reason of the universe: an essential aspect in Plato’s systematisation (*ibid*:11). This ‘underlying force’ of intelligence requires further aspects, those of ‘purposive design and goodness’. It is in this context that the material he has spoken about can be considered: the necessity or indeterminate cause. Any material (even that from which the cosmos is fashioned), whilst serving some purpose of design utility, will have its own particular properties, which ‘may produce side-effects’ (*ibid*). Lee uses the example of steel used to make modern tools: strong, malleable yet prone to rust.

The analogy is problematic, since as Cornford has warned, this cosmic material should not be viewed in the earthly-stuff terms of *hyle*. Anything to do with relating *chōra* to graspable properties tends to cause such issues, so any analogy must be transient or partial. However, Lee’s point is to make us aware that

12. ‘Appetition’ is another term I take from Whitehead; which has been of particular relevance at earlier stages of my project. In *The Function of Reason*, he talks about appetite as something of a drive, a factor of the ‘mentality’ which is itself a factor of the Reason (‘the organ of emphasis upon novelty’ [Whitehead, 1958:17]) at the centre of this treatise. As all his terms in their various forms, appetite functions in multiple ways, as anarchic refusal to slavish conformity, emotional purpose, agency (*ibid*:25–8). Anarchy is a crucial aspect in the ‘upward trend, the quest to live better, which is the reason for ‘the art of life’ (*ibid*:2–5). Remarking upon the becoming of moments of quite anarchic beauty amidst the rubble of human (and earthly) existence, Whitehead delights in such aesthetic wonders, seemingly in spire of physical ordering:

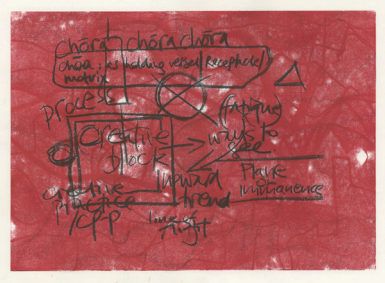
... there is in nature some tendency upwards, in a contrary direction to the aspect of physical decay. In our experience we find appetite, effecting a final causation towards ideal ends which lie outside the mere physical tendency (*ibid*:72).

a (necessary) factor of the necessity – which itself is required by the intelligent reasoning of the world, is an element that is uncertain, unpredictable, even arbitrary. Whilst not uncritical of Plato’s logic here,¹³ he is intrigued by the relationship of this chance element, serving as proof component in the rational scheme (c.f. Plato, and Lee, 1977:12; Gregory, in Plato, and Waterhouse, 1988: xivii–li)), To my own ends in this thesis, the particularly salient part of this, is the pertinent notion that (the event of) the Receptacle involves ‘material transformation’ as necessity in the process of becoming. However we might comprehend material, this necessary transformation indicates the ‘making something of it’, which has been of crucial importance in my realisation of *creative block*.

Uncertain multiplicity

As relayed across the various scholarly articulations, part of the (creative, conceptual) value is that ‘chōra’ is not any one thing, but like various aspects of life. Whilst analogy and metaphor are philosophically problematic in the quest for the truth or ‘right-ness’ (or academic validity), and myth may be perceived as morally suspect or sociopolitically dangerous, in the creative pursuits of ‘plastic arts’, approximations and relations are fecund. That with which we can more readily associate facilitates thinking or appreciation of that which even if beyond immediate experience; we may ‘feel’. Its mutable ambiguity is an aspect of why the concept is so vital to creative pursuit. In relation to the concerns which have inspired my research, there is no singular, complete answer to how to make work or with regard the processes of creativity; so there is no categorical answer to the problem of ‘creative block’. Nor should we expect or hope for ‘one’: or if we do, only as addition to the multiplicity and polyvocality of becoming. In relation to the ‘novel entity’ of creativity, Whitehead teaches: ‘the many become one and are increased by one’ (Whitehead, 1985:21). The complexity and uncertainty of creativity makes the making process relevant, or is at least a component of its vitality.

13. In discussion of the oft-cited ‘likely story’ reference, Lee questions the suggestion of his predecessors Taylor and Cornford with regard the partiality of the empirical knowledge of physical science. Likewise Lee sees Plato as mistaken in his emphasis on the higher grade mathematical, logical knowledge, trained towards self-validation – setting the way for philosophical thinking in general, requiring ‘all knowledge to conform to a single set of criteria’ (Plato; and Lee, 1977:12). Whilst he does not offer any alternate hypothesis, it is interesting to note that although he comes from this Classical (and so analytical) tradition, in my reading, Lee seems to be suggesting a more pluralistic approach to thinking.



But perhaps in this stumbling-through it is only natural (human nature?) that we search for signs, markers that – as creatives, in the process – we are on some ‘right track’ or other.

The name of chōra has long felt for me like such a signal, a reassuring sound, albeit uncertain. Perhaps because it is a term from a language which is not mine, I am able to hear it as resounding, not in the sense of being emphatic but rather resonant, like birdsong. If perversely, in all its uncertain suggestiveness, it has the capacity to hearten, akin to a nonsense word of poetic language, transformative children’s literature, or *avant garde* culture (so often born of sociopolitical crises; with its investment of hope in change), which transports its receptor or receiver to alternate modality; in which one might ‘make sense’. In some regard, this acts as a passage from the structures of epistemology to the (even murkier) ontological quagmire. In the context of attempting to articulate a thesis for submission and examination, chōra is becoming the sense to which I am more consciously drawn, since my experience of practice research has continually demonstrated the concept’s practical capacities as useful theory, to access thinking. In my appreciation, just as ‘block’, chōra is (perhaps) a noun or name, which through activation of discourse becomes dynamic verb.

Echoes (across the arts)

The chora of Julia Kristeva’s semiotic sense (to which I will turn subsequently [pp. 167–74]) involves the articulation of a distinctive mark or trace (Kristeva, 1984:25). Chōra echoes across the centuries, through tales relayed and the literature that sets them down and draws them out. In my own sense-ability, there is feeling in the word, which sounds a resonant timbre:¹⁴ when I hear ‘chōra’ now, it causes my ears to prick up. For I have been wondering about this notion for several years, using it in writing, discussion and presentation, making work with it, finding or forming new words from it, to express my under-standings of

14. The relationship of chōra to sound or to auditory sense, is another which may be explored. For example, Roshanek Kheshti does so in relation to listening to music and the generation of (Kristevan) signifi-ance (2008). However, it feels necessary to briefly mention Derrida’s Tympan here. In this essay (from 1972), Derrida continues his thinking with regard limits, peripheries and margins (the essay is in a collection called *The Margins of Philosophy* (1982. See also Sean Gaston, 2009). He ‘plays with’ its titular device linguistically; but is especially relevant is the tympan as reverberating skin of the middle ear, like that of the drum struck by sticks or hands to make sound. A tympan is also a factor of a mechanised printmaking process, in which it functions as a sort of matrix. I also note that this particular essay has been typeset with a narrower column in the right, in which an extract from Michel Leiris’ *Scratches* (1991) is set. There is a stylistic relationship here to the design of my thesis manuscript.

its conceptual and practical capacities. Recently I heard it on the radio, in *Archora*, the title of an orchestral work by composer Anna Thorvaldsdottir, which uses the concept as inspiration, conjoining it with *archē*, as principle, and referring to primordial energy and a realm both static and transitory: described as ‘a halo’ emerging from that energy by the composer (BBC Radio 3 *In Concert*, 21.10.23). I have already discussed the way in which *chora* has informed architectural practice, lending its suggestiveness to environments for interaction. The term has also been used more graphically: as the title for a paintstick drawing of overlapped ring forms by the artist Richard Serra (2000); its dark undertones rendering it apposite for the naming of a warrior character in a massive multiplayer online game (*Warframe*, 2013) and a sinister governmental agency in a short film (*Khora*: 2023).

Yet even when it came to me (even if not in a dream [e.g. Derrida 1995:90]), its sound or association was not unfamiliar: something that had been around, perhaps just beyond consciousness. ‘Sometimes we see an elephant ...’ (Whitehead, 1985:4). The word – or name – itself sounds like other things: like an African musical instrument, like a chorus, like a forum website, like a Latin term related to democratic process. Similarly, the ambiguous ‘meaning’ or associations of *chōra*, in its various spellings, related to so many notions of spaces and processes of becoming, approximates it to other things we’ve heard about, or think we have. When I refer to it verbally, my interlocutors generally do not know quite what I’m talking about (for such is the social experience of a research student); but many will nod ‘Oh yes ...’ – and I sense that they are scanning their memories for the source of some distant recognition.

Making / feeling / holding *chōra*

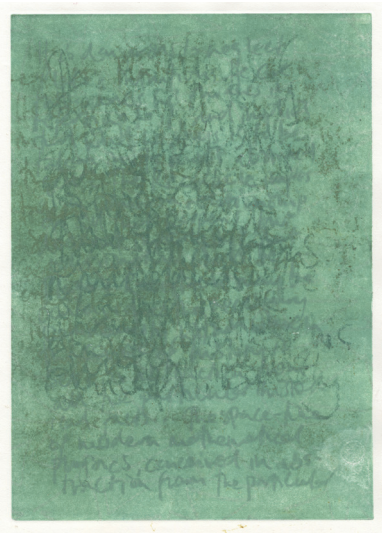
During the span of this PhD research I have written, often and variously, about my current appreciations of *chōra* and the ways I can apply it to my practice of that time. Such writing, in



Richard Serra, *Khora* (2000),
(image credit: Gasogian Gallery).

association with the making of prints and the positing of theory in relation to lived experiences, has allowed me to process thinking. That sentence is simply written but hard realised. It is therefore an important dimension of the argument I am setting out. ‘Being-with’ the notion of *chōra* has been key to my endeavour, and the wrangling of material with which I have been dealing. The ‘definitions’ that I first read in Plato, extended (initially) through Whitehead, remain those by which I recognise the creative capacities of *chōra*: inscriptions whose strokes I have traced, along the practises of this research. Their practises have taken me elsewhere, undermining both my resolve and understanding. Although at various points in this work I have found ways to ‘claim’ the term and thus feel a sense of ownership (and awareness of the problematics of such terminology), I am likewise irregularly reminded that any ‘understanding’ here can only ever be partial. It is not my concept; nor can it belong to anyone or anybody. Indeed, in one reading (the creation myth of *Timaeus*’ telling), human beings were formed by the Demiurge within *chōra*, as mixing bowl / receptacle: *chōra* ‘existed’ *a priori*. But therefore perhaps, by (human, creative) association, *chōra* is likewise the womb of humanity ...

The term resounds again in another contextual *milieu*; and again I question my decision to align my study with *chōra*. For I perceive yet more modalities of the ways in which it has been considered, that must be to some extent reckoned with in my PhD thesis. Maria Margaroni suggests that the challenges levelled at Kristeva about her appropriation of the concept resulted in her distancing herself from it in subsequent work – although Margaroni’s contention is that *chōra*’s relevance to her philosophy is traceable through this *oeuvre* (2005:79–80). This suggests that one may not need name it to feel it; or to recognise its channelling capacities. Nor indeed, to use the other ways of thinking it affords in the development of ones’ own approach. Before Kristeva reaches the ‘semiotic *chōra*’ that she harbours in *Revolutions in Poetic Language* (at least), in



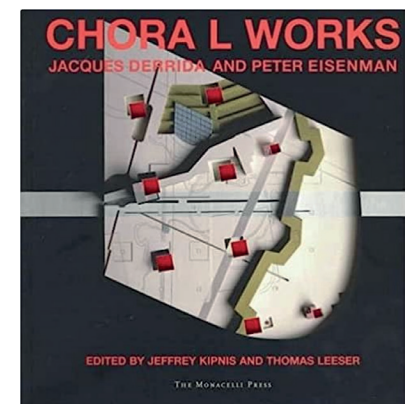
setting-out her revolutionary intention to challenge the accepted norms of the 'philosophy of language and the "human sciences" that stem from it', she posits the requirement to 'de-center the closed set and elaborate the dialectic of a process within plural and heterogeneous universes' (1984:14). Whilst seemingly theoretically worthwhile, such emancipatory work is challenging to effect – and maintain – in practice.

Challenge is compounded by the scholarly requirement to assert some authority, to claim and defend a position: the making of a contribution to knowledge for other academics to refute. Yet even before those textual counters of academic gaming, 'chōra' is inherently problematic, as 'that' which is neither one thing nor its other, but rather 'a state' beyond, around, parallel, ante, between, without or to the side. Triton genus, trans, hybrid, queer. Difficulties of its terminologies notwithstanding, the concept is errant. My writing in response to it has generally strayed from its objective of articulation, into other forms of (subjective) expression. In writing chōra now, in response to the timbre of my current position of existence and the reading around it, I can associate it with the conceptual fecundity of *signifiance* with regard process thinking. Here then, is another iteration of conceptual association. That it feels 'right' and affords me some sense of insight, is the result of critical endeavour, or the graft of creativity. It might be wise to to appreciate this sense as the result of creative effort, as an element of Whiteheadian 'satisfaction'. My contention is that this is all chōra will ever grant us, necessarily. Accepting limitation to any understanding – or understanding as liminal process – is what allows us to make something of it.

'Chora L Works': a collaborative project

Although I am not an architect (so view the discipline from the perspective of interested spectator rather than practitioner), I will discuss this architectural project and its context at some length. It has various implications for my appreciation of the concept of chōra; but also wider relevance with respect the relationship between what might be considered 'theory and practice' and their associated events. This unrealised project is the result of the interplay of architecture and philosophy, as well as various other creative disciplines, through the associations of those concerned. It is a project of speculation, primarily involving the architects Bernard Tschumi and Peter Eisenman and the philosopher Jacques Derrida. My source material for this present discussion is the book, Chora L Works (1997). This book has also interested me variously, such as being a pertinent plastic form as vehicle for an awkward problem.

The Derrida-Eisenman collaboration exists as a record of speculation and planning, detailed thinking and drawing, arguments and understandings, documentation and media discussion: a collage of fragments of their project. The book of the interplay – the project that actually became plastic outcome – is the resource that allows people to access this garden of the mind. That the particular garden it proposes was not realised in Paris' Parc de la Villette is a result of various practicalities, including economic constraints and associated politics. Other reasons for its state-of-being can be ascertained from the transcripts, memos and associated evidence of disagreements, misunderstandings, dislocations, conjunctions and overlaps, gathered and articulated in this repository of text, image, idea and occurrence. *Chora L Works* might also be seen as an event.



Chora L Works. © The Monacelli Press 1994

The wider Parc de la Villette project is the result of one of President Mitterand's *Grande Projet*'s to rejuvenate (or regenerate or gentrify) the French capital city: an urban park on the former site of the slaughterhouses and wholesale meat market of La Villette, known as the 'City of Blood' in Paris' 19th *arrondissement*. The architect responsible for envisioning and overseeing the project, Bernard Tschumi, conceived a space for cultural wanderings; which included both large public buildings such as the City of Science and Industry Museum, as well as a series of 'gardens', one of which has been designed by Peter Eisenman and Jacques Derrida. The whole park project is a rethinking of the built environment, from deconstructivist (and rhizomatic) perspectives, considered in the literature (c.f. Weltman-Aron, 2005; Morgan, 2008; van de Velde, 2014). In journals such as *Architectural Review* (2012) and *Dezeen* (2022), explorations of this 'deconstructivist' nature of the Parc de la Villette suggest a 'denial of coherent meaning' (Blundell Jones, 2012) and 'pursuit of ambiguity' (Griffiths, 2022). Rather than the formal layouts of the typical urban park, with adherence to Classical symmetry and order that impose patterns of social behaviour, albeit insidiously, Villette is supposed to encourage people to find their own ways to interact with one another and the existing, or evolving, environment. Tschumi is quoted as wanting 'to create a place that people could appropriate ... [so would] 'not constrain them', as example of his idea of 'architecture of disjunction' (Griffiths: *ibid*).

Point and Line to Plane

Perhaps the most immediately visual association of this grand project are its 'follies'. These are a series of red steel structures, taken from the dimensionality of a 10x10x10m cube (or block), deconstructed into sculptural assemblage. The follies are dotted throughout the park, serving distinct functions or open to user-interpretation. Yet in the drawings that are a key reference of this project, these dots can be identified as points on a grid – a trope



Chora L Works. © The Monacelli Press 1994

of Modernism – contextualised in some of the theory to Wassily Kandinsky's *Point and Line to Plane* (1926/1979). It is not my intention to interrogate these languages, yet the words of Kandinsky himself are pertinent in consideration of the wider notion of chōric event, which I discuss elsewhere in this thesis. Kandinsky's peculiarly spiritual artistic theories are also resonant in the development of my own thinking and feeling about making, as plastic creativity which draws on the depth of experience.¹⁵ At the start of *Point and Line to Plane*, he discusses how phenomena may be experienced externally or inwardly, thus drawing our attention to the Outer and the Inner (subtitle of the subsequent quoted section), as interesting spacial – and affectual – conceptions; but also the rhythmic pulsation of colour, which have relevance in relation to my print practice :

As soon as we open the door, step out of the seclusion and plunge into the outside reality, we become an active part of this reality and experience its pulsation with all our senses. The constantly changing grades of tonality and tempo of the sounds wind themselves about us, rise spirally and, suddenly, collapse. Likewise, the movements envelop us by a play of horizontal and vertical lines bending in different directions, as colour-patches pile up and dissolve into high or low tonalities. (Kandinsky, 1979:17).

The bright red follies of the Parc de la Villette may be perceived as colour patches in a play of vertical and horizontal lines, with shifts in tempo caused by occasional, incidental interjection of the curve of a slide or a ramp. Whilst large, static objects, these cheeky steel monoliths appear to punctuate the landscape dynamically. Obviously such a feature will generate considerable divisive opinion, so Tschumi's intention is clearly relevant here. For example, he explains: '[t]he movement of bodies in space was really important, both at the large scale of the park – the cinematic promenade [of the separate gardens] and all that – and within the the follies themselves, which have ramps [sic], stairs, elevators' (Griffiths, 2022). Given his emphasis on the ongoing-

15. However I note that the historical point at which this book was published, in that decade following WWI, a time of significant cultural reckoning. This was the decade in which Alfred North Whitehead and his family moved from Cambridge, Cambridgeshire to Cambridge, Massachusetts; and in which he gave two series of Lectures (the Lowell at Harvard and the Gifford at Edinburgh) from his metaphysical perspective, published as *Science and the Modern World* (1925) and *Process and Reality* (1929). Kandinsky's work at this time might also be linked culturally to the thinking of those such as Viktor Shklovsky, discussed previously 'The Function of Reason' ... p. 69); and by association to that of Julia Kristeva (1984) and Deleuze and Guattari, in the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Perhaps in the wake of earth-shattering events, thought shifts. I speculate that out of the rupture of trauma we might identify impetus and locate means by which to remake ourselves and think anew.

ness of movement around the designed environment, Tschumi might be thought of as a 'process-architect'. Elsewhere he has said that 'the follies, as built, are nothing but a moment in the process of conception ... abstract notations, meta-operational elements, a frozen image, a freeze frame in a process of constant transformation, construction [sic] and dislocation' (Blundell Jones, 2012). Again here I think of my monoprints, as freeze-frame shots of moments in the making process. Whilst not comparable, the sense of rhythmic, disjunctive interplay is resonant.

In the context of the park's unrealised garden, collaboratively designed by Eisenman and Derrida, the follie motif appears (to my perspective) as physical punctuations in the text of the book. This punctuated material is transcripts of the discussions between the architect and the philosopher, memorandum, academic essays, speculations. *Chora L Works* is (arguably) a mass-produced 'artist's book', with a design concept attributable to Jeffrey Kipnis.¹⁶ The form of the book, the book as the work, interests me both conceptually and practically. Indeed, some of its visual language or motifs inspired my own printmaking when I started looking at it in 2019, exploring grids and blocks and maps. Several years later, I have started to think that it could constitute a germane premise for a film or a body of print work.

Personally I think that its graphic designers missed a trick: given the layers of process it articulates, their design layout, grids and notes might also have figured in the book. For the grid, which is such a feature of Tschumi's thinking process for the park, is almost painfully 'present' in this volume: superimposed grids of various plans for different places, stamped in physical location. Across the majority of its spreads, an asymmetric grid of square holes has been punched, disrupting legibility by taking-out sections of lines of text or impacting on the legibility of diagrams and maps. At some earlier point on the verso there is a solid, bright red page, so that these small blocks of cutaway disruption appear red-coloured to the viewer, looking through the stack of

16. This is not clear from the imprint details, but speculation on my part, due to Kipnis' creative credentials.

punched points to the colour plane behind. On the recto, the terminal solid page is black, but the position of the punched grid on the page layout seems to shift in small increments – rotating on some invisible axis – so that the hole device becomes the layered fragments of other pages, with a black rectangle of shifting dimension within it. This is process-design at play, frustrating the reader's expectation and need for completeness of understanding, thus much in the spirit of Tschumi's vision for the park. In an essay called 'Disjunctions', written at the start of the project, around the time of Eisenman and Derrida's dialogues, Tschumi writes: 'it might be worthwhile therefore to abandon any notion of a postmodern architecture in favor of a post-humanist architecture, one that would stress not only the dispersion of the subject and the force of social regulation, but also the effect of such decentering on the entire notion of unified, coherent, architectural form' (Tschumi, 1987:112).

'disjunction': a questioning structure

So much of this project, or the projects-within-a-project, seem intent on decentring human expectation or existing conceptions of 'how/the way things are', opening-up space for new thinking and activity. Both the park and the book seem designed to incite: such intent may be associated with the philosophical underpinnings of their ideas and collaborations, Tschumi has often been linked with a Deconstructivist Architecture 'movement', due in part to his inclusion in an exhibition of that name at MOMA in 1988 (about which he has subsequently expressed regret [Blundell Jones, 2002]), though whilst this questioning of existing structuring is clearly relevant to the development of his practice thinking, Tschumi's preferred term is 'disjunction'. In architectural work, disjunction might be seen as a 'questioning structure ... [within an] open system of thought' (Tschumi, 1987:113–14). He is aware of himself as an architect, motivated by concerns of the built environment and the thought that might be articulated around

it. In his case this is thinking informed by literature and film theory as well as that more commonly regarded as philosophy; and highlights the aspect of disjunction which is 'interruption', emphasising 'limits' (of practice) as being the interesting ground. (ibid:115). This resonates, with regard my difficulty or reluctance in claiming a territory of practice, in situating myself firmly within a discipline. Tschumi names James Joyce, Antonin Artaud and Georges Bataille, along with Derrida, as being practitioners working at the edges or in the margins, and therefore the relevance for him of the active movements of deconstructivism to rigorously analyse from within as without. (ibid:115–16). Here again we may hear the strains of Kandinsky's Inner and Outer, echoing across the projects of (Tschumi's) *Manhattan Transcripts* and *La Villette*. He employs 'modes of notation': generally denied any place in either the classical or modern canons, these become essential to their transgression, for the purposes of relevant architectural renewal 'and its accompanying concepts of culture' (ibid:117). Thinking elements from outside one's discipline may be brought into it; or the external internalised, processed and repurposed.

Dangers of 'cultural appropriation' notwithstanding, from my creative perspective it is necessary to risk bringing disparate elements together, in order to see if there may be some creative reaction, including the incitation of critical challenge. Perhaps if we truly believe that experimentation is a creative attribute, we must be prepared to encounter discord, backlash and fallout. It might not work. But in failure, as in *block*, I hold that creative potential might be discovered. A practice researcher should be concerned with transgression, in the vital quest towards 'becoming-quite wrong' (see *Biéjodromo*, p.135) and thereby activating new knowledge. Therefore the 'relations of conflict' which Tschumi 'carefully maintains' in these projects results in the sought-after disjunction, whereby 'facts never quite connect ... (and a) project is never achieved, nor are the boundaries ever definite' (Tschumi, 189:117–18). A PhD thesis is examined, in order

that it may be questioned or challenged (and 'defended') in a *viva voce*. The whole affair is a bringing-together: of thesis, practice, examiners, supervisors and candidate, in a space established by the nature of the event. It might be assumed that the viva will allow the candidate to answer the examiners' questions regarding the thesis, in relation to the practice. But rather than being a summary defense, I would prefer to think of this opportunity to open-up the work of the thesis. Rather than identifying the holes in the argument, maybe holes could be stamped through the text. I am of course suggesting that the viva event is (also) *chōra* and *chōric*.

Turning tricks

This allusion to the voice has some 'relation of conflict' to the *chōra* of the Eisenman-Derrida project, presented as choral work.¹⁷ From what may be ascertained from the punctuated text of *Chora L Works*, Tschumi introduced Derrida to Eisenman, inviting discussion with a view towards co-design. He speculated that the questioning of architecture in such a collaboration would be 'interesting', perhaps reflecting 'the ambiguous and often paradoxical dialogue between architecture and other fields' (Tschumi, *Introduction*; in Derrida and Eisenman, 1997:125). Relations of conflict, challenge and questioning appear to have been elements of the makeup of this project, with notation of the disagreements and disjunctions evident across the various elements of the text. Indeed, Tschumi relates the speculation that Derrida and Eisenamn deliberately sabotaged their proposed contribution to the park by blowing the budget: 'as [Serge] Goldberg ... said at the time, "I do not think that they intend to build a garden at La Villette. All they want to do is publish a book."' (ibid). For his part, Peter Eisenman talks about the collaboration that began before the two had been formally introduced by Tschumi. He had tried to use Derrida's thought to make sense of his own intuitive work: 'through a process of wishful and creative misreading, through a citation of quotes, which may never have been read or could never be found, I had

17. I note my preference of 'chōric', in which the vocal allusion is less pronounced, as is the (somewhat para-doxical) suggestion of harmony.

already established a collaboration of separate tricks, between fantasy and fact, between presence and absence' (Eisenman; in Derrida and Eisenman, 1997:132).

In the subsequent essay in their book, Jeffrey Kipnis takes up an echo to discuss the 'separatrix': mathematical device, copyeditors' mark, separating slash, border line ... For Kipnis, speaking for Derrida, the separatrix is a mark of punctuation, ratio and fraction, used for the structuring of relationships, decision, management, or 'rendering complexity manageable ... keeping things in line, keeping things straight' (Kipnis, in Derrida and Eisenman, 1997:137). Kipnis recognises Derrida's quest to derail the separatrix, that he can 'turn it back on itself and poke holes in it in order to expose the insurability of those terms which it separates' (ibid). To some extent the 'block' is the separatrix of my project, a device variously employed which my work seeks to redeploy; although my pursuit is less icily calculating and relentless than that of Derrida (ibid). In Kipnis' view, it is this preoccupation which brings Derrida into a relationship of complexity with Eisenman.

Recounting the development of his own appreciation of the slippery phenomenon (of *chōra*) in the context of the project, Eisenman admits to his conception of being able to retrofit the ensuing research to fit the hypothesis, as per his existing practice. Whether this is a brave, foolhardy show of vulnerability or knowing academic hubris is questionable. From my perspective however, it rather indicates the presence of liminality amidst such conditions. Experience of engagement in the research process (particularly over a prolonged period) affords a very real sense of the uncertainty that accompanies even a reasonably defined objective. For example, the appearance or discovery of tangential paths (lines of flight or underground rivers), which appear essential to investigate, though after a while seem to be going nowhere so are abandoned; but might yet reappear at a later stage – as if from a dream ... In the subsequent section [*Process*], I will describe the PhD process as an exercise in tolerance, not least of

bearing not-knowing. Yet what became increasingly apparent for Eisenman (if subconsciously) over the passage of time, amidst the awkward space(s) of this show of collaboration, was the breadth of capacity in Derrida's suggestion of 'the manifold and subtle possibilities for the chora' (Eisenman, *Separate Tricks*; in Derrida and Eisenman, 1997:132). Perhaps for an architect it might be reasonably natural that his starting point would be its relation to *topos*, or place.

Writing this essay (quoted above) around 1989, Eisenman talks about the effects of the information age on 'place-making'; of technology overwhelming nature; of the challenge to traditional orders of 'reasonableness' (Eisenman; in Derrida and Eisenman, 1997:132). The digital age and other conditionings of the Anthropocene have propagated such challenges to exponential level, compounded and exploded them into cyberspace. The physical space of the galaxy is becoming speculative real estate. My own focus on this particular project and its concerns might therefore be brought into question in a thesis of the first quarter of the twenty-first century; questioning which will presently itself be compounded as I track back to source. But thinking with these (presumably) privileged white males in their speculative ruminations, allows me to access and begin to appreciate the practises of place-making, in relation to a philosophical concept which I perceive as having affordances for environmental care and repair: more recently described as 'ecologies of care' (e.g. Liu, 2022). There can be no doubt that our world needs to be concerned with itself as a place, a holding environment, whereby its human inhabitants relinquish or at least question and limit their territorialising tendencies. If a PhD thesis should contribute knowledge to the world, rather than claiming ground, a contribution ought to suggest other ways to think and practice.

Speculative (architectural) practice and simultaneity

Ways of thinking and practising would certainly appear to concern

Eisenman in his speculation. He sees his contemporary context, that of the deconstructive breakdown of the categories or binaries of figure/ground, frame object etc., as necessitating different approaches to practice (Eisenman; in Derrida and Eisenman, 1997:134). Woven into his essay are references to other projects, designs he executed for Cannaregio Town Square (Venice, 1978) and the Guardiola House (Cadiz, 1988). The second of these relies on the trace of an 'L' shape, repeated, extruded and rotated about the building plan. It might be reasonable to consider this device has been used in the current project: to make a choir of chōra in the title for its book. The idea of this shape, as conceptual-physical device, certainly influenced the conceptions of his design thinking, as evidenced on Eisenman Architects' website (Eisenman Architects: Guardiola House: n.d.). Here one can more clearly read the sense-making, perforated in the *Chora L Works* book. Again, the temptation to explore this must be checked as diversion, but has been discussed by others such as Adrian Lo, who notes the shift from the trace to the 'imprint' and the recognition of the 'interstitial' in this project (Lo, 2019:9).

Across his essay, Eisenman notes the ways in which these projects imprinted both metaphorically and physically in his work with Derrida; and also how his relationship with chōra has affected his practice. In my experience – supported by this brief secondary research of architectural practice – the suggestiveness of the concept would seem to be insidious, as perhaps for anyone who questions how things are seen/conceived. However, the suggestion of creative origin, whilst relevant to my own conceptions of the particular source being developed and extended, is just a pre-existing trace for Eisenman, who highlights that it is the operational which is more pertinent consideration than the material (such as the conditions of place). In his perception, the point of material, whether absent or present, figure or ground, is that it be identified in order that it may be destabilised – or processed.

Chora exposes the contingency and conventionality in the value of place but does not neutralize it. Rather, it allows it to be active within a multivalency that is no longer dialectical, that is no longer concerned with resolution. Trick. An allusion or stratagem. A trick is a sexual act turned by a prostitute. A trick is a device for counting in the game of bridge ...' (Eisenman; in Derrida and Eisenman, 1997:136).

Supposed beginning'

According to Eisenman, their point of departure (or 'the supposed beginning') of/for collaboration was Derrida's suggestion that the subject of some of his recent work be the 'object' of their project (Eisenman, in Derrida and Eisenman, 1997:132). Derrida's concern here was 'the Platonic idea of chora found in the Timaeus' (ibid). This chimed with Eisenman's own preoccupation with the 'trace' in relation to environment as 'the already given or ... present'; the search for which he had already given many names in his various theorising (ibid). It is the complexity of the phenomenon of trace (another block ...) which captivates Eisenman: at once presence and non-presence, suggestion of some past, premonition of something to come, a type of 'mark' but no classical 'form', uncertainty and speculation (ibid:133). In architectural practice, where reality is (arguably) given, its meaning is further dissipated:

A column is both a structural element and an iconic sign of its function. What the idea of trace proposes is to insert a third condition into the presence of the column, or the wall [as reference to earlier example], a presence that marks an index about the possibility of the wall or column, an index of its ... [remaining words in line punched out; though 'ocesses' is legible and suggestive] (ibid)

The obfuscation of precise meaning is relevant, not least because it refers again, via 'iconic' and 'indexical' conditions to the Inner and Outer noted previously; and speaks of Eisenman's creative practice which draws on 'text': by which we might understand theory, philosophy, thought: perhaps as trace of non-presence or un-realised. This is conjecture, since Eisenman's text – just as all



the text of this book – is rendered partially illegible, regardless of issues of accessibility or comprehension, for a reader located outside the discipline of architecture . But the considerations here relate to being able to understand (or think with?), the insatiable human thirst for knowledge, the efforts of 'science ... society ... architecture ... humanity to overcome nature' (Eisenman; in Derrida and Eisenman, 1997:133). That we may not quite understand here is of vital importance in consideration of chōra – for this is certainly a concept always just beyond reach. This issue will continue to reiterate.

And onward

What follows in subsequent blocks are examples of the response to the idea of chōra from various perspectives: primarily those of Derrida, Kristeva and Whitehead. These readings are useful to contextualise my own arguments theoretically, as more contemporary appreciations of this fascinating problematic – which in recent decades appears to engage thinkers from a range of disciplinary standpoints (e.g. Mohr and Sattler, 2010). Yet despite my sense of chōra being 'all about creativity', during my own research I have not come across anyone else directly relating it to the plastic practices with which I am concerned. My suggestion here, as contribution to practice knowledge, is that chōra plays a vital role in visual or other sensorial production: regardless of whether we can explicitly identify it. Before these other discussions though, an intermezzo diversion of a personal experience, following a call to discuss 'Whitehead and plastic arts' in quite another part of the world.

Beijódromo: a personal journey around a conference site

In the tale-telling of this thesis I might appropriate my own chōric motif, which is named the Beijódromo. Indeed this is a name: not a proper name *per se* – but a neologism coined by the man who dreamed-up the space, as a familiar name or nickname to indicate ideal usage rather than official function. The building designated The Memorial Darcy Ribeiro is located in the parkland of the Univesidade de Brasília (UnB) in Brasilia. The person in whose memory it is officially named played a significant role in Brasilia's mid twentieth-century formation, becoming Minister of Education and the first rector of the UnB; so this campus of the university is also named for him. The Beijódromo is officially nicknamed after the Portuguese word for 'kiss', beijó, and perhaps this is best considered as affectionate (or affective) space. But its special relevance for me is as the site with which I associate a conference – the International Whitehead Conference – which was a pivotal event in my research project. Such symbolism is fitting given the ideology of (inter)relationship which imbues the building, and I suspect that Darcy Ribeiro would have been delighted by this personal appropriation.

Perhaps most creative people secretly hope that others might take up their ideas to work with – appreciating that they well may not. In a guest lecture at the Sorbonne in 1979, Ribeiro claimed that most of his projects, civic or humanitarian, were to some extent failures; but that such failures have been vital to his becoming (e-flux: 2022). No-one overtly agreed with the observations I offered in *Plastic Block*, the work I took to share with them: indeed I

learned that I was mistaken in my proposition. Yet the questions I was asked as a result of my presentation have continued to inform the development of my project; and therefore of my creative practice (and the ideas that I can offer here for reappropriation elsewhere). One North American academic asked why I would not call myself an artist ... but I am getting ahead of myself now! To attempt to explain (if only partially) the significance of the event, I ought to return to somewhere nearer the beginning.

I came upon the Beijódromo first by bike. I had travelled to Brasilia to attend the 12th International Whitehead Conference (12IWC) in August 2019, when my world felt different. Wanting to get a sense of the extraordinary city in a few days, I hired a bike and cycled as much of it as I could. Nervous about speaking at this conference of unknown scholars, so anxious to familiarise with the geographical territory at least, and intrigued by university campuses in general, my Sunday expedition took in the Univesidade. I cycled around the original Niemeyer-designed buildings such as the kilometre-long Central Institute for Sciences ('minhocão' or Giant Earthworm), the main academic building in which students also hang-out, practising yoga or gymnastics or capoeira; the library; the Rectory. These are all examples of impressive Brazilian Modernist architecture, in which to my mind, any sense of institutional regulation is mediated by a slight smile. The greyness of concrete is often punctuated by flashes or planes or ripples of colour, the angularity offset by swooshes or waves. Water and foliage play essential parts in this architecture: the natural landscape of Cerrado savannah will not be completely eradicated by Mankind's desire to conquer and erect.

Brasilia is twentieth-century city built for cars. But viewed from above, the airplane form of its Plano Piloto ('Pilot Plan': the name given to the blueprint of the concrete city) seems to be flying headlong into the Paranoá Lake. This lake is visible from the university campus, situated on city's 'northern wing'; and it was when I stopped off to look down towards it, that I caught my first



glimpse of the Beijódromo, docked on the fuzz of yellow-brown grass on the brick-red earth. I didn't know then that it would be the site of the conference, assuming we would convene in the Minhocão, which displayed the markings of a social hub and was the only place where I had noticed much activity. Conferences usually take place in lecture theatres and the flashy function spaces connected to administrative hubs, where the money and influence are focussed. The campus was eerily quiet on that Sunday, with many of its buildings seemingly empty, so I could not really ascertain what the Beijódromo was about. Yet its otherworldliness – even by Brasilia standards – certainly intrigued me.

For the Beijódromo is a low, circular building, in part reminiscent of the Greco-Roman follies built by the wealthy landowners of previous centuries in their residential grounds, although stylistically rather more like a 1950s B-movie UFO; or a piece of elegant headwear (with nods to all manner of other cultural references); or a Big Top tent; or a different sort of nomadic dwelling or meeting place, a yurt or teepee. With a span (or radius) of just over 30m, this is not a voluminous building – 30m is swimming pool length – though the distinctive white and yellow-tipped roof which overhangs the circumference is 37m, to provide outside shaded space. The building is surrounded by water, like a moat (replete with fish), over which visitors must cross a flat bridge to enter. The bridge is itself protected from the sun by a lolling red tongue-like canopy of slatted wood, its wave-like undulation echoing out on the opposite side of the Beijódromo, into the scoop of an amphitheatre lecture space, set into an embankment formed from excavated earth. The rotunda's upper level holds an archive compiled by Darcy Ribeiro: anthropologist, sociologist, ethnologist educator and politician, who conceived of this facility to house the collections of books, arts objects and documents and records of their field studies with the indigenous peoples which he and Berta Gleizer Ribeiro had gathered (I have subsequently learned that Gleizer Ribeiro's greater collection



was destroyed by fire at the National Museum in Rio de Janeiro, rendering this collection more poignant). On the ground floor, entering across the bridge one finds a more fluid space, sometime canteen, gallery or reception space, leading towards a winter garden in the very centre of the building. Beyond this are seminar rooms, looking out onto the moat.

