Instantiating ideas of limitless space:

Thinking through painting

Lucila Nalvarte Maddox
BFA (Hons), MFA,
PhD Fine Art candidate

The University of Newcastle
Faculty of Education and Arts
School of Creative Arts
February 2015

Supervisor: Dr Sean Lowry
Statement of Originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the university’s digital repository**, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

**Unless an embargo has been approved for a determined period
Instantiating ideas of limitless space: thinking through painting

List of Plates .......................... v
List of Series .......................... xi
Acknowledgements ...................... xv
Abstract .............................. xvi

Introduction .......................... 1

CHAPTER ONE
An exploration of relationships between pictorial space and ideas of limitlessness

1:1 The origins of concepts of limits and limitlessness .......................... 12
1:2 Searching historical spatial ideas of limitlessness .......................... 15
   1:2:1 Illusionism and depth in the Italian Renaissance ......................... 15
       1:2:1 (i) Atmospheric shadows ........................................... 18
       1:2:1 (ii) Voluminous depths ............................................ 20
       1:2:1 (iii) Receding sights ............................................. 21
       1:2:1 (iv) Extending perceptions ....................................... 22
   1:2:2 Experiential dimensions .............................................. 23
       1:2:2 (i) Emblematic visions and atmospheric horizons ................. 25
       1:2:2 (ii) Concealed worlds .......................................... 28
   1:2:3 Shifting sensations .................................................. 28
       1:2:3 (i) The synthesis of depth and flatness ......................... 30
       1:2:3 (ii) The separation of planes ................................... 32
       1:2:3 (iii) Pulsating surfaces ........................................ 34
       1:2:3 (iv) Binocular space ............................................ 36
       1:2:3 (v) Motional configurations ..................................... 37
       1:2:3 (vi) Accelerating intervals ..................................... 39
   1:2:4 Multiple perspectives .............................................. 40
       1:2:4 (i) Colliding images ............................................. 42
       1:2:4 (ii) Multiple views ............................................. 43
       1:2:4 (iii) Degrees of visibility ..................................... 44
1:3 Reflecting on spatial aspects of limitlessness via phenomenology of perception and pictorial models
   1:3:1 Perceptual model: pictorial thought .................................. 52
       – Invisibility/visibility ............................................... 54
       – Simplicity of perception: ambiguity of form ...................... 57
LIST OF PLATES

Plate 1
Masaccio, *Expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise*, 1427. 18, 106
Fresco (width, 89 cm).
Brancaccio Chapel, Florence.

Plate 2
Leonardo da Vinci, *Virgin of the rocks*, 1483-1490. 18, 106
Oil on canvas, 198 x 123 cm. Louvre, Paris.

Plate 3
Oil tempera wall painting, 420 x 910 cm.
Refectory, Santa Maria Della Grazie, Milan.

Plate 4
Caravaggio, *David and Goliath*, 1609-1610. 18, 106
Oil on canvas, 125 x 99 cm.
Borghese Gallery, Rome.

Plate 5
Caspar David Friedrich, *Monk by the sea*, 1809-1810. 25, 110
Oil on canvas, 110 x 171.5 cm.
National Gallery, West Berlin.

Plate 6
J.M.W. Turner, *Sun setting over the sea, with garnets*, c. 1836. 25, 110
Watercolour, black chalk and body colour with scratching out on Buff paper, 21.8 x 28.4 cm.
Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester.

Plate 7
Mark Rothko, *Black, brown on maroon*, 1957. 25
Oil on canvas, 233 x 193 cm.
National Gallery, Australia.

Plate 8
Frederick Church, *The Andes of Ecuador*, 1855. 25, 110
Oil on canvas, 122 x 190.5 cm.
Plate 9
Oil on canvas, 75 x 100 cm.  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Plate 10
Oil on canvas, 100 x 66 cm.  
National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Plate 11
Oil on canvas, 100 x 66 cm.  
National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Plate 12
Oil on canvas, 69.8 x 89.5 cm.  
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia.

Plate 13
Oil on canvas, 19 x 27.3 cm.  
Provost and fellows of King’s College, Cambridge, England.

Plate 14
Oil on canvas, 190 x 123 cm.  

