Instantiating ideas of limitless space:

Thinking through painting

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Statement of Originality

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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.
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*
Chapter one is a review of literature concerned with the evolution of methodologies in painting employed to depict spatial interpretation circumscribed to historical, theoretical and philosophical endeavours in painting. In this sense, painting is considered not as style, but as a vehicular medium to potentially decipher problems of subjectivity in art.

This research project examines the background of what constituted the ultimate boundaries of the universe that began with the Greek Aristotelian notion of limited space approximately 350 BC, with the exceptional belief that the earth was the centre of the universe. Aristarchus an astronomer and admirer of Pythagoras's 600 BC mathematical spatial calculations—a Contemporary to Aristotle—countered this idea at the time of its instigation.\(^1\) Pythagoras’ estimation that the sun was the centre of the universe\(^2\) marked the beginning of the idea of an ever-transforming, vast universe. Although the concept of a limited, as opposed to an unlimited universe, was not well understood in Pythagorean times, it was the precursor to the development of subsequent views. Copernicus, Kepler, Descartes and Newton\(^3\) all furthered the idea of a limitless world that had become evident in fifteenth century Italian Renaissance thinking, described in terms of illusionism and demonstrated through the use of perspective. This project begins by researching illusionism and depth in the Italian Renaissance, then ideas of experiential dimensions through eighteenth century German Immanuel Kant’s (1724-1804) idea of mind teamed with the body in perceiving the world contrary to Descartes’ mind/body dichotomy. This investigation continues by exploring the idea of shifting sensations, examined through nineteenth century scientific discoveries based on non-Euclidean geometry (space beyond our perception could be curved) and Einstein’s twentieth century ground breaking notion of a fourth dimension, which involved a

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\(^3\) Ibid, p. 56.
space-time-motion concept of simultaneous coexistence in more than one dimension.⁴ Einstein’s subsequent discovery of theory of relativity in 1905⁵ and Planck’s twentieth century discovery of quantum physics theory⁶ are also considered for further applications to the fabric of ideas of limitless space. These new scientific ideas, together with the consolidation of mind/body in perceiving the world, continued to become part of various succeeding artistic ideas that dealt with space as the dynamic appearance of reality. The many ideas that this chapter uses to reveal the passage of time in space is linked with the process of transformation of reality into a pictorial space presented as fractioned, simplified or reduced to something rather than nothing. This chapter is divided into four sections: The origins of the concepts of limits and limitlessness; searching historical spatial ideas of limitlessness; reflecting on spatial aspects of limitlessness via phenomenology and pictorial models; and elucidating spatial conceptions of limitlessness through the sublime.

1:1 The origins of concepts of limits and limitlessness

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⁴ Ibid, p. 117.
⁵ http://history1900sabout.com/od/100s/qt/relativity.htm (14/03/2014). Einstein’s theory of relativity (the speed of light is constant and space and matter are not absolutes, rather, they are relative to the position of the observer)
⁶ http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/quantum%20theory (9/03/2014). German physicist Max Planck’s twentieth century discovery of quantum physics theory (the concept of the subdivision of radiant energy into finite quanta)
The historical, theoretical and philosophical roots of spatial interpretation in painting\(^7\) began with the Aristotelian notion of limited space, developed approximately 350 BC. This notion involved what constituted the "ultimate boundaries of the universe"\(^8\) and a belief that the earth was the centre of the universe. Contrary to Aristotle’s concept of spatial limitation was the idea of limitless space, previously considered around 600 BC by the philosopher and mathematician Pythagoras, when he calculated that the sun was at the centre of what we now know as the solar system.\(^9\) Aristarchus, an astronomer and follower of Pythagoras’ spatial calculations, also countered Aristotle’s notion of limited space in 350 BC. The mathematics-based idea of limitlessness would last for around 300 years. Eventually, both Greeks and Romans disregarded this idea under the embryonic shadows of the Christian era.\(^10\) The idea of limitlessness re-emerged briefly during the early middle Ages, but was not fully reinstated until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543), German mathematician and astronomer Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) and Italian astronomer, scientist and philosopher Galileo Galilei (1564-1642).\(^11\) French philosopher and mathematician Rene Descartes (1596-1650) and English scientist Isaac Newton (1642-1727), also examined the limitlessness of space to form the understanding that still dominates today.\(^12\) In art, the concept of limitless space was certainly evident during the fifteenth century Italian Renaissance, becoming both a subject of experimentation, and the key to comprehending illusions of space for many Contemporary artists.\(^13\)