For the Whitehead conference these rooms were given the nomenclature of some of his conceptual apparatus: Prehension, Concrecence, Nexūs, whilst the lecture theatre was demarcated as Actual Entity. In a Whitehead conference it is fairly easy to name environments for interaction and inter-relationship, since a process philosophy privileges such states of becoming. Darcy Ribeiro's Beijódromo is a social space, with areas for conversation, presentation, learning and study of the peoples of the world, a round place, for people to come together and circulate; an architectural sci-fi folly for assignation, perhaps. According to sources available to non-Portuguese reader (translated via AI), Ribeiro discussed his ideas with the architect, João Filgueiras Lima (known as Lelé) for a fluid space in a beautiful location to be variously used, including for serenading, dating and kissing, at night-time, when the surrounding water would mirror the starry skies over Brasília (Lima and Menezes, 2004:9). These sources also suggest an other cultural reference for the design, the maloca hut built by the indigenous peoples of the Amazon, with which Ribeiro would have been familiar from time spent with the Xinguano (or Xingu) forest-dwelling people of Brazil. The communality of these buildings seem to be relevant in the design decisions; and certainly in my experience of inhabiting this space for the duration of the conference.

A Whitehead conference is an odd thing, not least since Whitehead as a figure appears on the margins. He is not a 'big-name' philosopher, often missing in compendia of the history of thought (including Bertrand Russell's ...), so perhaps overlooked. Yet his writing, opaque as it may seem, has often piqued my



interests, or otherwise intrigued me. The conference theme of the 12th IWC spoke to my research: *Process as Creativity – Process as Concern*; and included a section titled 'Whitehead, aesthetics and the philosophy of creativity' – one suggestion for which was 'Whitehead and the plastic arts'. I aimed my proposal, *Plastic Block*, to this end, since I badly wanted to be part of this event. Its 16 clusters linked Whitehead and Process thought with areas including ecological civilisation (ecology, ethics, economics, and law), theology, African and Eastern philosophies, mathematics, feminism, Continental philosophy, Amerindian animism, the future of democracy. A figure on the margins of many margins, then. Delegates came from China and other Asian countries, where Whitehead is (arguably) more well-regarded, as well as the Americas and Northern Europe, journeying to Brasília and congregating in the Beijódromo in the late-August heat.

If there was an uncertainty to Registration and conference agenda, this began to seem contextually-appropriate to me as the event unfurled. Between the sessions, people milled around the interior and exterior space, somewhat uncertainly, clustering in groups or wandering, wondering at things, seeming like they were trying to make some sense of it, just as I was. Refreshments appeared sometimes, sporadically: variations of local breads, fruits, cakes, juices, becoming a focus for people to gather at the far side of the building, under the canopy that undulates up and over the water to wrap around the 'Actual Entities' auditorium. Gradually I located and gravitated towards those people with whom I perceived I might engage, or felt elements of some interrelationship. I enjoyed talking to Michel Weber, who has written about Whiteheadian Pancreativism – a concept I might explore post-Doctorally, since it chimes with the developments of my pedagogic intent. Weber, who has a shamanistic air about him, was the only keynote speaker to show images (such as a coffee percolator) and seemed to be trying to find the fun in proceedings. As we talked about an image he has found of Whitehead which I



had not seen before (in a boat on the millpond at Grantchester, near Cambridge), I became very aware of the angles and curves of the concrete shading, articulated by the play of reflected light from the rippling pool. It was a moment of deep inter-connection, beyond ready explanation.

The very, actual hub of the Whitehead conference was the Beijódromo, that outlying space for exploring relationships, adjacent to the main administrative centre of the university. There is an echo here of one meaning of chōra, as a place outside the city where people might gather to discuss and think. Much of what I heard went over my head, for I am not a Whitehead scholar in the traditional vein, rather someone who is deeply interested in the man and his work. I write about Whitehead from my perspective as a plastic practitioner: practice I extend as I continue to explore his thought (and one particular image of him) in my work. Yet a vital aspect of the experience was connecting what I had read and thought to other people from beyond my own sphere. In a way it didn't matter that understandings were confused, partial or even absent, since I could see others working with process thinking. As diverse as our perspectives were, recognising that they also 'connected' on some level allowed Whiteheadian thinking to become more 'real' for me. In the normal course of my life, few people I encounter have ever read any Whitehead; and my problem with papers in scholarly journals is how distanced they seem to be from my reality of life experience. If perversely, it is on this level that Whitehead resonates with me: as a person with feelings that accompany the process of his thought. In an earlier sphere of the project, in a frenzy of psuedo-fandom, I 'followed in his footsteps', walking streets and quads I reasoned that he probably had. When I spoke about this in my presentation, by way of contextual introduction, it is likely that some of the audience will have been perplexed. But in a conference that observed the academic convention of sitting to read one's paper, my arts school approach of speaking to visual slides whilst moving around in the

space was probably deemed suspect anyway (though I suspect Weber would have enjoyed it).

If some people were engaged by what I had to say, others noted their concerns. In the questions that followed, one rather eminent German academic told me that I was 'quite wrong' in my reading / presentation of actual entities. I had suggested that a print, made as a process of concrescence involving prehension – and therefore perhaps any work of plastic art, constitutes an actual entity. His challenge was sound, since in its very becoming an actual entity perishes; so whilst the terminology could be relatively readily applied to performance, to posit a print (or another sort of created artefact) with longevity as this basic unit of reality is problematic. Yet by the very nature of Whitehead's intention, the philosophy of organism is a system of thought which ought to be fluid, flexible and adaptable. Whilst there is an emphasis on 'logical consistency' from the opening pages and throughout *Process and Reality* (e.g. Whitehead, 1985:3), in other texts (such as *Adventures of Ideas* and *Modes of Thought*) Whitehead emphasises that he would expect other thinkers from other disciplinary arenas to reapply the ideas, in ways that he would not be able to. Whitehead was a mathematician, an educator of maths and science and a lifelong scholar, but there is documentary evidence that he admired the arts (e.g. Price, 1958). At any rate, I found the challenge emancipatory. Rather than struggling to learn the technicalities, I recognised that my creative approach is to 'think with Whitehead': alongside, not in adherence to. I began to appreciate that I would be on the periphery of academic Whitehead scholarship, even when in its midst. Besides, there was that other question in response to my 'outsider' presentation, from an evolutionary biologist. Why is it that I do not (or struggle to) consider myself an artist? This was the real crux, in the wider context of my study. Looking back, Dr. Don perceived me as practitioner.

I have given various presentations of my research in progress over the course of these years, all of which have afforded me



insights and provoked creative response. But none has felt quite so relevant as this one at the 12th IWC, delivered in the Beijódromo seminar room temporarily deemed Nexūs for those three days. The experience was certainly heightened affectively by anticipation, desire and a degree of imposter syndrome, but the physical sensations of being in that space remain with me now. The room was warm, the atmosphere close. It smelt of dry heat, baked earth, warm concrete, proper coffee and the green lino that covered the floor: a sort of institutional mustiness, mingling with the organic variegations of the campus, that wafted in through the velux windows. The water in the moat outside, reflecting the disturbances of the meandering fish, rippled up the white walls and flowing onto the ceiling, bending the right angles. Waiting for my turn, I took some video footage of this light phenomenon on my phone, whilst a Japanese academic made (presumably) erudite and accurate mathematical observations in relation to aesthetics and the philosophy of creativity, as insects buzzed and an occasional bird took a swoop at the fish. This small piece of somewhat abstract digital film, encapsulates the heady, intense energy of that moment in that space. Showing it in other presentations, such as *Test Lab* or *RNUAL* has sometimes allowed me to access the processual intensity of that seminal experience. In that, it has become a piece of work, both as and for response. I appreciate that it is not an actual occasion any more than my print is an entity. And yet ... in some ways those term of actual entity / occasion continue to resonate for me, as a way of noticing and holding intensity, and of creative response to experience, regardless of any technical accuracy.

I wore a shirt with a pair of heron on it, to symbolise flight. This is not the analogy Whitehead makes in the opening pages of *Process and Reality*, and nor is it the aeroplane suggested by the Plano Pilato. But I wanted to talk about my own thinking with regard the flights we make, to move elsewhere (or simply to become airborne), shifting territory in order to convene, in a proposition or



speculation, toward creative advance. Flying is a desire, colouring our dreams or aspirations, a physical sensation that we crave. It is exciting; it can be dangerous, and it has changed our world. When struggling with some problematic situation of existence, we may long to rise up above, perhaps to gain some perspective – or to escape to another place. We may crave adventure elsewhere. This is what I read in Whitehead's allusion to the aeroplane and its role in discovery: 'it starts from the ground of particular observation; it makes a flight in the thin air of imaginative generalization ...' (Whitehead, 1985:5). Imagination is that key component in a speculative philosophy which a process approach appreciates, and therefore why I contend such philosophies are so relevant in practice research. It was imagination that lead to me positing the print as an actual entity: a flight of fancy perhaps, that has taken me elsewhere. Technically speaking, in my proposition I was 'quite wrong', so the challenge was useful – beyond the technicality, as the grounding of particular observation, it has impacted on my affectively, in an emancipatory capacity.

The space which that occasion opened-up for me has allowed me to experience all manner of other perspectives; and now I can appreciate that in the terms of the philosophy of organism, a print is actually more of a 'nexūs'. An actual entity (a 'final real thing of which the world is made up') is a moment or pulse of experience, as a concrescence of possibility, but a nexūs is a plurality of such occasions, bound together in interrelationship (Whitehead, 1985:18). As many of the terms in the Whiteheadian vocabulary, this has its roots in antiquity, where nexus connotes a bond or the act of formation (or 'particular fact of togetherness'), with nexūs is the plural (*ibid*:20). The manifold of these collections of collections/communities is also termed a 'society', reflecting the 'inclusion of positive feelings of ... [a] common form', which in this instance might be constituted by the figure or work of Whitehead himself (*ibid*:34). 'Feelings' here is another term, with everyday connotations but yet used in other ways in this philosophy



(see *The feeling of a printroom*, p. 155). But for me the technicalities are less important than the workings, the relationships, the associations. The ways in which Whitehead has allowed me to see things, from other angles, in other spaces, has provided a prolonged, sometimes uncomfortable but revelatory voyage. His aeroplane 'again lands, for renewed observation rendered acute by rational interpretation' (ibid:5). The observations of this thesis constitute my interpretation.

There was another chōric event in Brasília that focussed around a building, though. When I arrived, my AirBnB host – an architect as it happens – had told me about some of the sights that I ought to see. One of these was the Igreja Nossa Senhora de Fátima (Little Church of Our Lady of Fatima): a building designed by Oscar Neimayer, with tiles on its facade by the artist Athos Bulcão. William told me that for him, this site symbolised Brasília, his city¹⁸. So on my last day in Brasília I cycled down the southern wing of the Plano Piloto to Entrequadra Sul 307/308 to find this symbolic space. There is much of interest to discuss regarding Lucio Costa's city planning of Brasília, and the role of the 'superquadra' city block or neighbourhood unit, although this reflection is not the place for that. But in brief, the superblock is the notion of a self-contained urban environment, with all immediate facilities for living: dwelling, playing, learning, shopping, eating, relaxing, working and worshipping. Trees are an essential component of the plan, their foliage providing shade and blurring the harder lines of the built structures. The small church that sits between blocks 307 and 308 is low-rise but sharply angled, resembling a nun's habit, including that swoosh of concrete that is indicative of Brazilian architectural attitude.

As I approached along the promenade from the road, the building's triangular front was open to the elements, and on the chairs that spilled out from it a party of wedding guests were seated or otherwise milling. Though I was clearly not one of them, some acknowledged and smiled at me, and I felt welcome to pass

18. I feel a sense of relationship with my own city, so have long been interested in this deep sense one can have of a metropolis, often regarded as anonymous and impersonal environments. At other points in my life, I have been quite obsessed by my own (sometimes dysfunctional) relationship with London and wondered how it all works. In what ways might we form relationships with such a place of transience or hardness? What is the city: its building (erected /deconstructed / in-progress), its communities or its events? What is the character of a city? What is 'inner' city'; what is outside the city? Inner; Outer: I think back to Kandinsky; and see my perspectives altered ...

beside them, down the side of the church, as the priest officiated proceedings from within the cool blue interior. Along its tiled flank I encountered other non-celebrant users of the facility: a fashion shoot was taking place, appropriating the church's famous exterior as backdrop. Other tourists from other places has also made this a point of focus, moving around the structure, touching and talking and documenting. As these other others moved on, I was able to to take my turn to appreciate the detail of the facade that had initially brought me here, those Bulcão tiles. These are evident all over the city, on municipal buildings and at the theatre and the airport, most often abstract geometric designs in vibrant colourways or more monochrome formality. I had noticed them without being particularly aware of them, other than in their capacity of lively flourish on the Modernist starkness; reminiscent of other mid-century speculations for brave new worlds. However, those on the angular or curved planes of the Igreja are more figuratively symbolic. On a deep blue background of almost lapis lazuli intensity spaced by white grouting, are alternating black and white forms. The black is a device reminiscent of a compass, such as that used in so many religious building of various denominations. The white is a simple bird form, comprised of six curved tines which make up the body, tail and wings, tipped by a tear-shaped head. Given the context, I presume this to be a dove. The birds are positioned flying downward, perhaps in visitation. Coming to them here, reaching out and feeling them as so many have done before me, was a profound experience. I thought again of flight, of the heron on my shirt in the Nexūs space, of pilgrimage and the temporal congregation of togetherness and connection, of faith or belief or hope, and the ways in which trust in something beyond ourselves gives us space to breathe, of imaginative discovery and creative response. The intensity of this feeling allowed me to shed tears of creative joy, tasting warmly saline in my mouth, as concrescence; or satisfaction in this event.



Up to this point, I have not known quite what to make of the conference. Being part of it was important to me; and my appreciation of the ways in which Whitehead's work has influenced consequent thought expanded as a result of my engagement. The

challenges to my presentation have resulted in a sense of emancipation, which has felt like the most vital result. Some plastic practice has been generated as a result of my experience. On my return to London I embarked on a couple of Bodies of Work, one of which focussed on the bud: another symbolic device drawn from a tree on the UnB campus. Towards the end of the conference, I had sat on a stump beneath it with a Portuguese academic, another person captivated by the environment and who also took photographs of the proceedings. I wish I'd taken her details. We had a conversation about the sort of process thinking that resonates with me, that concerns making and events. We poked organic matter with fallen twigs as we chatted, wondering around the majesty of these Brazilian trees and their Amazonian proportions (as the Rainforest burned); and the tree motif which the Process Network, who organised the conference, use as indicative of their approach or attitude. The roots of this tree symbolise Whitehead's work on the philosophy of organism, the trunk subsequent thought that has come as a result of it, the branches and leaves (and buds) the emerging potential of our current speculations.

The tree is a contentious device symbolically, especially in Deleuzian thought, where it suggests a particular (Platonic) form of knowledge creation, State control and linear pedagogy; but in this context, looking down towards the Beijódromo and the lake beyond, it offered me a sense of promise. If I was going to be 'quite wrong', I intended my wrongness to burst forth like an overblown bloom. For the buds from this tree blossom into extraordinary flowers: big blowsy exotic marvels, like a Magnolia on steroids. So upon returning home with my ridiculous cache of photographs, I translated this bud-device into a tri-block lino, which I printed in



numerous colourways, experimenting, processing, making work. Researching around, I became temporarily diverted by ideas of eighteenth-century botany; and produced a florilegium. The Beijódromo also figured in my thinking, and I started to talk about this 'dating space' in the presentations I gave as requirement of the Research Degree process. The bud print, tiled in a chromatic grid, became a slide that I used in these, a sort-of 'Athos Bulcão does Andy Warhol doing William Morris' mashup. I started to talk about kissing in public and think about other approaches to 'becoming quite-wrong' or the queerness of creativity. Then the world was struck by Covid; so as all our spheres contracted, my research focus shifted inward. Just as so many people whose movements are constrained, my attention became directed on my everyday movements and activities – allowing me to reconfigure my ideas of practice.

Writing these thoughts four years later, on the ground of renewed observation, gives me a sense of creative potential, regardless of how 'rational' or 'acute' my interpretations may be. In and around those spaces of the I2IWC, I discovered much that I would not have without being present, if I had given-in to the anxiety of the outsider and stayed away. The conference took me to a part of the world that had previously only existed for me as an abstract idea, a place of interest rather beyond my actual comprehension. Feeling Brasilia, its rhythms and movements, sights, sounds and flavours again now, ignites a desire to revisit those affective experiences, since my current practice recognises the processing of affect and the creation of some space for making; or for process. Our temporal inhabitation of the Beijódromo as a conference (itself a chōric occasion) ought to be responded to; and whilst others will have written words, my plastic practice offers – or produces – diverse solutions. The prints that I made on my return to London started to draw on the motifs of the Derrida/Eisenman Parc de la Villette project in relation to those geometries of the *Timaeus*; but I had not yet really thought about



my own experience of Brasília and the relevance of that with regard ideas of chōra. Whist I repeatedly drew the forms of triangles or interlinking squares (becoming cuboid, or deconstructing, like the Villette Folies) and started to think about the superquadra of the Plano Pilato, the punctuated roundness of the Beijódromo did not figure in my monoprints and my triangles and tetrahedra were missing the seductive swooshes of a nun's cowl.

On my Brasília trip, I gathered documentary reference which I have not yet used, of the visual language that I encountered in this ideal city made concrete. Some of these are derived from my observations of the collaborations between city planners, architects and architects, some born of actual usage by its real inhabitants. For example, on that Sunday that I first visited the UnB campus, I came upon the seven-lane Eixo Rodoviário, one of the main north-south arterial roads, cleared of motor vehicles. This key thoroughfare in a 'city for cars' was instead thronged with families and fiesta, music, dancing and roller-skaters: it is what happens on Sundays in Brasília. Remarkable novelty in the moment, the stream of sensual human life flowing along this artery and eddying off either side, feels now like another chōric event. I took a photo of sisters with colourful braids, blowing bubbles and leaping in the air to catch them, as their parents clapped and swayed along to some hip-hop bossanova beats. There is work to be made in all this.



Derrida's 'Khōra'; with associated mediation

Jacques Derrida's essay on chōra is named Khōra. In effect a close reading of the concept as it appears in the *Timaeus*, it also offers an appreciation of the 'thinkingness' of chōra and its place in the history of philosophy. Derrida was writing it around the time of his collaboration with Eisenman on a garden for the Parc de la Villette (subsequently *Chora L Works*), but the essay is 'presented' as a tribute to the anthropologist and historian of Antiquity, Jean Pierre Vernant.¹⁹ The final chapter of Vernant's *Mythe et société en Grèce ancienne* (1974/1996), entitled *Raisons du mythe*, functions as an historical philosophy of the Classical myth, though one that follows the threads of thinking into its contemporary sphere. Vernant responds to the charges and problematics of the discourse on myth, having considered various matters of transition and linguistics, speech and writing, forms and levels. As with various of the resources which I cite in relation to chōra in my thesis, this line of enquiry (on the mythic) must remain largely un-interrogated. Yet given the context of chōra (by any of its names within the *Timaeus*) on which Derrida will expand, it seems pertinent to note here a point Vernant makes about the cultural relevance of myth:

We may well wonder whether it is really possible today to maintain this opposition between cold societies frozen in immobility, and hot ones at grips with history. All societies to a greater or lesser degree experience changes that their myths reflect, integrating or digesting them in their own particular ways. Certainly it is true that a mythical tradition such as that of the Greeks has always lent itself to being recast and reinterpreted. (Vernant, 1996:258).

Perhaps centuries of scientific and technological advance have denuded contemporary society of much relationship with myth

19. The essay first appeared in volume of 24 essays: *Poikilia: études offerts à Jean-Pierre Vernant* (1987), amongst offerings on the subjects of Greco-Roman history, civilisation, religion and philosophy. Noel Robertson who reviews it for *Mouseion: Journal of the Classical Association of Canada* (formerly *Echos du monde classique: Classical news and views*), describes it as a series of questions 'to which answers may come in due course, for this paper is labelled, in a subscription at the end, "Introduction à un travail en cours. Fragment".' (Robertson, 1987:103).

No such 'subscription' is appended in its subsequent appearance in Derrida's own collection, *On the Name* (1995). In this version, from which I will cite, the end is given to the figure/narrator *Timaeus*, explaining that now we have more 'material' at our disposal, it is once again necessary to go back to the beginning ... (Derrida, 1995:127). This (re-beginning) is a theme of the *Timaeus* noted by Derrida; but also by John Sallis, in his book subtitled 'On Beginning in Plato's *Timaeus*' (2020).

My own thesis is work-in-progress, a fragment of the discourse of my plastic practice. It has commenced with (and is motilated through) a sense of its own continuation, beyond any possible conclusion. This discourse is necessarily fluid and emergent; though various open-ended 'answers' may be discovered in its midst.

(organised religion notwithstanding); and in my professional context of Education, that which cannot be validated or evidenced is usually undermined. This is perverse, since the arts, including literature, design and media, habitually recur to the fantastical. Science and technology often aspire to the otherworldly – and perhaps always have. My recourse to this device of Antiquity in a contemporary thesis, outside the realms of Philosophy or Classics, might be questioned. I contend, however, that chōra is an extraordinarily relevant aspect of contemporary arts and society. Its initial location or introduction, amidst the mythos of a strange book written two-and-a-half millennia ago, demonstrates that untoward ideas have perpetual appeal,²⁰ beyond the strictures of hegemonic thought. My interpretation of chōra developed across these blocks and this thesis, serves as contribution to this ongoing dissolving of binary oppositions.

Myths and fallacies

In this effort to suggest approaches to dealing with the problematics of the social position of myth, ‘absurd ... fictions’ or ‘grotesque tales’ that nonetheless somehow *endure*, their peculiarities that ‘constitute a specific mode of expression, with its own particular language, thought, and logic’, Vernant finds himself confronted with academic binaries (Vernant, 1996:203). Such binaries may be identified throughout the history of (representational) thinking, with their tussles for hierarchical ranking or positionality of privilege: the mind/matter bifurcation quarrels which only ever result in what Whitehead might term ‘fallacy’.²¹ If myths are similarly fallacious, they are knowingly and entertainingly so, rather than purporting to represent truth or law. But as Vernant reasons, the polysemy and inter-codal performance of myth allows it to shift between modes. Moreover, ‘[i]n the unfolding of its narrative and the selection of the semantic fields it uses, it brings into play shifts, slides, tensions, and oscillations between the very terms that are distinguished or opposed in its categorical

20. Another more contemporary project on the *Timaeus* and its various themes was the 2007 conference at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign of and subsequent volume of essays, mentioned in *A chōra (of the manifold)*, pp. 95–6 (n.8).

21. Whitehead is a philosopher of binary dissolve. In the *Preface* to a transitional-period book, *The Concept of Nature* (1920), he introduces the notion of ‘the fallacy ... [or ‘facile vice’] of bifurcation’ (1964:vi). In subsequent chapter titled ‘Theories of the Bifurcation of Nature’, subject-predicate logic and overriding reliance on ‘transmission theories’ (of light and sound) are taken to task, and related questions of causality, time, space and delusion introduced (ibid:26–32). These concerns are developed in Whitehead’s subsequent *oeuvre*. In *Science and the Modern*

framework; it is as if, while being mutually exclusive these terms at the same time in some way imply one another’ (ibid:260).

As perhaps Derrida does, I can hear a familiar tone in this, of something which participates in formation whilst having no form of its own. Whilst not himself speaking of any such mythological receptacle, Vernant continues that it is in such corruptive fashion that: ‘myth brings into operation a form of logic that we may describe ... as a logic of the ambiguous, the equivocal, a logic of polarity’. This further problematic, of formulating or formalising some explanatory terms for the ambiguity of such logic, presents cause for the mythologist to turn to linguists or mathematicians for non-binary means: ‘a logic other than the logic of the logos’ (ibid).

Derrida picks-up on this consideration, as the epigram for his essay, *Khōra*. He acknowledges the debt he owes to Verdant’s scholarly work on the role and practice of myth; and also of his giving cause to contemplate ‘the unceasing inversion of poles’ (Derrida, 1995:90), as a dynamic. This likewise resonates with my thinking with regard both Deleuzian inversion and Whiteheadian poles, and so the play of process. Derrida will work with this cause for thought as provocation for his own text, responding to the concluding paragraph of Vernant’s *Myth and society* (from which I quote above) with a set of questions for himself:

[H]ow are we to think that which, while going outside of the regularity of the logos, its law, its natural or legitimate genealogy, nevertheless does not belong, *strictu sensu*, to mythos? ... How is one to think the necessity of that which, while *giving place* to that opposition as to so many others, seems sometimes to be itself no longer subject to the law of the very thing which it situates? What of this place? Is it nameable? ... Is there something to think there ... (ibid 91).

Immediately, by the end of the first page, Derrida has stated that: ‘[Plato’s *Khōra* is] well known ... to defy that logic noncontradiction of the philosophers of which Vernant speaks, that logic of binarity ...’; being ‘neither “sensible” nor “intelligible,” belong[ing] to

World, (1925 the start of his ‘later-period’ / ‘metaphysical’ work), he critiques the tendency of the science to erect dualities, such as that between mind and matter. Yet these are gross simplifications, in the service of the quantification of reality: ‘In between there lie the concepts of life, organism, function, instantaneous reality, interaction, order of nature, which collectively form the Achilles heel of the whole [modern] system’ (Whitehead, 1928:71). His own research therefore (this book is the first of his later-period metaphysics, written in his mid-60s, after his own mathematical and scientific treatises) leads him to move beyond such binary conditioning, recognising process as fundamental. Later in this same chapter, Whitehead identifies another tendency, that of reification, or to make something concrete of an abstract idea. He calls this ‘the fallacy of misplaced concreteness’, an error arising from the idea of ‘simple location’ or spatialisation (ibid:72). His project is instead to recognise the role that philosophy might play in scientific advance, in its guise of being ‘the architect of the buildings of the spirit, and... also their solvent’ (ibid:xxii).

I should also note that my own project on *creative block*, is predicated on such a fallacy; though perhaps all art-making may be ... For this reason, the first piece of work I made for it – a series of concrete blocks in which printmaking material was used as ‘aggregate’ – I titled *Fallacy* (2017).



"third genus" ... [so that] one cannot even say of it that it is neither this nor that or that it is both this and that.' (Derrida, 1995:89). This readily-available khōra, then, will be what he interrogates in his homage-question text. It will be the key factor, or even player, in the logos/mythos binarity or polarity dynamic. There will be oscillations, and oscillations 'between ... types of oscillation' in the subsequent essay; and a reader cannot expect ready answers (ibid:91) Of course, this text is redolent with association for anyone interested in the notion of chōra; but particularly for me, given a particular contextual appreciation with regard the creative practice of architecture (and that of a particular collaboration). As Whitehead speculates with regard the function of philosophy, this 'most effective of all the intellectual pursuits ... builds cathedrals before the workmen have moved a stone, and it destroys them before the elements have worn down their arches' (1928:x). There is a resonance here with Derrida's and Eisenman's work at the Parc de la Villette.

Derrida vs Whitehead

But at the start of *Science and the Modern World* (op.cit), Whitehead suggests that philosophy ought to be 'the critic of cosmologies' (1928:ix). In his own project (subsequently developed in *Process and Reality*), he asserts 'its function to harmonise, refashion, and justify divergent intuitions as to the nature of things ... insist[ing] on the scrutiny of the ultimate ideas, and on the retention of the whole of the evidence' (ibid). Derrida's intention and method in this essay is somewhat divergent however. He is appreciative of his sources, courteous rather than challenging – as befits a discussion in which ideas of receptivity will become of fundamental relevance – being more critical of philosophy itself than those who have engaged with it. This may be one of the reasons for his own thinking being consequently challenged, since it does not go far enough in the academic practice of undermining in order to refute and assert. As Whitehead sees it, philosophy ought to be in the



service of: 'render[ing] explicit, and—so far as may be—efficient a process which otherwise is unconsciously performed without rational tests (ibid:ix–x). The discussions and disagreements with collaborators and stakeholders that resulted in the garden at Villette not achieving realisation (in organic form), are evidence of the polar oscillations at play in Derrida's thinking. In *Process and Reality*, Whitehead expands on his conception of the mental and physical poles at play in the processes of the world, e.g.: '... an actual entity is essentially dipolar, with its physical and mental poles; and even the physical world cannot be properly understood without reference to its other side, which is the complex of mental operations (Whitehead, 1985:239). Ongoing movement between these poles are essential to the formation of reality. At certain points (as in practice research), one or the other pole exerts a more powerful force or draw. I read Derrida's essay in relation to practice, whereby his khōra activates rather than represents; including via thought-work.

Grosz's objections

However, others will subsequently critique Derrida for not moving far enough from, or against, even re-enforcing what might sound like a (paradoxically) patriarchal positioning of chōra. One ongoing problematic of this 'idea' is its etymology in (white male) Western philosophy. Elizabeth Grosz's essay *Women, Chora, Dwelling* deliberately 'remain[s] silent' on the thorny issues regarding the subjugation of 'women in architectural training, apprenticeship and practice', self-evidently rife with sexism and discrimination (Grosz, 1999:210). Her objective is rather to examine 'theoretical issues that link the very concept of architecture with the phallogentric effacement of women and femininity' (ibid). Grosz is responding to the discourse of chōra in the Derrida-Eisenman Parc de la Villette project, as well as in Julia Kristeva's writing on language (to which I will presently turn). In extending some of Luce Irigaray's critique of 'the phallogentric foundations

of Western philosophy' and its part in 'the erasure or covering over of women's specificity' – though Philosophy's evocation of womanhood paradoxically serves as some form of philosophical indemnification – her intention here is to 'confront... one strand of [phallogentric] contemporary architectural theory' (ibid:211). Even if it may now be considered a trope to refer to Plato's role in the establishment of this foundationalism, Grosz highlights that his conception of *chōra* as playing a *female* part in becoming is 'according to Greek collective fantasies: in procreation, the father contributes all the specific characteristics to the nameless, formless incubation provided by the mother' (ibid: 213). Plato held the privileged male prerogative to think and write for posterity (i.e. philosophise; and make philosophy), so is representing the timbre of his society and those men born to govern and shape culture. Such is the strand of history that philosophy has conferred upon culture, informing today's thinkers and writers – presumably including those contemporary 'men' who who have responsibility or position to shape the physical (architectural) space in which our society operates.

Grosz's view is that Derrida's deconstructionist project 'has always been to upset pregiven categories', to challenge and undermine prevailing discourses; and that in the context of architectural practice this intention is to inculcate different modalities (1999:216). Whilst this is obviously valuable endeavour, a concern shared with feminist theorists of that sphere, Grosz contends that Derrida's writing about architecture is mostly in the service of 'validation' of those efforts of Eisenman and Tschumi, as attempt to construct: 'what might be considered a 'radical architecture,' an architecture of transgression' (ibid). Despite any utility to be found in Derridian texts for feminist theory, in Grosz's view his work is inherently ambivalent: 'neither feminist nor antifeminist ... his writings always contain an unassailable residue that is ... problematic in feminist terms' (ibid:217), nudging it towards questionable association and alliances.

To counter these questionable alliances forged or furthered in Derridian thinking, in *Women, Chora, Dwelling* Grosz turns to Luce Irigaray's writing with regard architecture. This is writing (practice) concerned with 'the establishment of a *viable* space for women to inhabit as women', in response to those historically established practices of constructing space that contains, constrains, or effaces women (Grosz, 1999:218). Here the phallogentric architectural project is shown as an aspect of the 'masculine modes of thought' which prevail in culture and society and thus the establishment of a man's world; of 'the production of an intelligible universe, religion, philosophy, the creation of true knowledges and valid practices of and in that universe' (ibid). In so doing, man has effectively obliterated all traces of the woman from whence he came; and not only reneged on the debt to which he is subject (that to which a son owes his mother, for bearing him), but disenfranchised women in the process. Male (philosophers') 'appropriation' of *chōra*, as 'the maternal', to do with what he theoretically and practically will, is therefore an extension of this historically ongoing performance of criminality (ibid). Moreover, through such positioning of *chōra* as maternal vessel-of-becoming, women are everlastingly relegated to a situation of non-autonomous existence, of support for masculine ambition. In spatial terms this renders the notion of dwelling or home (neither built by or for women) as one of imprisonment. Domestic service and abuse and child-bearing responsibility, thereby becomes women's sentence – as conferred by men. Male judgement likewise decides the status of theory, which is the 'refusal to acknowledge that of other perspective, other modes of reason, other modes of construction and constitution' (ibid: 220).

Online / in-person / fluidity: societal shift?

This is important critique, of significance in consideration of my own notions of *chōra*, and of its relation to the wider canon of thought. In making to utilise such a concept, it is necessary to

appreciate its wider context. Socioculturally and sociopolitically troubling, Grosz's objections prompt further questions and creative response, in keeping with the evident ambiguity of this inherently problematic concept. Whilst certainly not intending to argue against Grosz (or indeed any of the previous conceptions or situatings of *chōra*), writing in 2023, I am more aware of the binarity of her discourse than I would have been a decade ago – or certainly more able to appreciate its limitation. For some years now, younger people (at least those with the privilege and agency to help contribute to the developmental shaping of society – though now less-likely to have been schooled in hegemonic philosophies) have been questioning the conception of gender as either/or. Although it is too soon in this 'movement' to ascertain whether this attitude of fluidity will survive the heteronormativisation of middle-aged 'settling', at present the dynamic seems vitally exciting. This potentially revolutionary move away from dominant rhetoric suggests extension to those theories of 'otherness' which are (arguably) rooted in feminism. Thinking more in terms of queer, cyborg, or posthuman – and acting on the thinking – breaks open the structures of binarity, and allows us to think differently. Being freed from the need to position ourselves in terms of 'this or that', and rather to think (or perceive) in relation to *becoming*, affords us a sense of agency, at least.

Of course, such philosophy is idealistic, given the practical concerns of an established, structured and fundamentally inequitable world. Given a choice, people rarely choose to 'think differently', since ostensibly-desirable 'comfortable life' (arguably) requires societal adherence. In many cultures, daring to nurture, let alone express 'other' ideas, carries a real risk of punitive treatment, excommunication or death. So often, sadly, we think what we are told or taught because it is dangerous to question. Even in privileged, nominally-liberal social environments, challenging the *status quo* can prove perilous. Raising of heads above the parapets of the particular citadel in which we are lodged,

or critiquing its current orthodoxy, puts us in jeopardy of being shot down. In our internet age 'cancel culture' may function as another form of social oppression. This term is itself problematic and contested: for example, Pippa Norris questions whether cancel culture (in Education) is 'a pervasive myth, fuelled by angry partisan rhetoric, or do these arguments reflect social reality?' (Norris, 2023:146). Despite the seeming dualism of the either / or questioning, Norris concludes that frictions between progressive liberality and establishment conservatism (in various sectors of society) is scarcely new, nor the public 'outing' of transgressors (ibid:169). Moreover, situations differ contextually, as do cultures. There is a chroma-scope of shades, tones and hues between black and white. So as our (questionable) relationship with tech media should make us deeply aware, no line of reasoning should be accepted at face value, however catchy or seductively shareable it might appear.

Education educating itself

As an educator, my hope must be with the upcoming generations. In my experience of working with students – in a liberal environment of educational privilege – these young people not-yet tainted by prolonged experience of 'the given', have an attitude of choice. However problematic the internet has become, it has facilitated the sharing of non-authorised knowledges: those born of *feeling*.²² Everybody with access to a device and a server and the wherewithal to express, can air an opinion. Evidently, this has lead to the proliferation of vocal assertions and the leveraging of opinion as truth. But it also allows some of those who have felt marginalised in the communities in which they have been raised, to realise that other people beyond their physical environment, share their perspectives and experiences. It seems fairly evident in the twenty-first century that the internet has had a huge role in facilitating questioning of gender and sexual identity I indicate above – somewhat akin to a revolution – which has



22. Here this term relates to some processing of information through what appears to be a fairly personal criticality, rather than that of honed argument. Is it a coincidence that in contemporary youth vernacular, when offering an opinion it is far more likely to begin, 'I feel like ...'?

never previously had such public forum. Even from my position as a queer (non-heteronormative) person, I had been unaware of the panopoly of variation in sexual identity, prior to teaching contemporary teenagers online. This is the truth of life experience for many people. Creative educators learn with their students; whereby views and perspectives can be shared. This makes those of us who have previously held some degree of authority more vulnerable, often running some risk of being quite wrong. So all this convoluted muddle of uncertainty, as perplexing and/or dangerous as it has proved itself in recent years, must (at least; or also) serve to dilute the power of the established, giving us all the very real sense that there are 'other ways to be'. Although the risk of replacing one regime with another clearly exists, at this point in the reconfiguration of 'normalcy' – and as unlikely as it might often currently be – society may also be able to reinvent itself/ves, and thereby our attitudes and behaviours towards one another. Education and critical thinking have parts to play in this movement, if we are to realise different potentiality. For this to happen, Education itself needs to learn to respond creatively, rather than always being led or compelled by the established and insidious market forces of Neo-liberal capitalism.²³ From experience, this seems sadly unlikely. Hope must therefore remain with the interrelationships between educators and students, learning to navigate this rocky terrain together. I would suggest that the toleration of uncertainty is an essential skill to teach and learn. Educators need means by / through which to do so.

Assigning terms?

In attempting to make some sense of the seemingly-irresistible ambiguity of *chōra*, many commentators find cause to approximate, as indicated by the various examples I cite in this section. Perhaps one of the reasons for the enduring allure of the concept is some human need to look toward something beyond ready-comprehension to believe in – though the human

23. This is part of my consideration of *chōra* in the context of the EPRG, the pan-university group now entering its fourth year, and working out its direction for development. Allusions to creative pedagogy appear throughout this thesis, although not an explicit theme of it, and so not developed in detail. However, the EPRG is comprised of people engaged in Education, and therefore subject to the timbres of its forces. Our discussions – generally taking place online, in monthly Microsoft Teams meetings, as an institutional affordance – recognise many of the problematics, as well as acknowledging the significant value and possibility in the efforts of its players. The fluidity of the dynamic (organised as non-hierarchically as possible) and the discussions and arguments this promotes, is an indication to me that it is possible to learn through learning differently; and in so doing to produce material which has the capacity to engage others beyond the institution. I am here suggesting the EPRG as another *chōric* instantiation; and that *chōra* (intended here as 'condition of inter-relation') has pedagogic utility.

propensity toward the dominion of understanding may then cause us to name and explain it. In his study,²⁴ John Sallis addresses the ways in which other commentators have named and explained 'it'.

Sallis himself does not use the term '*chōra*', only the Greek *χωρα* which he argues is misinterpreted by Taylor and Cornford (for example) as 'space' or 'place', or even 'locus'. Nor should it be seen in relation to the Epicurean-Lucretian 'void', since that is discussed elsewhere as '*τοπος*'; and that such conflation 'would risk assimilating Plato's chorology to the topology of Aristotle's *Physics*' (Sallis, 2020:115). This feeling of the need to translate is an aspect of the contemporary quest to understand (or appropriate), though Sallis asserts that in the classical sense in which he is presenting it, *χωρα* remains 'intrinsically untranslatable ... such as to disrupt the very operation of translation, yielding to it perhaps even less than does a proper name, to which it is to this extent akin' (*ibid*). Yet in my own need to understand, both my practice and my study of practice, the irresistible draw to *chōra* and to work with it, necessitates this same practice of approximation, albeit erroneous.