Plate 15
Oil on canvas, 2.45 x 5.45 m.  
Collection, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Plate 16
Oil, enamel and aluminium paint on canvas, 122.5 x 97 cm.  
Plate 17
Gerhard Richter, *Woman descending the staircase*, 1965. 29, 115
Oil on canvas, 200.7 x 129.5 cm.
Artist’s estate, Cologne, Germany.

Plate 18
David Salle, *Dual aspect picture*, 1986. 41, 125
Acrylic/oil on canvas, 395 x 297 cm.
Ludwig Museum, Cologne.

Plate 19
David Hockney, *Grand Canyon*, 1982. 41, 125
Polaroid shots with Pentax camera.
The artist’s collection.

Plate 20
Oil on 60 canvases, 30 x 40 cm each.
National Gallery, Australia.

Plate 21
Gerhard Richter, *Arrest I*, 1988. 41, 125
Oil on canvas, 92 x 127 cm.

Plate 22
Gerhardt Richter, *Cell*, 1988. 41, 125
Oil on canvas, 201 x 140 cm.

Plate 23
Gerhard Richter, *Man shot down I*, 1988. 41, 125
Oil on canvas, 101 x 141 cm each.

Plate 24
Oil on canvas, diptych, 320 x 199 cm each.
Saint Louis Art Museum.
Plate 25
Piet Mondrian, *Composition with red, blue, yellow, black and grey*, 1922. 51, 132
Oil on canvas, 41.9 x 41.9 cm.
Toledo Museum of Art.

Plate 26
Paul Cézanne, *Mont Sainte-Victoire seen from Bellevue*, 1885-87. 51, 57, 132, 135
Oil on canvas, 65.5 x 81 cm.
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Plate 27
Jackson Pollock, *Guardians of the secret*, 1943. 51, 132
Oil on canvas, 123 x 191 cm.
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California.

Plate 28
Jackson Pollock, *Full fathom five*, 1947. 51, 132
Oil on canvas, 129.2 x 76.5 cm.

Plate 29
Jackson Pollock, *Autumn rhythm*, 1957. 51, 132
Oil on canvas, 2.67 x 5.26 m.

Plates 30 and 31  51, 132
Daniel Buren, *Within the frame and Beyond the frame*, 1973.
Re-painted ready-made canvases.

Plate 32  51, 132
Installation work in situ.
Courtyard of the Palais Royale, Paris.

Plate 33  66, 147
Caspar David Friedrich, *Arctic shipwreck*, 1824.
Oil on canvas, 96.7 x 126.9 cm.
Kunsthalle, Hamburg.
Plate 34
J.M.W. Turner, *Snow storm*, 1790. 66, 147
Oil on canvas, 91.5 x 122 cm.
Tate Gallery, London.

Plate 35
J. M.W. Turner, *The burning of the houses of parliament*, 1856. 66, 147
Watercolour on paper, 23.2 x 32.6 cm.
Tate Gallery London.

Plate 36
J.M.W. Turner, *Storm clouds, looking out to sea*, 1845. 67, 147
Watercolour on paper, 28.7 x 33.5 cm.
Tate Gallery, London.

Plate 37
Barnett Newman, *Onement I*, 1948. 67, 87, 147, 161
Masking tape on oil and oil on canvas, 69.2 x 41.2 cm.

Plate 38
Henri Matisse, *The red studio*, 1911. 80, 155
Oil on canvas, 181 x 219.1 cm.

Plate 39
J.M.W. Turner, *Rain, steam and speed, the Great Western railway*, 1844. 80, 155
Oil on canvas, 90.8 x 121.9 cm.
National Gallery, London

Plate 40
Gerhard Richter, *Uncle Rudi*, 1965. 87, 161
Oil on canvas, 87 x 50 cm.
Zech Museum of Fine Arts, Prague.

Plate 41
Vincent van Gogh, *The starry night*, 1889. 102
Oil on canvas, 73.7 x 92.1 cm.
LIST OF SERIES

Series 1

Charcoal on paper, 18 x 23 cm.

Series 2

Pastel on paper, 14 x 17 cm.

Series 3

Watercolour on paper, 18 x 23 cm.

Series 4

Watercolour on paper, 16.5 x 19 cm.