The Pythagorean idea of limitless space was also reflected in the philosophies of Plato, but most of all in Euclidean geometry, which stated, “The shortest distance between

\(^10\) Ibid.
\(^11\) Ibid
\(^12\) Ibid.
two points is a straight line. The late Greco-Roman and Italian Renaissance artists had begun to depict space with Euclidean geometry approach, but they interpreted this in different ways. It is generally considered that the Greeks first discovered perspective, within the Euclidean approach. Perspective was then developed by the Romans, lost in the middle Ages and re-discovered during the Renaissance. Observed space, as represented by Greek and late Roman painters, was quite unlike that of the Renaissance. Greek and Roman painters observed that space was not only generalised and vast, but also contained parallel lines used to depict separate objects not sharing a common vanishing point. Separate objects were not spatially related to each other or to the whole. As a result the image created was fragmented, unlike the unified images generated during the Renaissance. Late Roman painters followed the principles of mathematical optics as outlined by Euclid. Whereas in the Renaissance system of linear perspective lines indicating depth converged, in Roman perspective such lines did not meet in a single unified point. Instead of depicting distant objects as smaller than objects in the foreground, Romans presented all forms as similar in size, and the spaces between them did not combine into a unified whole. Greco-Roman perspective was limited not only by its conception of space as discontinuous and finite, but also by the classical system of optics, in which objects were presented as distinct in relation to other objects and the distances that connected them. These basic differences between the Greco-Roman and Renaissance systems of perspective suggest that the latter did not develop from the fragmented Greco-Roman system. The use of classical cast

14 Ibid
16 Ibid
17 Ibid, p. 2.
shadows and shading retained some illusion of volume, but in time figures gradually became stylised while landscapes and architectural forms became emblematic. The leaning towards flat depictions, which started in late Roman art, continued into the early Christian era.

Changes in direction from illusionist space and volume to stylised symbols were enforced by the Church’s desire to stress the Christian and the spiritual rather than the materiality of the previous pagan era, which had encouraged representation of figures in a dematerialised way. However, medieval artists continued to be influenced by the Aristotelian belief in which everything maintained its proper place with respect to the centre of the universe, which was the earth. Erwin Panofsky in his essay, *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (1924-25) challenged this Aristotelian view, arguing that Aristotle lacked any consciousness of continuity, relating one thing to another and did not recognise an infinity that extended beyond the existence of these objects.

Artists during the middle Ages cared more for their faith and the theological significance of an image depicted than for its mimetic qualities. For Medieval artists, the relationship between time and space was accidental and inessential, as the images depicted were only a reminder of reality. Medieval artists, therefore, presented images as flat and did not attempt to achieve illusions of volume, relief or roundness; spatial relationships

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between one object and another were not employed to unify compositions. Whilst medieval artists might have felt that they were a part of their pictorial world, they nonetheless saw each element and image within this world as separate. Renaissance artists, on the other hand, stood outside the world being represented and observed it as if looking through a window, from a single unifying viewpoint.\textsuperscript{29}

1:2 Searching historical spatial ideas of limitlessness

The evolution of pictorial space in relation to the idea of limitlessness is explored not only through the Italian Renaissance and Baroque notions of illusionism, but also further investigated through Romantic ideas based on Kant’s ideas of experiential dimensions, as well as Impressionist and Post-Impressionist, Abstract Expressionist ideas of shifting sensations and multiple perspectives.