As Whitehead did with recourse to his own notion of spacetime in *Adventures of Ideas* (1933), I will make a suggestion that in the early twenty-first century, the Internet might be conceived as a way of understanding this notion of *chōra* I take from Plato, his subsequent commentators and my own experience. Our social structures differ significantly from those of Ancient Athens and the city states, our conceptions of self-and-other too (to greater or lesser degree). But the internet as 'a device of intercommunication, without form yet impacting exponentially on the process of life, might be a human-made translation of that metaphysical concept. As such it is tainted, not least by the market forces of humankind, the effects of politics and associated power. Even so, I choose to retain belief in the (initial) conception of democratic equity of the internet and its inherent polysemy. Whilst generally aware on the inequity and the ongoing and developing dangers of cyberspace, I

24. Sallis' book is titled *Chorology* – in which he also suggests 'chorology' as a metaphysical device: the essence of the *Timaeus* and the very reason for this Dialogue or myth. He sees the chorology as Plato's major realisation, derived from his work to that point.

prefer to recognise the potential it offers, to allow us – those of us with the privilege of access – to connect and potentially experience other ways of life. Appreciating that there are other ways to be, and seeing examples, may still help us to learn to live better.

Shifting logic

If my suggestions here seem naïve, or ‘likely story’ at best, I contend that there is creative value in the suggestive. My PhD project is constructed around the suggestion of *block* as material to work with. The sources I am working with here attest to this, such as those discussions around the *Timaeus* that recognise some creative value in the *mythos*. As Grosz corroborates, Derrida’s thinking regarding the concept of *khōra*, rooted in his close reading of the text [with recourse to Verdant], shows ‘how the counterlogic – or a logic’ of this Platonic concept: ‘infects the other apparently unrelated claims of the *Timaeus* ... the ways in which political, physical and biological factors are rendered explicable’ (Grosz, 1999:215). Whilst she points to Derrida’s Platonic (and phallogocentric) collusion – not least in his tendency to sometimes affix to his *khōra* the feminine pronoun – she also recognises in Derridian deconstruction the goal to rethink or upset the pre-given; and in his architecture-related writing, some signal towards the ‘reconceptualization of space and spatiality’ (*ibid*:216). Although this is a self-serving project, it points (at least) towards the generation of ‘new perspectives’: those that allow ‘the dis- or replaced or expelled, to occupy those positions – especially those which are not acknowledged as positions ...’ (*ibid*:220).

In our contemporary global culture of territorialism, genocide, displacement and migration, such a call might be broadened out to include all those who are othered, persecuted or terrorised. Sometimes the seeds of revolution may be propagated in established ground; and roots may be transplanted. My thesis aims to use what I have found in life experience, supported and shaped by material gleaned from the established literature – to

reconceptualise some issues of creative practice, rooted in (my experience of) *creative block*: to open out, share and encourage. I aspire to find some means by which to do this, that also allows me to survive, to ‘live better’ as Whitehead might say (1958:3), in order to invest in, expand and extend my practice. This presents a further conundrum, of how to share openly, acknowledging one’s sources and debts, whilst still making a living.

Derrida also wonders about assuming ‘the right to transport the logic, the para-logic or the meta-logic’ of what he calls a ‘super-oscillation’ between the ‘double-exclusion (*neither/nor*) and the participation (*both this and that*)’ to the other discourse he has identified, concerning the dynamic – one that is activated? – around binarity (1995:91). For Derrida, in this context (the essay appears in his book *On the Name*), this move is one of metonymy, displacing names, being and discourse. The relevance of analytical shifts in name and discourse seem pertinent consideration for Derrida, the Algerian Sephardic Jew transplanted to France, whose lycée education was interrupted by Vichy’s ‘Jewish Laws’ of (which limited quotas of Jewish students during the Occupation) and who later adopted a more Francophilic name than that he was given by his parents. Another of his books, *Monolingualism of the Other* (1998), explores the dynamics of exclusion and inclusion: other poles; other discourses. In *Khōra*, Derrida demonstrates that the metonymy can be justified, or ‘authorized’, by ‘passing through *genre*’: feeling-through or analysing the qualities and particularities and problematics of one ‘genre/type (*genus*) and on different types of type’ – perhaps through being (and not-being) into becoming (*ibid*). For this discussion is no Aristotelian cataloguing or demarkation, nor a starry speculation – in spite of the source material’s recourse to a creator god and his negotiation of ideal Forms and Platonic solids, but rather an exploration of the ways in which living situations may relate or become related

In attempting to present *khōra* here, much in the vein of the *Timaeus*, Derrida moves around, whether back-and-forth in

oscillation or from here to there and round about. There is no straightforward route to chōra, nor may it even really be arrived at. 'It' is given so many names, by Plato, by its historical interpreters, that require at least some acknowledgement in the course of discourse—as Sallis does in *Chorology*, ostensibly without imposing his own. But although such indexing may facilitate analysis (or even deconstruction), a seeking of answers may be quite the wrong quest.²⁵ Derrida recognises that this 'history of interpretations', examining or searching for some 'meaning of khōra', inevitably result in 'giving form' to it (1995:94). If this is inevitable, given the subject of discussion, Derrida will at least question the tendency in his own topological variation. Identifying that the interpreters 'gamble here on the resources of rhetoric without ever wondering about them ... speak[ing] tranquilly about metaphors, images, similes ... [though not questioning] this tradition of rhetoric', Derrida acknowledges the utility of the resource thereby created as 'a reserve of concepts' (ibid:92). Conceptual analogy is useful, for appropriation into other discourse: a shorthand of sorts, by which, arguably, 'everybody knows' or can at least comprehend. It may therefore afford us grounds for the rolling-out of a concept and the means to discussion. However, given that even 'the thought of khōra exceeds the polarity', albeit of the *mythos/logos* or any other either/neither, this thought of chōra will 'trouble the very order of polarity ... whether dialectical or not' (ibid).

triton genus and creative block

This is as good a point as any to point (again) to the point which Derrida as Plato and the other interpreters, make about chōra 'as' triton *genus*. At the point of embarking upon his more detailed discourse regarding 'The receptacle of becoming', Timaeus explains that beyond the 'two forms of reality' previously distinguished, of model and copy, now it is necessary 'to add a third' (B49, Plato, and Lee, 1977:67). The notion of a 'third kind', beyond the binarity of 'one thing or the other' functions as a 'get

25. It is fitting that Derrida should play with language in this essay (as often, e.g. Tympan, 1972) – or perhaps this is an apposite subject for a questionning, writing thinker like Derrida to explore. Here we might note that in sometimes referring to khōra with a female prefix (as the English editor explains, in-text [1995:96]), Derrida is drawing on the capacity of *elle* to mean both 'it' and 'her'. The argument regarding this seeming-attribution is subtle; and one can appreciate the feminist identification of sexism or phallocentrism in both Derrida and Plato. However, in sitting-with the conceptualisation, it becomes apparent that Derrida's objective is to demonstrate khōra's processual capacities, in the ways it 'receives' but yet cannot be affected. Names, genders, similes may (or will) be applied, leaving traces for others, yet 'it' remains *amorphon*. 'There is khōra but the khōra does not exist' (Derrida, 1995:96–97).

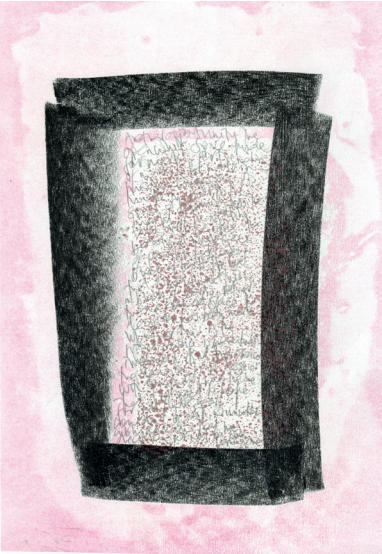
out' move in some readings, employed to justify prevarication or ambiguity regarding this slippery concept which both (and/or neither) receives and cannot receive.²⁶ Despite the metaphors and analogies – so helpful in the quest to grasp chōra, until they are undermined in a subsequent stage of explication – and indeed my own similes (as indicated above) part the allure of chōra for me is that it suggests something other, which is 'not yet', which remains to be created. This might be 'quite wrong' in that it doesn't fit the existing, established schema (and so an anathema to philosophers such as Whitehead, ostensibly problematic in the terms of his organic philosophy's requirement of 'adequacy' [1985:3–4]); but yet the creative advance into novelty would seem to require some unruly deviation into unmapped territory.

So whether riddlesome wordplay, conceptual mediation or rather more processual exploration, the notion of something neither one thing nor the other, not quite being nor evidently becoming, is perhaps the most germane aspect of chōra in my articulation of *creative block*. For this thesis posits *block* as a questionable factor in the becoming of practice (itself an ongoing and unruly premise). Although *block* might be apprehended by all sorts of descriptions in the attempt to know and thereby regulate or control its operations, it persists as frustratingly enigmatic. *Block* feels like something that seemingly results in nothing ... but when we feel blocked, is there any real feeling available; and in any case, what might be made of this actuality? In my rendering, *block* does not stop practice, but instead is involved in practice, rather as a creative immanence. If this is strange, queer, unlikely thinking, I seek to express its machinations through my practice, thereby potentially rendering it at least partially sensible.

Yet however I might present it, any sense or reasoning is a matter of speculation. My thesis requires and utilises articulation of the processes by which I understand (and process) experience – including practice and research – to make work. It has been suggested that in its aesthetic realisation (e.g the prints) my

26. 'Khōra must not receive for her own sake, so she must not receive, merely let herself be lent the properties (of that) which she receives. She must not receive, she must receive not that which she receives' (Derrida, 1995:98).

A little later in his essay, Derrida makes further interpretation which speaks more to a contemporary appreciation of gender: '[Khōra] is a third gender/genus (48e); she does not belong to an oppositional couple, for example, to that which the intelligible paradigm forms with the sensible be coming and which looks like the father/son couple ... This triton *genos* is not a *genos*, first of all because it is a unique individual, She does not belong to the "race of women" (*genos gynaikōn*). Khōra marks a place apart ...' (ibid:124).



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as a person of
 dominating
 the lines of
 future history
 often ignored
 and yet work

One can say of this dialectic that it is and that it is not a logic of noncontradiction. It integrates and sublates contradiction as such. In the same way it sublates mythic discourse as such into the philosopheme. (ibid)

Derrida's 'Khōra' ... 165

treated seriously, addressing all the arguments and obstacles to render it worthwhile endeavour: regardless of whether this work constitutes 'philosophy' (another Derridian concern). For Derrida's objective is a serious one, though his work here requires playfulness. This pairing too, serious and playful, one with its other, is another of the dualities which, like a 'double motif' mark the Dialogue: 'On the one hand ... But on the other hand ...These two motifs are necessarily interwoven ...' (ibid:112).

Just as the protagonist and other actors in the 'mise en abyme' which is [the situation of chōra within] the *Timaeus* – part-encyclopaedic 'general ontology, treating of all the types of being ...',²⁷ part-recollection of tales retold to illuminate understanding of the universe (1995:103–4) – Derrida detours, re-starting, circling about and doubling-back around, positioning and unsettling, before quite suddenly reaching his own chōric terminus [see 11, p. 107]. It is at this midpoint though, halfway through his essay, that he emphasises the placement of the chōra in the Dialogue. It comes to the reader in the middle of the Plato's book, in the midst of its wonderings, deviations, invitations and tales, in-between the sensible and the intelligible yet belonging to neither.²⁸ This is no sublation, nor a synthesis; seemingly an empty space but one which is not emptiness, a chasm which not abysmal chaos. Instead such 'an attempt to think or say this abysmal chasm which would be khōra ... [is] the opening of a place "in" which everything would, at the same time, come to take place and be reflected ...' (ibid:104). This space, somewhere in the midst, is neither myth nor logos yet participating in those forms of discourse by opening space for discourse. Such discourse was signalled at the beginning of the Dialogue, with Socrates' invitation to share stories.

27. This explanation continues: 'This encyclopaedic logos is a general ontology, treating of all the types of being, it includes a theology, a cosmology, a physiology, a psychology, a zoology. Mortal or immortal, human and divine, visible and invisible things are situated there. (Derrida, 1996:103).

28. I will note again here that this is what Sallis does in *Chorology*, where the third of five chapters is titled 'The Χώρα (its own three sections are 'Another Beginning', Images of 'The Χώρα' and 'Chorology'). That the central section in my thesis is also *Chōra* has come about through a situation of both chance and necessity. This might also constitute the process of 'significance', which I discuss in the subsequent block regarding Kristeva. (pp. 171–3).

Kristeva's 'semiotic chora'

In her 1974 book (derived from her own doctoral thesis), translated into English as *Revolution in Poetic Language* by Margaret Waller, (1984), Julia Kristeva sets out to reactivate processes of cultural production which she suggests academic discourses entomb or suffocate. Her process thinking – in the context of language – urges thinking beings to open up or 'de-center the closed set[s, of binary, social-scientific disciplinarity] and elaborate the dialectic of a process within plural and heterogenous universes' (Kristeva, 1984:14). Although she will borrow concepts from various disciplines, including Freudian psychoanalytic theory, rather than adherence to 'orthodoxy', her intention is to explore the signifying processes of language 'through' language: a practice involving 'exploding' existing, totalitarian structures (ibid:14–15).

Kristeva introduces her discussion of 'chora' with an introduction to her use of 'semiotic' here, drawing from the Greek term *sēmeion* as relating to a 'distinctive mark, trace ... engraved or written sign, imprint ...' (Kristeva, 1984:25). Acknowledging the breadth of this etymology as problematic, her reason for alighting on it in this conception is due to 'distinctiveness' in the prevalent meaning. This aligns chōra with a key move in the practices of the 'signifying process' which is a particular focus of this text (ibid). Kristeva's philosophy draws on the concerns linguistics and psychoanalysis (and indeed psycholinguistics) among others, so explains her concept of 'The Semiotic Chora' with reference to Freudian theory of 'the drives', in relation to 'so-called primary processes which displace and condense both energies and their inscription' (ibid). The drives here are unconscious, pre-formation propensities in the developmental process of the human subject,



affective impulses or urges that can be and have been variously characterised, but generally relate to a person’s psychological needs. Formless-chora for Kristeva, plays a role in the formation, or signifying process, of the subject, in ‘a modality of signifiante’ (ibid:26).

There is much theoretical richness in her synopsis which might be unpacked, especially given its motility towards the revolutions and creativity of ‘poetic language’ (with which Viktor Shklovsky was also concerned, and its connection to the work of creativity: see pp. 79–80). However, my focus is on the processual role of Kristeva’s chora. In this rendering the (Freudian) drives, as motilating energy, ‘articulate [chora’s] ... non- expressive totality formed by the drives and their stases’ (Kristeva, 1984:25 [my emphasis]). Whilst an ‘uncertain and indeterminate articulation’, chora’s processual nature marks and inscribes, imprinting characteristic subjectivity (ibid). Its closeness to Plato’s chōric Receptacle is evident here, although whilst Kristeva acknowledges this source, she feels her own way though it, just as anyone who borrows or takes up the concept must do. Indeed such requirement is in its very becoming – imprinted in its DNA, so to speak. In the queerness of bastard reasoning when introduced in the *Timaeus* ((1349), it lends itself to activities of reappropriation, or as Kristeva suggests: ‘Our discourse – all discourse – moves with and against the chora in the sense that it simultaneously depends upon it and refuses it’ (ibid:26). Her own contextually-befitting analogy is to the rhythm of rupture and articulation, gestural, kinetic and vocal play. Seeking to resuscitate it through her preferred theoretical lenses here, she encourages us to ‘read in this rhythmic space, which has no thesis and no position, the process by which signifiante is constituted’ (ibid).

Feminist critique

In this perhaps unfortunate non-positionality,²⁹ Kristeva allows the Platonic analogy to chōra as maternal – which, as Kristeva scholar



29. Margaroni makes the point that Kristeva does not refer to the semiotic chora after *Revolutions in Poetic Language*, following the critical response to this text; although she can trace a lineage of the concept throughout Kristeva’s subsequent oeuvre (2005:79–80).

Maria Margaroni identifies, has proved variously problematic with regard the discourses of feminism,³⁰ since it confers a quasi-mythological status on female reproductivity (Margaroni, 2005:79–80). Judith Butler is one such commentator, who also questions Kristeva’s conception of the semiotic in language (and indeed her ‘references to the “subject” of poetic language’, since such modality ought to undermine the patriarchal codification of subjectivity [Butler, 2002:106]). This is the taking-to-task of the signifying logos – though a term Butler uses only when challenging Kristeva’s argument, which she regards as vague at best, but verging on the complicit (ibid:113–14). Lacanian ‘paternal law’, structuring meaning through ‘the symbolic’, works by repressing the drives, constraining the ‘libidinal chaos’ of the feelings of an infant for its mother, imposing structured language, which in turn represses ‘libidinal multiplicity’ (ibid:101). Butler recognises Kristeva’s project to resuscitate this natural multiplicity through the semiotic and poetic language, as ‘the recovery of the maternal body within the terms of language, one that has the potential to disrupt, subvert, and displace the paternal law’ (ibid: 107). Yet Butler reads this attempt as dubious: not moving far enough away from the logos of the Lacanian Symbolic; perhaps even subjugating itself to that very structure which it purports to challenge.

Butler argues from a perspective which is politically and culturally important; but from discourse which is the context of her research-and-contribution endeavour. Personally, creatively, I am attracted to the sort of ‘spurious’ thinking which she and others perceive in Kristevan semiotic chora. For here I hear another dimension of the translation of the bastard reasoning in the *Timaeus* by which chōra can be ‘thought’, as Derrida reminds us:

Let us recall once more ... that the discourse on the khōra, as it is presented, does not proceed from the natural and legitimate logos, but rather from a hybrid, bastard, or even corrupted reasoning (logismō nothō). It comes ‘as in a dream’ (52b), which could just as well deprive it of lucidity as confer upon it power or divination. (Derrida, 1995:90)

30. See also Derrida’s *Khōra*, p. 153

It is the queerness, the trans- or hybridity of such approaches to being-with difference, which sidesteps the (dogmatic) following of logical proposition, rendering it an aspect of the sort of process thinking that – if perversely – I read in Whitehead. Rather like Kristeva (or indeed Butler), Whitehead has a fair share of disciples and detractors, and so a considerable secondary body of work of scholarly interrogation. His writing (which is at times arguably esoteric) evokes critical reaction. There is huge value in these discussions, whether as counters, extensions, reappropriations or lines of flight; and over the years of my study I have followed many of these into fascinating quarters of life and culture, thinking with other thinkers. Although I will discuss some of my appreciation here, I do not intend to contribute significant comment to these contextual arguments, constraining my commentary to the concerns of creative practice as I aim to elucidate it.

Motility: in-solution

My relative-position on the various discourses of-and-around these thinkers, is to appreciate that the arguments continue, across the centuries and their disciplines. This is part of the ‘solution’ to creative block I am presenting in this thesis, as the ongoingness of process – whereby solution necessitates motility. ‘Motility’ is the term Kristeva uses in discussion of the signifying process mediated by the semiotic *chora*, whereby the drives and their stases function ‘in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated’ (Kristeva, 1984:25). I am proposing that rather than being conclusively answered, a problem in the sphere(s) of creativity should maintain its problematics within interplay of movement and non-movement. Such a state (or ‘modality’), of some awkwardness, allows for the creative advance into novelty that I take from Whitehead: which an open, live problem encourages. Kristeva recognises that her conceptualisation of *chora* ‘is itself part of the discourse of representation’, but yet that ‘all discourse – moves with and against the *chora* in the sense that

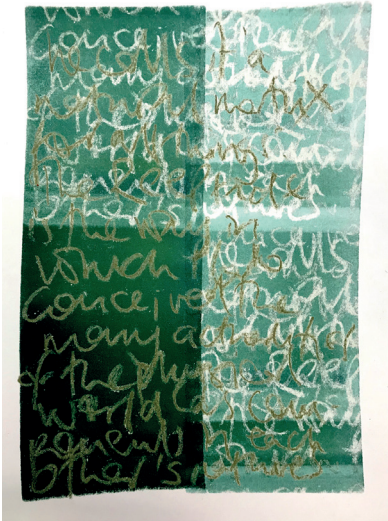


it simultaneously depends upon and refuses it’ (1984:24–25). The *chora*, she suggests, precedes discourse. But in order to restore its motility of ‘gestural and vocal play’ the task of contemporary thinkers (and practitioners) is to resuscitate it ‘from ontology and amorphousness where Plato confines it in an apparent attempt to conceal it from Democritean rhythm’ (ibid:25).

If we did not challenge that which is written (and thus becomes given, as shared), human thought would gradually stultify to inertia, fatigue (e.g. Whitehead, 1958) or entropy (e.g. Cziksentsmihalyi, 1996), with its physical repercussions. In a world where the right to voice (opinion, one’s truth, what one is experiencing) battles with cancellation and censorship – and silencing – this is a real, live problem. In the context of my research concerns regarding creativity, discourse (whether the technologies of philosophy, arts theoretical or studio-situated confabulation) is most useful when it incites making-response as Daniel Rubinstein suggests (2013:1). This is an aspect of why *chōra*, as a thinking-and-making device, is so redolent. Conceptually it refuses to be constrained: just as soon as we perceive some concrete sense of it, it proves itself to be other. Any physicality of *chōra* is fundamentally contestable, as not existing yet participating in that which is made or becomes. In Plato (and due to Plato), it is problematic, and these problems extend over the centuries that readers and thinkers grapple with it. As Kristeva suggests, it is almost self-refuting, whilst being paradoxically unavoidable. Yet in its very ambiguity, it lends itself to many purposes, amorphously interrupting discussions of conceptions, ontological or bodily, like it or not. Its unruly queerness means that it has no place, so may therefore be located and responded to all over the place. However we might think about it, *chōra* is challenging and challenges.

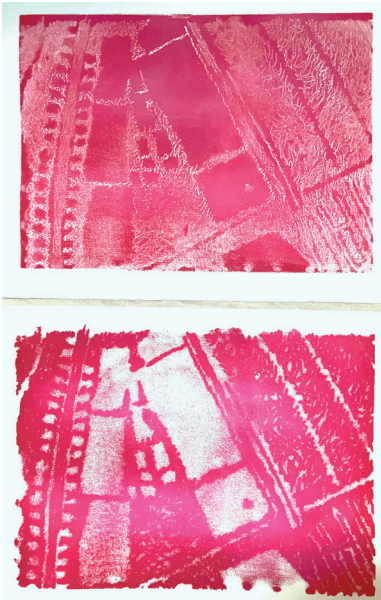
‘signifiante’

In the *Prolegomenon* to the text, Kristeva situates her research intention, to look at an other way of understanding. This



revolutionary turn is somewhat akin to Whiteheadian metaphysics, in countering or moving beyond the prevailing discourses of post-Enlightenment scientific methodologies. In my reckoning, there are resonances of the post-WWI world of Whitehead's later *oeuvre*, in the post-1968 milieu of Kristeva's doctoral thesis: 'environmental concerns' that will impact on creative thought and action. Kristeva takes what could be now seen as a posthuman stance (e.g. Braidotti, 2013), regardless of her take on subjectivity (the ways in which the subject is constituted through language-making). She argues for an emphasis on those processes which ought to pervade being and becoming, which she names 'the generating of signifiante' (Kristeva, 1984:13) – that are repressed or cancelled by prevailing institutional thinking.³¹ As in Whitehead's philosophy of organism (e.g. 1985), there is a sense here of process as being the vital concern. My understanding of Kristeva's conception of signifiante is that it may be brought about through writing – such as that of the 'modern literature' (as signifying practice) that Kristeva will go on to examine in her treatise (1984:15). Such writing breaks down the textual subject, away from the 'meaning-centred practice[s]' (e.g. Kheshti, 2008:68–9) of linguistics – and much other post-Enlightenment thought – into more embodied and affective ways of knowing. A practice of allowing lived experience the space of validity in scholarly endeavour, is of relevance in my own research context of creative practice. Any such approach would seem to require some agility and a degree of manipulation, to prove worth and claim to a place at the table (of debate, repast or account). Roshanek Kheshti has written about the 'inversions' that take place in creative processes such as performance and music. To introduce this discussion, she identifies the ways in which Kristevan signifiante is influenced by Roland Barthes' writing on writing, which challenges binary logics, departing from their epistemological stranglehold (ibid:68). In the course of this process of signifiante, in which inversion might mean 'an inverted state or condition', the 'subject' of the text is lost, since:

31. '... the kind of activity encouraged and privileged by (capitalist) society represses the process pervading the body and the subject ... we must therefore break out of our interpersonal and intersocial experience if we are to gain access to what is repressed in the social mechanism: the generating of signifiante' (Kristeva, 1984:13).



'writing displaces, condenses, repeats and inverts the linear order of language producing an 'overmeaning' (ibid).

Writing-as-process is germane in my understanding of a deliberate departure from the accepted norms, since it situates agential capacity in an encounter with other logics and 'struggles with meaning' (Steven Heath; in Kheshti, 2008:68). This feels like creative practice to me. Making work – and here I mean the considered plastic practice, as a cultural contribution, to which I aspire – is demanding: intellectually, affectively, temporally, economically, socioculturally. In *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva celebrates the articulation of the processes of language through revolutionary texts, that motilise (the philosophy of) language from 'systematizable', territorilised, 'static' meaning (Kristeva, 1984:13–15). Personally, subjectively, as someone who would therefore generate signifiante – as space of thinking, broadly; or articulation of understanding – it may be in writing-as-process where I activate something,³² for myself. Beyond the processes of writing, 'text' may be shared with others through whatever modes of intercommunication become apparent. Elsewhere I have discussed making-space that I discover (with)in printmaking practice; and that the prints that I make might 'make space' for a viewer. But writing explores the processes of writing – interrogating and articulating experience, as 'creative response' – through its own immanent process:³³ as space of thinking.

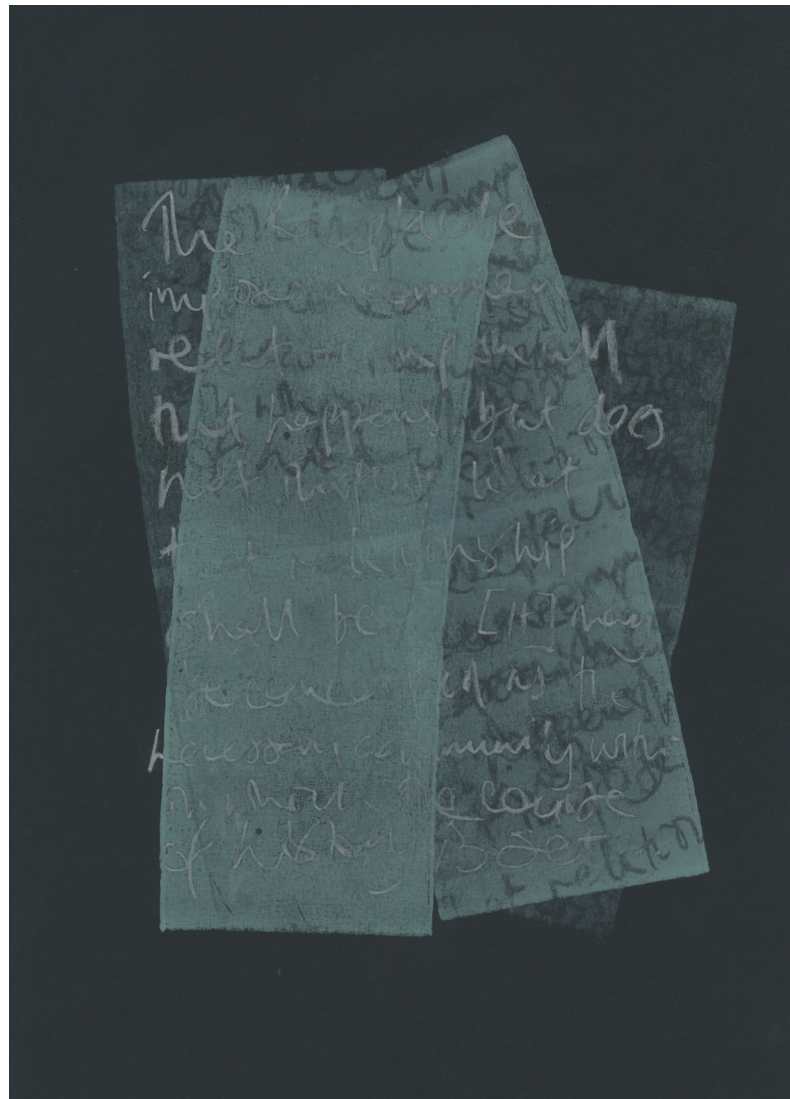
Rather than poring over the texts I produced during my research, deconstructing existing material – 'the remains of a process' – to construct a 'necrophiliac' thesis (Kristeva, 1984:13), my realisation is that I must write where I am now. By writing I locate the critical position of my research,³⁴ so further identification of the results of these experiences of creativity and its stases. It involves the frustrations of the drives, anxieties, rupturing and experiential intensities. The process has taken me into deeper and darker, or murkier places than I had envisaged it would. This is also what a creative practice can do, if we choose to go there.

32. A term such as 'meaning' would be problematic in the context of a discussion of Kristevan 'signifying process', requiring 'unpacking' that is likely to further obfuscate any articulation. Therefore the more anodyne 'something' is my preference, to indicate the 'cultural contribution' or 'personal discovery' – with resonance – which I contend creative work should achieve.

33. I am drawing here on the point that Kristeva makes about the particular 'signifying process' she identifies in the poetry of Lautréamont, Mallarmé, Joyce and Artaud etc., that 'although produced in language, is only intelligible through it', and which tests the devices of academic, formalist (and psychoanalytic) constraints to their limit, and 'exploding the subject and his ideological limits' (Kristeva, 1984:15). This may be stretching the point in a thesis destined for academic examination; yet practice research surely ought to aspire to creative advance.

34. '...to write is to struggle and resist; to write is to become; to write is to draw a map: 'I am a cartographer.'" (Deleuze: Foucault, 1999:44).

Whitehead's Receptacle



Adventures of Ideas

Alfred North Whitehead's take on *chōra* appears in his 1933 book *Adventures of Ideas*. Such 'adventures' are a history, of the way in which strains of thinking have impacted upon (or even inculcated) 'civilisation', from the point at which the growth of forests prompted some mammals to climb trees and become apes. The 'standpoint of criticism' must figure in this, since for Whitehead 'our history of ideas is derivative of our ideas of history ... our own intellectual standpoint' (Whitehead, 1933:8). This (dead) white male identifies that much so much of what is passed down or on, depends upon those with the power and agency to record, preserve and confer knowledge. Whilst he admires much of the thought that he (infamously) locates in Plato,³⁵ he likewise criticises the products of ancient civilisation that needed to be sustained by the 'barbarous substratum of slave labour (*ibid*:14; and *passim*). It is not my intention here to defend my preference for Whitehead, by pointing to the humility I see in his work for example, since my relationship with him over the course of this research has been quite particular, and formative in terms of its developments. However, in the context of a discussion of *chōra*, with both its inherent problematics and those of its interpretations, it is contextually necessary from my own writing standpoint in 2023, to identify that I am at least aware of some of the criticism that might be raised towards this association. However Whitehead's perspective on the topic is vital for appreciation of why the concept of *chōra* is of such relevance with regard creative process and practice.

Interconnections (rather than subject-predicate)

Whitehead identifies that orderings of life which have prevailed

35. In *Process and Reality*, Whitehead tests the scheme of thought which is his philosophy of organism, in relation to extant systems of Western thought. In introducing his intent, he suggests that the traditions of this philosophical history might be safely characterised as 'a series of footnotes to Plato (Whitehead, 1985:39). This quote has often been used as proof that Whitehead is himself following on in a questionable, classical tradition. Yet he qualifies his (wry) statement by explaining that rather than claiming that Plato said it all; he is pointing out that Plato's privilege afforded him creative scope:

His personal endowments, his wide opportunities for experience at a great period of civilization, his inheritance of an intellectual tradition not yet stiffened by excessive systematization, have made his writings an inexhaustible mine of suggestion (*ibid*).

during the ages of recorded history (explored in *Adventures of Ideas*) are rooted in Ancient Greek thought, subsequently transplanted to and modified by diverse cultures (e.g. *op.cit*:132). Although attempting to present balanced critique, he prefers the speculation of Plato to the scholarship of Aristotle, in which he perceives various flaws. Whilst thinking is generally flawed, Aristotle’s teaching bears the attraction of appearing logical and therefore actionable. Offering concrete answers based on observed, quantifiable actuality, it is no surprise that this approach to understanding the universe should have been generally adopted as the correct way to interpret life and proceed with its required business. In his own scholarship (if we take his view that scholarship picks at points of conjecture) Whitehead will work through these accepted rationales, in order to ground his speculative scheme (*ibid*:137–8). Aristotelian subject-predicate logic is especially relevant here (i.e. a method of structuring a verbal sentence), as a process of philosophy meant to ascertain the truth of a matter, through consequent analysis. This is a point that Kristeva will later raise, in *Revolutions in Poetic Language* (1984:21-23). For Whitehead, subject-predicate logic is fundamentally flawed: a reckoning underlies much of his philosophical development. In *Adventures of Ideas* he uses the example of a bath-tub and the observation that it is filled with hot water. It may seem obvious that a ‘thing’ (water) and a ‘quality’ (hot) can be added together to explain a phenomenon, as ‘a set of ... abstract characteristics ... united into an individualized togetherness’ of that bath (Whitehead, 1933:169). Yet: how can ‘we’ put them together? This is not quite the question he asks, since his objection concerns the interconnected agency of reality:

This answer is beautifully simple. But it entirely leaves out of account the interconnections between real things. Each substantial thing is thus conceived as complete in itself, without any reference to any other substantial thing. Such an account of the ultimate atoms ... or of the ultimate subjects enjoying experience, renders an interconnected

world of real individuals unintelligible. The universe is shivered into a multitude of disconnected substantial things, each in its own way exemplifying its private bundle of abstract characters which have found a common home in its own substantial individuality. But substantial thing cannot call unto substantial thing. A substantial thing can acquire a quality, a credit – but real, landed estate, never. (*ibid*:169–70)

Whitehead sees this problem reflected in the various cosmologies he discusses. All aim to answer the conundrum of the mysterious force operating in the background of reality, functioning as mediator between abstract characteristics or units of reality – such as Leibniz’s monads. Often of course, this turns out to be God. Whitehead’s ‘God’ is questionable; and it is not my intention to explore it here.³⁶ More relevant in my context of *chōra* are his observations of how the difficulty has been negotiated by Plato and Lucretius/Epicurus.³⁷ He suggests that Lucretius’ Void is a variation of Plato’s Receptacle: one of the terms by which *chōra* is named. Each of these ‘doctrines are emphatic assertions of real communication’ (Whitehead, 1933:171). The communication, or intercommunication, is perhaps the fundamental ‘predicate’: that upon which actuality depends. In his philosophy of organism, actuality occurs through the process of prehension, by which units of reality (termed ‘actual entities’ or ‘actual occasions’) reach out and ‘feel’ the data of the universe to coalesce into presence (e.g. Whitehead, 1985: 219-82 [Part III: *The Theory of Prehensions*]). This active, engaged ‘becoming’ is ongoing intercommunication. The Receptacle is likewise an essential component in becoming:

It is part of the essential nature of each physical actuality that it is itself an element qualifying the Receptacle, and that the qualifications of the Receptacle enter into its nature. In itself, with the various actualities abstracted from it, the Receptacle participates in no forms ... It receives its forms by reason of its actualities, and in a way not to be abstracted from those actualities ... [It] is the way in which Plato conceived the many actualities of the physical world as components in each other’s natures. It is the doctrine of the immanence of Law, derived

36. I should note, however, that Process theology is a large school of thought, staking particular claim to Whitehead’s philosophy. My own sense, which I see reflected in his biographers, is that Whitehead, the son of a clergyman, was ambivalent about organised religion and about theological figures (c.f. Lowe, 1966; Leclerc, 1961).

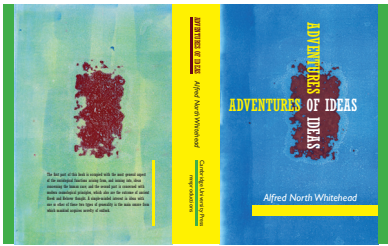
37. Whitehead notes that it is the Roman poet Lucretius (in his epic *On the Nature of Things*) who ‘gives the clearest formulation of an exact, detailed, order of nature’ (1933:171). Lucretius is translating the Greek philosopher Epicurus, and the Atomic theory of his predecessor Democritus, for his own contemporary audience. In Whitehead’s purview this is a ‘rival cosmology’ to that of the competing Laws of Immanence and Imposition (*ibid*:154–5), those binary doctrines which have dominated human history.

from the mutual immanence of actualities ... [and] of the medium of intercommunication. (Whitehead, 1933:171–2)

Situation / The Dogmatic Fallacy

It is perhaps telling that this discussion of the Receptacle appears in the second Part of *Adventures of Ideas*, which is titled *Cosmological* and situated between *Sociological* and *Philosophical* (before the culmination of *Civilization* in Part IV; and its chapters on *Truth*, *Beauty*, *Adventure* and *Peace*). For the Receptacle is not an answer but rather a solution. This is not tautology, since I intend solution to imply an activated fluidity, ‘suspension’ or ‘infusion’ rather than ‘resolution’ (see also *Solution*, p. 211). There is an alchemical aspect to this reasoning, which itself implies the sort of ‘mystery and magic’ that the idea of the Receptacle sustains (Whitehead, 1933:182), amidst the other cultural shifts and technological progress of the ages. In a discussion in the *Science and Philosophy* chapter (which follows on from that on *Cosmologies* in Part II), Whitehead presents another of his observations of fallacious thinking in the attitude of the civilised humanity that he is exploring in this text. Indeed, this error has been pervasive to the extent that it is ‘characteristic of our thoughts’; ‘a fatal misunderstanding ... [which] may be termed The Dogmatic Fallacy’ (ibid:185): which is humanity’s incapacity to adequately formulate notions that correspond to the complexity of the universe’s internal relationship. The various classifications, *logos*-es and *Laws* that have been perceived, received or developed, by those (men) with the power to interpret, impose or convince, are brandished as ruling devices in the ongoing attempt of mankind to civilise itself.

