

An Alternative Portrait: Beyond the physical form

by

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Abstract

The concept of *An Alternative Portrait* was derived from a long-standing fascination with the human body's interior configurations and the potential of these to evoke the essence of individuality and bodily presence (or portrait). My objective is to capture ideas of self and embodiment through experiential and emotive marks and transitions expressed within broad fields of colour. My investigation references both loosely arranged and tightly constructed abstracted patterning evident in formally structured art and the apparent human need for visual order that pattern provides.

A survey of artists who look beyond literal representations of the human form and natural processes commenced with the work of Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky. Klee observed pattern and cyclical rhythms in nature supplemented with linear motion and vertical extension, while Kandinsky used the human form as a starting point to demonstrate pure abstraction. Ideas expressing individual spirituality can be found in the work of Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko.

The capacity of representations of invisible natural processes to extend our understanding of human minutiae is evident in the work of Christine Borland who documents decay, and Susan Derges who captures natural cycles in photograms. Other artists who use forms of pattern to express abstracted natural processes include Anne Morrison and Catherine Woo. Both engage the natural world in observations of underlying processes, structures, and natural rhythms and exhibit qualities that I attach to the human body. Chuck Close employs a complex form of patterning in a systematic approach that is abstract yet surreal. A strong attachment to process is referenced in Steffen Dam's exquisitely structured organic forms suspended in glass and in the materiality of Dale Frank's abstract portraits. The media I chose to express *An Alternative Portrait* delivers luminous qualities evident in the atmospherics of Janet Laurence's installation aesthetic and Antonio Murado's colour-fields.

Significant sources of ideas about pattern are E H Gombrich and Kent Bloomer. The indexical natures of perception and awareness as these relate to phenomenological

ideas of body, self, embodiment, to communicating subjective experience, and to a contemporary concept of the sublime are examined with reference to Emmanuel Kant, Barnett Newman, Billy Collins, Mark Johnson, Francois Pluchart, David Peat, Drew Leder, Tracey Warr, and Maurice Merlot-Ponty.

An Alternative Portrait invites new readings of the body as a site of physical and imagined presence. I leave an audience to its own associations giving primacy to a subjective interpretation.

Introduction

The aim, in *An Alternative Portrait: beyond the physical form*, is to expand upon the conventional format of portraiture to embrace a different view of the human body. The project investigates if individuality and identity can be drawn from pattern inherent in microscopic human structures and biochemical processes, in which I connect both reality and imagination with metaphysical qualities and abstract notions of self, body, embodiment, and a contemporary concept of the sublime. My alternative version of portraiture navigates the complexities of human anatomy and physiology in an exploration of abstraction, scale, colour, and pattern, to invite subjective encounters and different interpretations that extend the possibilities of what portraiture might be.

It is understood, pattern satisfies an inherent need to order elements of life into a unified and logical system, that the human mind requires pattern formation for successful disseminate of information (Bloomer, 2000b). *An Alternative Portrait* expands on this to contextualise an exploration of the human body's various anatomical configurations and physiological processes and the potential of these to evoke the essence of individuality and bodily presence. The project explores how a sensory engagement with the body might generate an alternative form of portraiture. Elements of real anatomy fuse with abstract concepts of body and self presented in broad expanses of colour communicating a different view of the body. The indexical natures of perception and awareness are mobilised to suggest a sense of individual presence. The term *indexical* is used to represent the dynamic capacity of individuals to think independently and to make free choices in subjective expressions and interpretations brought about through individual experience. Exploring concepts of perception and awareness leads directly to questions of embodiment and a contemporary concept of the sublime as these relate to my aims for a sensory experience. I regard these elements as significant within the context of *An Alternative Portrait*.

Artistic expression exploring notions of self and body is not new. The significance of *An Alternative Portrait* includes how I express the concept in experiential and emotive marks and a considered choice of media. This form of portraiture is expressed in colour-

fields containing loose patterning captured within a fluid matrix. It is in detail within intense colour that individuality is characterised in significant marks of identification.

The project emerged from an enduring fascination with the body's various structural configurations that crystallised during a short spell studying anatomy. At this time I was introduced to human cadavers in a university wet lab. Cadaver material is used to locate and examine bodily structures and is usually in the form of full bodies, halves, quarters, organ systems, single organ parts, and tissue samples. Introductory sessions in a wet lab can be confronting although this irrational fear of the dead is usually fleeting and is quickly replaced in subsequent sessions with familiarity and a desire to seek out and master the complexities of the human anatomical system. It is an enormous leap however from coloured line drawings in anatomy texts to actual physical human material. Precise text-book illustrations highlight intricacies and boundaries, while clinical differences in coloured inks contain strategically placed markers and bubble-text information that delineates and clearly defines both the macro and the minutiae.

In reality, deceased human bodies and their parts do not contain defined text-book style colour changes. Rather, the prevailing hues are variations of grayish-yellowish-pink; something akin to blood-drained aged flesh. Through time, gravity prevails as rigid boundaries dissolve into oneness until they cease to exist. Blood, biochemical processes, and the life-force, all of which keep the living organism and its parts pink, plump, and vital, are absent. Identifying what was previously seen only in text books presents a challenge.

My approach then was pragmatic. In order to navigate the confusion of visual data, I developed a system of study in which applied colour, pattern, and sequencing provided the order clearly needed to distinguish, identify and remember structures, organs, organ systems and the cyclical intricacies of biochemical processes. Simple illustrations and illustrative steps containing colour modulated pattern and logical sequencing became an effective tool.

As a result of this methodology, a personal need for a particular type of visual order is identified which, I believe, is one of the reasons I imagine the human body as I do. That is, not only from a connectively inclusive and biologically logical perspective, but also as

a dynamic system of patterns and sequencing. In this project these elements are drawn together and contained within colour-fields in which each unconstrained application of pigment-dense epoxy resin interacts with the one before and with the next to form indefinite and indistinct pattern.

The notion, of defining the perceptive self to connect with the material or the known, is extended linking the immateriality of perception with knowledge. This process generates non-representational images of the body presented as an alternative form of portraiture. My need for a meaningful visual system, for identification and recognition of complex systems, is only one thread in a weave of abstract ideas explored in Chapter One that collectively frames and supports an alternative idea of portraiture.

Engagement in a broad survey of arts practices from historical and contemporary experience references shifts in processes, movements, and outcomes. Artists of particular interest engage in work specifically describing the abstracted human body in a form of pattern, sequencing, and decoration. The works and practices of selected artists are explored as they relate to my studio engagement in process, content, and engagement with *body* and *self*.

Seminal artists are those who worked within descriptive categories of abstraction, organic structures, defined pattern, and unusual choices of materials to develop ideas about the abstracted body. Paul Klee observed nature's pattern and cyclical rhythms which he supplemented with linear motion and vertical extension. Wassily Kandinsky demonstrated pure abstraction in colour and form. Steffen Dam, Christine Borland, and Susan Derges inform ideas for an embodied experience. Other artists, who most clearly inform and define my project include Anne Morrison for her observations of underlying processes in both the landscape and the human body in a skillful use of perspective and depth of field: Catherine Woo, whose recent works demonstrate a close yet ambiguous connection with microscopic bodily tissue: Dale Frank's use of colour, and his obscure references to portraiture in cryptic titles: Janet Laurence's atmospheric effects in her use of a transparent medium that expresses her connection with the natural world and that I choose for my expression of the microscopic human body. An Alternative Portrait is

expressed in a colour-field aesthetic, hence I pay particular attention to colour field painters Barnett Newman, Mark Rothko, and Antonio Murado.

Chapter Two briefly explores the conventions of portraiture, thus leading directly to questions of perception, awareness, and embodiment. Two states of awareness are explored; knowledge of a surrounding world, and awareness of this world through feelings and emotions. In a holistic approach, this allows emotions to connect with knowledge and imagination. Engagement of the senses is described as a process that allows a body of work to evolve and explore anatomical structures linked with philosophical ideas of reality and existence. The usually private place of awareness and perception, in which individual knowledge is subjective, frames this research.

I consider a James Creed Meredith (1964) translation and Richard Stemp (2002) discussion of Emmanuelle Kant's (1790) and Barnett Newman's (1949) concepts of the sublime as it relates to my aims. In *Purity* (2001), the American former Poet Laureate Billy Collins looks at himself from the outside in an absurd but entertaining suggestion that thought and imagination can only come through the body divest of its pathology (the poem in its entirety is contained in Appendix A). Mark Johnson (2007) asserts however, that the *complete* organism gives us meaning and shapes our thinking (Johnson, 2007: 3).

In *Ancient Rhythms*, Francois Pluchart (1978), David Peat (2008), Drew Leder (1990), and Tracey Warr (2006) share their particular and unique perceptions of bodily awareness and the embodied experience. I describe embodied perception as awareness that comes from a private place that is unquestioned until it is revealed.

Imagining Alternative Realities explores the concept of picturing the immaterial; that is, picturing something existing in the mind but devoid of physical substance. In this section, Anne Morrison (1999) describes the difficulties of expressing immateriality.

Giving Form to the Formless examines the ubiquitous language and psychology of pattern and motif as described by Kent Bloomer (2000a) and the E H Gombrich (1994).

In Chapter Three, the evolution of the concept is examined including methods used to express my idea in an Abstract Expressionist colour-field aesthetic that defines my

painting style (Figure 1). The concept of an embodied experience lies in the immersive effects of broad expanses of colour in which the entire field of vision is immersed.

My engagement with the human body invites a different view of portraiture that explores the threshold between how I see the human body with my eyes and how I see it in my mind. This is a site of physical and imagined bodily presence in which an audience is left to its own associations.

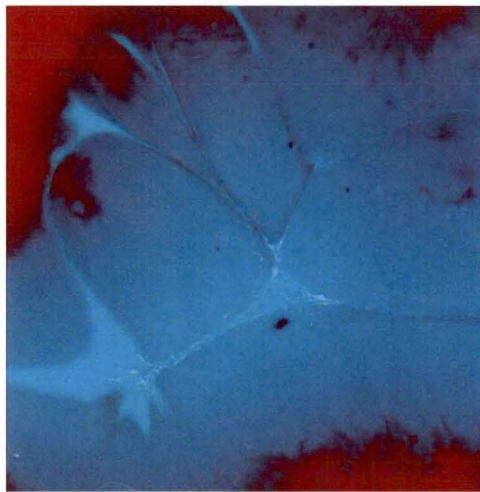


Figure 1: Susan Quinn, *Untitled (detail)*, 2011, epoxy resin & pigment on acrylic sheet, 20 x 20 cm

Chapter One: engaging the imagination

In order to explore the potential of human tissue as a source of pattern and sequencing, I recall the visual complexities of wet lab anatomy. I also recall my response to these difficulties and the pragmatic approach of engaging colour, pattern and sequencing as an effective study tool. This experience is greatly enhanced in a survey of other artist's works that serves to inform my use of media and techniques in order to engage an aesthetic that I believe best describes my concept. The investigation informed my examination of two-dimensional media and processes for their capacities to reconfigure conventions of portraiture. Formulae containing a balance of pre-determined layers of knowledge and perception are interwoven in a dynamic interplay based on microscopic anatomy, biochemical processes, and colour. Combined with unpredictable studio processes, I attempt to express suggestions of greatly exaggerated human minutiae – I use the term minutiae to describe the microscopic detail of human anatomy. Obscure patterning and sequential movement emerges within a fluid matrix-like medium, and panoramic projections (Figure 2).

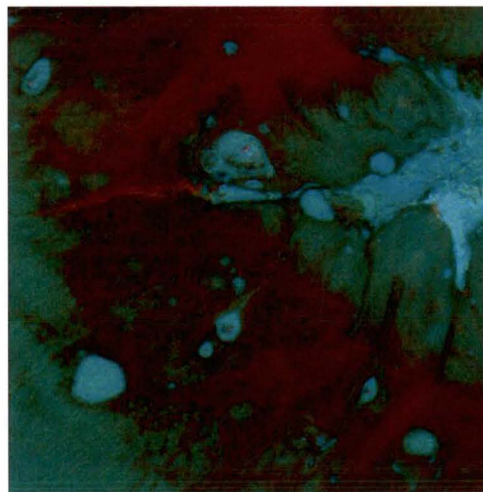


Figure 2: Susan Quinn, *Untitled (detail)*, 2011, epoxy resin and pigment on acrylic sheet, 20 x 20cm

The term *pattern* can be defined in a variety of ways. I use it loosely to describe a regular or logical form, order, or arrangement, or a random combination of shapes and colours

(Pearsall, 1996: 1066). Pattern formation and sequencing within my imagined human body is derived from the personal system of study that reveals an obscure yet logical engagement with the body within the context of arrangement, replication, structure and a cyclical repetition of systems and processes.

The terms *decoration* and *sequencing* are used entirely in the imaginative realm as interpretive tools to describe the human organism through a variety of invented forms and processes. Various subjective principles of ordering provide connective logic (Pearsall, 1996: 1321) reinforcing a personal need for visual order which, within the context of sequencing, provides a vague form of systematic clarity. Simple and complex pattern formations can provide an effective system of recall. It is also important to acknowledge that my perception of visual clarity may not reflect that of others.

A system of sequencing and logical patterning provides a means to connect with my imagination thus allowing an alternative reality to emerge. While reality informs the work, the conceptual body loses all sense of volume and depth. It is represented as a material trace referencing clinical slides, or the Petri dish containing stained slices or smears of human matter presented as minutiae yet encapsulating the whole being. Detail within contrasted microscopic matter characterises individuality in small yet significant marks of identification.

My use of intense colour is a visual reference both to biological staining used by medical scientists to examine microscopic parts in laboratory investigations, and to vivid colour employed in anatomy and physiology texts that assists students identify structures and processes. A brief engagement with the biological sciences combines with perception, awareness, an embodied experience, and the indexical to inform an expressive but reality-based construct of immateriality forming an alternative portrait.