1:2:1 (i) Illusionism and depth in the Italian Renaissance

Illusionism and depth can be examined in terms of the Renaissance system of perspective. This system of perspective describes physical space in terms of linearity, planes, atmosphere and colour. Together with a unified light source, this form of perspective generates on a two-dimensional surface an integrated, mathematically correct illusion of volume, depth and accurate placement of figures in space.\textsuperscript{30}

Renaissance artists understood linear perspective as a new system of depicting depth, through which mathematical and reliable objectivity were employed to integrate converging

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid, p. 35.
lines and diminishing size in order to show objects receding. Fifteenth century Renaissance architect Filippo Brunelleschi (1377-1446), one of the originators of linear perspective, believed that perspective was essential for designing structural forms.\(^{31}\) Architect and artist Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472), a Contemporary of Brunelleschi, demonstrated this form of perspective in his treatise *Della Pittura*, 1436 by depicting cubic forms through a linear, one-eyed view at the eye level of an average person.\(^{32}\) He observed that the picture is a plane section of the visual cone\(^{33}\) in which the relationship between the shape of an object and its position was one of simultaneous cause and effect in that they were relative and not absolute. Alberti’s conception of painting as analogous to a flat section across a visual cone made possible a mathematical rationalisation of pictorial space that was also unified aesthetically.\(^{34}\)

The idea of a separation of planes is a modification of an earlier device involving overlapping planes.\(^{35}\) Depiction of an object as separated by planes—in which one sits behind the other in graduated increments of distance from foreground into deep background—is only possible with the help of linear, atmospheric and colour perspectives.\(^{36}\)

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, painters used low eye level, one-point perspective to create the effect of a stage. The picture plane was understood as a large panel of glass situated across the front of this stage upon which all objects, actions and spatial illusion took place; however, the adoption of linear, atmospheric and colour perspectives, which allowed

\(^{31}\) Ibid, p. 38.
\(^{34}\) Ibid, E. Panofsky, 1924-1925, p. 15.
\(^{36}\) Ibid, p. 42.
artists to create an illusion of distance or nearness, made the picture planes appear separated rather than overlapping.\footnote{37 Ibid.}

Atmospheric perspective is arguably the most effective method of creating an illusion of depth because the illusion of depth created in this way is not subject to the same limitations as linear perspective.\footnote{38 Ibid, p. 43.} Whilst exaggerated linear perspective and separation of planes distort reality, atmospheric perspective can imply enormous distances, often without drawing the viewer’s attention to distortion.\footnote{39 Ibid, p. 45.} Using atmospheric perspective, more than two hundred kilometres of distance might be compressed onto a two metre canvas.\footnote{40 Ibid, p. 46.} Dissolving objects in the background and solidifying objects in the foreground through contrasting values, and creating differences in sharpness of focus, achieve atmospheric perspective.\footnote{41 Ibid.}

The classic theory of colour was established based on the observation that while warm colours appear to advance cool colours appear to recede. As the distance between the viewer and the object increases, the quality of blue atmosphere that act as a filter between them is increased proportionally. While objects in the distance appear progressively bluer and greyer as the viewer moves further away from these, objects appear warmer, more saturated and intense in colour as the viewer moves closer.\footnote{42 Ibid. pp. 48-49.} Light colours in the distance however tend to shift towards red because blue light scatters the sun’s rays through the atmosphere, and light objects in the distance appear warmer, while dark colours seem to shift towards blue because they do not reflect as much light.\footnote{43 Ibid, p. 49.}
Illusionism and depth are variously explored through some fifteenth and sixteenth century artists who used ideas of limitless space in their work such as painter Tommaso Masaccio’s (1401-1428) atmospheric shadows (Plate 1) and Leonardo da Vinci’s (1452-1519) voluminous depths (Plate 2) and receding sights (Plate 3). Such artistic methods are further investigated through seventeenth century Baroque painter Michelangelo Caravaggio’s (1571-1610) extending perceptions (Plate 4), originating some crucial precedents for future spatial representation.