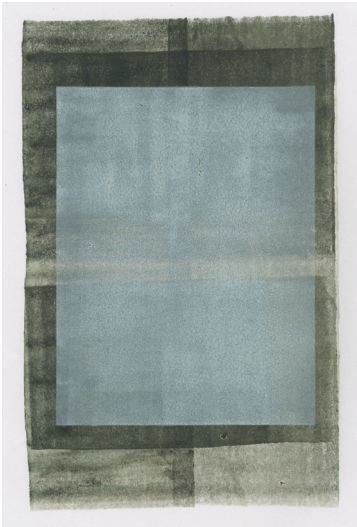
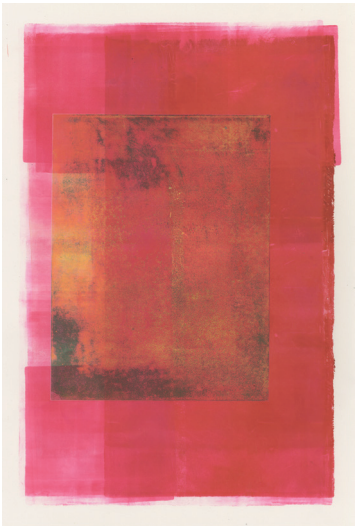
In fact the interrelationship of the universe requires far greater perspectival consideration than is generally given, including that of ‘internal consistency’ (Whitehead, 1933:182); but oversight or lack of criticality results in assumptions or claims of truth and rightness – by which men proclaim sovereignty and take



up arms. Although Whitehead acknowledges that metaphysical finality can never be achieved, the task of philosophy (and ‘philosophic research’), as he sees it, is in the recognition of limitation as it endeavours to find adequate and applicable means of exemplification and articulation (ibid:185–6). This is a point he makes at the start of *Process and Reality* when laying out the ‘speculative scheme’ which begins that book; and in *Adventures of Ideas* it is worked through with less technical and more illustrative detail. Such fleshing-out of the ‘deeper intuitions ... give life and motion to detached thoughts’ (ibid) – as, I would suggest, does making art or other plastic production in response to the experiences of life. Yet we must be aware of limitations in our endeavours to present cohesive outcomes. Critique, from that standpoint of internal consistency, as well as from the adequacy of applicability, is an essential and ongoing aspect of a ‘step by step process’ Whitehead indicates here, that should achieve no finality but ‘can produce a variety of partial systems of limited generality’ (ibid). The Receptacle implies such process.

Ongoing-ness (practice)

The relationship between art-making and *chōra* is one that I am intending to articulate – through this ‘solution of thesis’ in the present instance. I claim no dogmatic finality in my endeavour here, but rather the identification of a subjective, limited but reasonably self-consistent generality, from a standpoint of inter-personal experience. All the ideas upon which this project is predicated and extended are necessarily incomplete, since I am claiming that creative practice requires material to work with (and through), requiring continual re-conceptualisation through the questions it asks of the practitioner considering it. *Creative block*, in my purview, is an example of an idea that can be continually explored. From my initial conception of *block* at the start of the research, I have investigated a range of perspectives, largely materially-biased, through my plastic practice and its associated writing.



Some have not been developed or extended; and there are various others which might yet be examined, such as the experiences of other practitioners – across a range of associated fields. The study of ‘creative block’ could be the ongoing practice of my working life ... The decision to focus on *chōra* in the midst of this thesis is an acknowledgement of the centrality of it in my current conceptions of creative practice and its processes. Yet the requirement of limitation in the scope of such a piece of research is compounded by the particular form in which I have elected to present my conceptions and work. If the partiality of the argument presented here concerns me, Whiteheadian process thinking allows me to accept these concerns as intrinsic to the work itself as ongoing endeavour. This line of thought will be developed in the subsequent section, *Process*.

In tracing the history of civilisation’s propensity for binary thinking – immanence or imposition; speculation or scholarship; Hellenic or Hellenistic; Platonic or Aristotelian systemisation; science or philosophy – Whitehead is setting-up the argument for an other approach to the conceptualisation of reality: his metaphysical quest – as that of ‘creative advance’ (Whitehead, 1933:188). This will be one that draws upon all the extant data of the universe as material to work with. Yet in amidst the skirmishes and scuffles played out between (and in amongst) these various schools of thought, the interplay between one and its other is evident, functioning as a process of moderating and shaping critique. Ideas are picked up, reappropriated and reformulated; or impacted upon by other factors of the universe. To represent this notion of the glimmer of thought or imaginative possibility, Whitehead uses the analogy of some species of organism, lying dormant, unregarded or forgotten, ‘as an obscure by-product of nature in some lonely jungle or morass’ which is suddenly activated and like a virus, ‘by some trick of circumstance ... escapes into the outer world and transforms a civilization, or destroys an empire or the forests of a continent’ (ibid:186–7). From a source in

some distant market place, global pandemics change the course of peoples’ lives. Millions die, infrastructures demonstrate their incapacities, fortunes are made by the pharmaceutical industry, governments unravel, people are forced to rethink how they operate – though all may revert to normalcy. But maybe practices are learned which do prevail, inculcating and incubating cultures of new germs of ideas. The EPRG (discussed earlier) is an occurrence of the Covid pandemic; and amidst shifting cultures in the wake of that, aims to extend its reach of intercommunication, celebration and creative critique. My point here, picking up on Whitehead’s suggestion of interplay and of the potential power of ... [philosophical] ideas’, is to highlight the creative practitioner’s ability to notice the imaginative possibility in the ‘action and reaction’ between modes of thought or disciplines, and the aim of such practices to realise potentiality (ibid:187). The to-and-fro of the pendulum swing or repetitious nature of life cycles can seem predictably moribund, but moments of creativity may be gleaned within the momentum; or indeed the point of pause.

The Receptacle as a Theme

Although the context of my work is ‘the’ creative process, it is clear that the ideas I am engaging with have been transplanted or infiltrated my study from other (disciplinary) environments, rather than looking at other artists. Of course, as most creative practitioners will attest, this is fairly standard practice, since creativity tends to include an element of curiosity about what is going on elsewhere. Ideas, whether we see those as concepts, discourses, material or themes, may be imported, appropriated, recontextualised or hacked, to explore potentiality and generate creative advance, or variations within or between bodies of work. It interests me that Whitehead, whose background is in mathematics and associated sciences – often bringing the language from those practices into his philosophy – is so taken by the likely tales of Plato. He even suggests that themes he identifies as being key to

Plato’s later dialogues are of importance to contemporary science: ‘The Mathematical Relations’ is one, but so too are ‘The Eros’, ‘The Psyche’ and ‘The Receptacle’. Unlike the clarity of Aristotle’s categorisations, which can be seen as having formed a basis for subsequent scientific practice and development, Whitehead identifies Plato’s meanings as often being ambiguous. Plato is apt to contradict himself, ‘feels the difficulties and expresses his perplexities ... mov[ing] about amidst a fragmentary system like a man dazed by his own penetration’ (Whitehead, 1933:187–8). Although one might note similarities with Whitehead’s own manner of expression here, I do not perceive Whitehead as making any such connection in his prismatic reflections.³⁸

Whitehead maps the journey of ‘The Ideas’ through this spiky constellation,³⁹ as they obtain ‘life and motion’ by their interaction with The Psyche and then ‘an inward ferment ... of subjective feeling’ which is equated with The Eros (Whitehead, 1933:188–9). Alluding to the *Timaeus*, Whitehead equates The Psyche with the Supreme Craftsman: the creator god or Demiurge. The Eros in this reading might be seen as those sensations related to the performance of practice, where the making activity becomes channelled towards its ideal formulation, and intensity of engagement is activated. It is not a question of the love of ‘mere knowledge ... [or] mere understanding’ as the culmination of ‘the urge towards ideal perfection’: indeed Whitehead muses that Plato might (should) have written another dialogue ‘named The Furies, dwelling on the horrors lurking within imperfect realization’. The ‘enjoyment ... appetite [and] action’ that are aspects of the ferment of feelings of eros, may not always be charged with positivity or indicate pleasurable experience; and insight can be dangerous (ibid:189). From my perspective on creative process, Whitehead’s summary of Plato’s key themes in those works expresses a truth about the messiness of making, whether print or text or performance or any other. Making work is a process of trial and error (confusion; disorder; disappointment; slog;

38. Whitehead is often cited as a difficult philosopher to read. Various commentators have remarked about the awkwardnesses associated with following his explications, which tend to be technically challenging, quite apart from the textures of their ideas. A ‘Corrected Edition’ of *Process and Reality* was published in 1978, as the project of David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne, to rectify the ‘deplorable ... condition’ that the text had been published in, replete with typos and technical inconsistencies (Editors Preface, pp v–x, in Whitehead, 1985:v). Whilst clearly believing in the importance of his work in relation to the various disciplines of its potential audience, and a dedicated and inspirational educator, according to several accounts, Whitehead was less interested in the grammatical accuracies of his text in its publication, displaying ‘indifference to the production process’ (ibid).

39. In turn, I have been much taken by Whitehead’s reading of these later dialogues – or rather of Plato as a writing thinker. Whitehead’s language, for all its mathematical allusion, is often lyrical and poetic. Despite any typographic inaccuracies or inconsistencies (as mentioned in n38, above), some of his prose is beautifully crafted; and he possessed the writers’ knack

anxiety; hope; frustration; thrill ...) but one in which a practitioner will experience variations of sensation and moments of intensity. Chōra seems to be in the midst. .

Part of Whitehead’s aim in this chapter, *Science and Philosophy*, is to express the essential constituent of mathematical relations in these practices (Whitehead, 1933: sections IV–VII; pp 187–203). Whilst diverting for someone not generally party to mathematical thinking, the crucial component for my own here is his treatment of The Receptacle. Whitehead’s Receptacle is ‘the general interconnectedness of all things, which transforms the manifoldness of the many into the unity of the one’ (ibid:192). This transformative capacity of chōra can be seen across the various appropriations of the concept previously discussed: Kristeva’s *semiotic chora* and its processing of the drives; Derrida’s *khōra* which allows for the shifting of logics; Grosz’s identification of the male appropriation of ‘womb-like’ chora to subjugate women, as vessel of gestation; the architectural space for encouragement of other modalities of human (recreational) behaviour [Parc de la Vilette proposal]. Perhaps given his own context of thematic appropriation, Whitehead’s sense of it is yet more grandiose. The ‘one’-ness of the unity cited above is not any prefect harmony of some idea of an absolute, but rather the conjunctive universe, in its progression. Indeed this ‘one’ is the fact – perhaps even the only ‘fact’ in the whole of history: that the universe continues. Any notion of ‘civilisation’ is altogether debatable (and from contemporary perspective, morally questionable); and there can be no ultimate agreement on the nature of truth, beauty or good – or even nature. But still the world, as the sum of everything that makes it up, goes on: *e pur si muove*, as Galileo ostensibly shrugged (e.g. The Scientific American, 2024). So when Whitehead considers The Receptacle in Plato’s system of thought, it is as the ‘community of the world, which is the matrix for all begetting, and whose essence is process with retention of connectedness’ (Whitehead, 1933:192). Not the world itself – or any planet within

for a *bon mot* (his former students, Alison Hartz Johnson collected some of these together in *The Wit And Wisdom Of Alfred North Whitehead*, a volume published just after his death in 1947). Struggling through Whitehead will sometimes be rewarded by an outburst of laughter. But such delight is additional to being able to experience his insight, those products of his penetration, and associations consequentially produced. In the allegory he gives of Plato working through his perception, I picture a planetary environment, cold and dark, but punctuated by disconcerting, gleamingly-illuminated incidental interruptions, like shards of mirror ... This is the image Whitehead’s description of ‘the world in its function as the theatre for the temporal realization of ideas’ (Whitehead, 1933:188) brings to my mind; and how I have perceived the research process of my study. In an earlier part of this project, around the event of the Whitehead conference in Brasilia, I started to make prints which explored this imagery. See e.g. image that concludes this block.



the universe – but the ‘community’ of the world, its together-ness and the way(s) in which that is brought about. There are many processes involved in the notion of community, whether we think of it as the commons of unity, shared purpose, gathered sets or the interplay of individuals in collective environment. In any case, community is not a fixed, static entity, but one which (I would suggest) is necessarily fluid and reasonably amorphous, shifting in response to its constituent elements becoming together and ongoing.

‘matrix’

As Whitehead notes, when referring to *chōra*, Plato takes care to vary the terminology he uses, which is one of the reasons that it comes to be referred to by so many names and is imbued with so many analogical appendages (explored and critiqued in Derrida’s essay). Whitehead himself prefers ‘Receptacle’ – other than when he quotes Plato’s ‘foster-mother of all becoming’ (Whitehead, 1933:192) – but in its role of matrix we may hear a resonance of the maternal.⁴⁰ Yet this term bears other suggestion to me, from the perspective of printmaking practice.⁴¹ The sense of process implied is less that of temporary holding and more to do with the transformative capacity, like the offset lithography roller onto which the image is offset from the inked plate before being transferred onto the paper substrate – that which holds the print and thereby becomes the print. These rollers are elements of the printing machine, part of the internal mechanism, and although not of quite the same ‘functional totality’ in the process as that which I read in Whitehead, are fundamental at that point in the becoming of the print. A matrix likewise appears in any other printmaking processes, as the plate of intaglio or the block of relief. Matrices are a component of printmaking, playing quite a particular role; although their form is not ‘set’, since their technical-materiality will depend on the printmaking process in operation. Here I sense relationship with Whitehead’s reminder



40. I wonder about Whitehead’s rendition of it here: ‘the matrix of all begetting’. This has connotations to obtaining an objective, and to causing something to happen. But I will assume that he is playing with the more biblical association of ‘beget’ to the paternal role in reproduction. Although as previously mentioned, I am not intending to contribute to discourse on the sociopolitical semantics of *chōra*, I am nonetheless taken by this framing, which challenges the feminist critique of its depiction as female. Since the Receptacle indicates ‘all’ in relation to process, it seems more appropriate that any sense of gender be mixed: the ‘either/or’ thereby becoming dissolved. See also n26

41. I discuss the role of the matrix-roller in my printmaking elsewhere e.g. 21–3; 40. This discussion is prior to thinking about matrix in relation to ‘begetting’ [n40] so does not extend into considerations of the

that devining meaning is tricky, for as Plato warns, ‘it is an unsure and difficult concept, and that in its own essence the Receptacle is devoid of all forms’ (ibid). A matrix may be a reasonably-constant element in a work of printmaking, less susceptible to the vagaries of ink and paper, a fixed position around which these more temporal elements interact and fluctuate. Yet to depend on this sense-constancy would be unwise, any matrix is itself liable to become corrupted, with use, becoming damaged or corroded or attracting environmental detritus that may have effect on the print being made. Although it has physicality (and so form), in general it will not be apparent in the consequent print; having causal quality but no absolute definition – at least for the viewer of the work.

An elephant of experience?

I am slightly anxious about making such allusions to printmaking from my thoughts about the matrix as a form of *chōra* in Plato and Whitehead (and many of the other commentators on the *Timaeus*), since as should be apparent, the very ambiguity of this bastard reasoning is key to its utility in practice. Again, when presenting his own appropriation of The Receptacle, Whitehead stresses that Plato is careful to not offer any final definition, presenting the concept as abstract but with practical allusions that allow an audience ways into thinking further. In a sense, this is just what I am aiming to do in my project: by examining the capacities of *creative block* to articulate creative process. The project was predicated on the various definitions of ‘block’, having utility of meaning as both an obstacle but also a printmaking device (‘I can’t make work because I have a block; I need a block in order to make work’). Therefore this very possibility of reconfiguration allows for the project to become, through consideration of the different angles on the problem, which occur as a result of divergent perspectives. As I state above, my intention here (and perhaps in my wider practice) is not to solve any problem but rather to articulate it:

‘patrix’ in printmaking, not least since the term is new to me. However, it generally relates to the mould used in producing Linotype, for typesetting. More recently, Lenka Vilhelmova has used the term in relation to the more ‘sculptural ... relief and dimensional’ printmaking, in which a print is made between two plates or blocks, matrix and patrix (‘Exploring the Physical State of the Matrix’ in *Celebrating Print*, 1(1), Vilhelmova: 2015). Although this is an interesting notion, it is not one I wish to pursue, since the allusion to the parental and heteronormative is at odds with my burgeoning conception of *chōra* – and therefore a matrix – as queer and therefore non-normative. This is in part due to my own positionally; but further informed by my appreciation of Deleuze and Guattari. Their work on questioning the status quo and the role of conceptual apparatus in doing so has been instrumental to my practice research (eg. Deleuze and Guattari 2003; 2015; 2021).

to identify and activate possibilities of fluidity or movement; to encourage thinking practice.

Throughout this study, coming back to Whiteheadian philosophy at various points has reactivated my research in moments of stuck-ness, even as it has brought about additional confusion. One of the lines (from the early pages of *Process and Reality*’s ‘Speculative Scheme’) to which I have returned on many occasions have resonated here:

Sometimes we see an elephant, and sometimes we do not. The result is that an elephant, when present, is noticed. Facility of observation depends on the fact that the object observed is important when noticed, and sometimes is absent. Whitehead, 1985: 4).

This is another example of the wit and wisdom of Whitehead [though does not appear in Johnson’s florilegium: see n39], which initially attracted me since I conceived of creative block as ‘the elephant in the room’: something that we prefer not to speak of, or investigate too closely, though it may be overbearingly ‘present’. We may politely ignore this unfortunate condition, for fear of awkwardness. My research quest had been both acknowledge and rehabilitate the elephant; so this suggestion regarding observation was pertinent. At points during the study I have been creating work intensely (with various matrices), and whilst my focus has been on *block* I have felt differently about it, to the point that I was not so sure what I was looking at, and whether I was able to perceive any such elephant, though I still sensed its presence. Indeed, *block* has shifted, morphed, become amorphous (e.g. *Solution*, p. 141, p. 211). *Block*, elephant, matrix, chōra ... The quote has acquired various resonances as I have perceived it from the various perspectives mediated by the study. Puzzling over what might constitute these focal points – ontology, ontogenesis, actuality or affect – has meant that I have never been entirely clear about what I am seeing. More recently, I can appreciate this as the vitality of *creative block*, and so Whitehead’s introduction to the

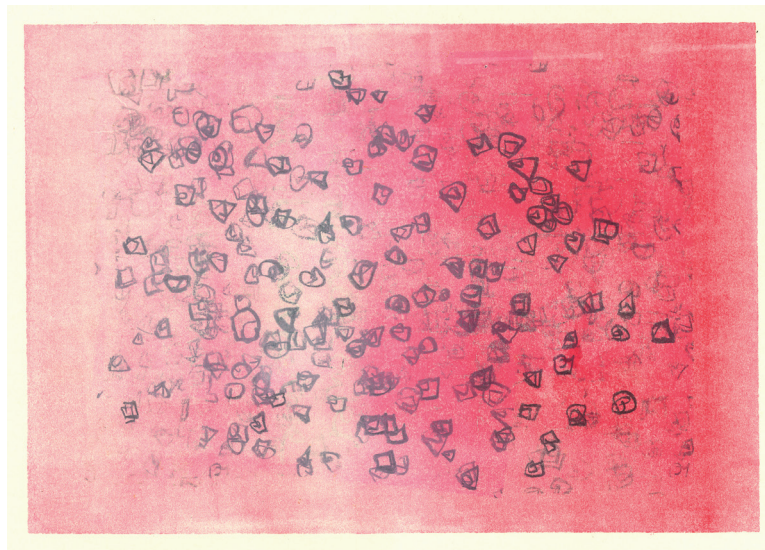
section in which the quote is set (introducing the metaphysical speculation of his philosophy of organism) take on greater importance:

Weakness of insight and deficiencies of language stand in the way inexorably. Words and phrases must be stretched towards a generality foreign to their ordinary usage; and however such elements of language be stabilized as technicalities, they remain metaphors mutely appealing for an imaginative leap. (*ibid*)

Whitehead’s suggestion that experience is the route to insight has been a crucial factor in the interplay of creative practice in this study; as has his validation of imagination in the process of serious work. As non-existent (in terms of ‘material substance’), the Receptacle is activated through imagination. Matrices may be appropriated, blocks reconfigured, via imaginative leap. In an(other) age where the readings of words can be rendered incendiary, to the extent that we may find ourselves saying nothing meaningful for fear of saying something offensive, his idiosyncratic terminology is refreshingly archaic ... Though perhaps ‘timeless’ would be a more apposite term here: spanning generations and disciplines, it seems ‘of this world’, yet one cannot place it precisely. Because it doesn’t mean quite what it initially appears to, it requires us to speculate; to engage in some process of investigation; to try to discern his intention, to see his meaning. Whiteheadian scholarship and debate continues, and I have found my reasoning dismissed as ‘quite-wrong’. Yet such may be the case with *all useful work*: that it asks questions of its reader, who may therefore be emancipated to think. Learning that my experience is valuable in this regard has been liberating for my practice, since I can now appreciate practice as a way to ‘make use’ of experience.

I would speculate that the interplay of imagination and experience is also what allows Whitehead to make a proposition at the culmination of his focus on The Receptacle: that to all intents and purposes this is ‘almost exactly’ what physicists (in

1933) are considering as 'space-time' (Whitehead, 1933:192–3). From the environs of his own practice, this allusion is somewhat beyond my particular comprehension; yet as I have discussed in the previous section of the thesis [Practice] the idea of a Time Machine is also relevant for creative practice that is, on some dimension, an adventure of ideas. In setting up his connection, Whitehead reiterates that 'Plato's Receptacle may be conceived as the necessary community within which the course of history is set, in abstraction from all the particular historical facts' (ibid:192). Here I read 'chōra', from my perspective of stumbling about the fragmentary, poly-dimensional system of creative practice, where the controls can sometimes seem jammed on 'Random'.



superficial inversions

June 2023

My process in these prints is a continuation of the various actions – printing actions – that I have developed over the course of Process Prints. These are the visible scrapes and smears and stippings born of the activity of making prints, the offsets, ghosts and re-inkings which one encounters in the course of relief printing methods: those in which a roller is instrumental. My methodology has been to recognise these 'interim phases' of construction as of aesthetic, conceptual value; as work itself. Bringing self – physically, affectively – together with media and creative intent in the making environment (as mediated concrescence) is to *practice*, which has become the focus of my project, as practice research. Using the directness of the roller-and-substrate I have sought to capture (as the work) these as moments of making, usually esoteric, private, unseen practices, in my endeavour to open-up practice, to celebrate and share. The thesis should explicate this intent; but so too should the prints made in the process of practice, which are parts of the whole of the work. It was therefore important to attempt to present them as 'pure movements', be those captured echoes or reverberations of other movements, as a single pass of the roller across the paper plane, to show (an extended repetition of) what I see on my print-making plate, or block, or matrix, in the making. However, this methodology responds to what is there, as that which appears in the making process; and in the course of the practice I have seen that some of the prints, as aesthetic objects, require *more*. A subsequent pass of the roller sometimes activates that which has seemed unremarkable. A third or fourth might take it into darker, sensualised territory, or may 'kill it' by pushing it into murky dirge.

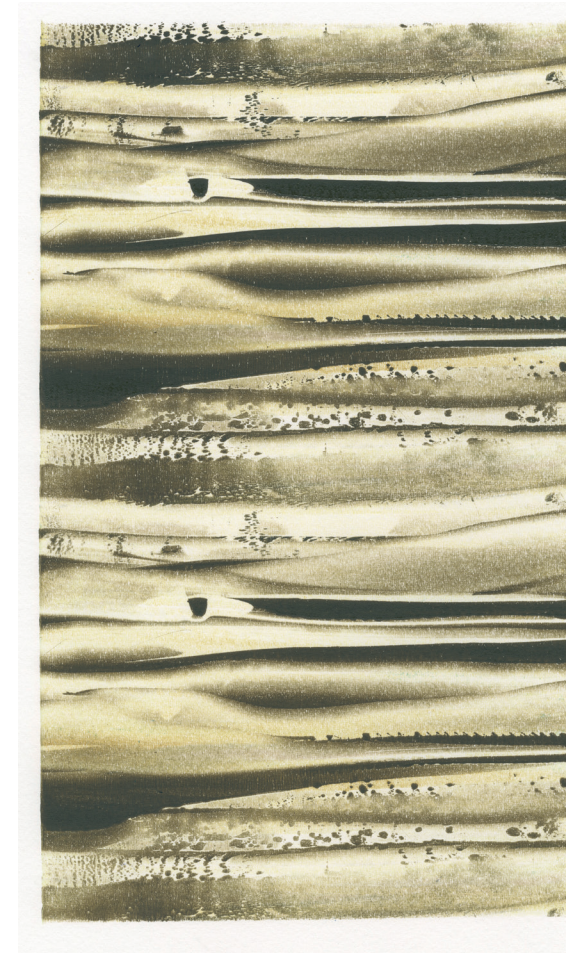


Deliberations of this nature become creative struggles, as reckonings which take me into other affective territory. Perhaps this is why the process of overlaying really came to the fore around the time of *cosmic magics* and *Affective developments* (2022–3), which was a period of intensity in my life, reflected in my practice. Appreciating affect as multiplicity, and as Félix Guattari suggests, *durational*, allowed me to conceive of these works in response to my reactions being constructed, temporally, rather than needing to be discreet pulses of feeling (Guattari, 1990:67). Regarding them as works in process, suspended and unfixed (as 'finished') opened-up my own sense of this practice. Instead of the endless generation of new prints in the quest for a hit of sensation coming off the hand-held roller, I began to understand that the making intensity could be built, and thereby prolonged. An initial response to seeing what I have made might be held, as the preliminary feeling at the start of the story; but then shift registers, be drawn out or undone. Although layering is a printmaking process, in which (colour) separations are reassembled, the prints I started to make in that period of my life experience have a more 'painterly' depth, where the marks and colours are seen through, in relationship to or obscured by each other. They also necessitate a different sort of viewing practice, where the eye is required to focus and assimilate, to unpick or submit; being more complex to look at, perhaps one questions further. Whilst they are certainly comprised of making marks, some of the complexity of creative practice – of speeds and slownesses – is highlighted in the assemblage of these strata. There are various reasons that I have considered those prints as 'stronger' work, even if superficially 'thinner'.

It was that work which I stopped making in early-2023, in the chōric disturbance which was another creative blocking; though one which precipitated a turn to concentration on the written thesis, propelling me into writing-up. Returning into the printroom after that hiatus, I had initially begun work on an idea of using the roller as a figurative as well as a conceptual

device. Although this approach has potential, I was not willing to commit to concentrating on such a significant shift at this point in my project. A turn to figuration, and to 'drawing' in that sense, has considerable implication which requires various practical, environmental factors to be present but are not currently available to me. Although I feel drawn towards this new possibility, simultaneously I sense that this directional shift is not for now, and that I should return to continue the work that I am – or was – engaged in when I stopped. If indeed I ever really stopped ... There is a linearity to these temporal, environmental implications, but also inherent a-linearity. My PhD project moves towards its end, suggesting new beginnings, in the midst of my wider research about practice, as the onward, interrupted rolling of continuation across the flat surfaces of substrates, integrated and revised in the editing and rewriting of illustrated text. These interplays of text and image are likewise illustrative of affective, creative duration, where ideas from one source effect readings and productions in other media. Such understandings, appreciations or provocations can colour perspective and suggest reaction, which underscore the creative practice I am developing. (Distorted) cycles and revolutions of creative practice pick up and set down (or lay out), as the roller on the substrate, and bodies of work become. It is in this way that the BoW (Body of Work) I am now making has come about. Seeing another window of opportunity in the space temporarily emptied of students and colleagues, I put the writing and rewriting to the side and committed the week to printmaking.

However, in my research practice the writing informs the making, as the reading informs the writing. My recent 'discovery' has been *Logic of Sense* (LS), the book which became from Gilles Deleuze's doctoral thesis, first published (in French) in 1969. It is a text which at this point in my reading of it seems to offer me keys to all sorts of understandings, to be expanded upon when I have more purchase on them; yet has stimulated me initially as a commentary on Lewis Carroll's *Alice*. This was a text and its writer



that I had begun to think about at the start of my research, as I started to consider the slipperiness of language, for which I made monoprints in response – some of the first in which I allowed myself to integrate text. I had been unaware at that time that Deleuze had considered Alice: if I had my project might have taken a different turn. Coming upon LS now has seemed particularly poignant and my burgeoning appreciation of it quite pointed. For now I am able to read Carroll-through-Deleuze in relation to my own work and becoming. Just as Alice I have become simultaneously more and less as I have gone in both directions at once. I have discovered sense in no sense (and nonsense), and vice-versa. Most importantly, I see now, I have spread or unrolled my working across planes of flatness, in my quest for conceptual and visual depth. So again I find methodology for making sense of my own working practice in the ideas of others, and their articulations; ways into and therefore lines out from the conundrums of making and not-making.

This newest work, then, takes a title for its body from what Deleuze identifies as a 'Carrollian concept': the conquering of sense 'as the double sense or direction of the surface' (Deleuze, 2017:10–11). My making of these prints is in some ways continuation or extension; though in others a reversal, or return to earlier ways of being. Whilst the techniques and the appearances are akin to those of *cosmic magics*, the *superficial inversions* prints are of another time and space; and I – as component factor of their coming into being – have also shifted in mine. I have torn muscles and my hair has grown; lost face, gained experience; relationships have altered and I have made new acquaintances with whom I hope to collaborate. The world has shifted and change is on the cards. I feel differently in the space and in my body, so the work I make has different resonance, with other forces behind similar movements. Recent experiences have impacted on my feelings, stirred-up affect from the depths of life, erupting sometimes unexpectedly on the surface, impacting on present actions. Yet I would also

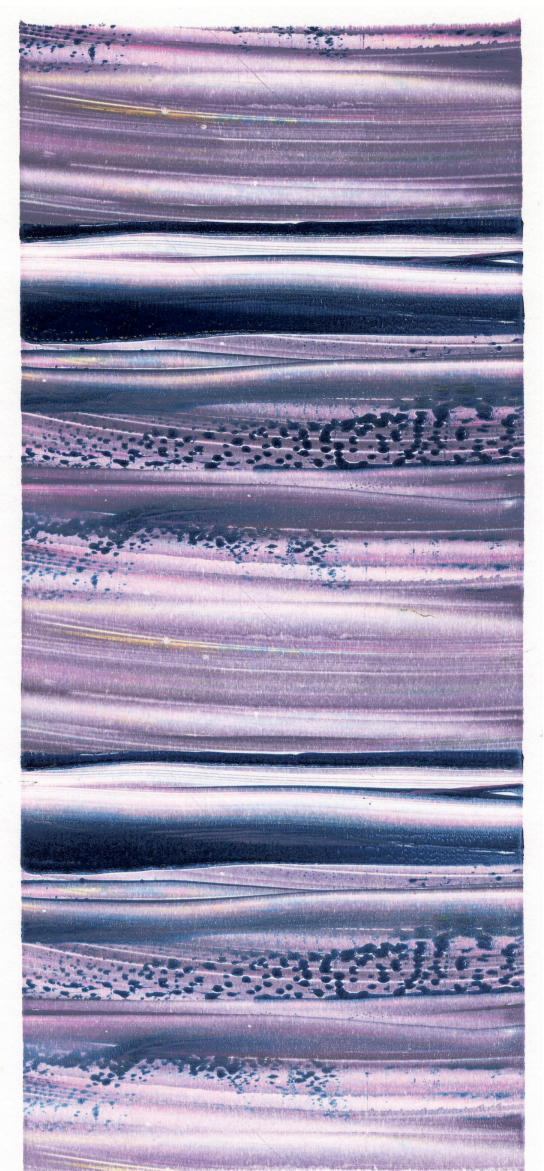


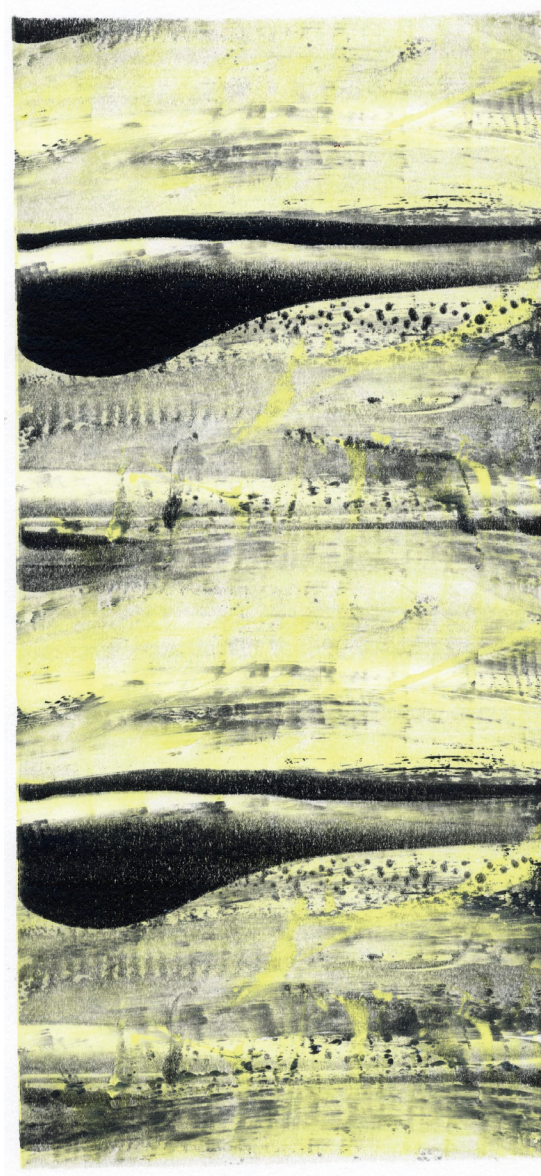


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superficial inversions 197





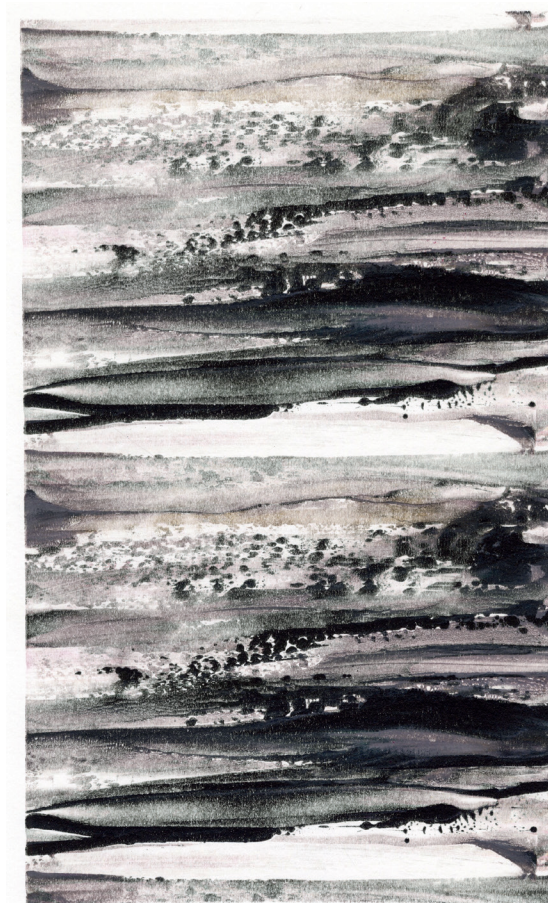
suggest that intense experience-feelings dissolve in affective depth, becoming (in some sense) solution. The activated potential which 'solution' suggests, as that which may be channelled through a conduit or spout, resonates with my sense of myself, in my project, now that I am 'writing-up'. Whether all the elements of my thesis are evident, I have a sense of the direction I can take in completing it; which gives me a new sense of self in the course of the study. These various factors relate to the word 'Sense' in the title of Deleuze's book. In French, *Sens* is a term which has the English connotations of physical and emotional feeling, and of common or good sense, but can also be used to indicate direction: of travel, of attitude; a line to follow, or diverge from.

The superficial inversions BoW is inherently disparate, with variety of appearance as the cohesive feature. Colours range through the spectrum [beyond the selection shown here] with a wide variety of textural effect. Some of these prints are of surface quality rather than ink plasticity, where the paper or its grain is more overt aspect of the composition, or the ghost image from the roller taken back to almost watercolour luminosity. In others I have picked up the surface texture of some fabric sample, which crumples and pleats as the inked roller revolves across it, picking-up and echoing these resistances, just as it may the fabric's weave of warp and weft. Fabric is a feature of the Foundation printroom (for the Technical Manager has a background in Costume), so rolls salvaged from industry move around the space, their patterns, stripes and colours subconsciously informing my making experience. My occasional turn to fabric in this printmaking is therefore natural in these circumstances, though atypical for paper-based printmaking; and another complication to contend with. Ink on textile always behaves in a different fashion than when on the smooth glass surface of a block, for fabric is disobedient, slippery, gathering and puckering, interrupting superficial continuity of ink on my roller with the noise of flecks of thread. This can be infuriating, when what is not visible on the textured-inked roller screams-



out of the subsequent print on paper, in spite of efforts taken to control textural effect. Woven material is another medium, with its own constitution, behaviours and demands. Constructed from a huge variety of threads or fibres, there are myriad process for forming the material; and each of these variables will effect its texture and movement. Beyond this dis-constancy, even, the wrong side of a length of fabric is an intriguing counterpoint to the right side. Sometimes the pattern is inverted, sometimes the construction is manifest, its textures and disruptive ability more pronounced. Indeed, the reverse is often far more interesting, and generally unseen, concealed from view.

The notion of 'inversion' is far more complex than it might initially appear, with scientific, psychological, musical, mathematical as well as philosophical renderings, but I am intending it in the first instance to refer to the overlay of a further pass of the roller across the image plane. Scaling-up the prints – endeavour I began in the wake of consideration of *cosmic magics* – allowed me to recognise the polarity of these movements more acutely. Sometimes the overlay must follow that same attraction, but in other cases it should be reversed, so that the story begins and ends in both directions. The rhythms and intensities shift, with the light or depending on the perspective of focus. Sometimes there is no second pass, for the first 'just works'. My decision-making is visually, affectively intuitive, for when I can tune-in to the work and perceive its frequencies, then I can feel what it needs. The quiet space which begat this BoW allowed me to 'be with' many prints simultaneously. Three hanging racks have capacity for 108 back-to-back (otherside-to-otherside) so being able to hold the developing collection in some degree of consciousness as I worked, provided opportunity for a considered development. One of these monoprints may have echoes of another; which in its own right will have effected a different one and lead to another. (Are they mono prints; or duoprints or trioprints, now?). Just as any BoW, '[t]he many become one, and are increased by one'





as visual cues suggest other possibilities (Whitehead, 1985:21). Each scraping of the block-plane matrix might provide grounds for a roller pass to pick up that articulation of ink-in-process, potentially augmenting something or prompting fresh exploration in a further print: any number of relations or beginnings. Deleuze allows me to see this as 'the simultaneity of a becoming whose characteristic is to elude the present ... [the essence of which is] to move and pull in both directions at once' (Deleuze, 2017:1).