Within the context of *An Alternative Portrait*, the term indexical represents the dynamic human capacity for independent thought and free choice that forms subjective expressions and interpretations. I see perception as the site of the subjective interface with the world. Experiences and expectations are brought about by the individual and the contingent elements of a situation. This project is underpinned by the notion that all

human interpretation is bound to the context in which it occurs, that contextual or indexical demands significantly influence the shape of reaction (Keel, 1999).

Pattern construction plays an important role in self expression. Choice of media, processes, and execution can also contribute to instability between inherently formal aspects of patterning and loosely arranged abstracted and expressionist colour-fields. A form of hybridised pattern and sequencing seems to emerge when information is organised systematically.

Pattern sequencing is one of many elements in a convergence of influences and to which I take a lateral approach. My studio engagement and methods can be located within an Abstract Expressionist style, closely referencing those artists exploring expression through process and media. Barnett Newman, for example, is best known for his colour fields separated by vertical lines, or zips, which define the spatial structure of the work, clearly and simultaneously both dividing and uniting his compositions (Stemp, 2003). In my work this engagement with colour is defined not by zips but rather, in subtle transitional blurring in which one colour reaches into the next to break through in transition creating dynamic cell-like formations suggesting layers of human tissue.

The Abstract Expressionist colour-field aesthetic considers a number of elements. In a form of abstraction, compositional arrangements appear loose, demonstrating a propensity for happenstance. Strategies, however, are usually planned and controlled, created with some degree of care to engage the viewer in the artist's use of broad expanses of colour while exploiting positive and negative space. This approach is evidenced in my alternative portrait's compositions of variously scaled and loosely defined colour fields. Interest lies in an atmospheric effect of large expanses of colour filling the entire field of vision. Whilst appearing to be carelessly placed, colour field transitions emerge through carefully and precisely applied media that blur colour-change boundaries. This strategy exploits the positive and negative and is intended to encourage examination of important transitional markers within colour-field boundaries.



Figure 3: Antonio Murado, *Untitled Seascape (Anawhata)*, 2003, oil on canvas, 101 x 83.8 cm



Figure 4: Susan Quinn, *Untitled*, 2011, epoxy resin and pigment on acrylic sheet, 20 x 20 cm

Figures 3 and 4 demonstrate the colour field painting aesthetic of loose transitioning within broad expanses of colour.

Because I am drawn to exquisite but tightly controlled elements of pattern evident in for example Islamic and Byzantine art, this fascination, I believe, provides a counterbalance to a personal need to be loosely expressive in my own practice, where temptations to create highly descriptive and repetitive images are consciously resisted.



Figure 5: Tiles, Iran, 13th – 14th Century, Islamic and Middle Eastern Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum

The preference is to move around freely on the horizontal plane otherwise, I believe, my nose would quite literally become stuck to the canvas. Pouring and spreading the media in large and expressive movements and strokes eliminates a propensity to re-organise an image into a highly descriptive form. The media provides only a limited time-frame during which colour transitions are created. These strategies exploit intriguing visual constructs; of connecting with fluidity suggesting human viscera or, perhaps, allowing the eyes to follow what might be sequential steps in a biochemical process.

Artists have explored and examined numerous notions of consciousness and perception to find poetic ways to express both the human body and the invisible self. Historically, Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky inform my ideas of the abstracted human form.

Klee observed pattern in nature, from coordinated linear motion, bone, muscle and blood-flow, to waterfall, which he supplemented with vertical extension of bird-flight, horizontal motion of the tides, and the circular rhythm of growth rings in trees (Moholy-Nagy, 1968: 32). Through observation of the smallest manifestation of form, Klee concluded the magnitude of natural order interrelationships (Moholy-Nagy, 1968: 5).

In *Senecio* (Figure 6), Klee renders an expressive portrait of the rayed flower-head of *Senecio* (a flower of the daisy family), captured in square and triangular blocks of colour. A surreal element exists in its simple geometric qualities. *Senecio* is painted in a broad flat style, while interconnecting blocks of luminous colour resonate with patterns evident in Byzantine and Islamic styles of art.



Figure 6: Paul Klee, *Senecio*, 1922, oil on primed gauze on cardboard, 40.5 x 38 cm

Wassily Kandinsky's paintings demonstrate pure abstraction into which he incorporated a clearly evident passion for colour and form. His paintings have been variously described as 'a vision of polarity and paradox' and 'a tangle of irresolvable ambiguities' (Dobrowski, 1995). Kandinsky's visually loose compositions are often divided by heavy lines in strong primary colours. A sense of movement is evident in his use of vibrant colour within compositions of perfectly formed circles and elemental geometry. Despite strong geometric and mechanical elements in Figure 7, *Yellow red blue*, Kandinsky's painting is infused with subtle organic qualities and an overriding sense of the human portrait.



Figure 7: Wassily Kandinsky, *Yellow red blue*, 1925, oil on canvas, 127 x 200 cm, Musee National d'Art Moderne, Paris

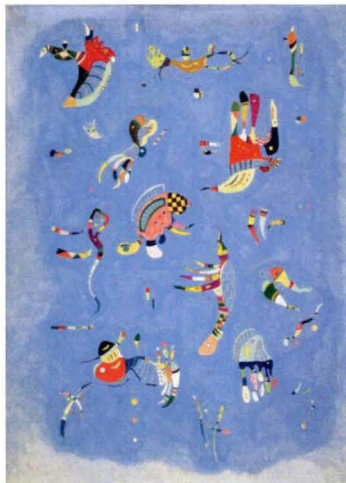


Figure 8: Wassily Kandinsky, *Sky Blue*, 1940, oil on canvas, 100 x 73 cm, Courtesy Musee National d'Art Moderne, Paris

Figure 8 demonstrates Kandinsky's use of colour and form in his elemental use of floating or falling biomorphic forms within a broad field of blue. The human element is again evident in this work.

Contemporary glass artist Steffen Dam (Figure 9) constructs organic forms suspended and preserved within delicate glass. The connection I make with this artist lies in his sculptural images preserved within the glass itself – not on the glass. Dam's forms suggest the existence of previously unknown life forms – perhaps exquisitely delicate alien or botanical specimens.

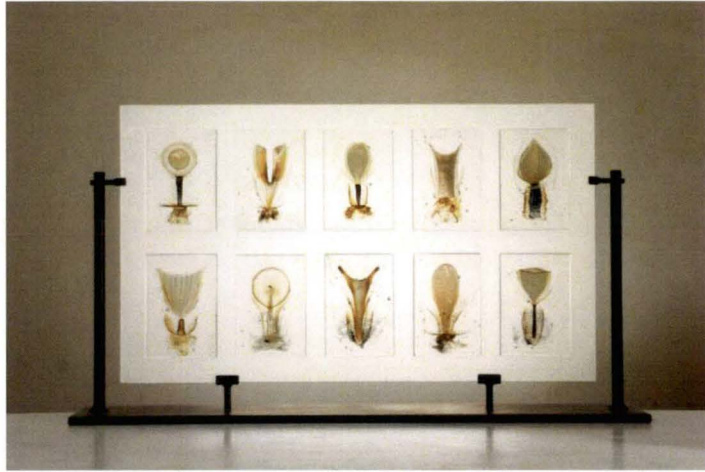


Figure 9: Steffen Dam, *Fifth Season*, 2007, glass and metal, 68 x 96 x 25 cm

My preoccupation with the decorative element of human tissue draws me to the studio of Christine Borland (Figure 10) whose work associates itself with natural processes and systems, forensic science, medicine and also with ethics. While I engage with the human body's natural living processes, documenting the living system conceptually, Borland signals the process of decay within the human body, documenting the process of deterioration.



Figure 10: Christine Borland, *GMS*, 2004, Installation view (dimensions variable)

While Borland works in three-dimensions, Susan Derges methodology reflects my aim for an enveloping experience of self-awareness and self-perception in events describing natural bodily forms and processes. Derges captures the imagination in two-dimensional

photograms (Figure 11), revolving around the creation of visual metaphors that explore the relationships between the observer and the observed, the self and nature, the imagined and the real. Derges endeavours to reveal invisible natural processes in photograms, capturing both events and microscopic particles in photographic mediums (Hicks, 2009).

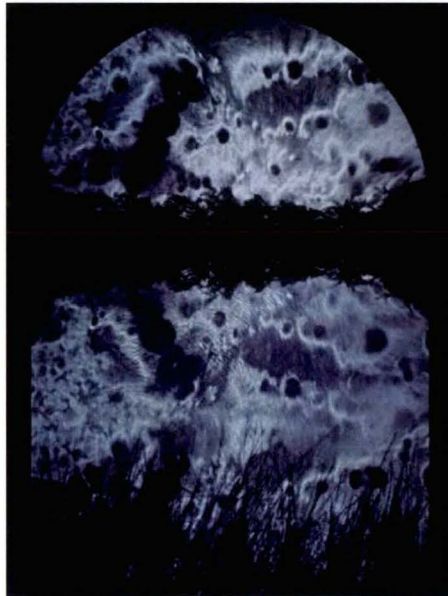


Figure 11: Susan Derges, *Arch 2*, 2007-8, C type print, Ed of 3, 200 x 150 cm

I am drawn to painters in particular but also to artists employing alternative, unusual, or non-conventional methods and media to achieve a particular form of expression through process and technique. In an approach mirroring my interest in reducing the body to a collection of cells arranged decoratively, Chuck Close employs a method of expression that reflects cellular and microscopic activity.

In a flexible and ingenious process, Close employs the grid to break down the face into individual segments. Each painting is, in effect, a sum of its individual parts. Close employs a systematic approach, which is abstract in the sense that his portraits are photoreal, or superreal, made up in entirety of hundreds, and possibly thousands, of pixels, thumbnails, complete albeit minute images in themselves – integers – or cells, visible in Figure 12.

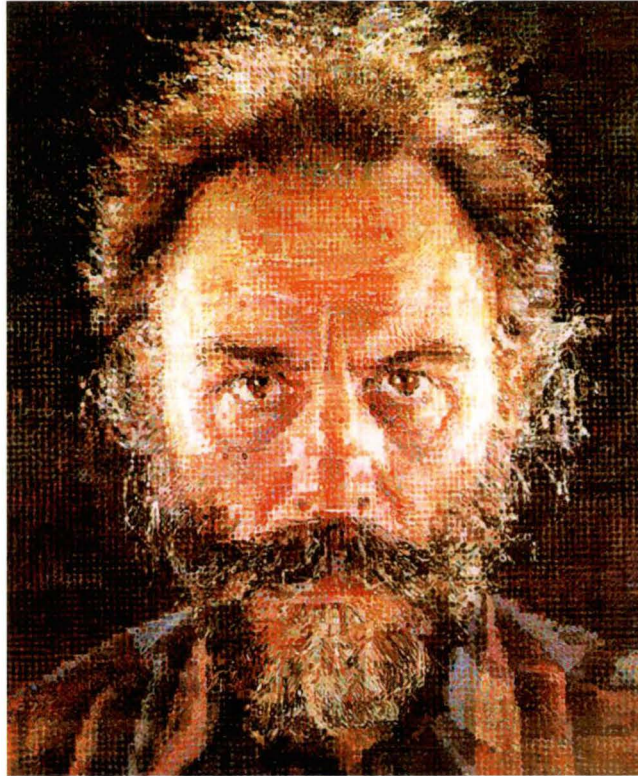


Figure 12: Chuck Close, *Close 1 (Self-portrait)*, 1997, oil on canvas, 259 x 213.4 cm

Two artists of particular relevance are Anne Morrison and Catherine Woo. Morrison's *Sentient Body* series engages in work describing pattern and sequencing within the human body, while Woo, although less directly, employs visually organic painting processes that engage notions of bodily presence.

Morrison's *The Sentient Body* reflects a personal engagement with both the human body and the landscape employing a unique painting technique. My interest in Morrison's work derives from her observations of underlying processes, structures, and natural rhythms mirroring the human body in the landscape. Morrison's paintings engage the imagination in her skillful use of perspective that references both landscape and the pattern-forming networks evident in internal and external bodily forms. Morrison's unique engagement with paint and processes skillfully renders a rich and palpable presence. Perspective and depth of field make it possible to move within the paintings. By this I mean, to achieve a state of being within the body, or to move within both the landscape and the human body.

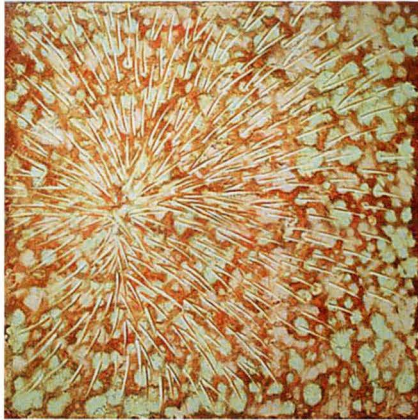


Figure 13: Anne Morrison, *Scatter*, 2003, oil on paper, 57 x 57 cm



Figure 14: Anne Morrison, *Living System #5*, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 56 x 56 cm

A further connection with Morrison's work lies in its engagement with the microscopic human body. My work is based on similar ideas. Morrison's conceptual body engages with the landscape whereas my conceptual body engages with the laboratory microscope.



Figure 15: Anne Morrison, *Lattice*, 2003, oil on canvas, 52 x 52 cm

In 'Awful Grandeur – Worlds Apart', Zara Stanhope (2008) asserts, Catherine Woo's art incorporates a dimension similarly common to Burke's (1756) sublime. It confronts, invites imagination and perception beyond description. The body is evidenced in Woo's series of works titled *Forecast* (Boutwell Draper, 2006). The paintings in Figures 16 and 17 contain quite explicit visceral qualities that I attach to qualities evident in the human body. Both images evidence something that might be seen under a microscope: *Squall* in its likeness to soft connective tissue fibres (Figure 18), and *Thaw* for its resemblance to Haversian canal systems in bone (Figure 19).