Series 5

Pastel on paper, 14 x 17 cm.

Series 6

*Converging sights*, 2009-2010.  
Oil on canvas, 18 x 23 cm.

Series 7

*Enigmatic*, 2009-2010.  
Oil on canvas, 16.5 x 19 cm.

Series 8

*Scattering perceptions*, 2009-2010.  
Acrylic on paper, 18 x 23 cm.

Series 9

Wax sticks on paper, 13 x 20 cm.

Series 10

Various mediums: wax pencil, pastel, charcoal and acrylic on paper, 18 x 23 cm.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series 11</th>
<th>Reflecting ripples, 2009-2011.</th>
<th>121</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acrylic on canvas, 15 x 18 cm.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series 12</td>
<td>Impulsion/expulsion, 2009-2012.</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wax sticks on paper, 13 x 20 cm.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series 13</td>
<td>Spatial fluctuations, 2010-2011.</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Watercolour on paper canvas, 14 x 17 cm.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series 14</td>
<td>Flickering of time, 2010-2011.</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oil on canvas, 19.5 x 25 cm.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series 15</td>
<td>Accumulations, 2010-2012.</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pastel on paper, 14 x 17 cm.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series 16</td>
<td>Imperceptible, 2010-2011.</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acrylic and charcoal on paper, 18 x 23 cm.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series 17A</td>
<td>Pensiveness, 2013.</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ink on paper, 14 x 20 cm.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series 17B</td>
<td>Diaphanous, 2013.</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oil on paper, 18 x 20 cm.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series 18</td>
<td>Encounters, 2010-2011.</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 29 cm.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series 19</td>
<td>Metamorphosis, 2012-2013.</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pastel on paper, 14 x 17 cm.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Series 20

Permeable, 2010-2011.
Watercolour on paper, 13.5 x 19.5 cm.

Series 21

Impermeable, 2013.
Oil on paper, 15.5 x 18.5 cm.

Series 22

Liquetifying, 2012-2013.
Acrylic on canvas, 18 x 23 cm.

Series 23

Slices of time - fragmented space, 2010-2012.
Oil on canvas, 24 x 29 cm.

Series 24A

Ominous, 2010-2012.
Oil on canvas, 16.5 x 19 cm.

Series 24B

Menacing, 2010-2012.
Pastel on paper, 16.5 x 19 cm.

Series 24C

Forsaken, 2010-2012.
Oil on canvas, 16.5 x 19 cm.

Series 24D

Isolated, 2010-2012.
Oil on paper canvas, 16.5 x 19 cm.

Series 25

Chaos, 2010-2012.
Watercolour on paper, 16.5 x 19 cm.

Series 26

Aftermath, 2010-2012.
Watercolour on paper, 15.5 x 19 mm.
Series 27
  *Stillness*, 2013. 151
  Watercolour on paper, 17.5 x 21 cm.

Series 28
  *Foreseeable*, 2012-2013. 152
  Oil on canvas, 25 x 30 cm.

Series 29
  *Indiscernible*, 2010-2012. 153
  Oil on paper, 17 x 18 cm.

Series 30
  *Transient*, 2010-2012. 154
  Oil on canvas, 25 x 30 cm.

Series 31
  *Timeless orbit*, 2010-2011. 157
  Acrylic on paper, 18 x 23 cm.

Series 32
  *Circumvent*, 2011-2013. 158
  Oil on canvas, 16.5 x 19 cm.

Series 33
  *Orchestrating the invisible*, 2011-2013. 160
  Oil on canvas, 92 x 76 cm.

Series 34
  *Tracking time*, 2012-2013. 163
  Photograph and oil on canvas, 19.5 x 25 cm.

Series 35
  *Invisibility/visibility*, 2013-2014. 165
  Oil on canvas, 88 x 165 cm.