In this – the first of his series of paradoxes, that of 'pure becoming' – Deleuze highlights Carroll's work in activating sense (an activation already immanent) as slippery, reversible, flowing. The sense of a print, how it is, what it needs, is within the making of the print; not given but emergent. Therefore as maker I am in-relation with the prints-in-process, effected by them as they by me, feeling-through interrelationship. The feeling of making is intensity, as struggle of endeavour and sensory assemblage. In the context of the way in which this BoW is developing, I might consider these making effects as 'events' (ibid:5). Emanating from creative block, as my practice does, the poignancy of this making-feeling is particular; and another paradox. From a position of no-work I generate too-much; and *superficial inversions* currently numbers around 250 A3-format prints. If I was unable to start, I am reluctant to stop, though sometimes I (or the printing actions) am halted when the plug is pulled. For expedient Completion of the thesis I should not be making more work, but rather cutting words from my 'draft'; yet in order to be able to pare down to what is necessary for the argument I feel an acute need to produce more words and images. Just one more; and so another counterpoint ... The work I am doing feels critical, as key to articulating my practice, now tantalisingly within reach though still slipping beyond my grasp. That my creative practice seems determined to continue outside and beyond the demarkation of the project is perhaps inevitable, since (I have grounds to argue that) even halted practice is ongoing, interchangeably active and passive. My

research posits *creative block* itself as paradoxical: a problem which may also be taken (or channelled) as a strength, or power – which in turn is problematic. ‘The problematic power of paradox’ might be an alternate title, or subtitle, for my thesis. In relation to the work of paradox in the activity of pure becoming, as Alice finds her personal identity being contested (and again), Deleuze attests:

... personal uncertainty is not a doubt foreign to what is happening, but rather the objective structure of the event itself, insofar as it moves in two directions at once, and insofar as it fragments the subject following this double direction. Paradox is initially that which destroys good sense as the only direction, but it is also that which destroys common sense as the assignation of fixed identities.

(Deleuze, 2017:3)

The second series in LS is the ‘Paradoxes of Surface Effects’, in which Deleuze begins to demonstrate the innovation of the Stoic philosophers, in their guise of presenting a new image of the philosopher. He credits them with reversing Platonism (and other ancient philosophy), ushering in more embodied, relational ways of thinking. Deleuze elaborates upon this argument in another previously-published paper, held in the Appendices to this thesis-book; in which he also identifies Plato himself as perhaps pointing out the way toward this reversal (Deleuze, 2017:265–6). Pursuing, tracking, pushing (or taking) something like a concept to its limits – which is what the philosopher does – means that at some point one will reach the lip of the abyss, thereby becoming obliged to peer over to see ... the other side? In this earlier paper, he is exploring the concept of the simulacrum, as false, disobedient – even demonic – pretender to the Platonic Idea (though pursued by Plato). This is pertinent thought also for a becoming artist, who sees the resemblance of dissimilarity in other artists’ work; who aspires to overcome the structuralising power of ‘higher’ examples – those which demarcate art-world hierarchies; who crave novelty. Models of practice are helpful to consider, but largely so they can be turned against or disobeyed, for there to be any creative

advance. In visual practice such encounters and slides away-from are rendered in plain sight, acting-out what we might think of as ‘discourse’; though more textual counterpoints occur both in philosophy and the dramaturgy of the novel. The becoming of Alice, growing and shrinking, inquiring and arguing, constantly at risk of losing her head, is an adventure which does not take place Underground – as Carroll discovers through his methodology of writing this story (which began as a tale conjured-up and narrated over the course of a boat trip down the river); and therefore he shifted the original title of its first book. Wonderland is the ground we traverse, and Carroll’s eponymous researcher slips, slides and stumbles through a series of problematic encounters (in some senses humorous, in others grave), questioning reality in ‘the first great *mis en scène* of the paradoxes of sense’ (ibid:xi). Hers are not the explorations of depth, for the events and paradoxes which constitute *Alice* take place about the surface.

Along with being innovators of paradox, it is the Stoics who Deleuze credits for cleaving and dismembering ‘the causal relation’, bringing about a ‘radical inversion’ which reverses Platonism and acknowledges the ‘event’ (Deleuze, 2017:6–7). Events, as effects between bodies, ranging over the frontier between beings and concepts, allow simulacra to achieve their activating potential of youthful (novel) transmutation. In my project, this might be the paradoxical rendering of *creative block* as generative solution. But such reversals (and discoveries) may occur when a search for some depth of meaning becomes appreciation of that which happens on the surface, that is, *events*: crystals that grow on the edges (ibid:9). It is not Deleuze’s project here to turn to ‘process’, since he is primarily concerned with showing the shift in dualisms which this Ancient philosophy allows the modern novelist to think with. Yet in the Stoic operation and its ‘discovery’ of incorporeal, surface effects, that which was consigned to the depths, buried in the hierarchical categorisation of Ideation, is freed to play out across the surface: like playing cards indulging in a game of



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hedgehog croquet. The event, as the actual occasion, seems to have a deeply-hidden meaning, which the thinker pursues with all their wiles. Yet as Deleuze observes in Carroll, the conceptual personae of March Hare and Mad Hatter give way to '*card figures* which have no thickness. One could say that the old depth having been spread out became width' (ibid). Whilst a PhD thesis sets out to constitute a deep-dive focussed on a particular point, the process of a PhD is a wide-ranging operation which covers much conceptual ground, engaging with many bodies, their causes and their effects, and the events that emanate from these relations. The work of ongoing practice, of generation and contemplation, of following lines of entangled arguments whether or not their limits, peering over the edges of understandings, means that occasionally one discovers the crystals of unlimited becoming growing in the fissures. Perhaps it is the practice of making prints which makes width of such pretence at depth:

... the first secret of the stammerer or the left-handed person: no longer to sink, but to slide the whole length in such a way that the old depth no longer exists at all, having been reduced to the opposite side of the surface. By sliding, one passes to the other side, since the other side is nothing but the opposite direction. If there is nothing to see behind the curtain, it is because everything is visible, or rather all possible science is along the length of the curtain. It suffices to follow it far enough, precisely enough, and superficially enough, in order to reverse sides and to make the right side become the left, or vice-versa.

Deleuze, 2017:9–10

A printmaking week has become three; with another to come. The *superficial inversions* BoW has expanded, gone back on itself and turned corners in its ongoing revolutions. Whilst the end of my project looms on the horizon!; the field-plane (or is it a pool, or pond or bog?) seems wider than it ever has been, with further possibilities bubbling-up. So I stake claim on this marshy ground to width as conceptual breadth, rather than focussed depth in my thesis. However, such expansiveness will be plotted as lines of

creative movement: written, drawn-out or extended so that they may be followed to their existing limit, as convergence: an articulation of sense. Just as my certainty about my work / practice develops, any self confidence regarding my creative status is challenged. My project requires these simultaneities as elements of impure becoming: waters muddied by the silt churned up through the revolutionary motions of practice. Yet with an appropriate angle mediated by turn of the wrist (which is sometimes a quite-wrong angle of awkwardness, to enable slippage and slide, the curve of an arc; or something more queer, like a kink), and the chance element of favourable circumstances, a stone may be skimmed across the skin of a body of water, bouncing and rippling. At some point it will reach its limit of momentum in that direction, descending through that body to the counter-side of the surface.



Solution



The chōra that I am presenting in my thesis is a variation.⁴² Extant themes of this enigmatic concept are present in my rendering, although my focus has a particular slant: that of consideration of creative practice, and the processes thereof. In this endeavour, I have responded to motifs in other depictions which resonate with me, from perspective on my practice – that includes reading, writing and thinking, education, making print works, and disparate collaborations. So amidst this set of text blocks there are evocations of other pieces of work (both those of others and my own), whether overtly referenced or repeated, more obliquely suggested or unapparent in this context. My intention here is to indicate that this particular line of enquiry exists within a wider cannon of interpretations, some of which are more pertinent than others to my present effort. The body of work in relation to chōra is vast, and in its own senses amorphous. My work on this score must be incomplete and inconclusive.

Fluid definitions

Reading and thinking with other positions on the idea, 'so difficult of explanation and dimly seen'(Plato, and Jowett, 2021 1349), from whichever angle it is viewed in the *Timaeus* or thereafter, compounds awareness that any attempt to definitively define what chōra means would be folly. Notwithstanding his suggestions regarding spacetime (1933: 192–3), Whitehead might suggest any such reification as constituting 'the fallacy of misplaced concreteness' (1928:64), an intellectual tendency to claim or explain; and extension of binary or subject-predicate thinking. Still, from my position somewhere outside the ongoing arguments of academia,⁴³ it is a particularly useful concept, with application for reconceptualisation. As I have expressed,

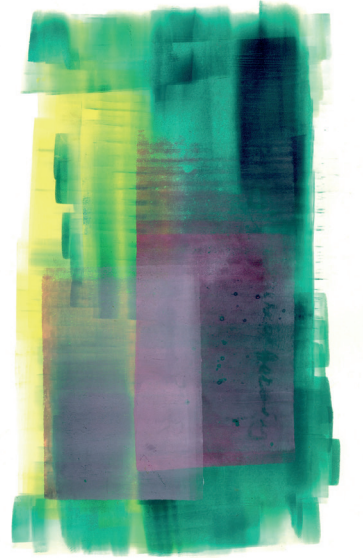
42. Many others before me have responded to the notion of chōra (by whichever term is preferred) and from various disciplinary perspectives: mine is another take on the theme. Although I am not a musician, an allusion to musicality seems contextually apposite, for there is a (hauntingly) lyrical quality to the idea of something beyond physical form but yet participating, formally or informally, depending on our perspective or qualification, in so much of what happens or is experienced in the world. In some renditions, chōra suggests musico-mathematical qualities of tempo, rhythm and meter as effects of its modulation. Another set of musical variations are those of Elgar, around the theme that may (or may not be) 'enigma' (Marshall A. Portnoy, 1985). On this line of flight though, if I were to liken my sense of chōra to music, it would be to freeform, improvised jazz: as the emergent, speculative soundscape of this very moment – music in-and-of its process of creation.

43. Whilst a PhD is an academic qualification, and I am nominally part of the institution (by dint of student Registration and employment), my positionally has shifted during the course of my study – in spite of the research; as a direct result of the politics – though 'change' can be considered a chōric dimension. My relationship with Education has altered during this time. I now perceive academia as akin to polis, and sometimes myself as inhabiting (or even haunting) liminal, marginal spaces at its periphery, becoming adjacent to it. Yet here is another meaning of chōra: as that space outside the confines of the city, where creative thinking occurs, much as among the orators of the *Timaeus* (e.g. Sallis, 2020:24).

in descriptions of pedestrianised motorways thronging to hip-hop samba (Béijodromo, p. 148) or canal basin foregrounds repurposed for raising love-mountains (*My creative practice ...* p. 19), I am inclined to see the bringing-together of bodies or material for some 'creative activity', whether by design or accident – along with the congregation gathered, and the space or event of activity, and feelings engendered and extended through making – as chōric.

By this thinking I recognise the chōric event as 'of potential', whereby it matters less whether anything seems to occur – in terms of recognisable outcome – than that something is occurring or has taken (or been given) place. Or indeed, that some change has occurred, giving place to further potential occurrence. In this troubled and troubling world, a quarter of the way through the twenty-first century, my faith and hope has to be invested in the potential of creativity: which will impact upon the various actors of an event in disparate ways at diverse times. People may come to be affected by something we have taken part in *after* the event. We may learn its value for us personally, or find divergent, disjunctive connection in something other. The 'nature' of chōra is that it is conceivable, unknowable, but yet it affects. We may not quite grasp the meaning of our engagement; though we will be in some way transformed by it. From the perspective of creative practice, this ought to result in some form of creative response, whether now or later. The role of chōra in this dynamic might be seen as a 'conditioning', by which some form of 'making' can occur.

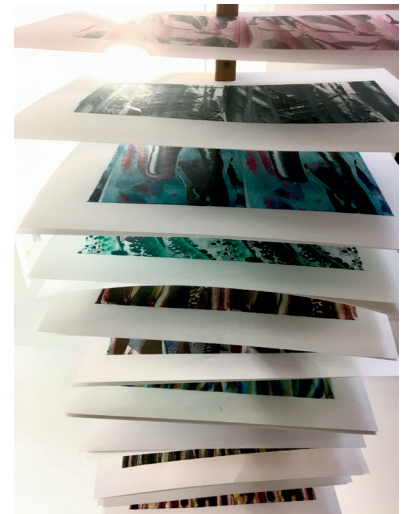
My claim of the relevance of chōra to creative practice is simultaneously large and vague. Although speculation, it is derived from personal experience, of 'being with' this concept for a duration and trying to locate its sense amidst diverse research practices. At various points during this period of study, it has seemed to chime with my particular circumstances, such as the intensities of making work in the printroom. The block which commences this set (*A chōra [of the manifold]*, p. 107) identifies my appreciation of this space for making and details some of the



processes that occur about it. Feelings of making, and variations of the 'space of making' are relayed in the previous set [*Practice*], but reflective observations concerning more particular moments are constrained. Over the years of my study, exploring practice in response to creative block, I have generated a huge amount of material (as creative response): not all of which is relevant to articulation of my argument. But the affect I associate with creative practice – and therefore with *creative block* – is likewise an aspect of my understanding / appreciation of chōra: as a state of 'being-with' or process of 'working-through', which may yet involve stasis, anxiety or despair. The very ambivalence of the concept relates to affective feelings that swirl around making work: perhaps simultaneously boring, thrilling and mistaken. Rather like practice, *block* and creativity, I have come to regard chōra not as 'this or that' but – or rather, as well as – 'and another'.

Grounds

The multiplicity and polyvocality and ambivalence that I associate with this manifold concept, is indicative of the sheer mass of uncertainty with which I have become more accustomed during this PhD period of my life and learning. Elsewhere I have written about the quagmire, which I propose as useful means to demarcate the territory of my thesis and requisite claim of contribution to knowledge. For a quagmire is uncertain, marshy ground. It is ground in-solution: offering some appearance of solidity that may yet give way underfoot, for its composition is more fluid than it appears. My suggestion of 'solution' wryly acknowledges the problem(atics) of chōra, but is more excited by the mixture of solutes and solvent, and the motility of the resultant combination. Therefore I should also acknowledge the metaphor of 'mixing bowl' in the *Timaeus*, in which the Demiurge combines the leftover stuff from 'his' creation of the physical cosmos in order to fashion humanity (Plato, B42). All these likenesses are useful to my creative conceptions, providing material suggestions: just



as the 'matrix' does – applicable by extension to ink spread out, picked up and applied (as matrix; to matrix) by the roller-matrix. Each description, appropriation or suggestion provides material to work with, to extend approach to investigation, and generate further output. Each is a trace, to be felt, followed or worked over. A solution has an effect of solvent on a problem; and will consequently seep into available space.

Claiming chōric conditions

At some point in the span of a PhD or other practice research project, it is advisable for the practice to be halted, in order that its resultant thesis can be written-up. Terms and their ground should be defined, that arguments can be incisively constructed. Within these text blocks, my current appreciation of chōra is articulated, as informed by and traced in the experiences of research. The processes of writing (including for example, Kristevan 'signifiance') have afforded me greater insight. This enhances my sense of chōra in and around creative process and the practice(s) of *creative block*. These processes channel the research towards some form of completion, and submission of a claim to novel appreciation, to be examined and critiqued. Regardless of any partiality from particular angle of practice, I am arguing for recognition of chōra as a 'condition of making'.

Challenges

Aspects of my claim are that chōra is queer, fluid, mobile, motile, uncertain – even paradoxical; and that such 'otherness' is key to its creative value. Although it might not be absolutely apprehended, it can be discussed, utilised and responded to, by a creative practitioner engaged by its potentiality. Just as with the vagaries of the internet (as space), or the gathering of persons or materials for creative activity, as a sense of 'making-condition', chōra might offer proponents affordances: as opportunities for novel discovery, interconnection or other

creative process. As medium of intercommunication, chōra allows expression through other modality (as I have done throughout this set, in responding to the thinking I have discovered through research); to meet one another in different spaces; to interact with stuff and make meanings ... though these may be contested or declaimed quite wrong and contestable. From my experience of this project, 'becoming quite wrong' is more valuable than staying safely static, fearing movement, or maintaining *status quo*. It opens-up space, of uncertainty, for the (fluid, ongoing) work of research practice. Therefore I will run the risk of presenting an inconclusive argument. It should elicit questioning or other challenge, thereby activating solution: by which to lubricate the process of creative advance.





PROCESS

Process thinking through Whitehead, Deleuze and Guattari

Q. What do you do with (might we make of) creative block, then?

A. Process it.

Re-introduction

Throughout this manuscript and across my wider creative practice I mention 'process'. In this block I will articulate my appreciation of the concept of process and its role in this project. As a way of seeing things, or approach to being in the world, 'process thinking' allows me to make sense of experience; sometimes by making work. Sensitivity to process-at-work (or play) in the eventfulness of existence, frees me from teleological expectation of arriving at any conclusive answer, focussing instead on its ongoing-ness. The notion of 'solution' indicates my recognition that a more fluid attitude to the events of the material of life, affords increased scope for creative response. My intention here is to articulate some of the ways in which process might be apprehended, as a means to reconceptualising and activating problems – such as that of *creative block*; and thereby of our creative practises.

Process thinking

In an increasingly disturbed, posthuman world (e.g. Braidotti, 2015), an openly generative and nurturing perspective seems the crucial one to foster. A process-approach to living might embrace acceptance of not-knowing, or becoming quite-wrong, along with openness to chance discovery, as ways of being with difference. Through such receptiveness, the 'community of the world'

which Whitehead describes (1933:192), might be encouraged to encounter, include and extend diversity. The ‘sense’ that we can find in more motile (e.g. Kristeva, 1984:25), active ways of being involves adaptability to shifting circumstances, which might help its peoples to navigate change – and crucially in terms of practice, to express experiences of complexity.

Broadly-speaking, process thinking offers a different mode of comprehending existence to the ‘either/or’ of any binary. Philosophically both Being and Becoming, dissolving idealism and realism, process is around and beyond any givenness; whereby present, future and past all have parts to play in reality, actuality, life – however one views such metaphysics. In my particular conception (which I will further contextualise), process is situated in the individual body of (practitioner) experience, and extended out into the world through our interconnections. It thereby draws upon and adds to constellations of experience, through our networks of intercommunication. Process philosophy, as another rendition, involves the multi- and the poly-ness of things, factors or feelings in the course of events. It might be seen as the ‘third space’ that (in some sense) is constituted by the ambiguity of chōra: as that approach to perception or bodily ontology which is fundamentally unclear, evading any firm grip.

‘Process thinking’ is my preferred terminology for this set of ideas that I draw from the texts of Whitehead, Deleuze and Guttari, among those others already mentioned (or beyond the structural scope of this thesis).¹ Just as it is problematic to posit chōra as a concept, arguably positioning it in the realm of intellect – and thus of mind, any philosophically-related language risks the suggestion of purely cerebral activity. Yet through engagement with the writing of these thinkers, I have recognised how very practical their philosophies may be / become, for reading, thinking practitioners.² Within the meshwork of my thesis, predicated on practice, I am asserting that any creative practice involves thought, action, mind, body and soul – or feeling, or

1. Process thinking is a sort-of shorthand for a constellation of thinkers and their work, which I have considered at various stages of my project. Since it is employed variously, an extended quote from Ajit Nayak and Robert Chia, writing in the arena of organisational theory, is a useful means of situating it:

Process philosophical thinking invites us to think about individuals, organizations and social entities in terms of ceaseless change, emergence and self-transformation. It urges us to recognize that what really exist are ‘not things made but things in the making’ (James, [A Pluralistic Universe] 1925, p.263) ... What process philosophical thinking does is to alert us to attend more to the transformational process from the possible to the actual so that each instance of organization is viewed as an exceptional accomplishment in its own right. In this fundamental sense, process philosophical thinking privileges process over end-states, becoming over being; it is an intellectual orientation that accords primacy to ‘becoming and change – the origination, flourishing, and passing of the old and the innovative emergence of ever-new existence’ (Rescher, [Process Metaphysics] 1996, p.28; cited in Nayak. and Chia, 2011: 281–2).

2. In the opening pages of What is Philosophy?, their final text together, Deleuze and Guattari situate their questioning of philosophy:

We had never stopped asking this question previously, and we already had the answer, which has not changed: philosophy is the art of forming, inventing, and fabricating concepts. But the answer not only had to take note of the question, it had to determine its moment, its occasion, and circumstances, its landscapes, and personae, its conditions and unknowns. It had to be possible to ask the question ‘between

affect (whatever the preferred phraseology), as modes or factors of intercommunication. Practice requires engagement with the material available to the practitioner; amidst some space of making. This is one of the reasons for the crucial consideration of chōra in practice.³

In my own particularity of experience, a significant aspect of the period in which I did not generate plastic work was that I feared I could not think. Feeling blocked was in part frustration with my own output: whilst visually-engaged, as response to my observations of London (as a constantly-evolving metropolis), the work I was making before I stopped, was not informed by either theory or what I might now term philosophical discussion. Although a factor of my undergraduate experience was refusal to subscribe to what I perceived as an ‘art school cliché’ – of practice that had to be justified by textual analysis to attain any contextual credibility – perversely this rejection brought about disenchantment with my own practice.⁴ However, a subsequent opportunity to make work twelve years later, ignited the reconnection that evolved into this current study.

During my research, process thinking, which overtly recognises the interrelationship of becoming, has imbued my working process (i.e. my practice) with a focus on the making. Through the various machinations or stumblings of practice research, I became aware that *sense of process* holds particular value for me in this project, as expression of my interest in creative practice and the concept of *creative block*; which arguably informs the ‘research question’ I have been moving around.⁵ This realisation occurred in part through the making of plastic work, in which forms (formations) of process may be visualised. Observing the marks of making traced in the work – even as the work – is encounter becoming rendered plastic. Therefore the larger BoWw I have produced during the project may be grouped as ‘Process Prints’;⁶ and as a significant factor of the research practice. These involve making techniques I have named ‘Rollerdance’, ‘Rollerwave’,

friends’, as a secret or a confidence, or as a challenge, when confronting the enemy, and at the same time to reach that twilight hour when one distrusts even the friend. It is then you say, ‘That’s what it was, but I don’t know if I really said it, or if I was convincing enough.’ And you realize that having said it or been convincing hardly matters because, in any case, that is what it is now (Deleuze and Guattari, 2015:2).

In my own thesis my intention is to demonstrate how the fabrication of the concept of *creative block* allows me to make plastic work and develop my conception of creative practice. My philosophical turn has been to find means by which to access and mediate the concept through process thinking – in which chōra functions variously, including as ‘medium of intercommunication’ (Whitehead, 1933:172).

3. In *Adventures of Ideas*, on the chapter titled *Cosmologies*, Whitehead articulates:

The Receptacle, as discussed in the *Timæus*, is the way in which Plato conceived the many actualities of the physical world as components in each other’s natures. It is the doctrine of the immanence of Law, derived from the mutual immanence of actualities. It is Plato’s doctrine of the medium of intercommunication. (1933:172).

In the subsequent chapter, *Science and Philosophy*, he expands this point contextually:

... a yet more general philosophical concept, namely, the general interconnectedness of things, which transforms the manifoldness of the many into the unity of the one. We speak in the singular of *The Universe*, of *Nature*, of *φύσις* which can be translated as *Process*. There is the one all-embracing fact which is the advancing history of the one Universe. This community of the world,

‘Ghost Strata’ and ‘Risoller’, for examples:⁷ techniques which are deviations from accepted printmaking practices, much as hacks or dodges, and so which are an aspect of my contribution to practice knowledge. This work has played out in tandem with my scholarship, at times taking precedence and at others being sidelined, but very often a means by which I have been able to spend time grappling with the thoughts: both my own and those of others.

In some situations, perhaps when the environment presents chōric conditions, with a certain intensity of focus, the rhythms of printmaking practice co-align with process thinking and I find unexpected means of access to concepts I have been engaging with in the literature. It was for this reason that the document I wrote for PhD Confirmation was titled ‘My conceptual tool is a roller’. Following an extended break from the printroom, I return to it in the last stages of writing-up, in part because in my current perception of practice, this interplay has become a vital aspect. So I must also note that this space of the printroom, often described in terms of chōra in my thesis, has another chōric property: that of the interpersonal relationship. The space is only available by way of negotiation, which is at times overt but mainly tacit. In my understanding the making of space is a feeling-through process; and my printmaking space becomes afforded via interplay of various elements (societies of entities) feeling one another and concurring. In the conception of chōra which my research has developed, space is created as a result of collaborative endeavour, whether between persons, things or other events. Finding time in printroom space, as working environment as I write this thesis, reminds me that the writing of chōra involves the spreading, application and layering of ink, through matrix onto paper. My conceptual tool of roller picks up and lays down through the course of its revolutions, overlapping, offsetting and extending.

which is the matrix for all begetting, and whose essence is process with retention of connectedness— this community is what Plato terms The Receptacle ... (ibid:192).

4. My experience (as an undergraduate fine art student) of the requirement to attend Contextual Studies lectures, was that failing to understand frames of reference resulted in feelings of stupidity and subsequent disengagement. The art books in the library likewise seemed written in languages I found hard to penetrate. Becoming aware of the ‘cultural capital’ of such languages in learning contexts is an aspect of my endeavour to make my own work broadly accessible. Whilst arts practitioners may have difficult ideas to work with, and need to use technical terms, these can be unpacked, through efforts of articulation. If there is value in text, educators ought to aim towards sharing this; or allowing ways in. Perhaps analysis must be ‘felt’ as much as ‘thought’. As a member of the EPRG, I suggest that creative practice has techniques to offer. Throughout this thesis, I have endeavoured to make sense of the technicalities of the language I use.

5. As I mention at the start of this thesis, I have never been entirely committed to a particular ‘research question’. However, ‘How is *creative block* a concept?’ might be another way of articulating the concern which has informed this investigation.

6. I have written about these Process Prints at various stages during the research, annotating the making as rationale and activity, and reflecting on the effects. There are two examples now integrated into the thesis: in the Appendices: *superficial inversions* (p. 189) and *Risoller* (p. 271).

Chōric conditions / Practical Whitehead

The affect and physicality, that I have come to recognise as likewise essential factors in practical making, could be explored in further research; but this thesis concentrates on the recognition of chōric condition. By ‘chōric condition’ I mean that of ‘solution’, as motile interplay of thought action, affect, physicality, and so forth. This might also be seen as the ‘space of process’ indicated in the subtitle of my thesis; and is an aspect of the Doctoral School event that will conclude this project. My route to this broader recognition came from reading Whitehead, alongside discussions of Deleuze and Guattari with my Supervisors and in *The Art of Questioning* (a Doctoral Reading Group of practice researchers).⁸ Therefore I perceive these concepts, ideas, texts and practices as fundamentally interconnected. But although Deleuze and Guattari are often referred to across a span of creative practice research,⁹ Whitehead’s contributions have achieved less impact. One intention of my ongoing practice is to recognise the potential for creative practitioners in his corpus, since I contend that it has significant value. Very few of the papers given in the strand of Aesthetics at the 12th International Whitehead Conference (Brasilia, 2019) related to plastic practice on an accessible level; which is perhaps one of the reasons why such research remains so seemingly academic.

Arts and process

Process – whether considered as thinking or activity – is fundamental to creative practice. I am claiming that ideas are developed through process: informed by material and articulated sensorially. In such utility, process is itself diverse, personal (though also generalisable) practised, developed, rejected, rethought or reworked. In other words, there is no clear definition for ‘process’ in relation to practice, each utilisation covering a multiplicity of events, occurrences and intentions. Therefore

7. I will also add ‘*superficial inversion*’ to this list, since I have realised that beyond being the title of one of my BoW (p. 189), it also constitutes a printmaking technique for me. This Process Prints technique also utilises the [printmaking] roller as a matrix, but here to directly explore the affordances of printing ‘surface’ in the making of prints. One of my Process Prints techniques, *superficial inversion*’ involves rotating a print I have already made 180° and applying another pass of the roller – generally with a different configuration of ink marks on it. The intensity of ink application begins at the point of contact for the first revolution of the print, becoming lessened in subsequent revolutions, and so something of an inversion of the previous layer.

8. As I edit this document, the Institutional plug is being pulled on this resource: significant event. However, my peer group (all of whom are creative educators in some sense; and whose development as a ‘group’ has been another unexpected outcome of my research experience) will find means to transform and re-catalyse it.

9. In part this is because those thinkers wrote about art. Deleuze in particular, conspicuously discussed the plastic arts, not least in such texts as *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation and Cinema* (1 and 2), as well as many papers and other writings expanding aesthetic theory.

I perceive it as a fairly useful, everyday term. Its very ubiquity renders it seemingly-irrelevant, or overlookable, as self-evident. It just ‘is’, creatively-speaking (and as implied by the activity of ‘practice’) – though I would argue that we consider process in some sense more than we might choose to acknowledge. Yet this project has allowed me to perceive the interrelationship of various considerations of ‘process’. In my understanding, via practice research, the (relatively) commonplace ‘process’ of arts practices bears significant relation to the process thinking outlined above. One intention of this block of text within my thesis, is to articulate the workings of such relation.

As a creative practitioner who generally operates through the practices and processes of printmaking, I am perhaps more inclined than many to remember the primacy of process in making work. Because printmaking involves many stages of preparation, prior to the relatively-swift taking of a print,¹⁰ these activities can be overtly recognised as the processes of making a print. Indeed, printmaking is sometimes regarded as a ‘process art’. Rather than (nominal) process art movement (e.g. *Process Art*, 2024), as approach whereby a making process is deliberately, conceptually overt (such as that with which Robert Morris: ‘maker of process-based, anti-object folds, tangles, and mounds of felt and thread waste’ [Lottery, 2021:77] is associated) this rather more derogatory appendage implies that printmaking relies on its array of tools and techniques to generate aesthetic effects.

A process-driven means of production insinuates lack of deeper conceptual intention, as those associated with the ‘fine arts’.¹¹ I speculate this conception is a reason for why, in artistic hierarchies, printmaking has been apt to relegation as a lesser discipline, seen as inferior to conceptual (though arguably equally processual) painting or sculpture or installation art. It may also be part of the reason for the nomenclature of ‘fine art printmaking’, presumably intended to distinguish it from more commercial or reprographic print disciplines, which have less ‘cultural capital’

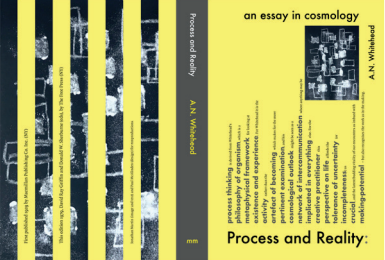
10. I recognise here that I am referring more to the production of an edition, and so the mechanics of reproduction; although in my own current practice, even monoprints are produced at speed.

11 This is difficult to ‘prove’, as largely anecdotal through experience; However, Catherine though my discussion of Catherine Abell’s text in *My creative practice* ... indicates the discourse to which I am referring. See pp. 24–5.

(Bourdieu, 1984). Yet anyone who makes any sort of print in or around the creative sphere (by which I mean those concerned, broadly, with creative practice), will be aware of the deep involvement of self and creative experience in the realisation of work. I would imagine such makers of print have also encountered aspects of detraction, whether from peers or associated others, since the ‘higher / lesser art form’ attitude reifies the sorts of binary thinking: which a process-approach could help to dissolve. In my own project and developing practice, I am aiming to integrate and celebrate thinking and making process(es), producing some form of ‘process art’ which opens-up space for thinking in and around making.

Whitehead’s Process Thinking

Alfred North Whitehead is regarded as the key twentieth-century proponent of process thinking (e.g. Emmett, 1966, Griffin 1982, Shaviro, 2015). His *magnum opus*, *Process and Reality* (1929/1985), is the most complete rendition of his philosophy, though as various commentators will attest, it may be more readily-accessed through subsequent texts such as *Adventures of Ideas* or *Modes of Thought*, as more illustrative (or applied) than the intensive technicality of *Process and Reality*. However, amidst the denseness and circling back around to approach from other angles, to extend and expand the concepts he is presenting, there are sudden moments of clarity, for example: ‘the actual world is a process; and that process is the becoming of actual entities’ (Whitehead, 1985:23). To summarise is to do his vast work disservice – and runs the Whiteheadian risk of ‘fallacy’. Yet although exposition of its depth and span is beyond the scope of my thesis, in this context it is incumbent upon me to clarify why I am appropriating aspects of his thinking in my quest to articulate *creative block*.¹² My abstractions are in some sense violent, since I am selecting elements from the greater ‘scheme of ideas’ of *Process and Reality* – subtitled ‘an essay in cosmology’ – to express my own renderings and particular practises (*ibid*:xiv). Yet



12. I will restrict this introduction to a limited section of the greater speculative system (i.e. Whiteheadian metaphysics), that I deem most vital to indicate my reason for arguing its applicability to my thesis, rather than as contribution to philosophical scholarship. From my extensive reading of secondary sources, I believe there is a case for a fuller consideration of creative practice (as I understand or experience it more broadly) in relation to Whitehead’s ‘categorical scheme’ – which might be perceived in his terms ... ‘applicable’ and ‘adequate’; though it is a larger project (Whitehead, 1985:3). Depending on the ways in which this present response is received and reviewed, the work I have already begun on this may inform subsequent research development.

I claim justification, not least because Whitehead-the-educator is mindful of his own disciplinary partiality, so invites readers (initially an audience, of the Gifford Lecture series in a University of Edinburgh lecture hall, that became *Process and Reality*), to pick up his suggestions and expand them through their own causes. As is the case with all its (so-called) proponents I am citing here, Whitehead doesn't refer to process thinking *per se*, naming the system he advances 'the philosophy of organism'. However, he signals Process as its ontological priority (e.g. *ibid*:18–20). Rather than focussing on substance, i.e. what something is, it is the ways through which things become (whether entities or occasions), that are fundamental in a Whiteheadian approach. The idea which underscores this process of reality is 'creativity'.¹³ This is a significant and complex notion in Whitehead, underscoring the movement *Process and Reality*; but essentially concerns the ways in which the events of life occur: those 'ordinary, stubborn facts of daily life' (*ibid*:xiii). These facts are known as 'actual entities' or 'actual occasions', which the philosophy of organism accounts for (as of process rather than 'stuff'); constitutionally outlined in the ninth Category of Explanation:

(ix) That *how* an actual entity becomes constitutes *what* that actual entity is ... Its 'being' is constituted by its 'becoming.' This is the 'principle of process.' (*ibid*:23)

conrescence and prehension

To present his metaphysical systematisation of the everyday, though a radical refiguring of accepted perceptions, Whitehead employs technical terms, which are appropriations (rather than neologisms) that evade easy grasp.¹⁴ I would speculate that confusion is an aspect of the reading experience of any non-philosopher attempting to figure-out the philosophy of organism; but many commentators with greater contextual appreciation note this (generally in their Introductions). Indeed, some of

13. I feel it is essential to at least note in my thesis (in which this concept plays significant role, if not overtly reckoned with) that Whitehead may be credited with coining the term 'creativity' ... (c.f. Meyer, 2005; Ford, 1978). This might be a point of relevance in any extension of my research concerning Whitehead with regard creative practice.

14. Whitehead has much to say on the subject of language, its usage and misuse – which leads towards the fallacies he names ('misplaced concreteness'; 'dogmatic certainty'; and 'perfect dictionary'). I will

these texts I have consulted in my own efforts to grapple with it, echo frustration in his insistence on more 'neutral' terminology' (Litman, 1947:235). Fortunately two of these terms most pertinent to my own presentation in this thesis, 'prehension' and 'conrescence', are reasonably accessible concepts for a creative practitioner.

Conrescence might be thought of as the coming-together of factors, the result of which make up the actualities of life in the world. This phenomenon seems likely to be something many creative practitioners will appreciate, through experience: as that point at which a project (or component of it) somehow *gels*. In an earlier phase of this research, I have been apt to think of conrescence as 'the moment of reveal' where the blankets are pulled back and the print is lifted off (whatever matrix or block has functioned in that particular printmaking event). Thinking beyond, or around that very particular creative moment, my sense now encompasses all manner of other occasions in which the material of existence fuses in novel ways, whether consciously recognisable or only subsequently apprehended.¹⁵ Conrescence is probably a key creative activity (in my overtly 'practical' application, in the context of an urge to make); and one in which chōra as medium of intercommunication is readily conceivable, in its guise of 'matrix ... of becoming' (Whitehead, 1933:192). Together-ness, or 'the advance from disjunction to conjunction, creating a novel entity other than the entities given in disjunction' is also Whitehead's 'ultimate metaphysical principle' and thus an aspect of the relevance of this thinking in creative practice, where 'the production of novel togetherness' is also fundamental (Whitehead, 1985:21).

Prehension meanwhile, can be seen as the activity by which the conrescing actuality or event brings elements from its own universe of potentiality into itself (the spectrum of possibilities available to it, as a 'thing' coming into existence).¹⁶ A becoming-actual entity or occasion has some agency, in that it 'feels' the data

constrain discussion to a line from the early discussion of *Process and Reality*: '... no language can be anything but elliptical, requiring a leap of the imagination to understand its meaning in its relevance to immediate experience...' (Whitehead, 1985:13). He goes on to expand on this with regard the language(s) of philosophy:

An old established metaphysical system gains a false air of adequate precision from the fact that its words and phrases have passed into current literature ... When we trust these verbal statements and argue as though they adequately analysed meaning, we are led into difficulties which take the shape of negations of what in practice is presupposed (*ibid*).

Such 'excessive trust in linguistic phrase[ology]' leads inevitably towards existent subject-predicate logic, which is that which the philosophy of organism, as process thinking, aims to dissolve (*ibid* 12–13). I am arguing that 'practice' is a means of negotiating some of this thinking.

15. The term 'apprehend' is my preference in this context, since it relates to 'prehension', the Whiteheadian term I will discuss presently. It pertains both to understanding and also to the notion of seizing and holding close.