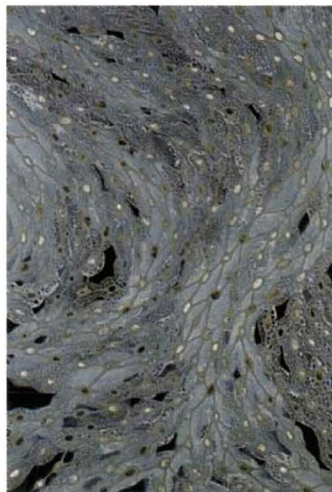


Figure 16: Catherine Woo, *Squall*, 2006, mixed media on canvas, 195 x 133 cm



Figure 17: Catherine Woo, *Thaw*, 2006, mixed media on canvas, 195 x 133 cm

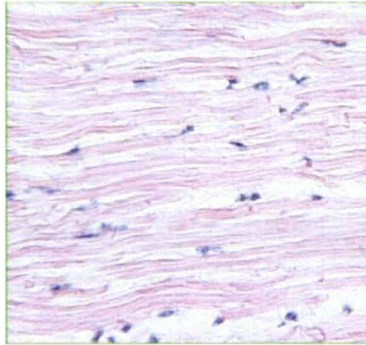


Figure 18: *The* ligamentum nuchae
(elastic connective tissue)
Meds.queensu.ca/medicine

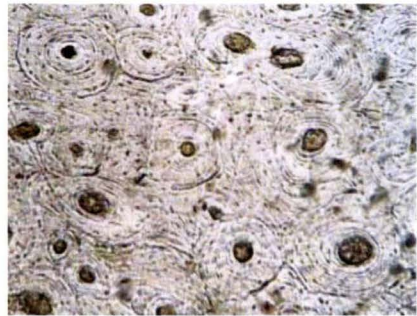


Figure 19: Differentiated Haversian
canal systems in bone (x 200)
tmj.ro/article.php

Woo's panoramic work (Figure 21) demonstrates a connection with the human body in title, *Lachrymal Lake*, and in content. Woo makes a strong visual connection between salt lakes in the landscape and the human biological lachrymal sac/gland (Figure 20) from which salty tears are discharged.

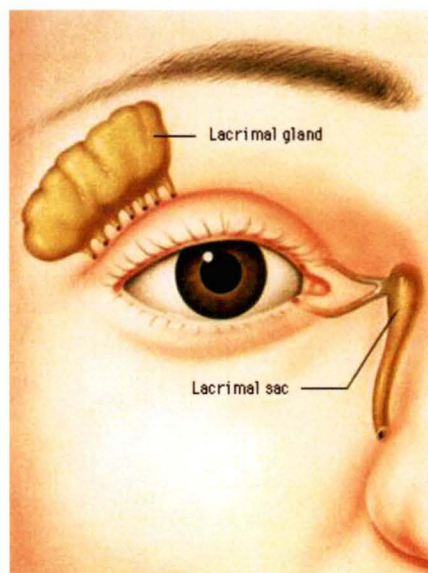


Figure 20: Lacrymal gland
and lachrymal sac,
Encyclopedia of Science

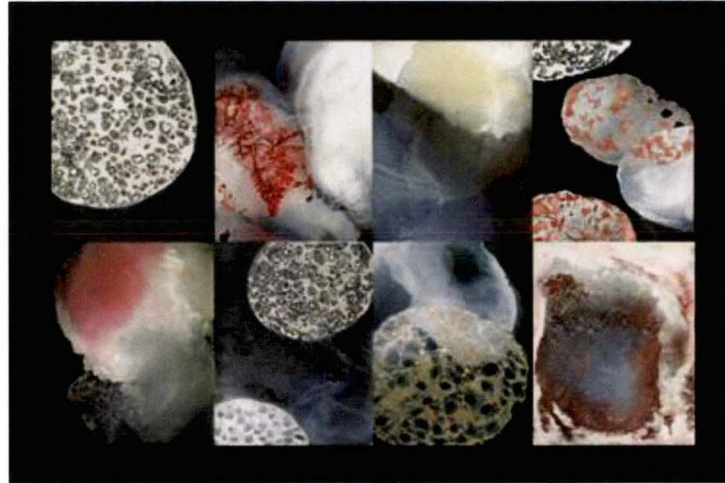


Figure 21: Catherine Woo, *Lachrymal Lake*, 2010, Installation, mixed media on canvas, series of eight, 120 x 97 cm each

The work of Dale Frank resonates with *An Alternative Portrait* in both choice of media and in expression of an obscure form of portraiture. Frank employs a transparent medium to carry pigment and in doing so, colour is un-muddled by the dulling properties of more conventional painting mediums. Clearly Abstract Expressionist in style, Frank's perceived spontaneity belies his mastery over his medium. Frank's paintings are described as 'alluring corridors of viscous colour . . . that accumulates and recedes' and 'giant lollipops in rainbows of colours' (Bryant, 2006).

Frank's work is distinguished by its materiality and the viscous quality of pigments suspended in clear varnish. In what appears random he, in fact, creates movement in applications of the medium in different viscosities that allows one application to move on the canvas faster than another. Dynamic effects are created with great care emerging in complex layering that demonstrates a visually mobile quality. As the consistency of the varnish changes, complex forms appear as Frank manipulates the media through movement of the canvas over a period of several days.



Figure 22: Dale Frank, *I was sent to find an 18th Century diamond brooch, dressed in a donkey jacket and cement-dusted workman's boots. He understood the past, whereas today's brilliant butterflies who dine and talk only about the new and know only about the future of their art portfolio's pricing structure. Their lead shoes are very much in need in the light gravity-less atmosphere*, 2006, varnish on canvas, 200 x 260 cm

Long, elaborate, and ambiguous titles often locate Frank's works as portraits described as metaphysical landscapes evoking spirit and emotions (Bryant, 2006).

Frank's reference to *brilliant butterflies* (Fig 22) is, I suspect, a commentary on his past, and a reference to those he dislikes. The title, *Dinner was rather matter of fact . . .* (Figure 23), appears as a commentary on an amusing albeit unpleasant dinner party experience. This too can be described as an abstract portrait into which the viewer is invited.



Figure 23: Dale Frank, *Dinner was rather 'matter of fact', simple, nothing to embellish, or nothing to rationalise or distract from the reason for being there. A bucket and hose could do just as well to describe the dinner, and as well, do as a fine description for the hosts and the company.,* 2010, varnish on canvas, 200 x 200 cm

I surmise, also, construction of complex titles provides a vehicle through which Frank expresses or releases repressed emotions and negative experiences – catharsis.

A further link to Frank occurs at the technical level. To achieve colour clarity similar to Frank's I adopted a process employing a pigment-dense transparent medium that achieves a variety of colour depths, transparent to densely opaque. Opacity and transparency are achieved depending upon the quantity or type of pigment used. Transparent pigments in liquid form enhance opaque pigments suspended in paste. Interesting reactions occur then the two types of pigments combine. Frank's style allows one layer of coloured varnish to overlap others (Figure 23). My technique allows each colour layer to interact with the one before and with the next to create a seamless surface effect.

A considered choice of media also resonates with techniques employed by Janet Laurence who engages both a transparent medium and a transparent support. Laurence relies heavily upon the intrinsically reflective qualities of her materials. Whilst reflection

is not a core aesthetic component, use of transparency in my media of choice reflects Laurence's work.



Figure 24: Janet Laurence, *Ashen Salt*, 2006/7, Duraclear, Shinkolite acrylic, aluminium, oil, pigment, 5 panels, each 100 x 146 x 9.5 cm. Courtesy Sherman Galleries, Sydney

Laurence engages with the natural world (Figure 24) in response to specific sites and environments while my project explores the natural world in response to both an enduring fascination with the complexities of the human body and human minutiae captured in the lens of a laboratory microscope. Similarities can be seen in Janet Laurence's *Ashen Salt* (Figure 24) and a microscopic view of nervous tissue (Figure 25).

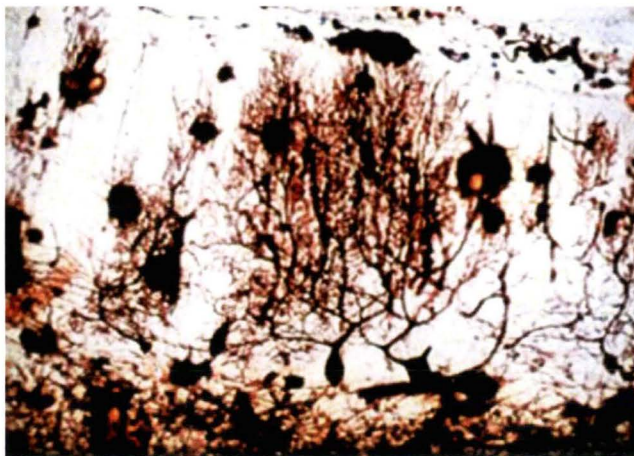


Figure 25: Nervous tissue: Purkinje cell, Keele in cerebellar Cortex (silver impregnation), Keele

A survey locates my studio engagement and methods with Abstract Expressionism in a colour-field aesthetic. The connections I draw on are from the mid 20th Century in the work of Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko. Best known for his colour-fields separated by lines (Figure 26), or 'zips', (Stemp, 2002), Newman's work and ideas are discussed further in Chapter Two as they relate to the sublime aesthetic.

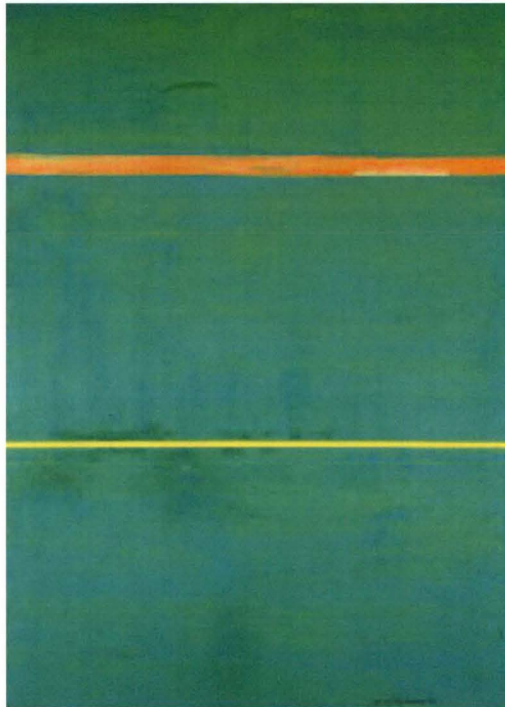


Figure 26: Barnett Newman, *Dionysius*, 1949, oil on canvas, 170.2 x 124.5 cm

Mark Rothko's inspections of nature are more conceptual than visually literal. In 'Mark Rothko: The Works on Canvas', (a retrospective exhibition catalogue), Francis O'Connor (1998) asserts that, in leaving us to our own associations, Rothko 'determines only the extent he wants the audience's associations to inhabit within his formal structures'. This strategy possesses the potential for a considered abstract portrait. Rothko's paintings look past the obvious and the literal, and it is this connection that I make with his work. I am looking past the literal human body to present what I imagine manifests the complete human. My intention, too, is to leave the audience to its own associations, allowing those subjective, indexical associations to inhabit the work.

My engagement with colour field painting is discussed further in Chapter Three.

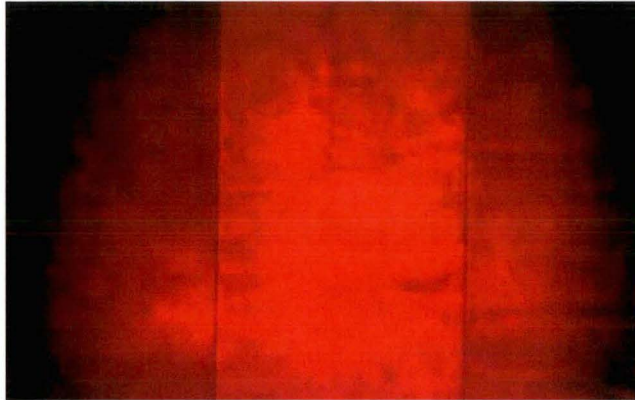


Figure 27: Mark Rothko, *Centre Triptych for Rothko Chapel*, 1966, Oil on canvas, 152.5 x 457.5 cm, Rothko Chapel, Houston

Antonio Murado explores landscapes in a colour-field aesthetic that can be appreciated as a dialogue of flora communicated in brief changes of light and atmosphere and in his use of colour (Morris, 2010). Murado's paintings evidence abstracted elements of landscape; floating flower petals captured momentarily to appear ephemeral. I am seduced by Murado's images of indefinite structure of forms (Figure 28) and his use of colour bleeding that renders soft and ambiguous outlines. As my process and technique develop, I aim to achieve soft outlines of unstructured and ambiguous forms through applications of wet-in-wet media. Murado's landscapes are gentle in one sense yet bold in his use of colour-fields demonstrating strong contrasts. Murado appears to possess a sensibility attuned to ephemerality in nature which might be extended to consider our own mortality. His sensibilities are captured in reflective compositions containing delicate, ambiguous detail in broad expanses of colour (Figure 29).

Figures 30 and 31 each demonstrates quite obvious similarities with the other. One is a landscape, the other a light microscope image of elastic cartilage. The elastic cartilage image locates an interior landscape of the body.