Series 36
  *Virtual reality*, 2012-2013. 166
  Oil on canvas, 26 x 30 cm.
Acknowledgements

I want to thank Doctor Sean Lowry for his contribution in nurturing and supervising my research process. I also thank Doctor Andre Brodyk and Emeritus Professor Elizabeth Ashburn for their valuable input to the development of my early work, as well as Professor Anne Graham and Patricia Wilson-Adams for their assistance and vital comments. I thank my lovely family for their support, especially my husband John for his inspiring love of art and for reading my work. I value my son John Andrew’s inspirational musical compositions and my daughter Laura’s continuous encouragement and her contributions through multimedia creations. I would also like to thank my Australian friends, Moira and Barb, for their support and for sharing their skills to assist with my language and presentation. I also want to thank my editors Alexandra Kaufman and Rebecca Conroy for their contribution to the final editing and proof reading of my thesis.
Abstract

This PhD research project is a theoretical and studio-based investigation concerned with the problem of thinking in pictorial terms about how painting might serve as an instrument to elucidate the otherwise invisible concept of the limitless passage of time in space. By framing painting as a register of processes of thinking through an ongoing experimentation with painting materials, techniques and strategies, this project aims to generate new ways of experientially presenting the un-presentable boundlessness of space through the vehicular medium of painting. Accordingly, this project seeks to demonstrate how the imperceptibly invisible passage of time through space might be contemplated through a series of pictorial ambiguities. In this sense, painting is articulated as a theoretical operator that aims to activate a consciousness of the very invisibility of the limitless passage of time in space. Pictorial strategies for evoking the invisible nature of limitless space are drawn from an historical account and theoretical analysis of strategies used by selected artists and demonstrated through a series of experimental painting techniques. *Instantiating ideas of limitless space: Thinking through painting* culminates with an exhibition which aims to experientially articulate the incomprehensible enormity of the idea that time passes without end through limitless space. Just as the universe holds time within an open-ended cosmological container, the canvas, by extension, presents the vehicular medium of painting in an open-ended process of transformation. Significantly, painting can only represent a transitive register of fragmentary moments within this limitless process of transformation, and as a consequence, the author’s studio outcomes are displayed in series in order to invite the viewer to contemplate them as a whole. Finally, this studio-based research project is proffered as a significant contribution to framing painting’s ongoing potential for building a pictorial vocabulary for communicating otherwise invisible elements through the visible materiality of painting.
Introduction

This thesis aims to demonstrate and contextualise how the accompanying exhibition component titled *Instantiating ideas of limitless space: Thinking through painting*, might function to communicate otherwise invisible elements through the visible materiality of painting. This research project, which unites a theoretical analysis and a studio-based investigation, is directed towards an ongoing experimentation with painting materials, techniques and strategies. Significantly, the interaction between the theoretical and studio based components is designed to demonstrate painting’s potential to unlock insight and understanding, potentially elusive in a theoretical proposition alone. This interaction is grounded in an open-ended and speculative relationship, and between the immediacy of reason, imagination and sensory channels, with a view to experientially revealing the invisibility of the limitless passage of time in space. This project also aspires to demonstrate how painting, as a register of process, and painting articulated as a theoretical operator, can work hand in hand to offer models for understanding critical philosophical concepts about space, time, visibility, invisibility and limitlessness. Various propositions are drawn from theoretical research and research into the strategies adopted by particular painters which are then tested through a series of experimental procedures designed to activate new ways of envisaging the invisibility concept of the limitless passage of time in space. These procedures are described in detail through a close relationship between the exegetical and studio based components of the overall research project. Accordingly, this research project will present both abstract and figurative works designed to experientially reveal the paradoxically invisible conception of the passage of time in limitless space. This is achieved through a succession of segmented events in which each painting will become a part of a new vocabulary of thought that, when displayed together, aims to expound the passage of time in space as a cosmological whole. Consequently, this thesis poses the following
question: How might painting be employed to build a pictorial vocabulary for elucidating the paradoxically invisible passage of time in space? The process-based experimentation from which the final exhibition plans to be drawn, will reveal itself as a laboratory for experimentation with painting materials, techniques and strategies in which a series of pictorial thoughts work towards an artistic verification of the invisibility concept of the limitless passage of time in space, as contemplated throughout this thesis.