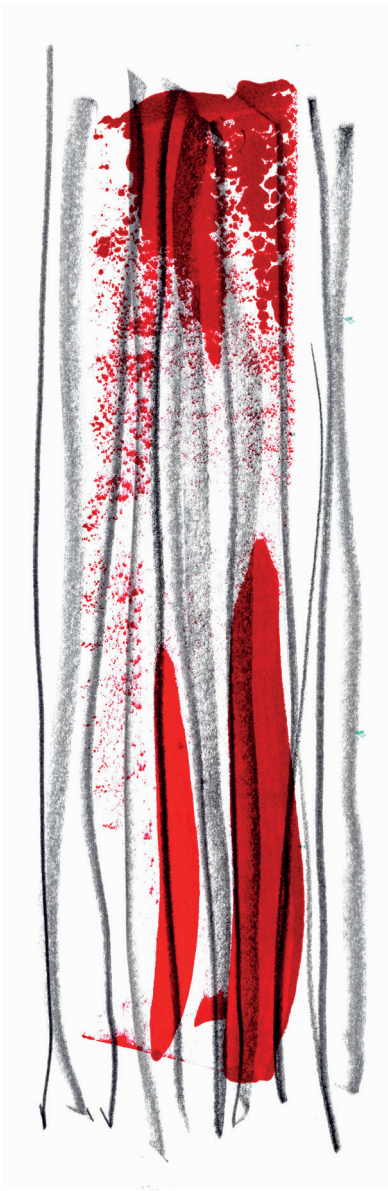
16. The processes in which these terms are situated in Whitehead are in the scheme of the philosophy of organism. This might be seen as ontological. However, my use of 'thing' here is problematic, since Whitehead is describing the ways in which actual entities or actual occasions occur, neither of which constitutes a 'thing' in the more commonly-used sense. Thing in this scheme may be better deemed as 'nexus'.

available to it, and makes a selection from those datum to draw into 'itself'. Many things might occur in this moment of becoming, given the vastness of possibility in becoming (data in the world); but what actually *does* is resultant of what particularities happen to be prehended. The role of chance is debatable here, but although I am not going to explore this element of creativity, I recognise it as a significant factor of consideration and therefore of process in this context. Whitehead mentions that consciousness may not necessarily be involved in prehension, suggesting that this vital process of creativity involves random selection (Whitehead, 1985::23). Yet 'Reason' is also assumed (Whitehead, 1953).

Perhaps it is more constructive (particularly in relation to my thinking regarding 'queerness' and 'fluidity') to regard prehension in terms of choice, or preference. In this notion of ongoing becoming, all that might be included is in some sense assessed and figured-with, as factors of creative decision-making. For there are differently-functioning prehensions: positive and negative species, operating along physical and conceptual poles. Although this might seem to imply some either/or binaries or hierarchical stratification, a vital point about prehensions is that they are relational even in their selectiveness. It is this relational-quality which underscores is the vitality of Whitehead's theory of prehensions. Whiteheadian cosmology aims to elucidate the interconnectedness of the universe is what he is seeking to elucidate in his cosmology.

Relations

The idea of interconnectedness is probably broadly accepted in the contemporary networked age. In a globalised, pandemic-ised, algorithmically surveilled world, we may be hyperaware of the impact of forces in other quarters or territories affecting life experience. The advent of big data and data mining practices, should remind us that isolated anonymity is not only unlikely but very hard to achieve. Beyond the impact of that world wide web



of internet, posthumanist, environmentalist thinking (e.g. Barad, 2007) recognises the ecosystems that sustain life on the planet are a complex enmeshment of interconnected forces. Social / scientific advances in the twentieth century have increased human beings' awareness of the complexity of relationships: perhaps importantly that they are not 'given' (in the sense of normatively preordained) but shift and morph, as a result of other factors in the constellation of experience. Philosophically, culturally, our relationships with those ideas of anthropoid self (Humanity's arrogant self-assertion) are challenged, as we become increasingly aware of human impact in the Anthropocene. Post-Enlightenment realisations are impacting on humankind's sense of its agency, in a world of ecological crisis and artificial intelligence.

In this generalised appraisal of the current state of things, my intention is to appreciate that Whitehead's suggestion of the ways in which actual entities 'feel' one another has important bearing on creative practices.¹⁷ I have discussed Whiteheadian 'feelings' elsewhere; another term he appropriates to explain the way in which material is prehended by a concrescing actual entity. As Isabelle Stengers has exemplified, it is fascinating to 'think with Whitehead' and to move with him,¹⁸ ranging over the histories of knowledges and understandings – and as in Stengers' work, to extend beyond Whitehead into one's own experience of histories and their developments. In this block, though, I will constrain the thoughts I take from Whitehead to those immediately pertinent to my own conceptions; whereby in the course of creative process, 'data' (as the material of life, in my reading) is felt by the actuality under construction.

Explaining his use of more 'neutral' terms, and their relationship to other philosophies he discusses, the 'ontological principle' of Whitehead's metaphysics is that everything comes from something; and exists as potential for something else:

Each actual entity is conceived as an act of experience arising out of data. It is a process of 'feeling' the many data, so as to absorb them into



17. 'Feeling is a vital process in Whitehead's philosophy of organism. See also *The feeling of a printroom*, p. 55. 'Creative practice' here is intended broadly, beyond the plastic.

18. Isabelle Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead: A Wild and Free Creation of Concepts* (2015). She begins this text with recourse to John Gardner's *Grendel* (1989), which itself is drawn from the epic poem *Beowulf*. Gardner had studied Whitehead, and utilised some of the philosopher's thoughts and words in the characterisations he develops in his novel.

the unity of one individual 'satisfaction.' Here 'feeling' is the term used for the basic generic operation from passing from the objectivity of the data to the subjectivity of the actual entity in question. (Whitehead, 1985:40).

Feeling is a 'positive prehension', where the decision is made by that becoming actual entity to include a particular datum in its concrescence. In my own context, I appreciate a resonance here. When making work a creative practitioner has their world of experience to consider. The data of this world is potentially useful: it might be variously drawn upon to inform some aspect of development. But in some sense or other, for whatever reason is currently our preoccupation or subconscious urge, particular elements are deemed more appropriate; and so integrated in the present work-activity. Whilst more- or less-consciously analysed, we may have 'a feeling about something' ...

creative advance into novelty

Thus Whiteheadian process thinking, with its invitation to consider becoming in terms of relational concerns, aligns with my own conceptions, derived from my experiences of making and not-making. The technicalities can be problematic, since perhaps rather like his observation of Plato with regard the Receptacle, 'he carefully varies his phrases' – which I take as Whitehead's way of allowing his thought to be variously reappropriated (Whitehead, 1933:192). Yet in reading (and rereading) it, a practitioner may find a sense of reassurance: that our stumblings-through might be mapped to some much larger framework, which somehow validates the experience, by contextualising it in the wider world of experience. Craving some form of interrelationship (particularly in a milieu where relationship is perceived to have value) and attempting to locate our work in the world, sense may be found in thinking which unpacks and extends process beyond the procedural or merely operational, to the ways in which things become for us.



Here I am asserting my creative right to be 'quite wrong' in my reading of the philosophy of organism.¹⁹ Whitehead's attempt to present a complete metaphysics in *Process and Reality* is essential, but yet, ontologically, it cannot have been conclusively finalised. Across his *oeuvre* I read the endeavour to justify his own positionality and claims (as these evolve) through various approaches and lenses; but also invitation for subsequent thinkers to pick up and reapply or remake.²⁰ So whilst I am aware of the flaws in my own assimilation of this thought, it nonetheless enhances my appreciation of what I am attempting to do: if perversely there is liberation in the structures I am worrying over in the practices of research. Such grappling with problems is an essential aspect of creativity, which does not occur in a vacuum. Finding new meaning(s) in the endeavour, whether through careful or chance observation or occasion is, to my mind, indicative of the 'creative advance into novelty': which is the ultimate ongoing ambition for a creative practitioner (Whitehead, 1985:28).

Concepts (and 'queer logics' of 'sense')

My intention in this thesis is to open-up the possibilities for rethinking and reworking material, as creative advance through which glimpses of novelty become apparent. For via identification of potential of its material, something may be made of *creative block*. I feel another resonance or proximity at play here: that of 'lines of flight' as proposed by Deleuze and Guattari.²¹ In the course of some speculative leap – whether or not in the direction of becoming quite wrong – someone trying to make (new) work will question what is generally given.²² In my experience of creative practice, whether my own or when working with others (including students), we are often drawn towards any potentiality we perceive in the alternatives which thereby become apparent. Potentiality here unsettles or breaks-down givens, motilising them into the queerness of 'solution' (which rather than answering, disobediently seeps and spreads ...). As a creative practitioner, I

19. For contextualisation of this statement, see Bieròdromo, (p. 135). 'Becoming quite-wrong' has been a relevant aspect of this research, as both a factor of life experience in the accompanying events across its duration; but also with regard the attitudes to creativity that I have entertained and thereby developed. Wrongness has a relationship with queerness: a culturally political position which I do not explore in this thesis but have a particular belief in, from the position of lived experience. Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (2006) offers various helpful perspectives on positionally that are useful to me; and I would suggest to conceptions of creative practice in a (hopefully) less stratified, more fluid world. Subsequent research would extend my thinking regarding 'queer creativity'.

20. Whitehead says that Speculative Philosophy (in which *Process and Reality* is an extended essay), 'is the endeavour to form a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted' (Whitehead, 1985:3). Proceeding to explain these terms, he identifies that human defects, including that of its slippery language(s), mean that 'Philosophers can never hope finally to formulate these metaphysical first principles'; but that hope at least exists in the guise of 'imaginative leap' or 'flash of insight' (*ibid*:4). At various other points in his work, particularly in the more applied *Adventures of Ideas* and *Modes of Thought*, he suggests that the arts have roles to play in the leaps and flashes. Donald W Sherburne partially responds to this suggestion in *A Whiteheadian Aesthetic: Some Implications of Whitehead's Metaphysical System* (1970); although largely from an art theory perspective, rather than that of direct practice.

am training myself to seek potential in concepts of movement and process. My creative experience of ‘being with’ such thoughts or notions during this project, and attempting to work with them through practice – in my quest to articulate *creative block* – is of finding queer logics and connections in the interplay. The more (and harder) I work with their difficult suggestions, the greater diversity of relations I perceive; and perhaps paradoxically the more obviously apparent some sense of logic or other appears. Therefore many of the terms that I am using in this section of the block (of text) are taken from others’ thinking, assimilated into my expression.

For example, *The Logic of Sense* is the title of a text by Deleuze (*Logique du sens*: *sens* in French has even more nuanced connotations than English *sense*, including pertaining to direction). It explores the correlation between sense and nonsense through a series of paradoxes, propositions, associations and inversions (including that of a surface),²³ which, taken as a procession of processes, open-up thinking on a variety of interrelated topics. ‘Sense’ here, becomes a fluid and disobedient concept. In human beings, sense is a means of perceiving the world. There are many discussions I could enter into pertaining to sense perception: of ‘the five senses’, of the sensual, of sensation and sensitivity, of making sense and the functions of reason. However at this point of my thesis I will instead return to some words of a creative collaborator, from a recent text message conversation, in which this idea of sense came up. Currently engaged in the process of writing a screenplay, he was discussing the characters’ motivations emerging through the writing (in what I might see as a variation of Kristevan *signifiance*); and spoke of finding a sense of them:

I suppose ‘sense’ means a kind of logic. A basis. Once there is sense I can relax and continue. I see a path ahead. A plan. (Temple, 2024).

Collaborations

I have often thought about the power of collaboration during my

21. ‘Lines of flight’ are indicated variously across the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (arguably Deleuze and Guattari’s *magnum opus*). The concept should not to be tightly defined – much like those I am attracted to in Whitehead’s work – not least here since it indicates those strains of thought which flee from systemised thinking or flow into new spaces opened-up by the cleaving of absolutes. In the Introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus* they suggest:

Always follow the rhizome by rupture; lengthen, prolong, and relay the line of flight; make it vary, until you have produced the most abstract and tortuous of lines of n dimensions and broken directions. Conjugate deterritorialized flows ... Write, form a rhizome, increase your territory by deterritorialization, extend the line of flight to the point where it becomes an abstract machine covering the entire plane of consistency. (Deleuze and Guattari, 2021:11).

It is an attractive concept to the wanderer, suggesting the daydream and the meander; although Deleuze and Guattari’s project is not concerned with such bucolic distractions. For writing *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* at a particular point in history, they have far more serious political and sociocultural points to explore. In *What is Philosophy?* (their final collaboration, published in 1996), they state that their work together is resolutely not about reflection, contemplation or the communication of conversation between friends (2015:6–7). Attempting to think with Deleuze and Guattari has generally been a dizzying experience for me, as they move in erudite fashion between focuses and registers: as soon as I have some grasp on the idea, the text catapults me off somewhere else. This is perhaps an experience of reading a line of flight .Such experience can be felt in other creative milieus: ‘Music has always sent out lines of flight, like so many

research, whether between people, parties, bodies, materials or media, having realised during the research that collaboration is another concept imbued with creative potential. The collaboration between Tschumi, Eisenman and Derrida (see *Chora L Works*, p. 123) is an example of a project that indicates how collaborations might work, fail and develop, extending the potentiality of individual practices. Creative collaborations I have engaged with, now that I have a sense of practice to bring into play (and plastic artefacts to offer up), have extended my sense of what else may be possible, in practical terms. Thinking, making, working and playing with others shifts perspectives by opening-up vistas, challenging positions and involving multiple practices in the mix. The collaboration between Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari is one such instance of this creative process, producing philosophy which is a product of interplay, rather than the more usual single mind. Two different persons, subjects or objects or personae, commingling across planes of thought. Many more than two; or n-1. They begin their 1980 book *A Thousand Plateaus* (the second volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*):

The two of us wrote *Anti-Oedipus* together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd (Deleuze and Guattari, 2020:3).

A Thousand Plateaus is a seminal text, to which an individual reader will have a personal response (in the effort to find their sense of it). In his *Introduction*, Brian Massumi likens the reading experience to that which one might have engaging with or listening again to a favourite album. My sense of the book is to see its title as indicating a choric environment, for explorative intensities. The text ranges over disparate terrains of conscious existence / lived reality, pausing momentarily to take stock of the intensities that it discovers there – the assumptions, experiences and challenges of thought and its interrelated discontents – before moving on; a line of flight pointing to a next adventure of ideas.

“transformational multiplicities,” even overturning the very codes that structure or arborify it; that is why musical form, right down to its ruptures and proliferations, is comparable to a weed, a rhizome’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 2021:11–2)

22. Presenting my research at a Whitehead conference I was told that my reading of the processual constitution of an actual entity / occasion was ‘quite wrong’. Although the challenge was technically accurate, I have found this sense of ‘wrongness’ emancipatory. See also n.18

23. Some of this thinking fed into my printmaking at a point in 2023, as a realisation of what I was doing with the roller. I used ‘superficial inversions’ as the title of a BoW produced at that time; though I now also consider it as a Process Prints / printmaking method, such as Risoller or Rollerdance. C.f. *superficial inversions*, p. 189; n6; n7 (above).

Philosophy in this case is collaborative affair. For Deleuze and Guattari, concepts are born from a slew of collaborative processes, of the mind, the tongue, the pen, the reserves of life experience. If this suggests an operation which is itself straightforward, that is only due to deficiencies of language in my presentation. For there are elements of what Whitehead might term ‘feeling’ in such concept-creating interactions which require other languages to bring them into visual perceptibility. In their writing together Deleuze and Guattari invoke many voices and registers to articulate the ranges of their ‘practice research’. To call it such is potentially contentious; but I see every reason to defend the nomenclature. Practice research is a name for what happens, creatively, as that which involves all manner of interaction and solitary effort, in the constellation of efforts made to progress something. The creation of concepts may also be a byproduct of practice research, as lines of flight unearth other problematics to contend with, such as the data of Whiteheadian entities.

Concept and Process

In my reading, Deleuze and Guattari offer their readers other modes of process thought to those of Whitehead, although there are various relations of connection evident in their *œuvres*.²⁴ Rather as the process of concrescence from which actual entities or occasions result, to begin their conceptual explorations in *What is Philosophy?*, they posit concepts as multiplicities (Deleuze and Guattari, 2015:15–16). Much as the actual entities or occasions which result from concrescence, concept is vital to their thinking practice – indeed all thinking practices – just as I would argue they are in the plastic practices which are my own particular concern. Deleuze and Guattari would seem to recognise this, noting ‘that the concept is the prerogative of the sensory and the arts, since art brings spiritual entities into existence while philosophical concepts are also “sensibilia”’; but that whilst creativity is likewise shared by these disciplines, ‘only philosophy creates concepts

24. There is notable difference however in many areas of their thinking practices, as for example in Whitehead’s position on ‘the concept’. It is not a term he uses often, though he talks extensively of conceptual feelings, in relation to physical feelings. This is an important aspect of the process of prehension; though I do not go into consideration of the technicality in this thesis. Where he does refer to concepts, it is generally in the course of explaining how his process philosophy relates to and differs from that of previous thinkers. For example:

Locke’s first statement ... is exactly the primary assumption of the philosophy of organism: ‘The mind, being furnished with a great number of the simple ideas conveyed in by the senses, as they are found in exterior things’. Here the last phrase, ‘as they are found in exterior things,’ asserted what later I shall call the vector character of the primary feelings. The universals involved obtain that status by reason of the fact that ‘they are found in exterior things. This is Locke’s assertion and it is the assertion of the philosophy of organism. It can also be conceived as a development of Descartes’ doctrine of ‘*realitas objectiva*’. The universals are the only elements in the data describable by concepts, because concepts are merely the analytic functioning of universals. But the ‘exterior things,’ although they are not expressible by concepts in respect of their individual particularity, are no less data for feeling; so that the concrescent actuality arises from feeling their status of individual particularity; and thus that particularity is included as an element from which feelings originate, and which they concern. (Whitehead, 1985:55).

For Whitehead, a concept is a way of thinking about or relating something ‘universal’, as actualities located in exterior things. Yet in his philosophy, concepts remain purely abstract until they are brought

in the strict sense’ (ibid:5). This creation of concepts is rigorous activity, not merely chance byproduct.²⁵ Whilst not framed in the manner of Whitehead’s ‘coherent, logical ... applicable and adequate’ (as requisite for a system for the interpretation of existence [Whitehead, 1985:3]), such metaphysical requirement might be assumed from their final synoptic investigation together, in the light of lives lived.²⁶

In positing *chōra* and *creative block* as concepts, I recognise that I have not systematically set-up and defended this thesis in a typically scholarly fashion. There is extensive theory to draw on regarding *chōra*, and a range of resources for *creative block*, much of which I have considered and utilised through the various processes of my investigation, involving plastic practice. Therefore I suggest my argument is relevant in this *milieu*, since it is contextualised in an articulation of creative practice – rather as solute in solvent. It is pertinent to see *chōra* and *creative block* this way and describe them here as such, since as ‘concepts’ I can more practicably work with them. For these concepts feel like material ... Sometimes it proves useful to have a package to put things into, a set or a schema. Teaching Graphic Design on Foundation (and since I started writing this thesis, ‘creative practice research’ to BA Creative Advertising students), I am variously aware of how concepts might work in creative practices, as fulcra around which projects develop. In pedagogically-focussed language, a concept might be in the form of a topic or theme (or even process), presented as a brief or learning activity. When a practitioner is developing a practice, it doesn’t really matter what the terminology is, since at the point of finding their agency and producing work, they are likely to recontextualise what is given to suit their purposes.²⁷

Working with concepts

Working with *creative block* during this project, as a concept to which I might respond creatively, I have generated a large amount of work. Having identified potential in the study of it as a concept,

into collaboration with those physical feelings (which I perceive as the activities or events of plastic practice), that bring them more into the realm of multiplicity:

According to the philosophy of organism, a pure concept does not involve consciousness, at least in our human experience. Consciousness arises when a synthetic feeling integrates physical and conceptual feelings. Traditional philosophy in its account of conscious perception has exclusively fixed attention on its pure conceptual side; and thereby has made difficulties for itself in the theory of knowledge. Locke, with his naive good sense, assumes that perception involves more than this conceptual side; though he fails to grasp the inconsistency of this assumption with the extreme subjectivist sensational doctrine. Physical feelings form the non-conceptual element in our awareness of nature (ibid:243).

25. In my creative practice, concepts are created rather than learned – although I simultaneously acknowledge, and celebrate, that creativity involves discovery. It is by working – making work; looking at and thinking about that work as I make it or in my considerations afterwards – that I realise the constellation of connections around an aspect of what I perceive, from my experience of life lived. When this proves the spur to ongoing exploration, by opening out and expanding or extending; in making other marks in my scrabble of endeavour, that this aspect can be seen as a concept that I am working with, in my attempt to ‘bring spiritual entities into existence’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 2015:5).

26. It is likely that Deleuze and Guattari would have much to take apart in my statement; and I wonder what Whitehead would make of it all ...

I speculated that it might therefore generate significant creative output; in turn likely to bring about other results and variations of subsequent possibility. *Creative block* is in no way fixed by the making of this work, but has become articulated during the course of study and through my thesis. Never intending to ‘answer’ it, I have explored – exploited even – my intention of ‘making something of it’. Consequently I can appreciate (and articulate) *creative block* as motile, embodied, generatively queer. The ways of working that I have thereby discovered, such as printmaking techniques mediated by process thinking, assure me that *block* is indeed a fecund concept with scope for further exploration. This should involve making something of the hoard of plastic practice which I have already produced in response.

Yet beyond accumulated prints and writing generated, the return on my investment of engagement with the Research Degree programme and seven years of practice research, has been a sense of my own creative practice. Regardless of any success or recognition, or the complexities of drives and concerns (in their multiplicity of forms), through experience of creative response to difficulties encountered, I can understand my ability to produce work. This is the significant achievement of my study: perhaps the most vital achievement of my existence. Conceptualising a creative practice, now within my purview, is of considerable value to me.

As another result of this study, I see *chōra* in many senses in and around my work – and the work of others with which I engage. Considering the implications of this reasoning, feeling *chōra* as I struggle through research, challenges me to make other turns, to speculate practically. If I am serious about really doing something, in order to advance creatively, I must try unlikely things. The collaborations that I have begun to take seriously during the project suggest further creative response to my thoughts concerning *chōra*. For example, my appropriation of the concept into a practical creative *milieu*, suggest it as workshop activity. It seems natural to talk to students about *chōra* as some

27. This understanding is likewise an aspect of my conception of pedagogy: of working with students, as individual entities in a constellation, to encourage them to recognise the emancipatory capacity of creativity. Too often the rigours of compulsory education, in a very systemised sociocultural milieu, results in a deep fear of ‘not doing the right thing’ in some guise or other. Grades rule. In an achievement and recognition economy, there is a bottom line of return on investment. But doing the right thing leads to what Whitehead might term ‘the Way of Repetition’ (1953), or rather the perpetuation of *status quo*. Whilst a reasonably safe bet, such normalcy precludes the creative advance into novelty which I personally see as the reason for creative life and the value of creative education.



place or space of experimental pursuit, where nothing is certain but unexpected occasions or entities may emerge through doing. I am about to offer a workshop, to those passing through a space (the entrance area and stairs at LCC) whose attention is captured by the possibility. A wall of my recent prints hangs there, that may be responded to by those who care to. If this work does indeed offer a space for thinking, my invitation is for the viewing thinker to participate in doing something with that thought, by adding to what they see, extending, subverting or reappropriating that print. The BoW is called *Extend* (since it uses extender in the ink, to render it more translucent); and the workshop likewise named *Extend*, as it should encourage participants to take my work further, into their own creative realms.

Event

I have thought about how this thesis will be concluded, speculating that it might be with a ‘Becoming’. A traditional thesis usually ends with something that has come to be expected, developed over its span, designed to result in more emphatic statement of its argument. But a ‘likely thesis’,²⁸ drawing upon the vagaries of creative practice and the processes of ‘creative advance into novelty’ (Whitehead, 1985:28), negates conclusive answers or statements of being. It ought rather to open-up possibility, leaving a reader with a sense of potentiality, born of impressions formed through the advances in understanding it offers. Although mine in this instance is a solution, as I have already indicated, such solution is fluid, stealthily spreading and permeating. This is conclusion as practice, and process. In the philosophy of organism, the processes of feeling, prehension and concrescence result in an actual entity; but in the moment it becomes, that actual entity perishes, its function thereby completed. Its point has been its becoming; and in its perishing, that which was gives rise to a variety of the infinite possibilities of subsequent becomings.

28. This is an allusion to the ‘likely story’ about the origins of humanity in the *Timeaus*. This creation myth has been a source of inspiration for much speculation and subsequent scholarship. Although my thesis is not modelled on it, I have drawn creative licence from it. See also Derrida’s *Khōra* ... p. 234.

a e o print show: an event

Once upon a Supervision ... the four of us sat together, in a physical room, and talked about my practice. That this was the only time that my Supervisory team and I had ever done so was significant, demarcating it as an event of considerable intensity. Circumstances had resulted in the majority of our Supervisions occurring online; and it was not always practicable for everyone to be present. Given an opportunity to all be together in this space therefore, I was determined to bring plastic work and share it with them. Whilst showing prints – which are generally 2D imagery and so can be easily scanned – works well enough in a digital context, paper and ink have material quality that is differently-appreciated in person. Many of our discussions had concerned the more philosophical aspects of my project, so printmaking considerations had tended to occur in other spaces with different interlocutors. But one March day, in a London College of Communication meeting room with strip lighting and Tango-orange walls, we convened and explored.

That this was an unusual event was apparent in the energy that imbued our conversation. At a point of time in 2022 not yet entirely post-Covid, being physically together in a room felt like a novelty. In-person discussion with others not wearing face-masks was still questionable, almost anarchic. Communication without the mediation of a screen caused us to appreciate elements of one another that had not been possible since the turn of events resulting in lockdowns. So perhaps it was only natural that we were all a little animated, even on a dull Tuesday morning in a meeting room. Adding to the sense of energetic possibility was that the previous month had been marked by the milestone of my Confirmation as a PhD student: that Research Degree crossroads, when it is confirmed by internal assessment that the work of

Some of which brings me to the idea of event. In my conception(s), an event is akin to an actual entity or occasion: in various thinking an event is an occasion.²⁹ So I will conclude this block with some lines of introduction to what is, in my reckoning, a vital piece of the creative practice configuration; and thereby to its process. An event is likely to be planned as summary: a show to be staged or mounted, the crescendo of performance. But an event likewise occurs in the midst of other events, in the unlikely instances where prehensions continue to conresce, in spite of our efforts or attentions elsewhere. An event is the making of a print, and some interaction or other along the way to that making. An event is the point where the print is shared with another, in which the print becoming-hospitality is the event that precipitates the event.³⁰ A creative advance into novelty constitutes an event, as does a wrong turn into a dingier quarter of the mire, whereby one experiences something untoward or disturbing. Death is an event, as too is birth, and all of life in between; whether these be moments or pulses of lived/felt experience, or occasions noted by or otherwise affecting others. Events occur, feelings lured, affects become; then are processed and may be responded to. Therefore, the viva event – that which is to come, the 'show' to be planned, curated, shared, seen and participated in – will serve my purposes of an investigation of 'what might be made of *creative block*' adequately and applicably.³¹



29. For Deleuze and Guattari, the event is a concept of significance, as too for Whitehead and Derrida. I will make my writing about this available at my viva event.

30. I note here (with thanks) a quote from a Supervisory collaborator. In the summer I made an invitation to view my work, and the subsequent occasion / event was a point of significance in my realisation of how to present this thesis. The notion of the event was particularly obvious in this; as echoed in this excerpt from an email exchange:

Your doctoral practice as a pedagogy of the event where the print is hospitality, and maybe hospitality as the conditional space of curriculum-making where I and we become the curriculum we imagine we could be. The ethical and affective capacity of the encounter afforded by the spacemaking of the work which also opens a different future [more below] ... (O'Reilly, 2023b).

31. This is an addition to the examined thesis. The proposed event occurred in June 2024. I called it *Creative Blocks*, in recognition of my thesis, visually indicated by my print work, set out in piles on the floor, wrapped in brown paper. I thought about this week-long event in a block of writing which I circulated to the Examiners and many of those who attended and contributed to what occurred, *Of elephants and aeroplanes: a viva event* (August 2024).

research would appear to be of appropriate level to (eventually) generate original contribution to knowledge. I had put together a presentation for that event, images of my most recent work and some phone video of print being made,³² but just as so many others, that meeting had been on Teams. Although I had usually brought a portfolio of prints to pre-Lockdown in-person Supervisions, it had generally remained closed. So this time I meant to share it with them.

The work certainly impacted our meeting, for during the Supervision, a different sort of interaction took place. The points discussion regarding the developments of my research were extended by examples of practice. Having recourse to this work, in a back-and-forth of words and images, somehow allowed for the ideas to become more salient. On reflection it is obvious that the additional dimensionality of the physical prints in relation to the conceptual discussion would have an effect; but the associated feelings were surprisingly palpable. The Whiteheadian notion of concrescence in the realisation of actual entities or occasions involves the prehension of feelings, as those elements of data included in the satisfaction of an occasion (c.f. p.70; p.230). Although we did not acknowledge the encounter in any of those terms, we each expressed that this sharing of perspectives, affect, conceptual and physical material, and resultant thought development was meaningful; or valuable; or in some way relevant. As so often in such circumstance, we wished that we were able to extend this sensation and make more of it, that others might experience the value we perceived ... So it was that the notion of a print show came about. Bringing together people, the material of work and the possibility of some element of creative advance, should provide similar conditions to that of this present togetherness. My assertion here is that such conditions constitute what I think of as chōric, discussed elsewhere in the thesis. At the time though, the notion that occurred concerned invitation to a wider demographic, to engage and participate in what (we were

32. The presentation was titled 'My conceptual tool is a roller', to indicate the ways in which the processes and practices of printmaking have informed the more philosophical aspects of the thesis – which in turn inform my plastic practice. The BoW which I showed, augmented by documentation of some of its making through the sensory (audiovisual) medium of video, was *Smooth and Striated* (2022). Although an extension of the Rollerwave technique I have developed, these prints are less-immediate, involving dampened paper and a pass through the intaglio press. The title comes from Deleuze and Guattari's conceptions of types of space – of that which encourages movement and of that which leads to atrophy (in *A Thousand Plateaus* [2020]). Although I have not overtly developed these particular thoughts in this manuscript, they are relevant to my conceptions of making space, and thus of chōra.

considering) a practice research Supervision-type event might be.³³

A particular advantage to being a student in the institution where I am employed, is that I arguably have greater access to the mechanisms of resource than other students or indeed staff. Finding available space for an event is always complicated, but operating across various camps, or campuses, allowed me to identify a suitable environment for the sort of show that I started to envisage as a result of that Supervision. In an earlier block I have described Wilson Road, where the Foundation course I teach on is currently situated, the location of the printroom where I have produced the plastic practice of my thesis (p. 55). But on the first floor of that building is a lecture theatre, once the school assembly hall. Knowing there would be a period of time during the summer when the space was free, it seemed apposite for this event. That the lecture theatre (as architectural space) has the sorts of qualities and atmosphere of school assembly gives it a slightly authoritarian air, of summoning-together. An imposing environment in some ways, this large, rather musty rectangular room, has tall windows down one side, looking out over the trees of a churchyard to a Gothic spire, its valued ceiling replete with dark, carved wood. At the back, a staircase leads up to a mezzanine gallery with tiered wooden benches. The far end of the hall, across its expanse of worn parquet flooring of the hall, is set with a stained glass window, usually covered by a retracting video projection screen. The space is 'flexible', in that chairs can be laid out for an audience, and tables or other apparatus / devices might be brought in for other users, such as yoga classes, life drawing or 'engagement activity'. What it doesn't offer is very much in the way of hangable wall space.

That this is not a typical showing / gallery environment was another aspect of why I considered it appropriate for my particular work, or research. In a study which activates the processual in creative block, it would have been disingenuous to identify a

33. The notion of event is complex and multi-faceted or -dimensional, which I will write about elsewhere. In this instance, I intend it to indicate a proposition for a coming-together of material and bodies in (a given) space. Therefore there is a distinct correlation between my consideration of chōric condition and event. The relationship is one of variation and difference. Just as chōra has been wrangled across the ages and its thinkers, event is a concept which refuses static classification. In *Logic of Sense* (a book of 34 'series' rather than chapters; whose discussions pertaining to *Alice's Adventures* influenced the titling of my own BoW, *superficial inversions* [2023]) Deleuze – often associated with the event – articulates its paradoxes and simultaneities effectively:

Just as the present measures the temporal realization of the event – that is its incarnation in the depth of acting bodies and its incorporation in a state of affairs – the event in turn, in its impassability and impenetrability, has no present. It rather retreats and advances in two directions at once, being the perpetual object of a double question: What is going to happen? What has just happened? (Deleuze, 1990:63)



selection of prints, to frame and hang in serried rank. But aside from stylistic sensibility, a traditional exhibition, whether of a body of work or a selection of the best or most recent, suggests a practice which involves at least semi-regular sharing of work with an audience: not the position I occupy in my practice. One of the factors that led to my show proposal, was the identification that I have not shown work since my degree show in 2000, (although that same piece, *Jungle*, was then shown again at *Talente* in Munich in 2003).³⁴ Thereafter, and for many years, there was no more work to show, since I made nothing; although in the years following 2015 I generated a considerable volume of output. So a somewhat surprising realisation of the processes of research concerned with my *creative block*, has been its transition or shift, through the research process; or its multiplicity. From the stultifying inability to make, the *block* morphed – through ongoing efforts of practice – into a glut of production. The emphasis of my practice had become making work,³⁵ as ongoing exploration of the development of (those) processes of creative production. By that point in 2022, years of making had resulted in a physical weight of work. This considerable quantity required storage – currently in the bowels of that same building, concealed under the stairs in the basement.

Although I occasionally discussed those various BoW (Bodies of Work) I was making with friends, colleagues or with peers, in the fortnightly *Test Lab* seminar for example, my focus was continued exploration through production. It was evident in the Supervision discussion of my research and practice, that some of my print work had never been considered, even by me. My tendency had become to bundle, wrap and stash the prints, occasionally digitally scanning them to include in the writing I was simultaneously producing, or to use in the *Printmade Book Jackets* (that Paul and I had begun collaborating on in 2020), but essentially failing to spend much time with them beyond their moments of becoming. The moment of production of a *Process Print* (in any of its variations of monoprint) is vital and thrilling, a hit of intensity,

34. The peice was reviewed by the contemporary jewellery promotor and curator Ralph Turner in *Crafts Magazine* (July/August 2003). I felt it was out-of-place when I saw *Jungle* at *Talente*; which is perhaps why it was noticed:

... a cityscape installation of freely drawn printed images of high-rise buildings. These cut-out homages – principally to Modernism – were secured to board, glass and metal to form an architechtrual forest. With its vertical emphasis and steely red cranes scraping the sky, *Jungle* had an *emphatic evolutionary edge* to it, with an *acute sense of space* (Turner, 2003:59 [my italics]).

35. I would also describe this ‘research’ and ‘practice’ as ‘the work’. Just as all the terms I use in this manuscript concerning my project (such as practice, process, event, creative and *block*), the term work suggests a multiplicity of forms, or manifestations, attitudes and efforts. In turn these have various connotations and implications, from the perspectives of my experience. In this breadth of possibility, it has a similarity to the Whiteheadian terminology of ‘actual entity’ or ‘actual occasion’. Its complexity of intension – in the philosophical sense – is belied by the simplicity of the word.

that drives me to keep going: their very making instigates almost insatiable urge. Whilst conscious of the efforts I was engaged in and so searching for means by which to theorise these practises, I somehow prevented myself from really looking at my prints. I was coming to realise that I needed to confront this issue, to be with the work myself, as well as allowing it to be seen by others. The sort of show I began to speculate about was not predicated on selection and curation, but more concerned with revealing the very material of my *block*, now. I thought about spreading it out as I had on that LCC table, but *working* it, materially: just as I might do with the ink I squeeze onto a block. Show as activation, then. It could become a space of event, for myself as well as for others, where work might happen. For I could envisage ‘work’ occurring during and as a result of it; though such premises also made me variously anxious.

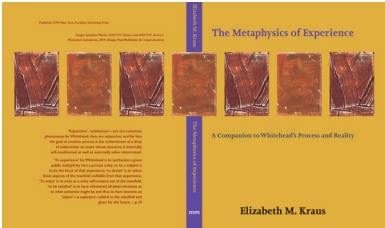
Fear of being really seen, of being revealed (or outed), has been a long-established factor of my experience. By turning my *creative block* into a stashed hoard, I perpetrated the same patterns of behaviour that I had ever since starting school and feeling the pressure of other people’s judgement. Because I felt inwardly different to those others, my classmates or peers, or later colleagues, I constructed a carapace to conceal my vulnerability and weirdness,³⁶ in the attempt to make myself socially acceptable. Over the decade from my mid-30s in which I was analysand, I might say that my creative practice had in some sense become the effort to ‘be with’ myself. I shifted my processual energy into comprehensive examination of the build-up of fearful anxiety, which had compounded over the years of hiding myself, including from myself (lest it should prove to be unbearable even to myself). In doing so, I invested myself in that work, which I saw as another opportunity; and in the intensive concentration of four sessions-per-week I became more able to accept and celebrate whatever it is which constitutes my *self*. During this period of subsequent work – that of my Research Degree – my sense of self has been



36. I might now see this ‘weirdness’ as ‘queerness’, which in recent years has become a far more socially-acceptable position (see also p. 12). I have not developed this aspect of my ‘positionality’ in this study, although I would argue that the process philosophical concerns that are my focus here are also pertinent to the notion of queerness. There is certainly another possible study in the association. I understand the term queer as pertaining to difference, quite as much as in its (currently more-prevalent) identity politics usage, as reclaimed-slur pertaining to non-heteronormative sexuality; and so arguably of considerable relevance in discussions of creativity. For example, Whitehead’s fundamental tenet of ‘creative advance into novelty’ (e.g. Whitehead, 1985:28) has become another adage by which my practice develops. Whilst this further term (creativity) is too large a topic for a PhD thesis, it is my overarching life-interest. Novelty suggests difference.

variously challenged. Events in my professional life, such as those which precipitated an emotional crisis which began at the end of 2020, have impacted on my creative work in meaningful ways. The efforts I made in therapy allow me to analyse and articulate my behaviours; but I am more interested in *making something of* life experience, which I see as 'creative response'. Such means of processing difficulty, I contend, is worth sharing: particularly if the results are in some sense meaningful for or encouraging to others. Yet I simultaneously challenge my own contention, by avoiding showing the results of my efforts, or even really confronting them myself. In my experience, hoarding work perpetrates *block*. Sharing my work with my Supervisors that day in March was a thrilling step towards dissolving this tendency, but the idea of an extended space of show, which could thereby become event, captivated my creative imagination. The data of possibility might be spread out for observation, positively prehended as feelings (or negatively dismissed as irrelevant to the particular actuality), as they moved toward conrescion into something new.