Figure 28: Antonio Murado, *Golden Lake*, 2009,
Oil on linen, 183 x 243 cm



Figure 29: Antonio Murado, *Untitled*, 2006,
oil on canvas, 140 x 160 cm



Figure 30: Antonio Murado, *Untitled*
(detail), 2006, oil on canvas,
140 x 160 cm



Figure31: *Elastic cartilage*, light
microscope histology image, Keele

When revealing the intimate world of perceptions, metaphors often provide an alternative and imaginative route. In her thesis, *The Sentient Body*, Anne Morrison (1999: 11) writes about picturing the immaterial, that is, picturing concepts existing in the mind and devoid of physical substance.

Morrison writes;

Many important concepts in life and in art are by nature immaterial. While they may be widely understood they exist in the mind and are without physical substance . . . For the visual artist wishing to explore the expressive possibilities of incorporeal or metaphysical subject matter (the Sentient Body would be included here) the immateriality of the concept poses a significant problem (Morrison, 1999).

Morrison (1999: 12) continues ...

The proposition is to find means of evoking the essence (rather than the particulars) of the concept and this strongly suggests that insights and perceptions derived from deep personal experiences are only a starting point for a process of conceptualisation and transformation.

This affirms my use of a fluid method, or methods, to convey the essence of a portrait. In this sense, the particulars (of the visible surface of the body) serve little purpose in exposing or revealing an alternative human portrait. The 'essence' of this project is captured in abstracted suggestions of organic matter, and my use of media to express my understanding of the body as a complex organism. Rather than seeking literal representation, I allow the media to move at its own pace creating the illusion of a specimen of human tissue. The image evolves in a series of transient images until visual qualities emerge to suggest sequential movement, or a register of a nanosecond in a dynamic biochemical process. In this sense, in attempting to capture the essence, I might also capture attention and engage an audience. Allowing the natural fluidity of the

media to express conceptual matter eliminates sharply defined layers and separations. These strategies reinforce the presupposition of an encounter with clinical slides containing traces of stained human material.

Bernard Gortais (2003) believed that representation in art is making present something which was not present before. This suggests making something perceptible to the senses that was not previously perceptible. This *thing* however, does not necessarily need to be intelligible. Paul Klee believed art does not express that which is visible, art makes it visible (Gortais, 2003). It is in this sense that I engage with the invisible human body's minutiae to connect with the immateriality of my concept.

What is not immediately evident and recognised relies upon a subjective, indexical interpretation. Gortais goes on to suggest;

A work of art is thus the objectivation (representation in the form of an object or an event) of a subjective relationship to the world by means of expression that are perceptible to the world. (Gortais, 2003)

Artistic processes are mediated experiences that have the capacity to open up the world and, when successful, art expresses a reality beyond actual reality (Gortais, 2003).

Chapter Two: a metaphysical response

Within the confines of convention, a portrait may be a painting, a photograph, a sculpture, a graphic description and, perhaps, some other visually graphic but physical representation of an individual. A literary portrait more closely resembles analysis of an individual, revealing personal insights through examination to reach far beyond the visibly literal. *An Alternative Portrait* combines elements of physical representation and subjective analysis expressing an alternative reality revealing a complete human.

Norbert Schneider (2002), in *The art of the portrait: masterpieces of European portrait painting*, reveals, it is from the Fifteenth Century onwards that portraiture came into its own. As a measure of success, royalty, the high clergy, noblemen, and merchants, craftsmen, bankers, and scholars exploited portraiture in demonstrations of social standing. Portraiture's vast vocabulary is expressed in physical posture and facial expression, and in attitudes characterising the sitter. Profile signified dignity and hierarchy, while a full face view suggested a form of direct address (Schneider, 2002: 6). Always a product of composition, it is naïve to view conventional portraiture as a spontaneous and fleeting 'snapshot' of reality (Schneider, 2002: 22). Rather, I see it as an aesthetic construct providing a limited number of visual clues and intended to reveal a contrived version of reality.

An Alternative Portrait expands on tacit rules of traditional portraiture to include an embodied experience. Likeness and identity are separate entities. Likeness constitutes what is immediately evident or recognisable and which elicits a response to certain physical characteristics. Alternatively, response to an actual person locates particulars within individuality that form *identity* and, while identity might be more difficult to locate, it holds a deeper meaning (Jordanova, 2000:17).

Humans possess a variety of innate mechanisms that provide us with an extraordinary ability to both consciously and unconsciously peel back subtle layers to reveal *self*. In an embodied experience, a reactive and subjective attachment to reality is formed. When the immediately recognisable or physical likeness is absent, the mind engages

mechanisms that provide the means by which individuality, familiarity, and identity are located (Jordanova, 2000: 17).

Mark Rothko (1943), responding to work submitted for a portrait show in which artists used mythological characters and symbols, argued that the artist can no longer be constrained by limitations of a rationale that all of man's experience becomes expressed by his outward appearance, hence;

The word portrait cannot possibly have the same meaning for us that it had for past generations . . . new times, new ideas, new methods. The real essence of the great portraiture of all time is the artist's eternal interest in the human figure, character and emotions – in short – in the human drama (Rothko, 1943).

Francis O'Connor (1998) said of Rothko's (unfashionable) use of symbols:

. . . fortunately, strong artists do not worry overmuch about these matters . . . They conjure the most powerful human images, leaving them for us to notice and acknowledge.

O'Connor (1998) continued, stating that it is Abstract Expressionism in general and the signature styles of its artists that deal with big symbols, in which each found . . . 'their abstract equivalent of a self-portrait, painting the reality of self . . . and with a passion, bravura, and decisiveness unequalled in modern art'. This, O'Connor (1998) believes, was the greatest contribution of Abstract Expressionism.

In a non-literal representation, the human body is the subject of this project. I must therefore connect with more than the visually literal. My intention is to invoke, provoke, and contribute to a continuing discourse centered on embodiment, awareness, self-awareness, and self-expression. In doing so, this might then locate a deeper understanding of the human as a complex organism. Depicted in vibrant colour implying representations of human tissue and biological processes, the aim is to cast the human body in a different light. How this representation is interpreted will be subjective.

This bodily concept is not based on scientific reasoning. Rather, it is borne out of recognition of the human organism's intrinsic beauty, exquisite structural qualities, and dynamic resonance in response to constant and continual external forces. And to that which is located in the mind; the sublime. Immanuel Kant (1790) positioned the human sense of the sublime in an awareness of transcending nature and not necessarily in an awareness of humans as a frail and insignificant part of it;

. . . Sublimity, therefore, does not reside in any of the things in nature, but only in our own mind, in so far as we may become conscious of our superiority over nature within, and thus also over nature without us (as exerting influence upon us). Everything that provokes this feeling in us, including the might of nature which challenges our strength, is then, though improperly, called sublime . . . consequently it is the disposition of soul evoked by a particular representation engaging the attention of the reflective judgments, and not the Object, that is to be called sublime. (Kant, 1790)

For Kant, the notion of sublimity did not reside in nature, but in a profound response to things in nature. The sublime, Kant stated, is a subjective paradigm residing in the mind. In this sense I aim to engage an aesthetic of contradiction in order to avoid the literally clinical, biological, and anatomical. My aim is to elicit a sublime response to the human body. That is, to engage an aesthetic that deploys contradiction in visual and theoretical contents. The contrast lies in what I am representing and the means by which I represent it. This is to greatly exaggerate the micro and illuminate this subject matter's paradoxical visual 'sameness'. The human organism's visual sameness contradicts its biological complexities. I aim to achieve this through experimental approaches to media.

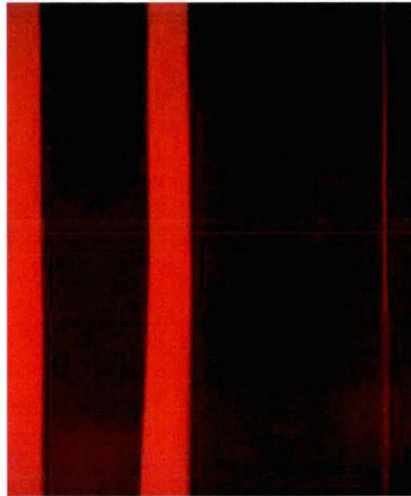


Figure 32: Barnett Newman, *Adam*,
1951–52, oil on canvas,
242 x 202 cm

In his essay, 'The Sublime is Now', Barnett Newman (1949) rejected the 'false' sublime of myth as superstitious and outdated. He asserted that a truly modern sublime would reject the 'representations' of an elsewhere or another time. Rather, the modern painting simply presents itself to be viewed in the here-and-now moment of the direct encounter between the physicality of the canvas and the audience (White, 2009).

In this sense, my alternative version of portraiture seeks representation in an embodied or metaphysical response, as someone might respond to another person in order to connect with more than the visually literal and which locates a deeper understanding of the complexities both of an individual and the human organism.

It is the intention of this engagement to invoke, provoke, and contribute to a continuing discourse centered on embodiment, awareness, self-awareness, and self-expression. In 'Barnett Newman', Richard Stemp (2002) describes Newman thus; 'A practitioner of the art of the sublime'. Newman believed his work could engender a heightened sense of self-awareness in the hope it might have the impact of giving someone, as it did him, the feeling of his own totality, of his own separateness, and of his own individuality.

Embodiment of mind and meaning becomes an acknowledgment that every aspect of human being, grounded in specific forms of bodily engagement within an environment, requires some rethinking of who and what we are as humans (Johnson, 2007: 1). In *The*

Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding, Johnson (2007) argued that a pervasive manifestation of dualism is the assumption of a higher-self or the rational part that controls the lower-self or body. This suggests that many assume and act according to dichotomies distinguishing mind from body – reason from emotion – thought from feeling. Johnson describes the higher-self as the inner core that transcends the bodily situated self (Johnson, 2007: 1). Central to Johnson’s thesis is ‘what we call “mind” and what we call “body” are not two things rather, aspects of one organic process’ and, chief among the embodied activities ‘ . . . aesthetic dimensions are qualities, images, patterns of sensorimotor processes, and emotions’ (Johnson, 2007: 1).

In *Purity* (see Appendix A for the complete poem), American former Poet Laureate Billy Collins (2001) looks at himself from the outside in an absurd but entertaining suggestion that thought and imagination can only come through the body divest of its parts.

Collins writes:

My favorite time to write is in the late afternoon,
weekdays, particularly Wednesdays.

This is how I go about it:

I take a fresh pot of tea into my study and close the door.

Then I remove my clothes and leave them in a pile as if I
had melted to death and my legacy consisted of only a
white shirt, a pair of pants and a pot of tea.

Then I remove my flesh and hang it over a chair. I slide it
off my bones like a silken garment.

I do this so that what I write will be pure, completely
rinsed of the carnal, uncontaminated by the
preoccupation of the body.

Finally, I remove each of my organs and arrange them on
a small table near the window . . . I do not want to hear

their ancient rhythms when I am trying to tap out my
own drumbeat.

Now I sit at the desk, ready to begin.

I am entirely pure: nothing but a skeleton at a
typewriter. (Collins, 2001)

Johnson (2007) asserts, that while this may be a dysfunctional dream, it is a wry reminder that the complete organism gives us meaning and shapes out thinking. In this sense, creativity is conceived not only of the material body but also in its sentient somatic knowledge. It pays close attention to what our bodies tell us about sensuality, reality, fantasy, and existence, all of which might elicit an embodied experience allowing creativity to be effectively conceived, expressed, reviewed, analysed, and interpreted.

Johnson believed;

It is our organic flesh and blood, our structural bones,
the ancient rhythms of our internal organs, and the
pulsing flow of our emotions' that give us whatever
meaning we can find and that shape our very thinking
(Johnson, 2007: 3).

The concept of embodiment is central to European phenomenology and has been extensively examined by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. His account distinguishes between an objective body, regarded as a physiological entity, and a phenomenal body, not regarded as *someone's* body, but 'my (or your) body as I (or you) experience it' (Audi, 1999: 45, 239).

Typically, a person experiences their body as a unified potential for personal motor capacities and of carrying out daily tasks rather than as a physiological entity that might require an understanding or knowledge of complex physiological processes (Audi, 1999). I refer to embodiment as the combined physical, psychological, and emotional presence of the body, which is integral to subjectivity, emotional thought, language, and

interaction with others. Hence, embodiment is an existential condition of which the body is the subjective source or ground of experience.

Dualism, or mind-body polarity, is an alternative view that constitutes a naïve and illogical belief, reducing the dimensions of consciousness to the two simple principles of spirit and matter; of the soul, the world, and nothing else (Carroll, 2009).

Argument centered on mind-body dualism and embodiment originates as far back as Plato and Aristotle, and possibly further. Philosophical concepts provide fascinating fodder for both contemplation and discussion, and are raised as significant markers within the conceptual framework of this project. The temptation, however, to become deeply involved in philosophical arguments are resisted in order that I remain within the parameters of a practice-based research discipline in the visual arts.

Ancient Rhythms

In 'Body Art', Francois Pluchart (1978: 219) describes the body as . . . the fundamental ground. Pleasure, suffering, illness and death inscribe themselves on it and shape the socialized individual in the course of its biological evolution.

As Pluchart (1978) explains, the body is put in readiness to satisfy demands and constraints of existing forces and that no one can escape the imposed oppression placed upon it by life's experiences.

In a personal approach, I see embodied perception as awareness of both the world and the individual's place in it. This is a private place, unquestioned until it is revealed. Through consciousness, and recognition of the fine line between fantasy and reality, I reveal my private place, combining elements of perception and knowledge to make creative use of what I am imagining and what I know. David Peat (2008), in *The Alchemy of Creativity: Art Consciousness and Embodiment*, made the assertion that art and music provide clues to sentience, or to the way consciousness is embedded within the physicality of the material body. Peat expanded on this concept to suggest that sensibilities about the consciousness of the entire body appear to be considerably more highly developed in artists and, 'Art and music make manifest, by bringing into conscious

awareness, that which has previously only been felt tentatively and internally' (Peat, 2008).