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

1:2:1 (1) Atmospheric shadows

Masaccio, one of the first generation of fifteenth century painters, produced the clearest assimilation of previous painter Giotto di Bodoni’s (c. 1267-1337) Renaissance innovations by synthesising these into his then avant-garde idea of atmospheric shadows,\(^\text{44}\) is exemplified by Masaccio’s fresco, Expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise, 1427 (Plate

Masaccio’s painting of Adam and Eve, the two most powerfully painted nudes conveyed since antiquity, used a new lighting technique called *chiaroscuro* (from the Italian *chiaro*, or light, and *scuro*, or dark).\(^{46}\) The use of *chiaroscuro* involved subtle dark/light value contrasts, rather than line, to model forms so as to create an illusion of mass and volume. Masaccio’s figures of Adam and Eve, placed at the front of the stage within a darkened background, effectively conveyed depth with a sense of infinity.\(^{47}\)

Much art of the fifteenth century Italian Renaissance was concerned with the accurate representation of nature. The invention of perspective facilitated expression of this concern, enabling artists to represent their world as unified deep space. Furthermore, although Renaissance perspective aimed to objectively mimic the world, it nonetheless remained subjective in its realisation of the world.\(^{48}\) The Renaissance perspective system empowered artists to use painting as a vehicle for creating new visual experiences. By attempting to display souls via transformation of allegory into painted reality, the divine was reduced to a visible form within the human consciousness. The capacity of the human consciousness to become the vessel of the divine was enhanced.\(^{49}\) In addition, the burgeoning yet embryonic fields of scientific observation and documentation during this period were becoming increasingly concerned with astronomy, mathematics, mechanics, physics, optics, anatomy and botany—and consequently, their representation in art.\(^{50}\) The High Renaissance was also characterised by great geographic discoveries and commercial revolutions, further extending the field of the visible. However, moderating the potential for rapid change was the stifling disapproval often issued by the Church\(^{51}\) towards ground breaking ideas, such

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\(^{49}\) Ibid, p. 38.

\(^{50}\) Ibid, pp. 69-70.

\(^{51}\) Ibid, pp. 70-71, 89.
as Copernicus’s radical revival of the Pythagorean concept of the planets revolving around the sun as opposed to the earth. Such disapproval limited popular projections regarding the limitlessness of space.

1:2:1 (ii) Voluminous depths

Working at the outmost limits of spatial imagination, da Vinci’s idea of voluminous depth was demonstrated through value contrasts creating focus against blurred effects as typified in his painting Virgin of the rocks, 1483-1490 (Plate 2). Where blurred edges disappear into hazy backgrounds, solid and rounded middle grounds appear, by contrast even more salient. Such painterly effects produce an elusive quality of mystery. Objects emerge out of the shadows, thus differing from the tangibility and clarity of more linear forms of art. This distinction was made particularly apparent to Kenneth Clark whilst reading da Vinci’s notebooks. Fascinated with the artist’s observations on visual effects involving lighted figures within a dark background, Clark noted that with da Vinci’s “intensification of light and shade the face gains greatly in relief … and in beauty”. Where da Vinci accorded a higher priority to painterly effects than to linearity, he also allowed that certain aspects of structure, clarity and detail might suffer. This loss would, however, invite the play of mystery and abstract forms in the work. Da Vinci’s use of painterly methods was also aided by the development of sfumato, a transition from light to dark that is so gradual as to be almost invisible. Sfumato, together with the value range of chiaroscuro effects, creates almost

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56 Ibid.
imperceptible gradations of light, dark and colour. Curiously, da Vinci also modelled his illusion of volume by adding black to his base colours, producing an additional uniformity of depth.\(^5\) Finally, by combining all of the methodologies described above, da Vinci achieved strong new illusions of volume. The physical projection in relief from the surface of the painting, as achieved by da Vinci, was perhaps the most important goal for advanced artists of this period. The centrality of this goal was affirmed by da Vinci’s declaration that “relief is the principal aim and soul of painting”.\(^5\)

1:2:1 (iii) Receding sights

Another fundamental aspect of perspective considered essential to unlocking a perception of limitlessness is lineal perspective. Lineal perspective enables artists to imply depth beyond the direct field of vision.\(^6\) Da Vinci’s contribution to lineal perspective technique was significant to spatial compositions wherein the appearance of receding sights are made possible through the integration of figure and background. Da Vinci’s creation of receding sights is demonstrated in his fresco, *The last supper*, 1495-1498 (Plate 3),\(^6\) through subtle dark-light effects and a common vanishing point.\(^6\) The lineal technique evident here however, is combined with the volumetric tonal devices of *sfumato* and *chiaroscuro*, thus creating a strong new structural composition, which is achieved by organising areas of dark and light, rather than patterns of colour. This artistic device in painting is arguably one of the most important structural ideas employed within the history