Ideas from Whiteheadian process thinking (as above), have been the principle philosophical motivation in the development of my subsequent study of *creative block*. Whitehead's 'speculative scheme' is the attempt to formulate a philosophical system for interpreting experience, or the events of life in the world. That Elizabeth Kraus titled her companion text ('Sherpa guide') to his magnum opus 'The Metaphysics of Experience' (1979) is pertinent, since as a work of philosophy his exegesis of *Process and Reality*, draws on the life and work of his experience.³⁷ Kraus is one of the various commentators to remark on the abstruseness of its technical language that readers must grapple with, in the endeavour to feel the value of the scheme, which I have discussed elsewhere. Yet in the opening sections of this most important work, Whitehead himself makes to recognise the limitations of any such attempt, since:



37. Whitehead states this in its *Preface*. His investigation and 'years of meditation' bring him to this point, whereby he can present the study in these lectures: '... intended to state a condensed scheme of cosmological ideas, to develop their meaning by confrontation with the various topics of experience, and finally to elaborate an adequate cosmology in terms of which all particular topics find their interconnections' (Whitehead, 1985:xi–xv).

Weaknesses of insight and deficiencies of language stand in the way inexorably. Words and phrases must be stretched towards a generality foreign to their ordinary usage, and however such elements of language be stabilized as technicalities, they remain metaphors mutely appealing for an imaginative leap (Whitehead, 1985:4).

There is a sense of humility in this, even though Whitehead is discussing broader philosophical constraints. But in reading his work (and therefore him, as a writer), I have become aware of the thinker, grappling with the problems of a life-world. That his work resonates with me is in part due to his emphasis of creativity, 'the universal of universals characterizing ultimate matter of fact ... [and] the principle of novelty'; and his inclination to actively recognise that art may have means of appreciating that words do not (ibid:21). During my study I have understood it as a call to action, since the 'imaginative leap' is an aspect of creative activity as I see it, as the subtext of my research endeavour. Another writer, a friend and creative collaborator, recently described creativity as 'the industry of imagination' (Temple, 2024:conversation). This suggests the continued application (as work, or graft) of what Whitehead suggests as a 'flash of insight': but which without a 'clear-cut complete analysis of immediate experience, in terms of the various details which comprise its definiteness' seems destined to merely approximate, curtailing real (metaphysical) progress (Whitehead, 1985:4). Drawing on these perspectives, it seems to me that interplay between the industry of creativity (i.e. practice) and the ongoing insights afforded by consideration of speculative philosophies, result in a fuller and more relevant (or adequate and applicable) 'elucidation of immediate experience ... [that] is the sole justification for any thought' (ibid) – such as that of my PhD.

Whitehead contends: 'Our datum is the actual world, including ourselves; and this actual world spreads itself for observation in the guise of the topic of our immediate experience' (Whitehead,



1985:4). If these topics of experience might be seen as the BoW that are the plastic outcomes of my work during this time, then the call I felt to lay them out for 'renewed observation', seemed to be some response to another of the impetuses that I perceive in these opening pages of *Process and Reality*:

The true method of discovery is like the flight of an aeroplane. it starts from the ground of particular observation; it makes a flight in the thin air of imaginative generalization; and it lands again for renewed observation rendered acute by rational interpretation. The reason for the success of this method of imaginative rationalization is that, when the method of difference fails, factors which are constantly present may yet be observed under the influence of imaginative thought. Such thought supplies the differences which the direct observation. (Whitehead, 1985:5).

I foresaw an event whereby the vibrancy of Supervision could be reinterpreted, if in more dispersed solution, affording a broader, soaringly imaginative generalisation and further means of speculation. This could in turn generate other perspectives on my work: my own developing ideas through the decision and effort to actively confront the work, in relation to those feelings of others who chose to come and engage, in an opened-up space for observation and consideration. It would thereby extend the Supervision experience of thought-interplay through creative interaction.³⁸ Whitehadian thinking concerning the becoming of actual entities – that process of concrescence which his scheme articulates – had been informing my own work at the time. Both my post-Confirmation writing about actual entities or occasions, and the prints I was making, (which employed laser-cut letterforms from these words amidst the interplay of roller and ink), were grappling with the ways in which process thinking works in my practice. A show, whatever I meant by that term, would require a title, and I felt the suggestive qualities of 'actual', 'entity' and 'occasion': both conceptually and also physically, in my hands.

38. Later in the section from which I have been quoting here, Whitehead makes a pertinent statement about the relationship between action and thought; and the development of one through the other:

Whatever is found in 'practice' must lie within the scope of the metaphysical description. When the description fails to include the 'practice, the metaphysics is inadequate and requires revision. There can be no appeal to practice to supplement metaphysics, so long as we remain contented with our metaphysical doctrines. Metaphysics is nothing but the description of the generalities which apply to all the details of practice (Whitehead, 1985:13).



I decided it should be titled 'a e o print show'; and Paul and I designed a flier.

The show took place over several days in mid-June 2022. Since the a e o idea involved the entire process of public display, all this time constituted show, whether or not others were looking at my prints. For example, one of its days involved my bringing my work up from the basement, into the lecture theatre, opening up packages and portfolios which has been out of my sight for years, in some cases. People were sometimes present during these aspects of the event. My friend and design collaborator Paul came to help me unpack and arrange the piles of prints, wondering what a logic of order for display might be. Once I had piled all the chairs at the back beneath the mezzanine, the remaining furniture was a large wheeled dais, a mobile stage or platform. Usually this is positioned beneath the projection screen, but we moved it more into the centre of the room. Jason from the 3D workshop suggested constructing a 'floating wall' of long dowelling rods slotted into 2x4 inch planks (in which round holes have been bored), and we tried permeations of this as well. I had some para-chord left over from another project so strung some up as hanging lines. Working in a space with the prints began to suggest possibilities for compositional rationale, the physicality of space in relationship to work encouraging visual thinking.

Further to the visual interplay, these temporary groupings shifted the self-existing BoW into interrelationships with others. Although I did not examine the prints any more closely than I had in the printroom in their moment of making, I saw them differently. Laying out and moving around gave me a different sense of them, as artefacts, existing in environmental space. More friends, colleagues and collaborators, the occasional student, wandered in to see what was happening, made suggestions, looked at the work, started to work with it, composing layouts. I began to perceive meaning in this, beyond my own conceptions.



Guy, another creative collaborator, came with a video camera to capture footage. This possibility had emerged from conversations he and I had after swimming, discussing that aquatic practice in relation to those of our day jobs. As a cutting room editor, he was interested in the processes of the printroom I mentioned, and taken by my story of this show. As aspiring filmmaker, he thought he might make a short film about it, to complement another he was engaged with, about an amateur boxer (and his bid to provide for his family through winning bouts in the ring). Whether our tales are comparable is questionable; but I liked his notion of my effort as 'documentary subject'. Over the course of a few visits, he recorded the movements occurring around the show space, interviewing me as talking head and capturing soundbites from other visitors. Although the film hasn't yet been finished, these creative processes of another, in conjunction with my own, are an unexpected byproduct of *a e o*; and an example of work that has been generated by another kind of work, which Richard Serra identifies (1994). Talking about *creative block* on camera was a strange experience, particularly given my reservations about addressing the peculiarities of my practice, and the seeming incongruity of being surrounded by my work. Yet there was also something that seemed very appropriate in the feeling of becoming film in this context, of confronting, or testing; and of sharing.

It was this aspect, of sharing, that was the most profoundly affecting element of my *a e o* experience. Although I had identified sharing as my intention and desire, I was not prepared for the actuality of watching other people engaging with my work in this way. When showing prints to other people previously, I had largely stage-managed the manner of these occurrences. I might put together a presentation for a conference or symposium, or invite someone to view what I had just made / was currently working on. But in the lecture theatre over those June days the way in which people interacted with the prints was largely beyond my control. Across the space, mainly on the dais but also across the floor, were



piles of prints, through which people could sift as they chose. This is unusual. Whatever the status of the print in 'art object hierarchy' (and however sensual the printmaking process), people are generally invited to look rather than to touch. Indeed, whilst thinking about this likelihood with my Supervisors, I had been wary of 'grubby fingerprints' on my carefully preserved, jealously guarded work. Yet in order for the print show to work, I had to surrender my grip of this cache, and allow others to experience it, themselves. Most of those who came, largely friends and colleagues, recognised the cultural norms of 'look don't touch' and so were initially wary. But the example of witnessing others' actions tends to be encouraging, so upon realising touching was indeed allowed, people seemed to delight in the opportunity. For the physicality of a print, as original piece of art / work, unprotected by frame or glass, has significance. This was something which I started to recognise, standing back, observing viewers sifting through the piles. Being able to give someone something of an experience, is itself an experience. Envisaging this when setting up this event, I had assumed that things would occur that were beyond any planning; but with me as active participant in any such occurrence. For example, the 'Open Supervision' element (the 'main event?') might allow anyone present to join in the discussion, offering suggestion or provocation, or drawing parallels from what they perceived here. I envisaged myself attempting to respond to questions, from people unfamiliar with the terms of my project, or with very different perspectives to those I had (by then) become used to working with. But what actually happened was that people milled about, talked to one another or spent time alone ... whether respectfully rummaging through prints; or (as at least one Supervisor) sitting up in the gallery, looking down at the milieu or upward at the vaulting, listening to the sounds of the space as another way of feeling the event. My Supervisors and I were components of the occasion, but the *a e o* experience was beyond any of us. Once I'd realised that it was not really about me



Maya Finkelstein Amrani (2022)

(and so stopped performing), I was able to see people engaging with the work. This was revelatory. For I recognised that through the processes of 'looking', people are able to form their own relationships with a piece of work. To do so they need to be left alone, to 'sit with it' – or in more therapeutic terminology, *be with*. What might occur then, is that the work becomes in some way *theirs*. For when one has that sort of connection with an object, it allows for a sort of interrelationship. This is a private and personal sort of ownership – in the way that we might own our feelings. In turn, I became recipient, granted a sense of 'making impact'. Appreciating that my work was allowing another person to feel something, was deeply resonant. Although I might have expected this to be a sense of pride, actually it was more of a humbling feeling. I was not responsible for any reaction, other than by playing a part in the formation of the space: a feeling space, or *chōric* environment.

However, I did come to recognise another, somewhat uncomfortable responsibility. As I witnessed people appreciating the experience of being with these prints, I questioned my right to conceal my work, as I have become used to doing. The prints I have made will not change anyone's life; but they might find enjoyment (or another of the multitudes of feeling) by 'being with them'. Whether or not people made encouraging comments or asked interesting questions, in their moments of engagement I perceived more personal response. Whilst much of my recent making is in reaction to the positive feelings of existence, the negative are likewise important aspects of real life. The pain, frustration, fury and loss that (I assume) we will each experience at some points all have parts to play, and they do in what I work through in my processes of making. Hardness and darkness are evident, just as colour and movement and fun. If I make work in response to my experiences, it is likely that there will be themes or factors that others can relate to, inwardly, as approximations of their own. Although engaging in the arts as spectator, whether

that be film, theatre, concerts, gigs, exhibitions or other, can serve as escapism, sometimes we will look for (or find) approximations or extesions of our own situations. Perceiving things we can relate to in the creative efforts of others might be reassuring, helping us to feel that we are not so entirely alone in our misery, or elation, or confusion. Expressing my fears with a therapist proved that revealing them would not destroy me. Revealing aspects of myself through my work is a means of making something of my intensity of feeling; of appreciating – and realising – the potential of feeling. Denying others access to the potential of such 'lure for feeling' (e.g. Whitehead, 1985:25),³⁹ could therefore be considered rather a selfish action, albeit motivated by my fears.

Although I had thought that I was being brave by allowing this access, I had not really yet opened myself up to the possibilities of being moved by the event. In one set of readings (e.g. Smith, 2015:387–90) the point of an event is that it is unexpected and changes things for those affected by it. I had wanted to inclusively extend the Supervision experience, but through the process of bringing my work into this space, quite another series of operations were activated. In the Whiteheadian sense of feelings, these developments continue to affect me.⁴⁰ By this I mean that I feel their impact across the affective vibrations and practical shifts of my creative practice; and thereby the thinking of this thesis. Whilst I may always question whether my work has value, beyond that of its moments of making for me, my perceptions shifted when I felt others experiencing it (with)in themselves at the *a e o* print show.

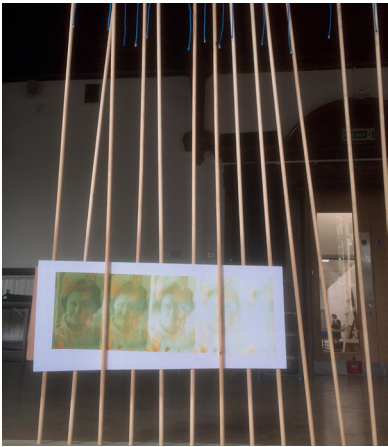
If this seems a questionable admission in a PhD thesis, it might be pertinent to recall the title, in which the practice of *creative block* is articulated as activate and nuanced. It encourages the material of experience, of all hues and timbres, to become work via processual space. During this critical aspect of my research, I witnessed, or otherwise appreciated, resonances in other people – of impact made for them through this momentary experience

39. I have discussed 'lures for feeling' at various points (e.g. p.63; p.254). In this citation, the 17th of the 'Categories of Explanation' of his scheme of being and becoming, Whitehead is discussing the 'ontological principle', by which that which is becoming (through concrescence) is informed by the actual entities or occasions which have already become. He makes reference to Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* here, to explain that the philosophy of organism allows for a breadth of becoming not tolerated in extant philosophies, such as that sense of 'feeling' so fundamental to creative process. The explanation in this contextual example, is that a lure for feeling might constitute the necessary conditions for 'the enjoyment of a joke' (Whitehead, 1985:24–5).

40. In Whitehead's theory of feelings [discussed previously, e.g. pp. 65–8], something 'becomes' as a result of a circumstance, in the ongoing multiplicity of possible becoming. A concrescing actual entity or occasion is brought about through the positive prehension of those factors of experience available at that particular point, which the process of concrescence brings into itself (i.e the becoming actual entity or occasion) in that instance. An instance of positive prehension designates that factor a feeling; a negative prehension means that it is dismissed from the particular concrescence. In my appreciation of the philosophy of organism, this explanation recognises the relevance of feelings in the actuality of life – and therefore in the making of work, where some factor of experience positively appreciated (whether or not 'consciously') is apt to be included in the development of activity of making. In Whitehead's philosophy, feelings refer to factors of experience that have impact or bearing on creative development, rather than demarcating process either a decisively psychological or operationally functional activity.

of being with my work. I would be confident in claiming (after Whitehead) that actual occasions were created through this process. Whilst I can think of this as an ongoing aspect of real life, becoming aware of such actuality occurring as response to my creative efforts was deeply affecting. Although I have not yet found means by which to allow people I don't know and to whom I have given them to physically own my prints (the hoard under the stairs now re-concealed), I experienced the potentiality of sharing, and other creative responses to 'being with'. Therefore I can sense a solution of possibility, even though I haven't come up with answers.

There was one print that I did spend more time considering during that time in that lecture theatre assembly hall. It had been a conscious choice in the beginning of my residency, to weave a variety of long, thin Risollers through one of the dowel floating walls, forming a sort of talisman. This Risoller was from a BoW titled Sally that I had made the previous summer (8see Sally, p. 259). My mother died in May 2021, suddenly and beautifully. It was the perfect death for her, in the midst of her active life, without any warning, pain or deterioration of her spirit. My creative response to this profound event had been to take an image that I found of her (before I knew her), from which to generate a series of prints; which in turn generated the possibility of a new printmaking technique. It was vital for me that Sally was a visible factor of this show, not least since Ma would have wanted to be part of it – ever the first to arrive and last to leave. My mourning of her death has taken a variety of forms, including the sharing of stories through writing, and attempting to encourage others; and indeed my own endeavour in the art of living better ... Amongst many other activities, Sally was a primary school teacher, who aspired to be a writer of children's stories. Whilst she didn't think she was a very good teacher ('not clever enough'), she believed children felt safe in her care: she was interested in them as people. One of the clergy who spoke at her funeral suggested she embodied



St Barnabas, the Encourager. That she didn't achieve all she might whilst she was alive is a spur to action for me. The image of her face woven between rods, alert and curious, fading in and out of intensity reminded me to stand back, watch and listen and feel in the attempt to learn. It is a way of living that she taught me.

In the eulogy I gave from the green carpet step in the parish church of St Mary-at-Finchley, I had cited Whitehead's philosophy. Instead of preparing something to read or recite, I responded to the rhythms I perceived in the space, which included her. It mattered that I was 'in the moment' throughout this strange event, feeling the care of the congregation in the church where she had spent so much time; and the bizarre effect of my mother's body beside me in a wicker coffin, like a dog basket – a resemblance that amused us both. So I spoke of Sally as fundamentally involved in the event – that of her life – as data, drawing on my understanding of Whitehead in relation to the 'satisfaction' of an actual entity and its subsequent 'perishing'. A person would not constitute an actual entity for Whitehead (any more than a piece of art might),⁴¹ so I am stretching the notion in something of imaginative leap. Nonetheless, I believe it to be a helpful way to think about such a death, for someone without religious faith: 'In the organic philosophy, an actual entity has 'perished' when it is complete' (Whitehead, 1985:81–2). In my appreciation of this process philosophy, Sally's life, a continual work-in-process, reached its point of satisfaction in the moment of her death, as completion. But in that satisfaction of concrescence, I opined, the data that became her, and thereby of her, is released back into the world, as potential for subsequent actuality:

The concrescence is ... the building up of a determinate 'satisfaction,' which constitutes the completion of the actual togetherness of the discrete components. The process of concrescence terminates with the attainment of a fully determinate 'satisfaction'; and the creativity thereby passes over into the 'given' primary phase for the concrescence of other actual entities. This transcendence is thereby established



41. It is more likely that a person or a print would constitute a nexus of actual entities or occasions. For example:

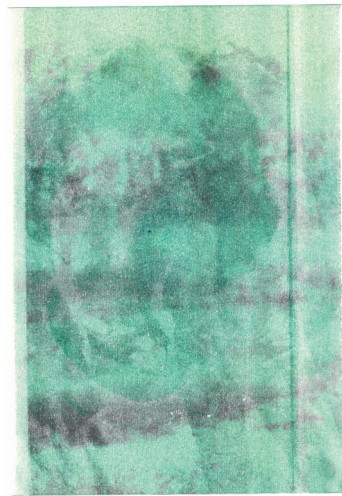
Actual entities involve each other by reason of their prehensions of each other. There are thus real individual facts of the togetherness of actual entities, which are real, individual, and particular ... Any such particular fact of togetherness among actual entities is called a 'nexus' (plural form is written 'nexūs') (Whitehead, 1985:22).

In thinking about the ways in which viewers at a 'were' with the work, I can also appreciate that their experiences constituted varieties of actual occasions. Whitehead's 14th Category of Explanations states: '... a nexus is a set of actual entities in the unity of the relatedness constituted by their prehensions of each other, or – what is the same thing conversely expressed – constituted by their objectifications in each other' (ibid:24). Therefore perhaps nexūs ought to have been the title for my print show. Perhaps it might be a suitable title for a different print show.

when there is attainment of determinate 'satisfaction' completing the antecedent entity (Whitehead, 1985:85).

Although I do not consider myself particularly sentimental, my sense of Sally now is that she is 'in the world', as creative energy or potential. It was evident from the effort made by those who attended the socially-distanced celebration of her life in June 2021, that she had meant something to people – whose lives continue. They spoke of her fondly, and will remember events of which she was part. The school children she encouraged (and continually learned from, she said) will have made lives, had their own children. Some will hear stories of her. In one particular instance of maternal care, Ma had listened to the story of my crisis of that point in my life, and wondered whether I might seek professional help. I did; and so began that life-affecting process. More relevant to my thesis however, is the notion of the creativity which is generated through the processes of life, thereby functioning in the world as 'lure for feeling':⁴² for perpetual becoming. The process of becoming in the philosophy of organism has creativity at the core of its ongoingness: 'In its self-creation the actual entity is guided by its ideal of itself as individual satisfaction and as transcendent creator' (Whitehead, 1985:85). In my plastic practice, I make work, which itself generates other work. Ink residue left on a roller from one print will suggest the possibility of a subsequent print. A text I have written might be typeset, over-printed; or become a small publication, when placed in relation with my images via motilities of collaborative practice. In these ways the material of (my) existence and experience is repurposed and extended. This material is data, now involving that released into the world by her perishing.

The event of my mother's death affected my life, and so informed my practice. Yet I hadn't included it in the writing of the thesis: it was only after this was questioned by my Director of Studies that I realised the relevance of the omission, and wrote-up this story. Now I may see it as a story of her. As a young person,



42. It is significant that Mary Wyman chose *The Lure for Feeling* as the title for her book on the philosophy of organism in a constellation of relation with some Eastern philosophies and the poetry of Goethe and Wordsworth (1966). The subtitle for this volume is *In the Creative Process*.

Whitehead says of lures for feeling:

the primary function of theories is as a lure for feeling, thereby providing immediacy of enjoyment and purpose. Unfortunately theories, under their name of 'propositions', have been handed over to logicians, who have countenanced the doctrine that their one function is to be judged as to their truth or falsehood ... [Yet] the 'lure for feeling' is the final cause guiding the concrescence of feelings. By this concrescence the multifold datum of the primary phase is gathered into the unity of the final satisfaction of feeling (Whitehead, 1985:184–5).

Sally's education had been curtailed, but when I started secondary school, she embarked on her next quest. An A' level led to an English degree, a BPhil thesis on 'Time Travel in Children's Literature', a PGCE, that enabled her to become a teacher in the primary school attached to her church. When compulsory retirement brought that gig to an end, she had embarked upon further pursuits of creative advance. We had talked about Whitehead and my study – or rather, she had listened and smiled; and I felt her pleasure in my creative development. It is a perpetual reserve.

A sense of Sally captured in a photographic image, provided me with material as lure for feeling, by which to generate a BoW, some writing, a small publication (*Ashes*: 2021), the technique of Risoller. For this unexpected discovery, as a way of hacking a process, was born of the photographs I found among the debris of her existence: that one of her, another of us.⁴³ My placement of Sally Risollers on that floating wall (next to the exit, beneath the Role of Honour) were intended to imbue the *a e o* print show with further lures for feeling: 'The tone of feeling embodied in this satisfaction passes into the world beyond, by reason of these objectifications' (Whitehead, 1985:85). The people who saw those prints, most of whom had not met my mother, will have noticed the work and considered it, for some reason or other. Via such processes of creative advance, through disparate means of working and divergent practices of making something of it, the data of Sally is also shared, potentially felt and positively prehended; and *a e o* goes on.



43. I can be fairly confident that this second photograph was taken by my dad. If belying my claim of non-sentimentality, I have speculated that he also took the portrait shot. This is a flight of fancy for which I have no proof. But however problematic my parents' relationship, there was some strange connection between them that was always beyond me. I explored that image in a BoW titled *Becoming Jonathan* (2021); and the Risollers that became from these efforts.

Postscript ... Extend: a becoming

Just as I was about to submit my thesis for Examination, an opportunity arose to show some work. London College of Communication, where my research is registered, holds an annual Research Degree work-in-progress show at this point of the year, titled *Unfolding Narratives*. So I proposed to show my most recent BoW, in which I make considerable use of extender in the ink, to exploit its luminosity (as described above).

The idea for this piece was that the individual prints of *Extend* would be displayed on a wall: a novelty for me. The space allocated for this was a large expanse of tall wall adjacent to the main staircase, at the entrance to the building. Although the curatorial suggestion had been a rectilinear block along the breadth of this wall, its height and the verticals of the architecture around it, suggested something rather more dynamic. When installing, we therefore moved upwards, bringing the long windows set high in the wall into the composition. Some of those who saw the hang spoke of it resembling a stained glass window in a church or assembly hall; others about it seeming reminiscent of the movement of a roller along a surface, spreading ink up a plate. Whilst I enjoyed the spatial dynamic this created, I was less enamoured of the selection used. Only half the BoW was hung; and the less-flamboyant of its prints, since the curator has a darker aesthetic to me. Personally, I craved more colour in the mix. A creative response was therefore incited.

My notion of extending this work, from installation into workshop became that I would add to the hang, with inkjet copies of the prints (made on the same Fabriano paper). The vital aspect here is that people could then take a print down from the wall and work onto it, into it. This idea had come from elsewhere, since when my boyfriend looks at these prints he often 'sees things in them'. Sharks eating seals, shoals of mackerel, toucans, cats in hats, weeping women, for example. Pete wondered how I might



feel about people making more of these 'images', drawing-out the imagery, perhaps introducing collage elements to tell stories. As far as I'm concerned, there are no 'images', but if these prints do open-up spaces for thinking, or seeing, then I am delighted. I generally welcome the making more-of.

Although the event was ticketed and ostensibly sold out, the vast majority of those who showed up that afternoon were my peers, unable to get tickets but invited into what I had always wanted to be an open-access space: in keeping with the environment of nomadacy or transition. No sense of organised formality was required, though there were some directions, as methods to navigate creative response. I had also printed off some examples of things participants might consider here: for I had piloted the workshop a few weeks previously with my Foundation students, at the culmination of a talk concerning my creative practice. The students had been encouraged to use those previous set of prints to extend their Final Major Project work, and seemingly had no difficulty bringing this material into their thinking. So I was intrigued to see how a selection of random others might respond to my provocations.⁴⁴

What occurred that afternoon in the LCC Canteen, was a cheerful chatty making *melée*. The assembled collective was a dozen Research Degree students from across UAL. Many of us meet online for *Test Lab* or *Art of Questioning* seminars, so this was welcome opportunity to be together in the flesh. Others joined from an adjacent workshop, bringing that different dynamic into this event. My brief introduction to my research was that would-be creative people need material and space; and that the *Extend* BoW (as part of the wider *Process Prints*) seem to offer possibilities for creative response. It seems that people do tend to see things in them ... Aside from the prints, I had brought magazines and newspapers for collage, scissors, glue sticks, pastels and marker pens, laying them out on a canteen table. In my experience, given



44. My DoS asked a student group he was with to review the *Unfolding Narratives* show as session exercise. One of these wrote a review of my work that began with a line that is extremely astute (just as the whole review was insightful):

If I were to describe Jonathan Martin's work it would be as 'weird'.
(David Woyo, Padlet review, 2024).



material to work with and some sense of direction, people will generally get on with it. It was no surprise then that these people made – and generally rather lovely things.

But the real delight was the conversation, snippets of which reached me. From what I could surmise, people were talking about their own projects with one another in their little huddles of engaged activity, making connections, questioning and supporting as they made art work pieces. Beyond the slightly formal presentations we give in our allotted time in structured *Test Lab* sessions, I sensed that the making activity was bringing-out nuances of intension. This is a big statement that I am unable to validate, other than through recourse to my own notion of solution. To render it differently, things occurred; though I am unable to explain quite what that might be, since it is beyond me. Yet I became conscious, during that ninety-minutes of workshop, that what we were really creating was a sense of *chōra*. Perhaps it is obvious that we would; or that I would see that in this. Someone made a collage peice which figured an elephant; so their elephant was noticed. As Whitehead suggests: 'Facility of observation depends on the fact that the object observed is important when present, and sometimes is absent' (1985:4). This motile, fluid solution of creative bodies in collaborative, collegiate space, generated the sort of amorphous, enigmatic vibrancy in process, that feels to me like the practical manifestation of a philosophical concept.

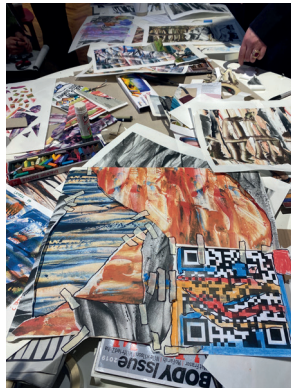


Image credit and copyright, Mercedes Lundy 2024

Sally: July 2021

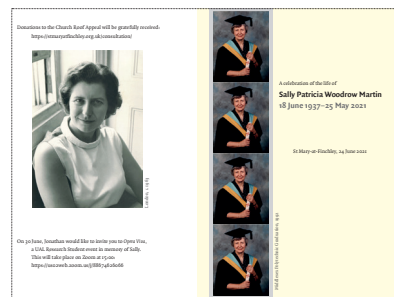
We found an image in my mother's desk drawer, a portrait shot of her. Neither of us had seen it before, and it was a shock: a stunning image, a beautiful picture of our mother, before either of us was born. One can only speculate as to why it had been forgotten about in the midst of the paperwork, the documents and certificates and pictorial ephemera of her 80-odd years. It was one of the two that we used on the funeral Order of Service: images that most people would not have seen. Other faces of Sally.

For Sally had many aspects. In any life lived a person will change, as their life moves and develops and they become other facets of themselves. A life is complex, and a person is numerous versions of the person they were and will be. Attitudes and perspectives shift as situations alter, knowledge comes and goes, roles are played. My mother's life was not exceptional, but was as unique as any life must inherently be, a peculiar set of occurrences and manoeuvres. She played many parts, and also in others' lives, which I learned more about in the weeks after her death. Our particular relationship – which had coloured the way I perceived her during her life – was but one of sundry significant relationships for her, contributing to her variety. The image we found seems to have been taken by someone that she had some connection with, judging by the gaze and the enigmatic smile. She is a young woman, radiant and alert, and looks to have made particular effort with her appearance. The hairstyle is late-1950s, the clothes early-1960s; the setting one I cannot identify, but perhaps an upper room in a Soho or Fitzrovia Ad agency or theatrical agents. Sally became pregnant in 1964 when she was 27; and I surmise this would have been a few years prior to that. I presume the photographer was a man, but whether this was a professional shot or a personal one is debatable. It wasn't a time of profile pictures for self-publicity, but

the actors on Barry Brown's books would evidently have required them. Sally worked as Barry's assistant and it would be several decades before she would take to the stage herself (joining an am-dram group when she was in her mid-sixties), so the purpose of this photograph is fundamentally unclear. For my purposes this uncertainty is fitting.

Yet the gaze of the subject looking directly into the lens is deliberate. My mother was not a confident person generally speaking, and indeed our last conversation brought this sharply into focus. Whilst her life was not one of extreme privation, she suffered from a lack of affection and the sense that she was in some way lacking. This is one of the reasons why I find this particular image so extraordinary and am arrested by it, since whilst absolutely 'her' facially and emotionally (that twinkle in the eye ...) the demeanour is one I am less familiar with. As her child it is wonderful to see my mother looking so self-assured and radiant. If I am able to divorce this biological connection and regard the image objectively, I see an attractive, intelligent young woman, enjoying the moment of morning sunlight by an open sash window in an interior space. There is little detail of the room itself, and it might be quite shabby, but there are clues to it once having been quite stylish: it is no sterile office cubicle. At any rate, the figure appears to be positioned in a corner, and the geometrical repetition and dynamic angularity of the linearity of the window framing on one side and door on the other, serve as counterpoint to the organic curves of the seated woman in the foreground, with the round standing collar of the dress orbiting her neck like a dog collar, her bare shoulder and dark wavy hair gently lit by soft natural light. There is considerable contrast in the image, as these compositional devices and the chiaroscuro, but also in the countenance of the figure, whose visage is at once open and somehow concealed. Just what is on her mind?

Finding the image at that particular time held an immediate significance, yet one of the multiplicity of heightened emotion,



discovery and loss that constitutes the aftermath of a sudden death. I questioned whether it was the right one for the funeral Order of Service, eventually deciding that it would be one of two that would show the congregation views of Sally they were perhaps not familiar with (on the front cover was her BA graduation shot from Middlesex, rendered as a passport strip). Whilst the younger-Sally portrait would have made a beautiful front, it is almost too perfect an image, and somehow disingenuous, since my mother was keen to stress that she was no saint. Any halo was certainly of the slipped sort.⁴⁵ Moreover this showed Sally at a time when no-one present in the church would possibly have known her, as a different person, before motherhood, maybe before church-going, so it seemed a wrong way to introduce them to a celebration of her life which would allow them to remember the role she had played in theirs. Instead it came as a parting gift, with invitation to coffee and cake in the church hall and also to *Opera Viva*, dedicated to her memory. But the image was too strong to relegate to the back cover of a programme brochure, and I recognised in the uncertainty of that month-long period following her death that I needed to use it better. So it became a Riso print. I had hitherto been a little ambivalent, verging on dismissive of the Risograph machine, which whilst popular in the Foundation printroom and wider image-making circles, with its lowfi hipster caché. I have perceived as a fairly limited means of reproduction, albeit with a welcome degree of chance imperfection. Its particular affordance from my perspective is as a swift means of processing a photographic image, hence sometimes likened to a 'silkscreen machine'. In the first instance I made some A3 copies, in Flat Gold on G F Smith paper for those people who were to perform creative roles at the funeral: the singers of the choral tribute, the lady who arranged the flowers. And for Paul, without whom the Order of Service would have been less full of life and verve; and has been one of the number of those who have helped me understand more about my mother. Rendering the image in a different format also



45. Yet the Rev.d Stephan Christostimou, who had been a sort-of surrogate son when he came to St Mary's as a curate, in his sermon-address (according to her wishes), spoke of a fridge magnet he had brought her from Cyprus, of St Barnabus known as The Encourager. This is how Stephan saw Sally. ee also pp. 252-3.

gave me a sense that it would have life beyond its initial usage for me, as I saw it transformed from a b&w photograph into a tonal composition with materiality: a sensual shift.

In the past several weeks I have used this as the basis of a large body of work. When Ma died I had been making prints using the roller as a medium / device for picking-up-and-putting-down: colour, marks, material residue. This transference and repetition of a plane onto a different surface has been intriguing me for some time, from the *Roller Drawings* of 2019, through *Chōrography* into *Key Terms*. Having reached an impasse with JB, I was in some ways delighted to have a new problem to contend with, since this Sally image required other consideration.⁴⁶ As so often, the place to start was where I was at that point; so I used the roller to apply the planes from the ink scrapings, the continuation of the *Roller Waste* work that *Key Terms* begat. Here though, it was not the leftover ink from another print I was using, but deliberate colour laid down (squeezed and rolled out) with the hues and shades particularly selected. Initially the choice was a simple 'colours that I associate with Ma' – of favoured tones, those she wore or I knew she liked. On reflection there is a further connotation. I often bought her scarves, for she usually wore a scarf. In the Redbourne Avenue flat clearance I had decreed that her scarves be passed onto friends, along with any jewellery as appropriate to them. Some I decided to distribute myself, to people not immediately apparent but to whom I knew such a memento of Sally would have significance. It is those which are the particular ink colours I was mixing: mossy greens and khakis, deep blues, silver greys, rich purples and dusky pinks. If those earliest prints are not hugely successful, this realisation means that I can work them further, since the scarf patterns are likewise built up in layers. It is possible that those first prints need more conscious pattern-making, further adornment.

There is a hesitancy in these prints, with the roller or mono print applied sparingly. It is a deliberate action to deface an image of one's recently-deceased mother, and whilst I had no difficulty

46. The use of the roller in my practice is becoming a key concern. Elsewhere I have identified it as my conceptual tool, since in its physical manifestation it is a matrix: in printmaking parlance a carrier of data for transference. These thoughts are extended in the other writings of this set of text blocks, (*Risoller*; *Becoming Jonathan* and in the subsequent *Bodies of Work*), but require further deliberation in my thesis.

with that decision emotionally, I was and am intrigued by the conceptual connotation. My whole response to my mother's death has been curious; and this is an aspect of my continued exploration of the image. If the portrait photograph from which the *Risograph* comes is beautiful or perfect, my augmentation of it disrupts, obscures or otherwise effects that state. The marks I make in printmaking tend to be angular and erratic, rarely graceful or elegant, and if there is an eventual harmony it will be derived from an interplay of these other movements. My laying-down of colour – of ink – is only ever momentarily considered, as the smearing across the plate or roller interruption/continuation brings about an intriguing mark, which I suspect will 'do' something. I might have an idea about a particular colour/combination, aesthetically or conceptually, which I am often working with over the course of a day-session in the printroom, varying technique or paper stock as see the results developing. Whilst the skill of practice plays a part in the decision-making, it is just as instinctive, with a deliberately cavalier approach which aims towards novelty ... Whitehead's words are so often in my psyche here, as I build up my appreciation of process, as creative advance. The end of *The Function of Reason* is particularly salient in this instance, where Whitehead makes some pertinent comments about the interplay of thought and practice.⁴⁷ The speculative Reason for which he is making a case, aims toward elucidation, and thus the upward trend (since Reason promotes 'the art of life' [e.g. Whitehead, 1958:3]). As I work I recognise that the practice I am developing depends upon a variety of components, which include time and space predominantly, material essentially, trial and error and the medium of reflection habitually, which is to some extent Whitehead's Reason. As I look back to those early prints, made around the time of the funeral, I see that there is an attempt to make something of the image, as of the experience and material, but an uncertainty about what I am wanting to achieve.

There are motifs evident in these prints, too. Waves are

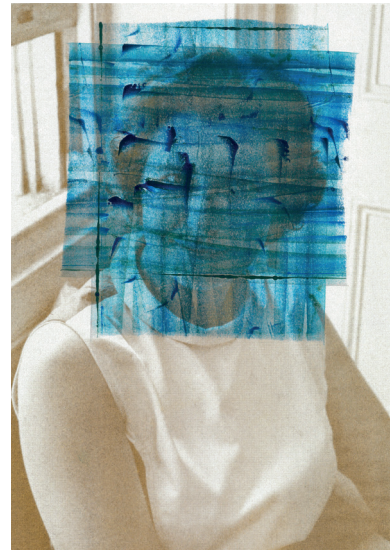


47. 1958:92.

JONATHAN: if you cut cut a line here or opposite to avoid a one line para opening at bottom of spread it would be truly idea

discernible: a deliberate starting point for several reasons. Explanation of these is not relevant to this current description, and it can suffice to note that this oceanic allusion may return to later iterations of this Body of Work. I was also interested in a degree of obscuring and the revealing of detail, which the 'scrapings' technique facilitates. Its *ad hoc* nature means that it is not possible to accurately predict or control what these visible or hidden elements might be, which I perceive as appropriate in this context, for in a not altogether dissimilar sense to when our perceptions of our (inter-)relationships evoke and shift as new insights eradicate the sense of previous reckonings, or revelations otherwise alter understanding. For me making the prints too, this iterative process in which I am presented with each lifting of print from plate or the duration of the roller's course with a changed view is somehow enlightening.⁴⁸ These prints are not made to illustrate Sally's characteristics or life story particularly, so the transformations of image are rather indicative of possibility and results of (printmaking) interplay. The processing of it in these ways is an exploration of what it might next become, and there is no intention of arriving at the 'right one'. Some work better or less well, some need reworking. As so often in process work, one outcome will suggest the next attempts, whether in the quest for a refinement or in the identification of a movement of application.