In his book, *The Absent Body*, Drew Leder (1990: 14) argued that the body plays a central role in shaping experience. He questions, however, if this is so, why we are so frequently oblivious to our own bodies. Leder asserts '... the human is aware of what it sees, but not of seeing'. Leder explained that while perception is formed through sense organs, the individual does not taste its taste buds, nor does it smell its nasal tissue or hear its ears. Leder (1990: 14) called the human organism the *ecstatic body*, describing this perceptual hiding of the body a 'focal disappearance of the specific bodily organs and activities of perception'.

In yet another concept of embodied awareness, Mark Johnson (2007: 5) suggested there is a necessary background disappearance of process, of which we are barely aware, but that he describes as the many thousands of dynamic yet non-conscious bodily processes, movements, and adjustments involved in producing a simple physical outcome that contributes to perception. A significant and inherently enjoyable element of my studio practice is engaging in experiments with media and processes to which, in response, an acute level of awareness is achieved; not only of the process and its outcomes, but in the all encompassing physicality of the engagement. When the experience is no longer 'new' I become aware only of outcome. In this sense, the process is reduced to a semi-automated response to the media that no longer delivers a physical experience. I am, in turn, devoid of enthusiasm and in no small part separated from the work.

Ecstatic Bodies

In *The Artist's Body*, Tracey Warr (2006: 11-12) suggested that non-Western cultures are not focused on a notion of the individual as a central, cumulative point rather, on an understanding of self as a part of a continuum in time, community, environment, and a cosmos. Warr's notion resonates with my contention; of defining tenuous threads of a concept embracing an invisible organism which resides within the content of perception can be difficult. Hence, I rely on ambiguity, blurring boundaries between what is real and what resides in the imagination. Approaches to media venture to overcome these

difficulties. The aim is that the work achieves an outcome embracing an embodied experience enveloping an audience in an engagement of the senses.

It appears to be the collaborative actions of the senses and the mind's cognitive processes that *see* what we imagine and what we remember. This is a process that Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1961: 196) called the 'map of the visible' in a suggestion that the artist never ceases adjusting what he has seen. Merleau-Ponty asserted, the practicing artist is engaging with a 'magical theory of vision'. This is to say; the artist creates because he has seen however, the artist also creates in response to emotions that might be described as an indexical response. Also, Merleau-Ponty suggested that artists use a 'pre-human way of seeing', for this is the artist's way of recognising and acknowledging. The seeing metamorphoses into the seen; the seen is indexical – coloured and influenced by life. The seen defines both the artists' creative input and the viewer's experience.

Of perception, Merleau-Ponty asserted;

Our body is not in space like things: it inhabits or haunts space. It applies itself to space like a hand on an instrument, and when we wish to move about we do not move the body as we move an object. We transport it without instruments as if by magic, since it is ours and because through it we have direct access to space. For us the body is much more than an instrument or a means; it is our expression in the world, the visible form of our intentions. Even our most secret affective movements, those most deeply tied to the humeral infrastructure, help to shape our perception of things. (Merleau-Ponty, 1961)

Merleau-Ponty's term, 'humeral infrastructure', derives from 'cardinal humor' representing each of the four chief fluids of the body. These are blood, phlegm, yellow bile [choler], and black bile [melancholy]. Historically, mental disposition was thought to be caused by the relative proportions of each of the fluids. This would determine an

individual's emotional state and one's state of awareness; hence individual awareness and interpretation of events might be determined by proportional quantities. Awareness is, therefore, determined subjectively: indexically. The origin, definition, and description of the use of 'humor' (English) and 'humere' (French), hence 'humeral', is contained in Appendix C.

Roland Barthes (1977) asserted the true voice in literature is not in the writing but in the reading; hence, interpretation is not fixed but mutable. The same ethos should therefore be transferable to apply in the visual arts, demanding that sensory engagement with both content and the materiality of the work embraces the indexical nature of embodied perception, to evoke and transmit emotions beyond readings of the physical form.

Giving Form to the Formless

Pattern's ubiquitous language has been reviewed in historical and contemporary texts throughout which a clear consensus emerges regarding the human need for pattern. In *A Sense of Order: the Psychology of Decorative Art*, E H Gombrich (1994) asserted that the human mind requires visual order in the form of pattern for successful dissemination of information. Humans integrate pattern into everyday use creating visual systems out of necessity. In *The Nature of Ornament*, Kent Bloomer (2000a) argued that pattern satisfies the human need to order elements into unifying forms which he defined as 'giving form to the formless' and what Anne Morrison (1999: 23) described as 'giving form to the unseen'.

Pattern and other forms of unified decoration provide visual annotation bringing order to life and allowing the human mind to imagine alternative realities (Skensved, 2007: 8).

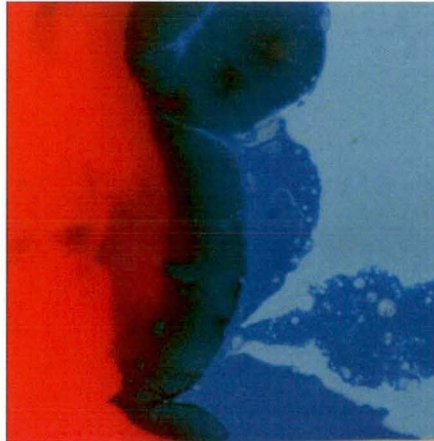


Figure 33: Susan Quinn, *Untitled*, 2011, epoxy resin and pigment on acrylic sheet, 20 x 20 cm

Profound descriptions of our representation of the world and our place in it are seen symbolically through orderly arrangements in patterns and motifs. These can be defined as culturally defined markers of human fears, motivations, and beliefs. While art continues to shape and reflect human emotions, pattern and motif represent what it is to be human (Adkinson, 2009: 7) by giving material form to the workings of the mind (Figure 33). In psychological and anthropological terms, human cognitive processes identify and focus on pattern and motif as culturally and historically meaningful (Adkinson, 2009: 9).

Barnett Newman (1943) made the assertion that pattern, symbols, and motifs are eternal and universal in expressing basic ideas. Newman (1943) defended artists' imaginative use of motif thus;

Use of motif digs into metaphysical secrets and, to that end, the work is concerned with the sublime: it is the expression of an attitude toward the mystery of life and death.

In his essay 'The Sublime is Now', Barnett Newman (1949) suggested it is in the art of the Abstract Expressionists that the sublime found its true home (Stemp, 2002).

Chapter Three: beyond real

Empty canvas. In appearance – really empty, silent,
indifferent. Stunned, almost. In effect – full of tensions,
with a thousand subdued voices, heavy with
expectations. A little frightened because it may be
violated. (Kandinsky, 1911)

Within the context of studio practice, my character is defined in experimental processes and media, materials and techniques. It is in the capacity of manipulating substances in ways instructions tell us we should not that I am stimulated and motivated, happiest when experimenting with something in a way it was not intended to be used. This might be combining incompatible substances, or applying heat to effect a reaction. The methods I employ are often unplanned, spontaneous. Breaking the rules satisfies a need to discover what might happen when . . . The result might be a sticky mess or, occasionally, it might take my breath away. This is both the joy and the frustration of experimenting – rolling with the frustrations to experience the joys.

Abstract Expressionism

As an experimenter, I believed my work could not be pigeon-holed, or aligned and identified with an art movement or with a particular style of art. In hindsight, it is now perfectly clear this is a style of painting most closely aligned with Abstract Expressionism in a colour-field aesthetic. Unconventional use of paint and other substances might suggest a loose approach that demonstrates a propensity for accidental outcomes. While this may at times be a spontaneous act, it is also often planned and controlled. In a pure abstract approach, large areas of colour might be considered an impersonal approach in which formal elements might accentuate flat, two-dimensional space. Interest lies in the atmospheric effect of large expanses of colour that fill the canvas. In the colour-field aesthetic, colour and scale are the dominant elements. The aim, in employing broad expanses of colour, is for an immersive experience in a colour environment, while an

encounter with the surface reveals a seamless glass-like finish in which brushstrokes and texture do not exist.

In this series of small and large studies and projections, materiality informs an audience. A sensual response invites an audience to move within the depth of colour, to move through the surface of colour-fields where detail is intended to suggest dynamic biochemical processes and layers of human anatomical minutiae.

While it may appear a simple process, to pour and spread pigment-dense resin onto horizontal surfaces, the very nature of the material I choose to work with allows only a short window of working time and, despite practiced small studies; outcomes rarely match the imagined when the process is scaled-up from 20 cm square to 122 cm square. A short working window also negates any propensity to *fiddle* or temptations to overwork an image. Small studies reveal those that were chosen for up-scaling, and those it was decided would not be so successful. Unfortunately, neither the large nor the small studies reveal pictorial shifts that occur in the process. These do not reveal the transient images it has been impossible to capture. This is to say; when a second substance is applied, instantaneous reactions occur, forcing the material to move and change in a consistently smooth yet dynamic shift.

Journaling

A significant element of my studio investigation is the immersive process of documentation. As a project progresses an increasing assortment of paraphernalia gathers around me. A hunger for new experiences and experiments in media and processes often finds me on a new trajectory and often to a place of non-relevance. Hence, I engage with notes and journals in order to stay focused. It is a strange phenomenon that ideas often arrive at the oddest moments and these might be forgotten but for scribbled notes on shopping docketts. Documenting ideas and decisions makes useful reading some time later when a body of work finally comes together, and for use during group critiques in order to generate and stimulate argument and to elicit critical feedback. It is helpful also not only for the artist but as a project footprint that might assist other interested parties understand where a body of work began and how it has evolved.

Stage One

The starting point for research engaged a broad review of pattern from both historical and contemporary viewpoints. This includes not only artists using forms of repetition, sequencing, formations, and decorative motifs, but also the role of pattern both psychologically and historically as discussed in Chapter Two. This phase of research occupied a number of months and proved to be a valuable exercise in establishing connections with the concept. It was also a time during which I engaged with three-dimensional media. This is a pragmatic approach that assists thought and to then organise those thoughts. It is also a form of preparation that allows an open mind to absorb information that might crystallise to become an idea and possibly a plan. Active thinking, as opposed to passive thinking, allows time for experiments with tools and materials previously alien to me. By this I mean, engaging physically with processes, mediums, and perhaps in 3-D as opposed to 2-D. It is a process I find both intensely enjoyable and enormously informative and that reinforces my connection to two-dimensional work.

As previously stated, I am drawn to highly organised and exotic forms of patterning evident in, for example, Islamic and Byzantine art. Studio engagement, however, employs a considerably less organised form of patterning and sequencing. Highly prescriptive patterning was nevertheless the catalyst for digital experiments, first in the dark room where I became engaged in the camera-less process of photograms. This process combines light and time with objects to produce evocative images which are then processed in Photoshop manipulations. The aim was to produce a body of large works containing grainy and loosely arranged ambiguous patterning to which ink and incompatible media and processes would provide detail loosely mimicking internal arrangements within the human body. Whilst I find the images aesthetically pleasing in composition, the results are not successful in providing me with useful images in terms of this project.

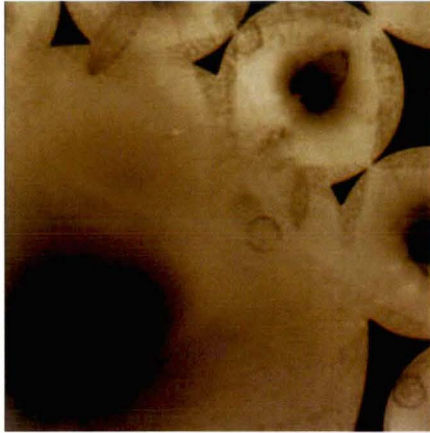


Figure 34: Susan Quinn, *Untitled*, 2010, digital image, 100 x 100 cm



Figure 35: Susan Quinn, *Untitled*, 2010, digital image, 100 x 100 cm

Figures 34 and 35, shown here as two manipulated versions of the same photogram, demonstrate some pleasing qualities but lacks bodily presence or in any sense suggesting biological processes. Later decisions, engaging media and processes to create similar images that more closely references human anatomy and biological processes, is a lateral approach that references qualities evident in early digital images. In this sense, photograms provided beginnings upon which to build and develop a means to reveal or to make material the immateriality of my concept using the fluid and painterly properties of epoxy resin. Figures 36 to 41 are further examples of early photogram and digital experiments. Each image measures 100 x 100 cm.