The purpose of chapter one is to establish the relationship between theory and practice, or more specifically, between theoretical and pictorial conceptions of the idea of limitlessness. This will be demonstrated in terms of the origins of concepts of limit and limitlessness, as based on the ultimate boundaries of the universe and demonstrated through Pythagoras’ mathematical estimation in 600 BC that the sun was the centre of the universe, which in turn marked the beginning of the idea of an ever-transforming limitless world. This will be followed by tracing the history of spatial ideas of limitlessness, beginning with theoretical precedents in the fifteenth and sixteenth century Italian Renaissance artists’ ideas, where perspective was used to convey spatial illusionism which still dominates to date. This notion of Illusionism will be examined through artists’ ideas, such as Tommaso Masaccio’s (1401-1428) atmospheric shadows to instil a sense of spatial placement, depth and atmosphere, or Leonardo da Vinci’s (1452-1519) voluminous depths to infuse atmospheric flotation. Da Vinci’s receding sights will be used to create common vanishing points of perception, and lastly, Michelangelo Caravaggio’s (1571-1610) ideas of extending perceptions will be engaged to link fiction with reality in revealing the invisibility notion of limitlessness. This investigation will introduce notions of experiential dimensions based on German Immanuel Kant’s (1724-1804) eighteenth century assertion that neither space nor time can be empirically perceived, a notion that ran contrary to Descartes’ mind/body dichotomy. Experiential dimensions will also be examined and demonstrated though certain
eighteenth and nineteenth century Romantic artists’ ideas, such as German painter Caspar David Friedrich’s (1774-1840) emblematic visions to evoke a sense of inimitability, and English painter J. M. W. Turner’s (1775-1851) atmospheric horizons to convey expanses of luminosity. Additionally, American painter Fredrick Church’s idea of concealed worlds will be used to reveal the invisibility of limitlessness with a sense of atmospheric dispersion.

The birth of new concepts during the nineteenth century, such as the boundless four-dimensional continuum of space that extended three-dimensional space and tested physicists’ incorporation of time, challenged artists to create new ways of depicting shifting sensations. Shifting sensations, translated as movement, will be explored as a means of describing the invisibility concept of the limitless passage of time in space. Here, new ideas such as non-Euclidean geometry (space beyond our perception could be curved), were particularly instructive. This will be followed by German physicist Albert Einstein’s (1879-1955) hypothesis of a fourth dimension (height, width and length together with time could be simultaneously evoked in the one painting), to demonstrate how artists’ perception of the world would never be in a state of stillness. Here, painting as a theoretical operator will offer models to demonstrate how concepts of time, space, visibility and invisibility can potentially be materialised through the tangibility of the painting process. The author will employ various means to develop shifting sensations in order to trigger new ways of revealing ideas of limitless space in motion. This project will demonstrate how French Impressionist painter Claude Monet’s (1840-1926) ideas of synthesis of depth and flatness can break colour to create a sense of shimmering optical sensations that resemble motional effects, and how French Post-Impressionist painter Paul Cezanne’s (1839-1906) separation of planes can instil a myriad of disconnected surfaces and yet maintain a sense of continuity. This idea of shifting sensations will be furthered through early twentieth century theories of relativity, from which artists generated new strategies and languages for interpreting their view of the world.
in motion. Furthermore, this project will show how the idea of shifting sensations, examined through German American painter Hans Hofmann’s (1880-1904) pulsating surfaces can disclose movement of push and pull effects, or how American painter Barnett Newman’s (1906-1970) ideas of binocular space can show optical discord that renders spatial movement. It will also show how American painter Jackson Pollock’s (1912-1956) ideas of motional configurations can display chaotic sequences of dripping paint as an active enterprise of mind/body in the act of processing the paint. Additionally, it will reveal how German painter Gerhard Richter’s (b. 1932) ideas of accelerating intervals can render spatial animation to mirror motional changes of time in space.

The play of shifting sensations will be further expanded by integrating ideas of multiple perspectives, in which uncertainty and fragmented information based on twentieth century German physicist Max Planck’s (1858-1947) quantum physics, can be applied to painting. Painting will no longer be understood only in terms of Modernist logic, autonomy, purity or unity alone, but also as a language relying on outside references, quoted images and disharmony of its parts. Aesthetic conceptions of multiple perspectives will be emphasised through American painter David Salle’s (b. 1952) ideas of colliding images to reveal how information, although delivered disconnected, can be unified when displayed as a whole, or how British painter David Hockney’s (b. 1937) ideas of multiple views which involve dissembling and assembling perceptions, can attract the eye not to a single point of view, but to multiple ones, or how Richter’s ideas of degrees of visibility can convey a simultaneous sense of realism and illusion in the one picture.