A particular shift came when I discovered a technique I am calling 'Risoller', which I discuss elsewhere, since I suggest this as a significant contribution to printmaking. Aside from the technique and resultant prints, the process entails a revolution of the roller, entire or partial, across a section of the image. It is a quirk of the roller that the cylindrical revolution produces a rectangle of flat ink on the substrate. This is often of relevance to me as the echo of motif, since I have visualised my *block* as a rectangle. Of course (or evidently to me) a roller drawing becomes more interesting in subsequent revolutions, as the marks of its progress across the plain are laid down and the next iteration is



48. If this suggests that printmaking is mechanical, it is erroneous. The roller is a device, that works in interaction with the maker; so its mediation is likewise controlled by my arm, completed at the point at which it feels right. If mechanical then, it is a sensual, organically physical, bodily mechanics.

fainter or flatter, demarcated by vertical stripes; and these quirks have informed the larger body of work that can be grouped together under the banner of *Process Prints*. Yet the single roller rectangle has really only manifested itself in *Sally*.⁴⁹ There is an elegance to this which is seductive, as a mark mediated by the roller, which is receptacle-matrix; and also one of the most purely basic prints that can be made. In the terms of my research, a *creative block* can be produced via a chōric device, visualised, utilised.⁵⁰ How it appears will be dependent on the myriad factors of rolled ink on paper stock, so here again control can only ever be relative. In *Sally* I have tended to apply the block to the face, colouring, highlighting, censoring or otherwise disrupting. It is furthermore a mask; which is also a term used in image-making, as means of temporarily protecting an aspect of an image from the process about to be applied to the image, or of creating shape. Seeing the effect of some of these reminded me of that way of working, so various prints have used the block as a prompt to further masking, protecting that element from the subsequent addition of colour or mark, whether via roller or acetate plate. In the later prints, made by layering a second Riso image (*Becoming Jonathan*) over this initial work, this block-mask has yet more striking function, facilitating some alteration of facial features by the shapes from that image. This is currently work in the earlier stages of exploration; but the Serra adage of 'work makes/generates work' is clearly at play.⁵¹ In the Risoller endeavour, where I have been looking for a particular 'rightness' of print, many similar versions of a particular image are produced in the process. One of the interesting aspects of Risoller (and indeed its offshoot which is somewhere between Risief and Risaglio, though significantly less interesting to me currently) is that these interim-prints have a validity of their own, existing as prints themselves, and thus ground for individual investigation.

For these reasons, it is apparent that I need to cut a lino block, to work alongside and augment the existing body of *Sally*. The volume of material that has been produced as this has evolved

49. Though also in *Becoming Jonathan*, developed concurrently, discussed subsequently [though not in this thesis].

50. In the Risoller technique, this will be part of the process of working towards the Risoller print.



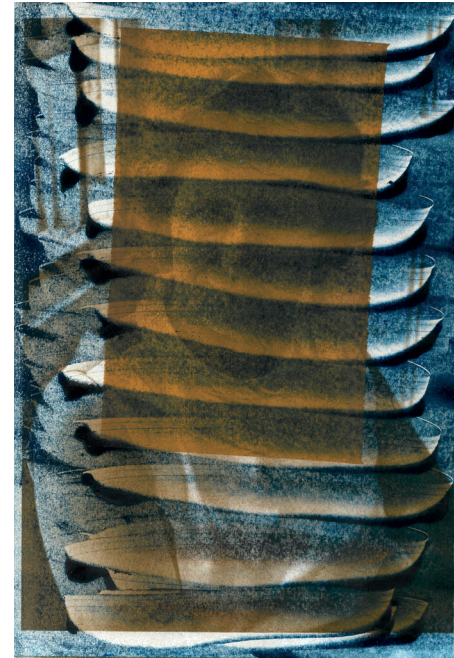
51. (Serra, 1992)

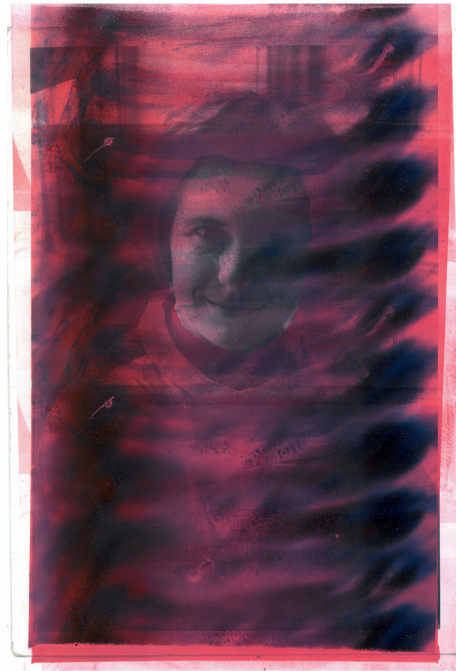
indicates the potential of this combination of process and various of the individual outcomes made from these have achieved some quality: there are a number of what I would term 'strong prints'. But this way of working, speculatively, as an interplay of trial, error, discovery and serendipity means that a proportion of the quantity is less engaging, a frustration to be handled. Printmaking for me is a discipline which involves visual interplay too, as layers are built and an image develops in the making. Whilst a failed attempt can be disappointing, the patience borne of practice allows one to set this aside for subsequent return. Reflection might identify the initially unseen glimmer to be extruded or replicated, or the whole thing may become the backdrop of a different idea. Various of the Riso-monos I have made are less-interesting versions of a (subsequent or previous) stronger version – which also undermine their mono status. I have little interest in editioning. Linocut blocks are a recurring medium in my work, an entry-level means of printmaking introduced in primary school and so accessible (and reasonably immediate) which also meets my desire for a matrix which may be high-contrast graphic but, dependent on the inking, also looser and less emphatic. In common with heterogeneous printmaking techniques, treated with healthy disrespect, lino is more adaptable than it might initially appear. Just as engagement with Riso has opened the process out from my initial conceptions of it as a rudimentary reproductive technique into something which provides a basis for more fluid thinking, I envisage that bringing a lino block into play will re-invigorate the 'missing' images.

Looking at the subject of the image, a person, with characteristics and dimensions, it seems vital to maintain any possibility of flexibility in the construction of each image, since Sally is a body of work rather than a quest for an ultimate single one. Even though this already comprises many (as one), it seems to be necessary to keep increasing whether by one or various.⁵² Rather like my mother, this work is ongoing, incomplete, enigmatic.



52. 'The novel entity is at once the togetherness of the "many" which it finds, and also it is one among the disjunctive "many" which it leaves: it is a novel entity, disjunctively among the many entities which it synthesizes. The many become one, and are increased by one.' (Whitehead, 1985:21). Whitehead's explanation of the ways in which things come to be, in existence (as actual entities or actual occasions) positions creativity as the basic fact of life, underlying and presupposing all. Death and becoming, made re-possible by perishing, are implicit within this.

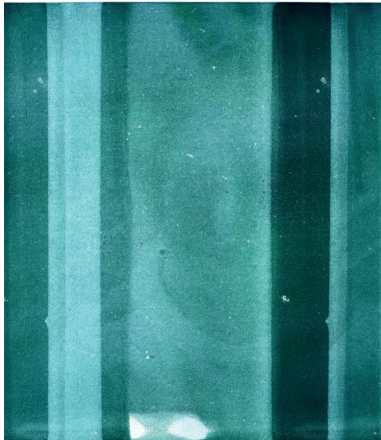




PROCESS 268

Sally 269

Risoller: July 2021



Risoller is a printmaking technique which I am developing, from my initial discovery of it in June 2021. So termed since it utilises a Risograph print and the medium of a hand roller to generate a further offset print, Risoller images have a particular quality borne of interplay: they are hybrid, irregular, suggestive, a sort of bastard reasoning.⁵³ Beyond their aesthetic appearance, which indicates process, this way of printmaking affords a means of working through an idea, as a direct embodiment of development.

Why

The first Risoller print appeared through chance. I had been working simultaneously on two or three Bodies of Work, which is my preference at the moment, using the same inks to work across these, reaching a point and leaving one to address an other. That day *Becoming Jonathan* was proving problematic. Although I had a good basis with a strong photographic image of a mother and child in a striking pose of transition, rendered as a Risograph in a 1970s orange, the roller marks or drawings I was attempting to augment it with were failing to develop my thinking. Rather than introducing further dimensionality to the scene these attempts appeared like (bad) decoration; or incongruous addition. Becoming frustrated I turned away from this growing stack of failures to the more abstract, and happily-decorative *Process Prints*.⁵⁴ The ink was running out for the day, and I was essentially using up what was left – as in the *Roller Waste* prints where this practice / way of working became apparent and which I now tend to employ when printmaking.⁵⁵ These end-of-the-day images are often the most successful of a session, with a cavalier looseness that brings happen-chance vitality to the outcome. It is for this

53. This is an expression taken from Plato's discussion around the Receptacle in the *Timaeus* (851b), otherwise translated as 'spurious' in some introduction (Plato; and Lee, 1977:71). Relating to the interplay between Forms, Copies and Space (ibid), the notion of bastard reasoning is an important one in creative production. Naomi Reshotko's explication (1977) is a useful contextualising device.

54. [This (wider) Body of Work, or printmaking attitude, is discussed and illustrated across the thesis].

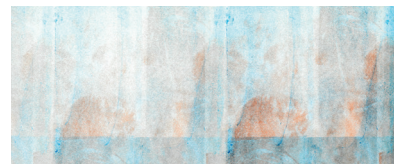
55. A body of work I began in 2019, which uses the roller very directly as a printmaking device, which not only disperses and applies ink to a paper substrate but functions also as substrate, holding matter and having the capacity to apply it to a further substrate. It is this characteristic of the roller (as matrix) which makes it so conceptually fascinating to me – especially in relation to my readings of the Receptacle and *chōra*.

reason that I appreciate the more 'unlikely' prints, for they are not intentional attempts to express or reflect, but unpredictable effects of printmaking process, rendered as print. Deleuze and Guattari's first definition of 'process' incorporates production, recording and consumption as interdependent;⁵⁶ and such a reading is highly applicable in the context of this way of practice.

So I passed the roller over the inking plate which had the remnants of some blue ink on it, reckoning that the rolled rectangular block it would produce might serve as background for the pass of a narrower gauge roller with more vibrant colour or dynamic marks. My mood was distracted, for I felt it unlikely that I would achieve anything that mattered much in this session. It was one of those that feels futile and makes me wonder what I am doing with all this ... Therefore it was with considerable surprise that in the moment after passing the blue-inked roller over the paper surface (which makes this form of print)⁵⁷ that I saw not only the pale blue rectangle I expected, but the ghost of the orange Risograph image within it. Ghost prints are a delightful possibility in much printmaking, though largely eschewed since they are fundamentally an afterthought; so if they are taken (made) will be done so deliberately. Conversely, accidental offsetting is a processual hazard, and an image indelibly emblazoned on the blankets of a press is a reminder that one had better take more care to protect the wadding from wet ink and dampened paper ... What I saw in that blue block was a combination of such happen-chance: a previous image offset in this current one. The blue was faint and flecked with other roller-marks, the orange also pale and verging on khaki in the overlay. But the image of those two figures was legible: her and him, woman and infant, cropped to a detail, features distinguishable. Part of why this was unexpected was that I couldn't quite grasp how it had got there. There has sometimes been a trace of a previous lino in my next rolling, and I have been playing for some time with the capacity of a roller to pick up marks made by Conté, charcoal or softer pencil. However,

56. Deleuze and Guattari, 2003:4.

57. i.e. *Process Prints*, which I have previously termed *Roller Drawings*. Using the roller as drawing tool is a development of my practice which has occurred during my research degree. Interrogation of the philosophical implications of this practice, where the roller is matrix (and thereby Receptacle), is becoming a significant aspect of my developing thesis.



so far as I was concerned the Riso image had no business being thus transferred ...

How

What I have come to realise is that the soy-based ink is unstable for some time after it has been machine-printed and can be smudged, hence Risographs require a day or so drying time on the rack. My experiments demonstrate that immediately after printing, relief ink (of certain colours / pigment compositions) will reactivate Riso ink so that it can be offset: the roller-matrix will pick up un-dried image-information as it simultaneously lays down flat colour on the unstable Risograph. This transfer of data is subject to the multitude of vagaries of most printmaking processes, whereby the elements all exert their own influences on the print outcome. Yet there is an inherent possibility of making something new through the process and the processing of the image. For me as someone who thinks through process this lack of control is advantageous, since whilst the intent is set, the making process shows up the unplanned, as visualised demonstration of creative advance into novelty. To regard each print produced on its individual appearance, as thing-in-itself, is to approach a situation without (or to limit) preconception. Because Risoller is – or seems to be – inherently technique of chance, even prints made by the same means of approach have distinctively unique qualities, so whilst one may aim for replication, the very process of replication seems to countermand it. To suggest that Risoller has a somewhat rebellious / anarchic nature might seem fanciful, yet it would certainly seem to defy control.

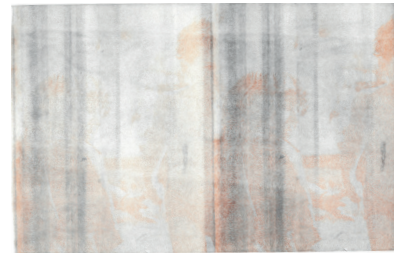
On more logical reading, the way that Risoller operates is to edit, whether or not it echoes. The roller will pick up a section of the print, bounded by the dimensions of the cylinder, and that will become the information that it transfers. Therefore aspects less-apparent in the Risograph are brought into focus in such differently-framed composition. For example, when working



with the *Becoming Jonathan* image, the hands of the woman and child, as one of various points of interest, become the pivot of many of the Risoller prints. The shape they make is rendered more angular and emotionally tense, prompting question of what those hands are doing: coming together, grasping onto, breaking apart? ... Of course, this is dependent on the roller having come into contact with the hands, or any other aspect of the Risograph: whether the printmaker has attempted to capture that particular data and indeed the path of the roller in this instance. To some extent, these immediate instances of temporal chance are what is relayed in the Risoller. In some prints the woman is the stronger figure, in others it is the child. A stronger impression of the floral pattern on the woman's dress may occur, since this often pops out when thus isolated. If the child is highlighted, filling the Risoller frame his stature increases. Personally I see a bronze cherub in this depiction, one of a pair that used to flank the bird bath in my parents' garden, but this is my own rather painful association; more objectively the little boy now seems almost colossus, striding forward confidently, with the hard stare of intent. We might see any of these aspects in the Risographed image of course, but in the Risoller, separated from its wider bucolic context they suggest new meanings.

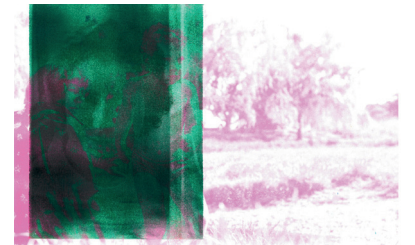
What

The visual quality of Risoller images is another very pertinent aspect of this discovery: I do not think they are like any other prints. The process is akin to offset lithography, where an image or text is picked up from a flat, smooth surface and transferred to another via a cylindrical substrate. However that technique is intended to produce an approximately perfect reproduction for dissemination, generally in some degree of mass. Risoller is resolutely hand-made and individual, though I have made many attempts to achieve a particular sort of print as I see the possibilities becoming apparent and strive for a better result. Yet each of



those made is slightly different. It is not only the composition or colouration which makes difference, but the intensity of the image. A Risoller generally has a fairly light tone – since it is in effect a result of excess. In some prints detail breaks down to the point of texture or noise. Any fading is itself a somewhat unusual quality in printmaking, which tends to aim for crispness and clarity and where washed-out is often judged dud. In the particular case of those *Bodies of Work* in which the process has emerged, however (dealing with images of the past, and the deceased), there is a conceptual rationale to this aesthetic occurrence. These times have passed; these people are no more as perished, and thereby transformed into other beings or data – or actual entities.⁵⁸ An ephemeral rendition affords a transitory dimensionality to the idea as incomplete, or completed, suggestive, evocative. These prints are not about memory, for they hold no sense of that for me: whether or not I was physically present when the original photograph from which the Risograph is made was taken, I have no sense of such attachment of me-mory. Yet regardless of the colours that emerge or are deliberately used, Risoller prints have a sepia-quality which indicate a-contemporaneousness, past, or passed history; his-tory; hi-story. Many images evoke narrative, so the processing of an image will augment its capacity for such meaning-making.

Other affordances of it are emerging as I work with it. Because I have been moving between bodies of work – separate but related – I tried applying one Risoller image to another Risograph. Visually and conceptually this was awkward, since it felt crass and unhelpful in the development of the thinking. However my trialing processes require further applications of the same loaded roller, 'just to see' if there's anything there, remaining or amended. It was in this that I realised that a second image could be added; or a second revolution of the roller on the same image would pick up a second layer of information. On the *Becoming Jonathan* Risograph this happens to develop the image itself, since the roller offsets



58. An allusion to the philosophy of organism, which is Whitehead's explication of process thinking. The concept of an actual entity is pertinent to the notion of becoming, or 'creative advance into novelty' (e.g. Whitehead, 1985:21).



some of the data it has just collected back onto the image, so that the mother and child are repeated more faintly, and one might read this in the sense of motion of projection, forward into life beyond now, to the future and beyond into history. The Risoller that comes from this contains all the information of the roller's journey across the Risograph, thereby increasing in complexity. In this instance the figures and the background merge, or are enmeshed, as in Deleuze and Guattari's second definition of process:

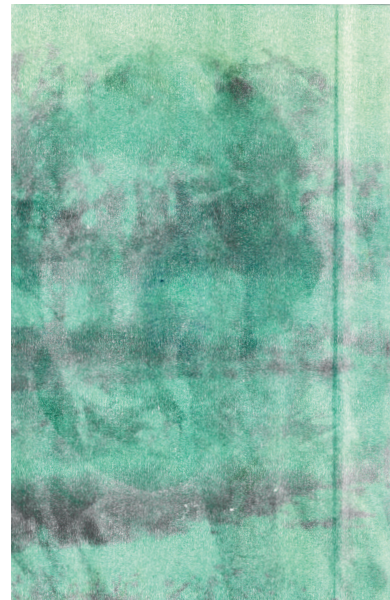
... man and nature are not two opposite terms confronting one another
... rather, they are one and the same essential reality, the producer-product. Production as process overtakes all idealistic categories and constitutes a cycle whose relationship to desire is that of immanent principle ... (Deleuze & Guattari, 2003:4).

Where

It is in this method, perhaps that of 'desiring-production', that I have found the overlap of these two Risograph images. The application of one to the other produces a Risoller print that is an aggregate, which evolves the crassness of that first attempt into a more sophisticated conglomeration. The binary of one and the other is dissolved into a solution of potential, where certain features will be brought to the fore depending on how the light strikes or the eye focuses. Poses are broken down into more abstract, gestural information, and its interplay throws up new compositions and narrative possibilities. Those prints I have made which combine aspects of *Sally* and *Becoming Jonathan* are the more mysterious and haunting, redolent in their illegibility.

When

The softening of subject and sense is echoed by the physicality of the technique, in which the production process is exemplified. In this printmaking, the means of making is more clearly represented within the print itself than in other forms of printmaking practice.



Completion of a roller revolution, a 360° cycle, is marked by a band of intense colour and then conversely by a fainter stripe, or series of stripes: points of contact are recorded and transferred. Imperfections in the rolled ink may similarly be conveyed into the print, where grains of hardened ink skin on the roller surface are translated as unprinted dots of white paper showing through the print, disrupting visual smoothness as irritation. Stray hairs become flecks or burrs. But further optical noise may be externally introduced as an image is re-worked through iteration. The Risograph is an inherently temperamental machine – contrary to the Japanese translation of Riso as 'perfect science' – and a print will often become stuck on its ink cylinder drum, jamming the mechanism and requiring human intervention.⁵⁹ Subsequent ink build-ups or creases to the print master (which is wrapped around the interior drum) may then be transported onto the next Risograph prints, these blemishes or wrinkles indicating the deterioration of the master. For there is also a very temporal aspect to the Risograph, which is designed for mass reproduction at speed, rather than for dully constant endurance. When in reproduction it shudders and pulses, with an audible clatter akin to a washing machine spin cycle. A maker may experience the thrill of watching a sheet of blank paper be sucked in from one end and spat out the other as Risograph: shooting not rolling. Its mechanism is more analogue than the contemporary inkjet or laser printer, and the visual physicality of its production an aspect of its current popularity among the younger generation of creative practitioners in our digital age. Those Risograph (or Risoller) prints which show these imperfections are testament to the ageing process and the effects of time and use on the artefact, the body – or on the moment that the image aims to capture and the futility of that quest. It can be seen as manifestation that the world moves on, that this too shall perish.



59. Where fact meets feeling. In *Science and the Modern World* (1928), Whitehead wryly questions the authority of the prevalent societal ruler, so often at the expense of other (more creative) speculative modes of thought. From my own perspective, 'perfection' signals moribund dullness, for I prefer the potential of more partial understanding.



Addendum: September 2021

Now; If

Risoller prints need not be on paper.⁶⁰ Having reached a point with Sally and *Becoming Jonathan* where I was ready to leave them be for a while since both seemed to have reached a plateau, I came across some bookcloth. This is material which interests me as an element that may be used in construction of an object, as ‘covers’ in bookbinding. There is more to say about both the book-as-object and about book jackets; but the relevance here is really that backcloth is textured – and processual. For previous projects (e.g. *Florilegium*, 2019) I have thought about printing onto it, considering both silkscreen and relief printmaking processes though have pursued neither. Yet the appearance of the material at this point relates peculiarly to the image quality that I am discovering with Risoller, including its linear striations suggestive of spines or flaps; and I have started to explore its affordances.

Returning to copyedit the Sally writing today I was reminded of her scarves as emblematic of my ‘processing’ of her, and remembering the colourful fabric as I serendipitously saw some colourful fabric scraps available for student use.⁶¹ Initial investigations have shown that just as on bookcloth, Risoller on fabric has potential for development. Whilst I am not intending to turn my images into soft furnishings or accessories, I am intrigued by the textures and patterns beyond those available on paper that these other materials bring to the creative equation. Other printmaking processes have similar capability, but as essentially hand-rendered or administered, Riosoller might seem to offer additional dexterity. Potentially it could be employed in more site-specific work – although any such possibility would still be dependent on the availability of fresh Risograph; and temporal implications remain prevalent. These are but early considerations, so my sense is that application will emerge through experience, just as the process has.

60. The desire to make non-paper prints and for dimensionality of form has always been an aspect of my printmaking practice. I made a dressing gown printed with continental breakfast foods at A-level; and my BA show, *Jungle*, was a 3-D printmade metropolis replete with diggers and cranes.

61. ‘Being and becoming student’ is a significant aspect of my practice and creative identity. Regardless of my given status in particular situations (at Wilson Road I am essentially Foundation tutor, despite it being the location also of ‘my’ printroom space), as someone exploring and discovering, as research and development, I feel like student. This is in some way justification for my material curiosity and acquisition, as here. However, more importantly the interplay of teaching and learning (not intending allusion to any commodification of education, this relationship might also be seen as that of producer-product ...) has been instrumental in the development of my practice and therefore of Risoller. As hybrid, or mongrel, the process draws on what exists as a foundation for exploration of other territory. Any creative advance into novelty makes virtue of that which exists in relation to that which might become. But as Whitehead suggests in relation to ‘the rhythms of education’ (1951: 24–44), advance is circular, involving back and forth and recurring (if not eternal) return.

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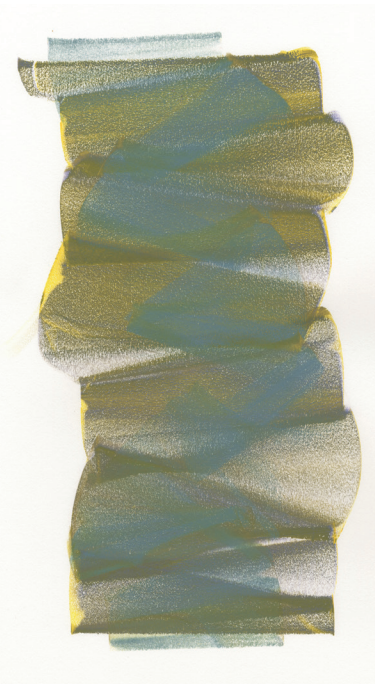
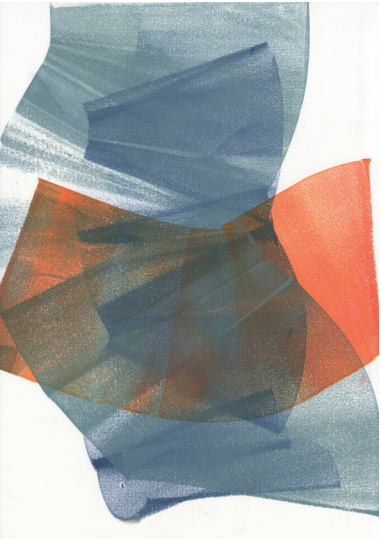
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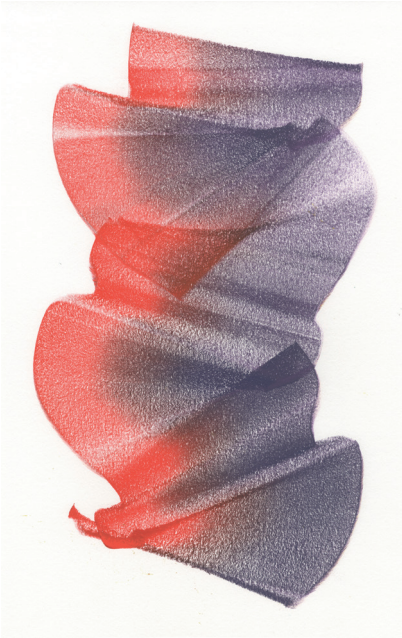
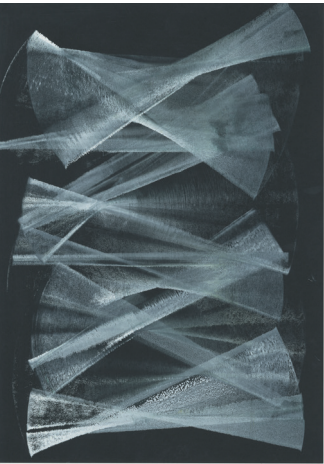


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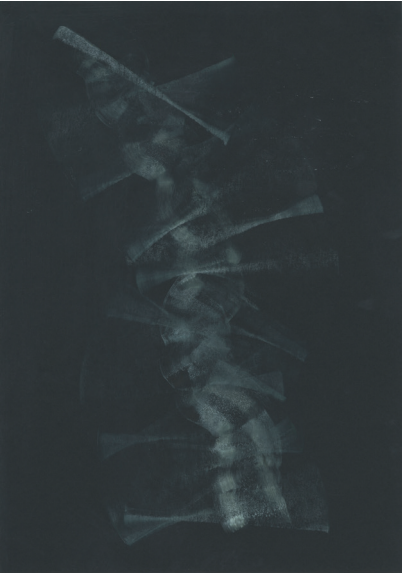
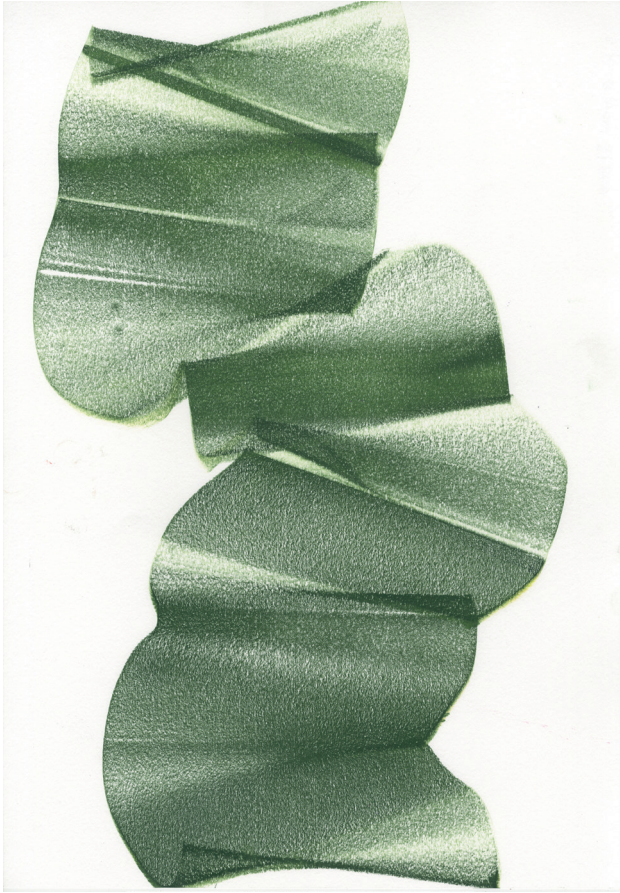
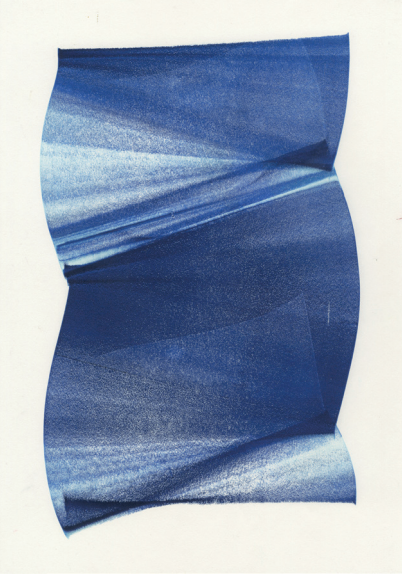
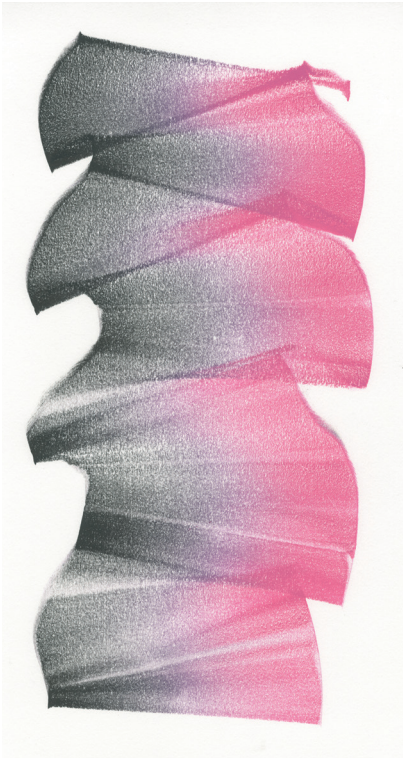


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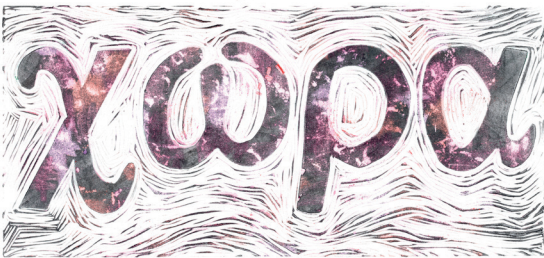
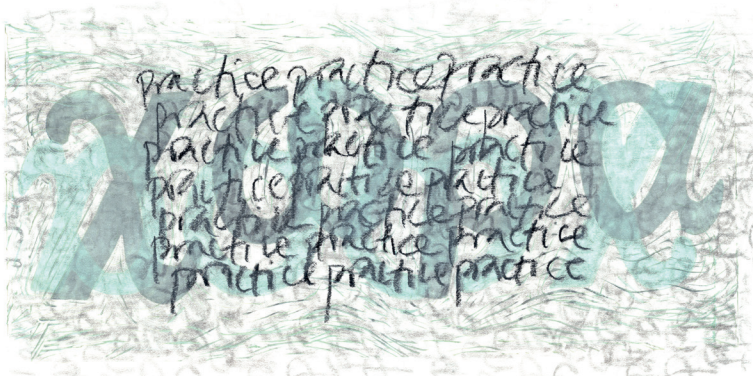
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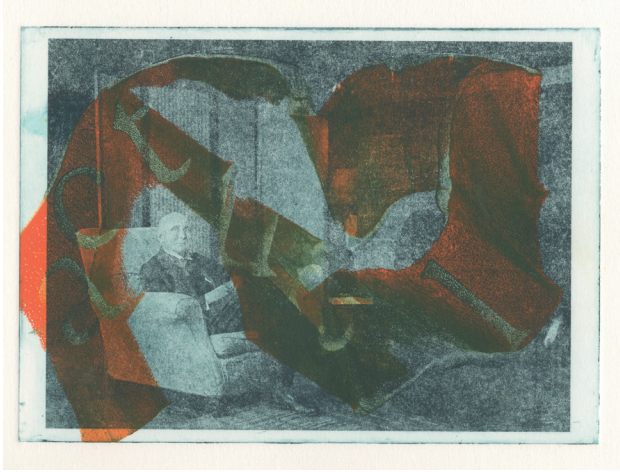
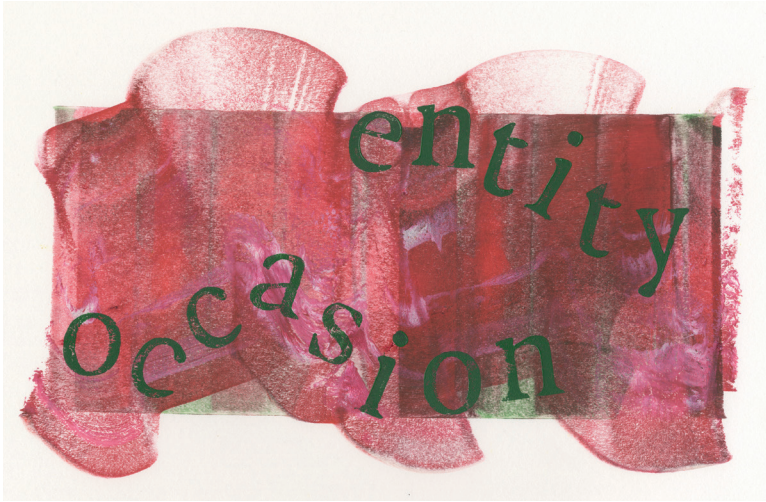
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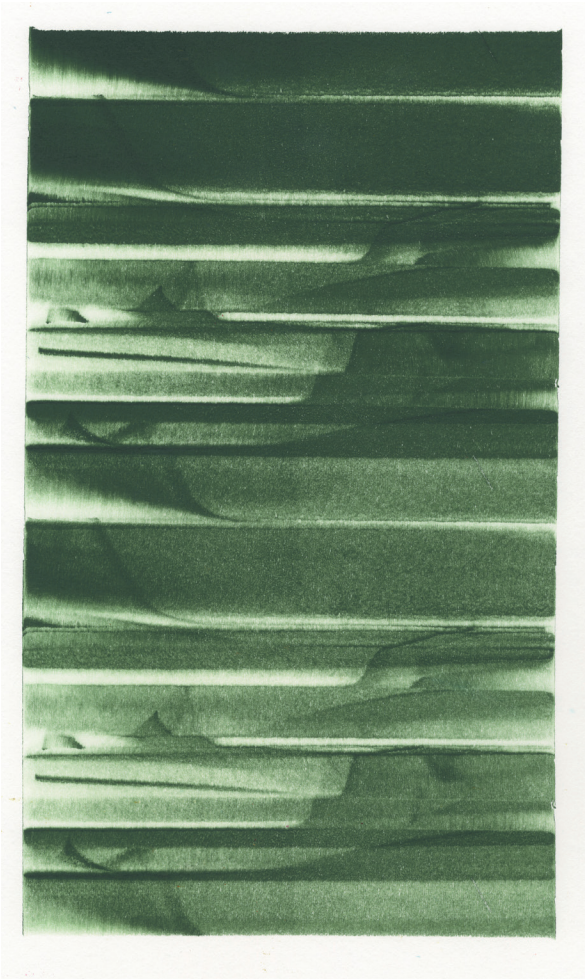
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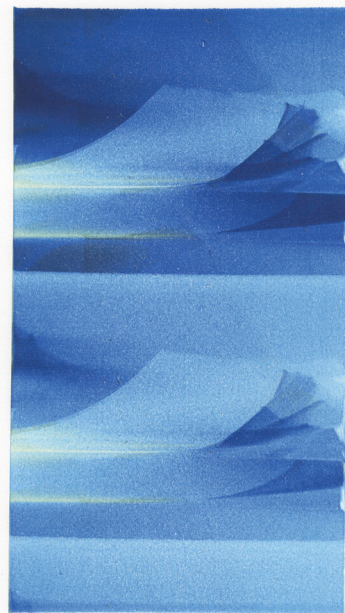
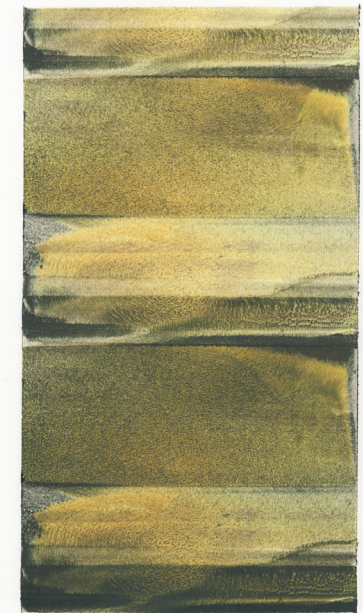
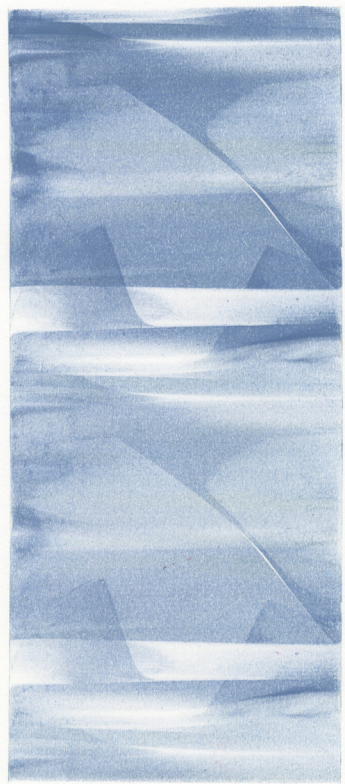
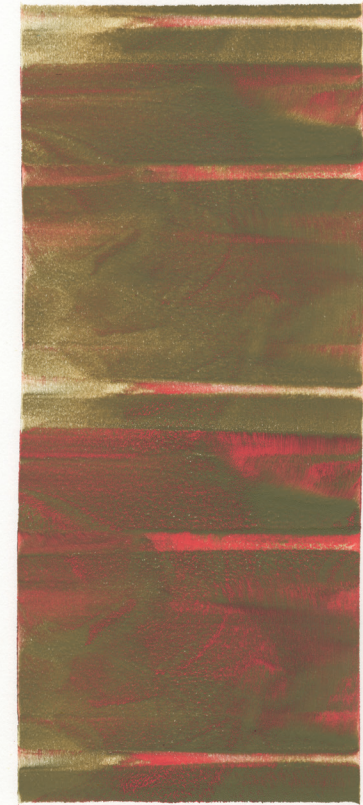
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BoW 308



Ghost Strata 309