Figure 36

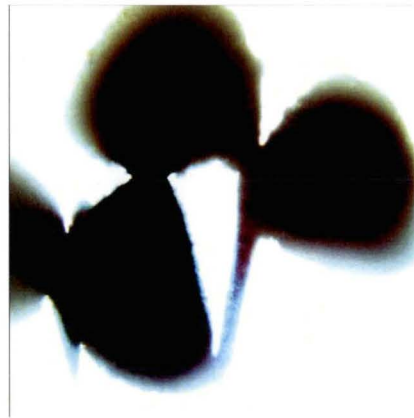


Figure 37

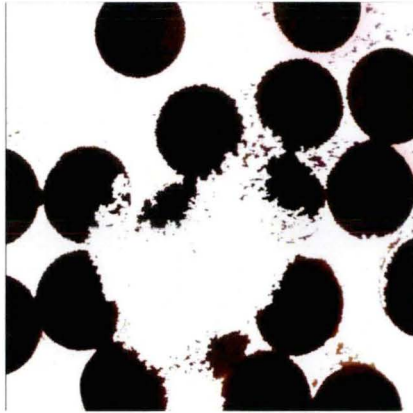


Figure 38

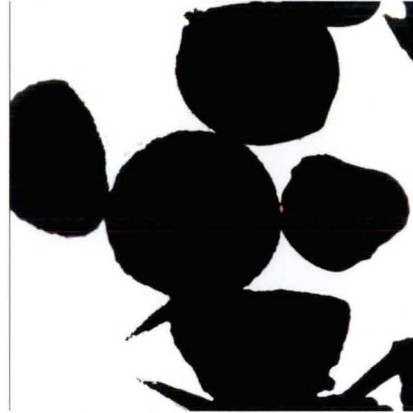


Figure 39



Figure 40

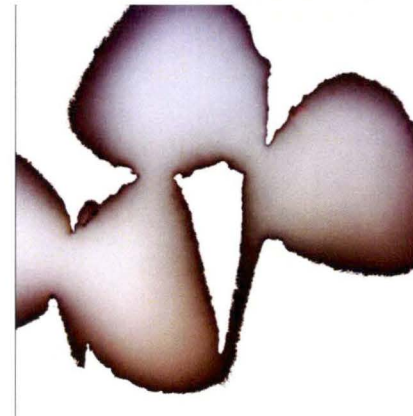


Figure 41

Stage Two:

I see Stage Two as an in-between time during which research into processes, styles and movements uncovered the ideal process for my needs. I was confident a medium existed that could deliver three essential elements; colour, clarity, and luminosity – and indeed it does. The medium is transparent; therefore colour pigments are not muddled through yellowing or matting from conventional painting mediums. The medium dries to a high gloss finish delivering not only true colour clarity but also degrees of depth and luminosity I could not expect to achieve using paint in the normal way. I achieve, also, a seamless finish; it is as though the image is not on, under or behind but within, captured inside a glass-like but fluid matrix.

This stage called also for decisive action; whilst sourcing the media proved trying, stability difficulties with supports were addressed with some urgency. Format and scale also demanded urgent attention. I addressed these problems in the following ways.

Media: Research into materials and processes focused attention entirely on outcome. Difficulties concerning availability or questions of use did not figure in my considerations. Usage and compatibility were addressed simply as issues to be resolved in experiments.

The artist delivering the degree and quality of colour and clarity I sought for my project outcome is Dale Frank (Figure 42). Frank uses many coats of paint and pigments suspended in clear varnish that achieves absolute colour clarity, depth, and a multi layered effect.



Figure 42: Dale Frank, *His painting was like being trapped in a crowded moving elevator.*, 2010, varnish on canvas, 200 x 200 cm

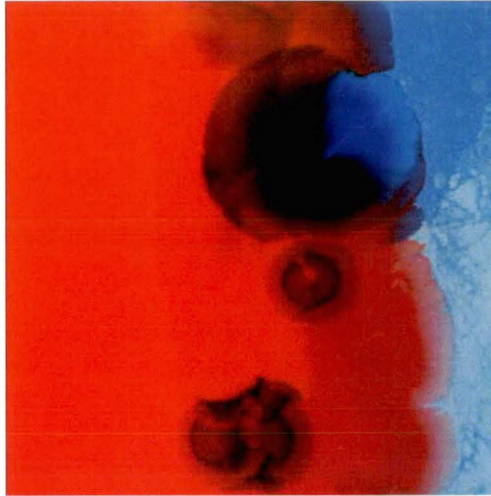


Figure 43: Susan Quinn, *Untitled* (detail), 2011, epoxy resin and pigment on acrylic sheet, 20 x 20 cm

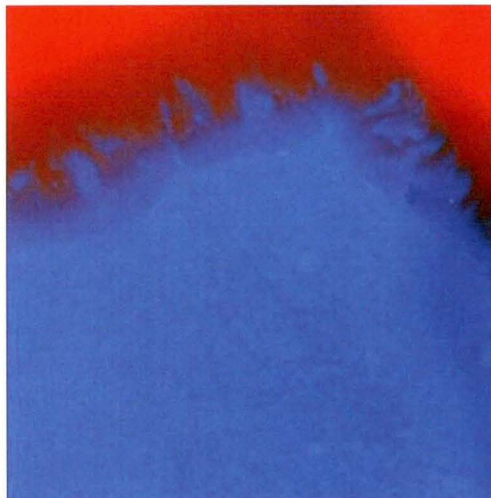


Figure 44: Susan Quinn, *Untitled* (detail), 2011, epoxy resin and pigment on acrylic sheet, 20 x 20 cm

The media of choice is epoxy resin for its glass-like appearance and into which pure pigment is deployed in varying forms, from transparent to densely opaque (Figures 43 and 44). In a method achieving a seamless finish, epoxy resin lends itself to the concept of slices of bodily material smeared onto glass slides. This is a reference to human minutiae as it would be seen under a laboratory microscope. Colour clarity and intensity are achieved with unmeasured additions of pure liquid pigment. Intensity references

clinical dyes and also brightly coloured inks used in the printing of anatomy and physiology textbooks.

Support type: A first choice for support material was plywood. I mistakenly understood that ply is a stable material suitable to stand up to the weight and rigor of applied epoxy resin. I resolved to use 6mm thickness to give the impression or the appearance that images are floating several centimetres off the gallery wall. This choice was not successful in terms of resilience. That is to say, the merest whiff of moisture sent the plywood supports off in all directions. The decision was then made to cut the ply into pieces small enough to retain their intended shape and will be used in a future project. Plywood 12mm thick proved to be a resilient support, as did 6mm clear acrylic (Perspex) left over from a previous project and used in early experiments and in small studies. Each has its own qualities that can be manipulated and exploited in order to achieve the best results possible from each of the materials. In essence, the aim is for invisible supports. Essentially, the material supporting these images does not form part of the artwork as, perhaps, a frame or a deep-edge canvas might be integral to the overall aesthetic of an image.

Clear acrylic sheet became the support of choice. Experiments on small acrylic pieces revealed an effect I believe is not possible to achieve on plywood. Clear acrylic fulfilled each of my requirements; it is invisible: it allows light to filter down behind the image from the wall above creating a luminous effect: its transparency allows resin colours to reflect within its smooth glass-like edges giving an unusual three-dimensional illusion that is captured within the depth of only a few millimeters. These qualities enhance the concept of human minutiae on glass slides.

Scale: Small studies, measuring 25 x 25 cm and 20 x 20cm on clear acrylic, provided me with exercises in which I was able to establish a technique with epoxy resin. It was quickly discovered that the media (resin) lends itself to large scale works which might assist in achieving desired outcomes. The decision was made to scale up to 122 x 122 cm. An epiphany late one evening, in the problem-solving state of twilight sleep, resolved a hanging issue, of attaching hanging equipment to the acrylic sheet.

Format: Decisions of scale lead immediately to the question of format. It was decided, works measuring 122 x 122 cm had presence enough to stand alone whilst also hanging within a proximity close enough to its neighbouring images to read as a sequence of bodily events. Square format references the round/square regular shape of the microscopic lens, while clinical glass slides and panoramic projections add further dimensions. The following images are examples of early studies each measuring 20 x 20cm.



Figure 45: Susan Quinn, *Untitled*, 2011, epoxy resin and pigment on acrylic sheet, 20 x 20 cm

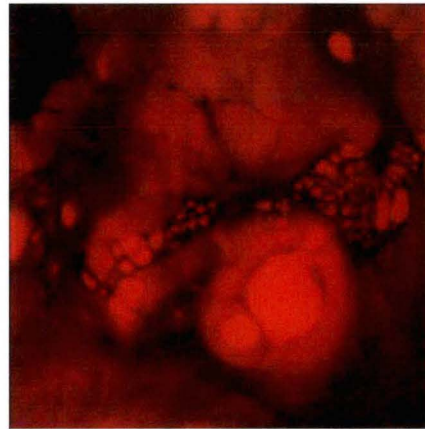


Figure 46: Susan Quinn, *Untitled* (detail), 2011, epoxy resin and pigment on acrylic sheet, 20 x 20 cm

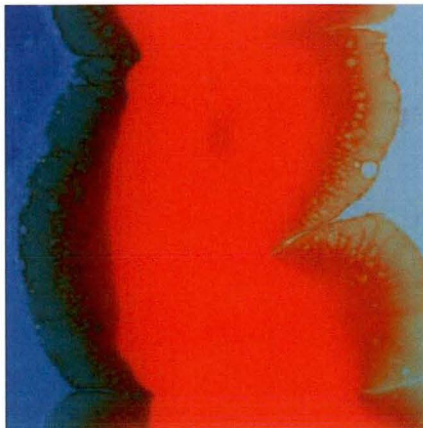


Figure 47: Susan Quinn, *Untitled* (detail), 2011, epoxy resin and pigment on acrylic sheet, 20 x 20 cm



Figure 48: Susan Quinn, *Untitled* (detail), 2011, epoxy resin and pigment on acrylic sheet, 20 x 20 cm

Stage Three

This stage describes the final steps in the process of this project. It is during this stage that experiments cease in order that a body of work is allowed to emerge. Gallery configuration decisions are required therefore; I visualise presentation in order to promote discussion that might provide solutions.

Processes and Methods: Unusual processes and applications engage my imagination and my attention for longer periods than when more conventional methods of brush or palette knife are used. Previous painting projects have employed liquid paint, dilutions of paint in both traditional and non-traditional mediums and applied in a variety of ways – dripped, poured, spread, spattered, and then manipulated with assistance from incompatible substances and solutions. An interesting reaction occurs when shellac or other spirit based solution is dripped or sprayed onto liquid acrylic or diluted oil paint. The mediums appear to chase each other around the canvas finally ceasing the chase to produce random, scattered, and lace-like effects.

While my current engagement, with epoxy resin, is not new or untried in the visual arts, it is often used by artists as a finish to paintings on canvas as a substitute for varnish that gives the work a high gloss finish without the often yellowing of traditional varnishes. My methods might be considered different, even unusual, in the way I push the material. I pour resin into resin in wet-in-wet applications allowing each application to interact with the last and with the next.

Allowing the natural flow of resin in one colour to engage with its neighbouring colour avoids contrived and prescriptive pattern, as evidenced in Figures 49, 50, 51, and 52. Other applications might involve the delivery of pure liquid pigment into wet resin to achieve interesting formations of florets and cell-like bodies within matrix-like backgrounds. In doing this, I risk that resin may not fully cure in the presence of raw pigment. What may seem to be random acts are, in reality, tightly controlled in terms of where, how, and when pigment is applied during the curing process. Time, temperature, humidity and, of course, desired effect dictate at what stage I deliver additions of pigments and solutions. My approach results in a seamless surface or finish in which

detail appears to be encapsulated in resin and trapped within the matrix-like support surface.

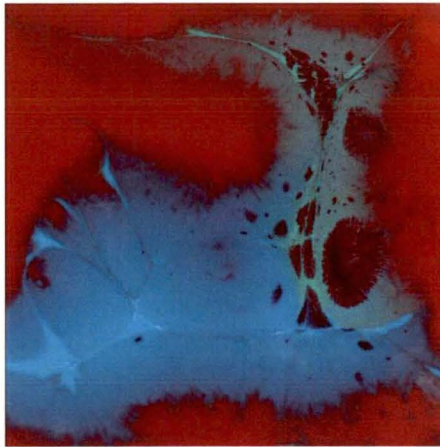


Figure 49: Susan Quinn, *Untitled*, 2011, epoxy resin and pigment on acrylic sheet, 20 x 20 cm



Figure 50: Susan Quinn, *Untitled* (detail), 2011, epoxy resin and pigment on acrylic sheet, 20 x 20 cm

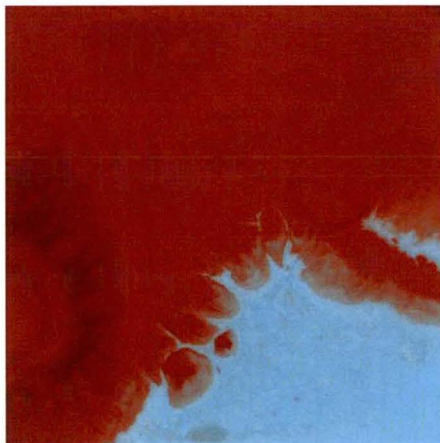


Figure 51: Susan Quinn, *Untitled* (detail), 2011, Epoxy resin and pigment on acrylic sheet, 20 x 20 cm

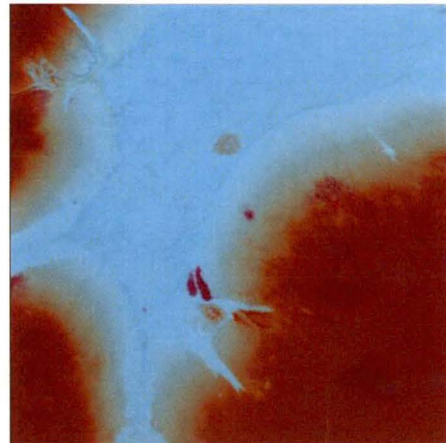


Figure 52: Susan Quinn, *Untitled* (detail), 2011, Epoxy resin and pigment on acrylic sheet, 20 x 20 cm

Resolving minor problems

Difficulties, problems, and obstacles are abstract concepts that I do not foresee rather, I choose to deal with them as they arise. Problems are not envisaged anywhere other than in the far recesses of my mind. This is to say, I do not consciously foresee, nor do I believe I will encounter problems. I am aware of difficulties as no more than

surmountable hurdles to which there is always a solution. It is best to believe every problem can be resolved. This must surely be the mind-set of an experimenter otherwise; I would be inclined to stick closely to the known. Minor problems have arisen and were resolved in the following ways.