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of Western Art. The increasing use in the Renaissance of oil paint, coupled with da Vinci’s ideas regarding dark-light composition, made it easier to combine the four sets of opposites: dark and light, warm and cool, thick and thin paint as well as transparent and opaque surfaces. Where light areas were cooler, thicker and more opaque, dark areas, by contrast, were warmer, thinner and often transparent. These four sets of structural opposites work in harmony, creating a strong illusion of depth and volume. Leonardo da Vinci’s conception of dark-light composition was responsible for making form the major content of his paintings.

1:2:1 (iv) Extending perceptions

The importance of perspective to spatial interpretation would of course continue to evolve well beyond the Renaissance. Form and structure as more significant than mimesis within Caravaggio’s idea of extending perceptions, in which illusion is linked with reality would dominate art parlance for more than four hundred years. The idea of extending perceptions was elaborated from ideas developed between Copernicus and Galileo and augmented by Kepler based on his empirical theory, in which quantity was the fundamental feature of objects. Both Kepler and his Contemporary, Galileo, believed that space and time were mathematically formulated. Descartes contributed his new theory of existence and the self, connecting consciousness with extension through its displacement in space, as the most essential attribute of being; this development unlocked new imaginary

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66 Ibid, p. 82.
67 Ibid, p. 89.
possibilities of a limitless world. Caravaggio applied this Cartesian concept of space to his work, focusing his attention upon “space and the objects that occupy it, [that] define our existence”, effectively linking his fictional space with the viewer’s real space. Caravaggio’s idea of extending perceptions, as exemplified in his painting *David and Goliath*, 1609-1610 (Plate 4), was demonstrated by showing parts of figures coming out of the picture plane into the real space of the spectator, therefore linking illusion with reality. The presence of both David and the head of Goliath in this painting were defined in a Cartesian sense by their extension into the viewer’s space. Whereas Masaccio in the fifteenth century had invited the spectator to enter the illusionist space of his painted world, Caravaggio’s David by contrast, seems to be reaching through the pane of the picture plane to invade the world of the beholder, who can then willingly embrace it. This Cartesian concept of extension reaching reality might be considered as analogous to Newton’s seventeenth century concept of gravity, a force determined by the laws of motion and mass. Newton gave new meaning to ideas of space, time, and motion (which would later be elaborated by Einstein’s discovery of the fourth dimension); artists such as Masaccio, da Vinci and Caravaggio had foreseen the forever shifting perceptions and imagination of our space through painting.

1:2:2 Experiential dimensions

The idea of experiential dimensions can be explored in terms of connecting time and space, as Kant’s *a priori* intuition which developed through reason and a conditioned experience of the senses. Although certain discoveries made during the fifteenth century

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69 Ibid.
71 Ibid, p. 97.
72 Ibid, p. 98.
offered a contribution to art in the relatively changing world of the seventeenth century, it was in the nineteenth century that significant changes in the basic structure of art were cemented. It was during this century that art and science were to be radically transformed by new concepts, such as non-Euclidean geometry (suggesting that space beyond our perception could be curved), and the hypothesis of Einstein’s fourth dimension (space-time-motion concept of simultaneous coexistence in more than one dimension).\textsuperscript{76}