Spatial ideas of limitlessness via phenomenology of perception and pictorial models are considered as a way of thinking through painting. In this sense, painting will be articulated as a theoretical operator that can offer models about how we come to understand
critical philosophical concepts of space, time, visibility and invisibility in limitless space. Here, painting will be used as a tool and a vehicle to process and elucidate these propositions. Accordingly, painting will be understood as a register of the process, a laboratory for experimentation with painting materials, techniques and structural strategies to display the invisibility notion of the passage of time. Although the subject of limitless space is undoubtedly known, its form is not. This form will be established as a catalytic element to enable form to reveal content and in turn, become its motivational force. As a result, the three elements—subject, form and content—will work in unity in search of an objective, to meaningfully reveal the passage of time through segments relating to each other and to the whole.

The invisibility concept of the passage of time revealed through a vocabulary of colour, line and shape will be demonstrated through French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s (1908-1961) *phenomenology of perception* and Hubert Damisch’s (b. 1928) *painting as model* (perceptive, technical, emblematic and strategic) as well as French artist Daniel Buren’s (b. 1938) ideas of serialisation. For this reason, phenomenology as a way of thinking will offer an indivisible account of time and space, just as perspectival experience links the mind with the brush as an extension of the body, contrary to Descartes’s mind/body dichotomy. Various methods of thinking through painting will be suggested by using some artists’ ideas which the author will use to emphasise that both thinking and handling the paint are inseparable, just as space and time are indivisible. Attempts to interpret the invisibility notion of the passage of time will demonstrate how Dutch painter Piet Mondrian’s (1872-1944) idea of pictorial thought (thinking through painting) can be effected through a process of simplification. Cezanne’s idea of pictorial technique will be examined through a process of transformation via difference, fractioning and repetition and yet with a sense of continuity and completeness in relation to the invisible/visible concepts. The concept of the invisibility
of the passage of time in limitless space will be established through Pollock’s pictorial emblems as a process of signification, a vision that continuously and sequentially links numerous meaningful possibilities in the creative process. Further Pollock’s pictorial strategies, will demonstrate how a process of anticipation can be the core of technical invention in painting. Additional data on sequential display of fragmented works in connection with the invisible passage of time, as exposed through Daniel Buren’s idea of serialisation, will show how a succession of sequential moments in space can develop a unified body of work to reveal the invisibility notion of the passage of time in space as a whole.

This thesis will continue investigating spatial ideas of limitlessness via the sublime as a new way of thinking through painting. The sublime will wrap around the conundrum of relationships between the invisibility notion of limitless passage of time and its pictorial interpretation, as a form of conceptual framework that will unlock the broader question of limitless space-invisibility/visibility. The sublime will be presented in three stages: The Modern sublime of vastness understood as a horror vacui (horror of the void), a significant element of an aesthetic device in art that will be used to extend the mind beyond the mere physicality of the landscape. The Post-Modern sublime will connect manifestations of the mind with space as absence/presence or indeterminacy, while the Contemporary sublime will link manifestations of the mind with space as blankness or immediacy.

The Modern sublime of vastness, understood as horror vacui, will be employed to demonstrate how the idea of limitless space can link with time that passes without end. Here, as the problem of rendering vastness in its entirety is impossible, it will be attempted by containing its core of interest through segmentation within the picture plane through the use of the powers of reasoning and imagination. Various procedures through painting will be
suggested by using some artists’ ideas who employed the notion of Modern sublime of vacuity in their works. Ideas such as Friedrich’s raising the mind to fear will be used to demonstrate how fear can engage with the imperceptibility of space, or how Turner’s igniting the imagination can locate the sublime, not in an overwhelming vacuum, but in the mind manifested through sensorial responses to paint. In this respect, the sublime will evoke that which is beyond the realm of a direct sense of perception, albeit aesthetically. An alternative sublime of vastness, as surveyed through Turner’s terror of the sublime, will demonstrate how manifestations of the mind that magnify experience as an unpredictable yet irrepressible sense of dread, can imply that time passes endlessly and so becomes invisible, just as the extreme removal of painting is directed towards its obliteration. An idea of the sublime of vastness, as considered through Turner’s simplicity of the sublime, will demonstrate how dispersing and dissolving complex spatial perception can convey the passage of time in limitless space as an appearance of an eerie feeling of nothing and yet, full at the same time. Equally, the sublime of vastness as examined through Newman’s idea of reducing event-bound time, will demonstrate how time, concerned neither with the manipulation of space nor with the image, but solely with fleeting sensations of time in space, can imply a sense of an impending passage of time in space in its extreme simplicity.