Scaling-up: Increasing the dimensions of the work, from small scale 20 x 20 cm up to 122 x 122 cm is, I discovered, a two-person task. A short, fifteen minute, working window raises issues of resin consistency and reduced opportunities for introducing and applying detail. The first large-scale piece demonstrates this difficulty and now forms part of the support work. Assistance with the time-hungry process of preparing materials reduces stress and associated distractions thus delivering the luxury to concentrate on applying the processes. In effect, productive assistance eliminates thoughts of what the next task might be, instead allowing a single-minded and creative approach to the task in-hand.

Health & Safety: Protective clothing includes, apron, rubber gloves, and protective eyewear. These eliminate the possibility of adverse reactions to the material. Whilst odourless, my initial suspicions were that the media may be harmful. A small mask seemed an appropriately cautious route given my concern that it may, in fact, be silently or odourlessly poisoning me. However, the *Chemquest* website provided detailed information, and that the product is, indeed, benign.

A finished body of work

Each large (122 x 122 cm) study in the presented body of work is a scaled-up version of a small study. While large studies may not appear to be similar, small studies serve as reminders of colour combinations, approximations of quantities, and compositional arrangements. A number of considerations dictate a finished painting and over which I have little control. These are, heat, cold, humidity, time between applications, quantities of pigment. It is not possible to recreate with any exactness, hence only approximations of effect and colour are possible. Small studies allow me the opportunity to experiment with process, ideas, and technique in order to achieve a sizeable body of work within a comfortable timeframe – for documentation and to make critical decisions for presentation.

My fickle nature quickly and effortlessly discards image effects and works which, in earlier experiments, were sources of great excitement. Through time, a more complex approach to application of the medium produced a more sophisticated outcome. I use the term sophisticated to mean subtle, minimal in content, and that I achieved an increasingly confident approach to the process in both my application of the media, in the delivery of detail, and in my expected outcomes. Less successful studies joined an increasing body of support work.

The term *minimal* refers to my use of only two colours in each study. Each of the colour pigments is mixed with resin in different ratios in order to achieve interesting tonal effects. By this I mean; resin is mixed in only small quantities each time. An image measuring 122 x 122 cm requires far in excess of 2000 ml of resin. Each 'batch' of resin is divided into yet smaller portions at which time pigment is added.

Application in small batches of resin containing unmeasured quantities of pigment delivers interesting tonal effects. These rich, luscious effects are visible in Figures 53, 54, and 55.

Figure 53 exhibits tonal effects using only one colour with additions of transparent pigment, added in increments. Depth, a degree of definition, and a sense of the body are achieved. Figure 54 demonstrates what happens when more than one colour is applied with additions of transparent pigments.

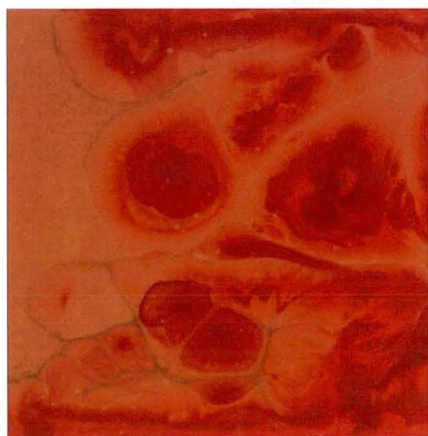


Figure 53: Susan Quinn, *Untitled*, 2011, epoxy resin and pigment on acrylic sheet, 20 x 20 cm

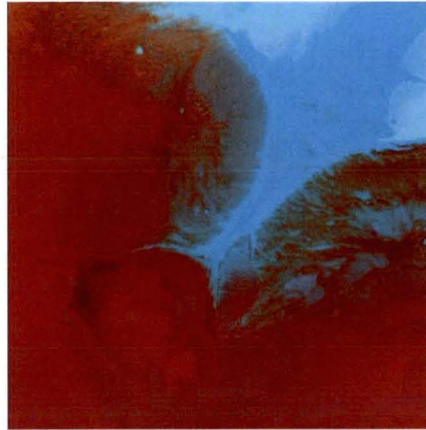


Figure 54: Susan Quinn, *Untitled*, 2011, epoxy resin and pigment on acrylic sheet, 20 x 20 cm

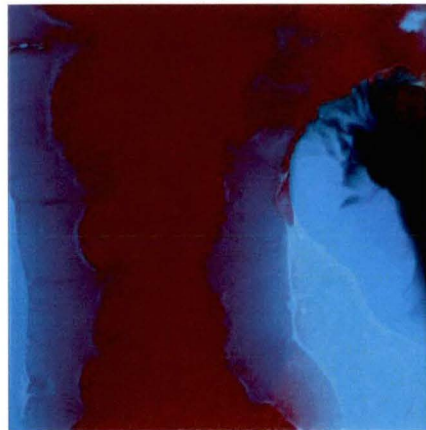


Figure 55: Susan Quinn, *Untitled*, 2011, epoxy resin and pigment on acrylic sheet, 20 x 20 cm

An aesthetic of bodily material achieves my aim of slices or smears of human matter as it would be seen under a laboratory microscope. Figure 55 is most pleasing – a subjective albeit considered statement. The image exhibits depth, pleasing tonal qualities while bleeding at colour-boundaries makes for interesting scrutiny.

Figure 55 contains application of only two opaque colours. These are violet and light blue. Violet opaque pigment contains additions of transparent pigment in increasing quantities, providing an effective contrast to multi-layered blue tones. Blue is applied

with increasing quantities of opaque pigment plus additions of transparent pigment to deliver depths of colour and tone I cannot achieve with opaque pigments alone.

Throughout the processes described so far, I have engaged, also, in applying resin and pigments to actual clinical glass slides (Figure 56).

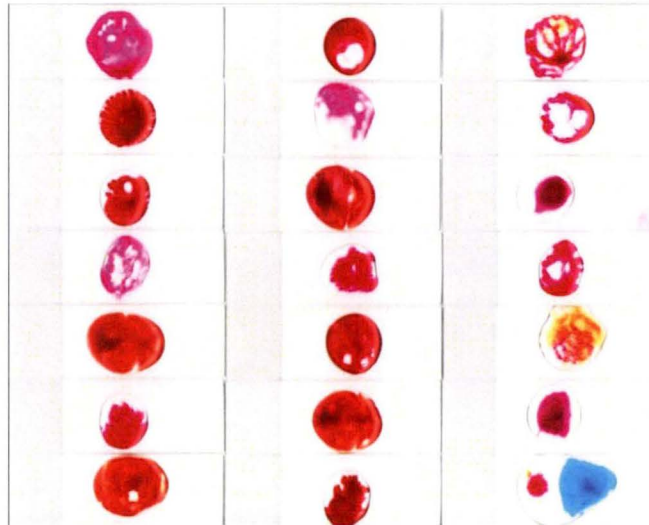


Figure 56: Susan Quinn, *Untitled*, 2011, 21 glass slides, epoxy resin, pigments, 17.5 x 22.5 cm (7.5 x 2.5 cm each)

While this was initially done on a whim, and had been intended only as support work, both interesting effects and a pleasing tactile response from my peers emerged. The physicality of sorting and stacking glass slides provides an interactive element and a counterbalance to the static qualities of both projected images and large-scale paintings. An audience might take pleasure in the intimate and tactile experience of examining conceptual human matter one slide at a time (Figure 57).



Figure 57: Susan Quinn, *Untitled*, epoxy resin, pigment, glass slide, 7.5 x 2.5 cm

My version of portraiture is expressed boldly in broad expanses of colour. In order to expand on the idea of portraiture I employed a non-conventional painting medium. I then used it in an unusual way. My method encouraged layers of pigment-dense resin to interact with the one before and with the next to form loose and ambiguous patterning (Figure 58). Applications of pigment in random quantities express imaginative cellular and biochemical activity.

Each visual element of *An Alternative Portrait* is linked. The intent of projected studies is to elicit an enveloping and sublime experience through sheer scale and intense colour, while a single clinical slide provides an intimate and tactile experience in the physicality of choosing, handling, placing, looking, and then replacing. Small studies and large-scale paintings encourage inspection of media, process, and technique in seamless surfaces where detail within colour-field transitions forms the essence of individuality, a portrait.



Figure 58: Susan Quinn, *Untitled (detail)*, epoxy resin and pigment on acrylic sheet, 20 x 20 cm

Conclusion: flattening the layers

In this project I have investigated whether a version of portraiture can be drawn from pattern inherent in microscopic substances making up the human body. My intention has not been to unravel the complexities of portraiture; rather, the aim is to expand on portraiture's generic form to embrace an additional view of the human body.

Throughout this engagement I investigated and demonstrated that abstraction, colour, and a form of loosely arranged patterning possess capacities to deploy the indexical natures of experience and perception. Identity has to do with an enduring sense of self and it is in this sense that I believe a portrait is best expressed, emphasising individual character and spiritual qualities. *An Alternative Portrait* invites viewers to experience a momentary encounter with the microscopic structures and biochemical processes that make up the human individual.

Central to my argument is how I navigate the complexities of human anatomy and physiology. The threshold between how I see the human body with my eyes and how I see it in my mind is indistinct. In this sense, my concept of portraiture goes beyond generic to form a reactive and subjective attachment to reality. The alternative portrait I have explored in this project is contained within microscopic human physical detail that retains and extends portraiture's debt to embodiment. Scale and intense colour explore and determine how new and different interpretations and individual interactions extend the possibilities of what portraiture might be.

How I express the concept in experiential and emotive marks and a considered choice of media is significant to this project. I draw parallels between Chuck Close's super-real portraits formed through hundreds of tiny images, and the small yet important contrasting detail within each of my paintings that forms the essence of each portrait. My choice of media resonates with the delicate balance Janet Laurence achieves with transparency, and with Dale Frank's bold use of colour. I also reference Dale Frank's obscure, cryptic titles. My use of colour-bleeding and ambiguous, unstructured forms reference Antonio Murado's atmospheric colour-field paintings.

In *An Alternative Portrait*, human portraiture is not found in likenesses. Rather, it connects with a number of significant metaphysical qualities described by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Mark Rothko, and Billy Collins, and in which I locate notions of self, body, embodiment, and a contemporary consideration of the sublime that Barnett Newman suggested is best expressed in the art of Abstract Expressionists.

Just as scientists suspend human biological matter on glass, my human body is suspended in a painterly process in order that an audience might investigate and scrutinise detail within both the macro and the minutiae, thus allowing a portrait to form in the mind. Being aware that a portrait is no more than a two-dimensional image, I use painting as a means to shift how the image is registered from simply viewing to a sensation that draws out awareness in the viewer. In a form of interactivity that is internalised, a sense of identity is enhanced; the viewer becomes aware of their position before the image. Thus, my *alternative portrait* engages subtle and obscure mechanisms in order to locate a sense of self in an embodied experience. Whether this version of portraiture is specific to self or to another individual is a matter for the viewer to negotiate.

In my assessment exhibition, visual context changes with proximity to each of the four defined elements within the body of work. Beginning with the tactile and intensely intimate experience of handling tiny (2.5 x 7.5 cm) glass slides (*Family albums*) containing conceptual human tissue in a pick-up and put-down action, context changes when a fixed vertical orientation is engaged and experience is extended through small (20 x 20 cm) studies (*Portrait gallery*) in which the proximity of an up-close view invites scrutiny in order to experience an intimate connection. Experience is then extended to large (122 x 122 cm) format paintings (*Commentaries on the lives of others . . .* and *Becoming acquainted with many famous people . . .*) requiring a step-back in order to take in a broader view. This view also invites scrutiny of detail within resin's highly reflective surface and physical properties that effectively express my perception of colour-defined microscopic human body structures and bodily processes.

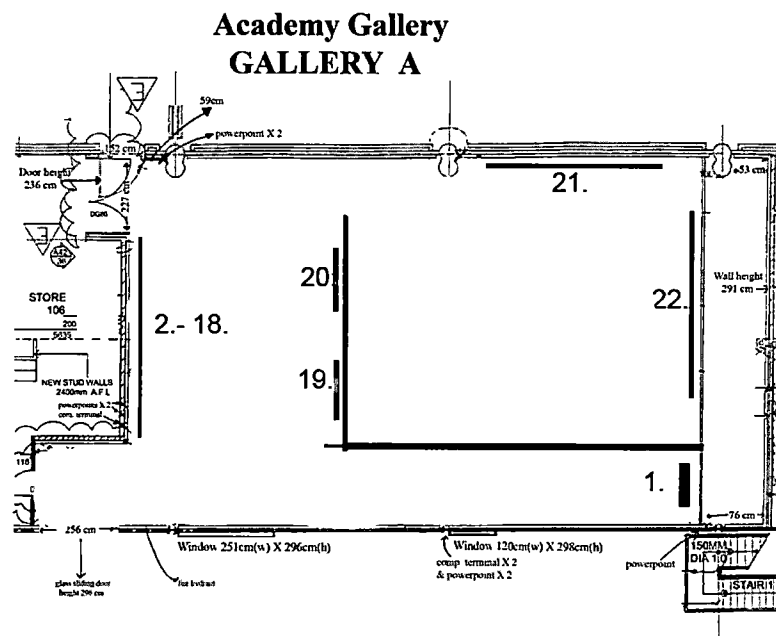
Spatial context changes again in floor to ceiling projections filling the field of vision, engaging emotional connections in an enveloping, sublime experience. In this space a

viewer is invited to become immersed in intense colour panoramas. Engagement in each of these four elements changes from tactile to corporeal and then sensorial.

As an individual, I am constantly, both consciously and unconsciously, absorbing information that influences both my intent and my modes of expression. *An Alternative Portrait* emphasises my physical engagement with process and materiality. My approach engages (and disengages) with process, material, and media, while a heightened awareness of scale and format as an effective form of communicating an idea has substantially enhanced my understanding of visual context. My response through extension of critical assessment continues to broaden ideas of what a portrait might be whilst generating fresh possibilities that I can take into future investigations.

Appendix C

Examination Exhibition: Configuration of gallery and resolution of Space



Examination Exhibition Gallery Plan

In my *An Alternative Portrait* examination exhibition, the gallery space was divided to contain four clearly defined elements. These are clearly numbered in the *Examination Exhibition Gallery Plan* (above). The visual context changes with proximity to each of the elements to engage the tactile, the corporeal, and the sensorial. The experience begins with glass slides (numbered 1. on plan *Family Albums*) inserted into worn-out clinical slide trays that I was able to obtain from a hospital Pathology Department. A chair placed beside an old cabinet situated at the end of a long corridor space evokes a domestic setting. The chair, combined with a desk lamp, extends an invitation to linger,

to interact, and to handle slides and trays in a pick-up, put-down action as one might browse photograph albums.



1. Susan Quinn, *Family Albums*, 2011, installation view, dimensions variable



1. Susan Quinn, *Family Albums*, 2011, installation view, dimensions variable



1. Susan Quinn, *Family Albums*, 2011, glass slides, epoxy resin, transparent pigments, installation view, dimensions variable

The context changes to a fixed vertical orientation in the second element (2 – 18 on plan) where experience is extended through a series of seventeen small (20 x 20 cm) studies while proximity, in an up-close view, invites scrutiny of detail within the resin's glass-like surface.



2-18, Susan Quinn, *Portrait gallery*, series of seventeen, 2011, installation view 2 to 18

2. Penetrating auditory assault burdened alongside crimson glow
3. In its pulsating inferiority, a struggle of ascension stalled
4. Predatory eclipse annihilated semi-dwarfs indigo
5. From under soft extension helpless objective notions subsided
6. Translucency exposed rhythmic endeavours close to exhaustion
7. The sleeping staleness threatened to permeate woolly border
8. Tight and engorged the statement elapsed
9. Indeterminable residue solemnly detaches beyond the laughter
10. Tear-shaped moisture extracted with uncertain pressure

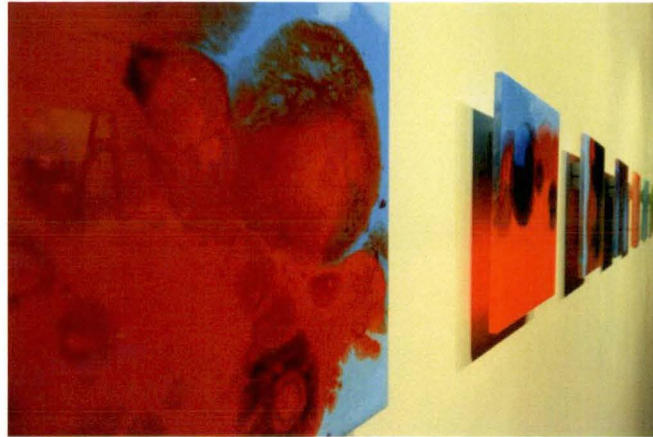
11. *Occasionally released into zero the smell of dormant withering*
12. *Prepared a ritual derived excitement whilst confronting external sac*
13. *Pumping into shriveled dermis aghast with sanity*
14. *Orbs of paleness inflated upon a stifled fever*
15. *Balanced scales oblivious to murmurings alight*
16. *Gentle waves emitted from within*
17. *Candid observations of extraordinary sub-particles avoided identification*
18. *Preparation called for subtle facial changes*



2-18, Susan Quinn, *Portrait gallery*, series of seventeen, 2011, installation view



2-18, Susan Quinn, *Portrait gallery*, series of seventeen, 2011, installation view



2-18, Susan Quinn, *Portrait gallery*, series of seventeen, 2011, installation view

The experience is extended again through two large format images measuring 122 x 122 cm (19 & 20 on plan).



19. Susan Quinn, *Commentaries on the lives of others subjected him to a life of constant criticism leaving him weary and disillusioned living out characters in an existence of grotesque moral and emotional deformity in a freakishly unforgettable tragi-comedy*, 2011, epoxy resin, pigment, acrylic sheet, 122x 122 cm

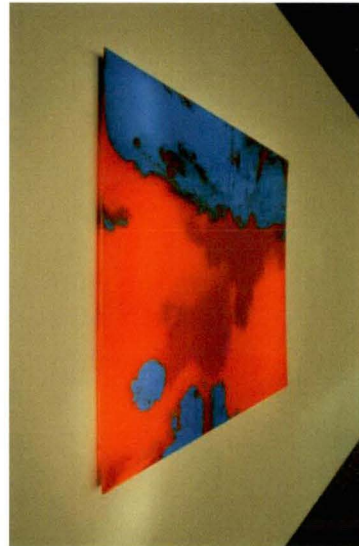
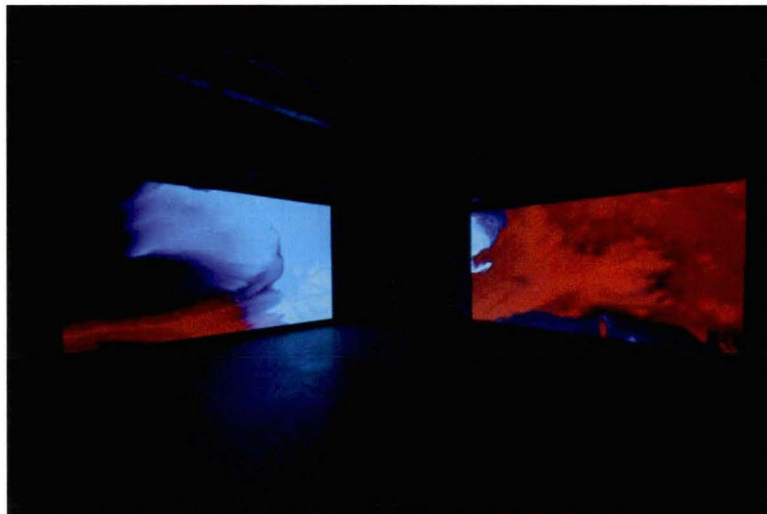


Figure 20. Susan Quinn, *Becoming acquainted with many famous people of truly of truly diverse personalities etched herself into her psyche whereas a more considered approach may have avoided so conspicuous a life of repeated errors of judgment playing out fantasies with real people never knowing how games in human might reveal the true spirit of any one subject*, epoxy resin, acrylic, 2011, 122 x 122 cm

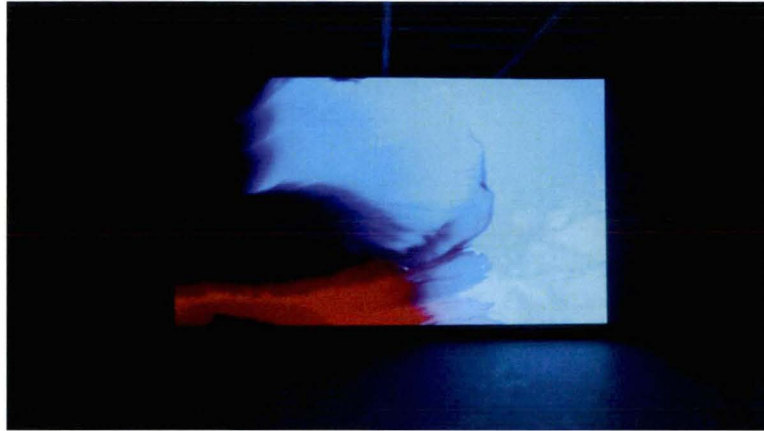


19 & 20, Susan Quinn, Images 19 & 20, 2011, Installation view

Scale and spatial context change again in floor-to-ceiling projections (elements 21 & 22) in a darkened space. Two projected images fill the field of vision engaging and eliciting an enveloping and sublime experience. Strategically placed sofas invited the viewer to linger in the space.



21 & 22, Susan Quinn, projected images (21 & 22), 2011, installation view

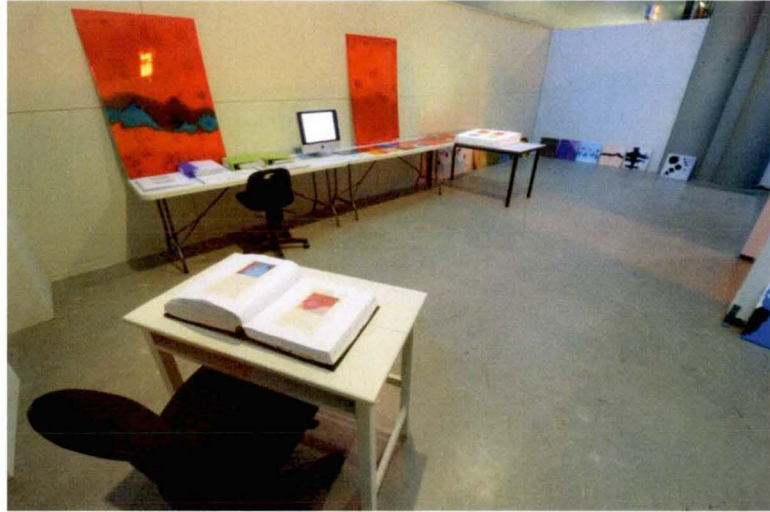


21. Susan Quinn, *An inflated sense of self-importance created a monster which his worth as an effective self-managed ignoramus increased to reach stratospheric heights of non-reality to the real world forcing those closely attached to retreat*, projected image, 2011, dimensions variable



22. Susan Quinn, *She possessed the demeanor of a flirtatious piranha setting traps for the hapless in a pathetic play for attention*, 2011, projected image, dimensions variable

Examples of support work follow (below). In this space, a desk and a chair extended an invitation to linger and to explore experimental pieces and works that, for editing reasons, were not selected for inclusion in the examination exhibition.



Susan Quinn, support work area



Susan Quinn, support work area

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Appendix A

Purity, Billy Collins, (2001).

My favorite time to write is in the late afternoon,
weekdays, particularly Wednesdays.

This is how I go about it:

I take a fresh pot of tea into my study and close the door.

Then I remove my clothes and leave them in a pile as if I
had melted to death and my legacy consisted of only a
white shirt, a pair of pants and a pot of cold tea.

Then I remove my flesh and hang it over a chair.
I slide it off my bones like a silken garment.

I do this so that what I write will be pure, completely
rinsed of the carnal, uncontaminated by the
preoccupation of the body.

Finally, I remove each of my organs and arrange them on
a small table near the window . . . I do not want to hear
their ancient rhythms when I am trying to tap out my
own drumbeat.

Now I sit at the desk, ready to begin.

I am entirely pure: nothing but a skeleton at a
typewriter.

I should mention that sometimes I leave my penis on. I
find it difficult to ignore the temptation.

Then I am a skeleton with a penis at a typewriter.

In this condition I write extraordinary love poems . . .
most of them exploiting the connection between sex and
death.

I am concentration itself:
I exist in a universe where there is nothing but sex,
death, and typewriting.

After a spell of this I remove my penis too.
Then I am all skull and bones typing into the afternoon.
Just the absolute essentials, no flounces.

Now I write only about death, most classical of themes in
language light as the air between my ribs.

Afterward, I reward myself by going for a drive at sunset.

I replace my organs and slip back into my flesh and
clothes.

Then I back the car out of the garage and speed through
the woods on winding country roads, passing stone
walls, farmhouses, and frozen ponds, all perfectly
arranged like words in a famous sonnet (Collins, 2001).

Appendix B

The four 'humors'

The origin of the word 'humor' is Middle English (as humour): via Old French from Latin 'humor' (moisture), from 'humere' (humid). The humors is derived from cardinal humor representing each of the four chief fluid of the body – blood, phlegm, yellow bile (choler), and black bile (melancholy) – that were thought to determine a person's physical and mental qualities by relative proportions in which they were present in the body.

The original sense was bodily fluid (surviving in *aqueous humor* and *vitreous humor*, fluids in the eyeball); it was used specifically for any of the cardinal humors, whence mental disposition (thought to be caused by the relative proportions of the humors).

Interpreting the Merleau-Ponty term 'humeral infrastructure' proved challenging and which appears to have been in translation, from French to English. The French spelling is 'humere', hence 'humeral'.

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<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/humor>
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Participation in Exhibition (solo & group), Conferences, Publications, & Promotions during candidature – March 2009 to June 2011

Solo & group shows

- *The Tops of the Trees*, (solo) 2009: catalogue plus essay by Dr Deb Malor, George Street, Launceston, (inaugural K&H Exhibition Prize)
- *Tertium quid*, (solo) 2010: Atrium Art Space, Cameron Street, Launceston
- January, March, August 2010, & February (solo) 2011, individual paintings, and groups of paintings (up to six at a time), Rossilli's, Launceston
- *Sosueme*, (group) 2010, incorporating six MFA & PhD candidates, works in progress, catalogue plus essay by Dr Deb Malor, Arts Alive, Charles Street, Launceston

Conferences

- ACUADS 2010: Presenter, (invited submit paper for possible inclusion in book)

Publications

- Susan Quinn, 2011: 27, 'ARTFUL PANOPLY: A Collective Affair by Four Australian Artist Run Initiatives', *WARP Magazine*, Issue 3, April 2011, Review of inaugural exhibition and opening of *Sawtooth ARI*.

Promotions

- Mary Machen, 2010: The Examiner Newspaper, *Sosueme*, story & group photograph
- Elaine Harris, 2010: ABC Radio, *Sosueme*, promotion/discussion
- Claire van Ryn, 2009: The Examiner Newspaper, *The Tops of the Trees*, story & photograph

Workshops

- November 2009, Newnham Campus, 'Managing the Research Journey: research designs in action', Prof. Gina Wisker, University of Brighton
- February 2011, Newnham Campus, 'How to write a postgraduate thesis'