The Post-Modern sublime, that purportedly connects manifestations of the mind with space as absence/presence or indeterminacy, will be used to demonstrate how the problem of conveying the invisibility notion of the passage of time in space can be inferred as ambiguous, alternating, rebounding and restoring appearances of form. Here, the impossibility of conveying an absence/presence or indeterminate concept will be realised through the determinate concept of the painting process and will be exemplified through some artists’ ideas of an indeterminate nature. This studio-based investigation will show how the sublime of absence/presence or indeterminacy, examined through Newman’s bouncing
spaces, will demonstrate that the vertical or zip that seems not to advance or recede but to float limitlessly in the middle ground without a sense of beginning or end, can activate a new way of evoking limitless space. Similarly, French painter Henri Matisse’s (1869-1954) idea of returning spaces will demonstrate how the continuous departure and arrival of objects over the picture plane, can render painting as a matter of origin and end. Turner’s idea of ethereal visions will then demonstrate how swift fragmentation of space, as analogous to the indistinct characteristics of technological changes, can be ambiguously fleeting just as paint can be endlessly processed.

The Contemporary sublime, which connects manifestations of the mind with space as blankness or immediacy, will be used to demonstrate how the problem of conveying the invisibility notion of space can be inferred as something in its contiguity of form. Here, the passage of time becomes invisible due to the speediness of the passing of time in space. Although this ambiguity of form develops a sense of blankness, it resembles an idea of an immediate presence of an unstated and user-friendly techno-sublime. This project will show how the sublime of blankness or immediacy can help to speculate empty spaces through the instant dynamic layering of paint, analogous to the rapid passage of images on a television screen. Here, the successive layers of paint will be considered as a convergence between moments of time, captured between first and final layers of paint. As a result, origin and end will be demonstrated in simultaneous accord, as an idea of time. This notion of multi-faceted invisibility in the passage of time through space will be analysed and demonstrated through artists’ ideas, such as Newman’s speculative space to demonstrate how a gradual passage of time can somehow anticipate sensations of emptiness, linked with the instantaneous convergence of time and space. Since this sublime is grounded in a plurality of information within the most immediate of forms, this design also pre-empts a sense of time unfolding. Richter’s idea of vanishing perceptions will demonstrate two
aspects of the sublime of blankness or immediacy. While one will be directed towards vagueness of form, the other will interpret it through a total erasure of form. Hence, this act of erasing reality, which is a manifestation of denial, becomes the incompleteness of the painting process. Consequently, painting is able to represent the inability to fully convey the invisibility notion of the passage of time in space, which will then frame the experimental work of the project in the second chapter. These ideas will be brought together under the heading *A practical exploration of relationships between pictorial space and the idea of limitless space.*

Chapter two will apply and demonstrate how artists’ ideas mentioned in chapter one become the author’s inspirational elements to trigger new ways of thinking, interpreting and delivering the invisibility notion of limitless space with the visibility notion of painting. In this sense, painting will be considered as a tool and a vehicular medium, and therefore as a register of the process for the development of thought through pictorial means. Furthermore, painting will be articulated as a theoretical operator to offer models of how we come to understand critical philosophical concepts about space and time, visibility and invisibility. In this respect, pictorial ambiguities will play a critical role in materialising the invisible. Consequently, this exegesis and the studio-based investigation, which is directed towards experimentation with painting materials, techniques and strategies, will be able to seek to answer the research question: *How might painting be employed to build a pictorial vocabulary for elucidating the paradoxically invisible passage of time in space?*

**CHAPTER ONE**

*An exploration of relationships between pictorial space and ideas of limitlessness*