During the nineteenth century, non-Euclidean geometries would instigate new modifications of the concept of space. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Einstein’s hypothesis of a fourth dimension would inspire Impressionist and Post-Impressionist attempts to depict the very moment of an experience with space-time-motion concepts of simultaneous coexistence in more than one dimension.\textsuperscript{77} Although Kant described the connection between time and space as \textit{a priori} intuitions—developed through reason and a conditioned experience of the senses—the fourth dimension was not defined as comprising a relationship between time and space until the beginning of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{78} One aspect of time, which was of great interest as early as the seventeenth century, and was focused on during the late nineteenth century, was the inextricable influence of infinity in nature—a variously perceived idea of vastness that would climax in the Romantic art of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{79} Artists, musicians and scientists alike, would now clearly regard time as a new experiential dimension.\textsuperscript{80} The notion of mind/sensate perception which effectively visualises the world in terms of experiential dimensions, is studied through Romantic artists’ ideas such as German painter Caspar David Friedrich’s (1774-1840) emblematic visions (Plate 5), English painter Joseph Mallord William Turner’s

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid, pp. 116-117.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid, p. 117.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
(1775-1851) atmospheric horizons (Plate 6) and American painter Frederick Church's (1826-1900) concealed worlds (Plate 8).

(5) Caspar David Friedrich, Monk by the sea, 1809-1810. Oil on canvas, 110 x 171.5 cm. National gallery, West Berlin.
(6) J.M.W. Turner, Sun setting over the sea, with garnets, c. 1836. Watercolour, black chalk and body colour with scratching out on buff paper, 21.8 x 28.4 cm. Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester.
(7) Mark Rothko, Black, brown on marron, 1957. Oil on canvas, 233 x 193 cm. National gallery, Australia.
(8) Frederick Church, The Andes of Ecuador, 1855. Oil on canvas, 122 x 190.5 cm. Museum of American art, New York.

1:2:2 (i) Emblematic visions and atmospheric horizons

Immanuel Kant maintained that experience was a complex affair, and that as all knowledge began with sensate experience, experience depended upon the formal contribution of the mind itself.\(^{81}\) Kant, in his influential *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1781,

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declared that certain *givens* (such as appreciation of colour or sound) were interpretable via the phenomenon of perception, aided by both the senses and thought.\(^8^2\) Experience, therefore grows and evolves as the mind reacts to its environment. By analysing what the mind does in response to external data, we might begin to see how the stages of the painting process develop in relation to experience.\(^8^3\) Attention to the task of the senses in giving form through any discipline such knowledge or experience can open many new horizons for artists, and become a useful reference point for painters wishing to emphasise the importance of formlessness.\(^8^4\) Both Caspar David Friedrich’s emblematic visions, as exemplified in his painting *Monk by the sea*, 1810 (Plate 5),\(^8^5\) and J. M. W. Turner’s atmospheric horizons, as employed in his painting *Sun setting over the sea, with garnets*, 1836 (Plate 6),\(^8^6\) might have been concurrently experienced as illusions of luminous expanses and infinite unseen horizons.\(^8^7\) Whereas with Friedrich, the lonely human form merges with nature’s vastness, Turner merely suggests the idea of landscape with sweeping brushstrokes that blur forms almost beyond recognition.\(^8^8\) This idea would prove to be an important step in painting towards implication in painting taking precedence over literal representation. The stage was set for development of a new conception of limitlessness. Friedrich and Turner could not have imagined the trajectory that the relentless drive away from literal interpretation in painting would take over the course of the twentieth century.\(^8^9\) Friedrich’s painting *Monk by the sea*, 1810 (Plate 5) exhibited at the Berlin Academy in the autumn of 1810, and Rothko’s reductive painting *Black, brown and maroon*, 1957 (Plate 7).

\(^{82}\) Ibid.
\(^{88}\) Ibid.
\(^{89}\) Ibid.
exhibited in the 1950s, both presented an image so near to nothingness as to be relatively
and equivalently disconcerting upon initial inspection. Although these paintings enacted
analogous renunciations of form, albeit both sombre luminous voids, they were nonetheless
examples of *pseudo morphism*. Close examination of the history of painting reveals a
multiplicity of rationales for formlessness. While Jackson Pollock’s (1912-1956) dynamic
whirlpools of embodied energy were developed through drips of paint in which the palpable
nature of the paint was transformed into a shimmering whirlwind of mythical signification,
Rothko’s static expanses of dematerialised form were enacted through luminous colour. In
each case, the idea of formlessness was recognised as one of the constituents of a vehicle
with which to evoke power, sensation, and emotion. Likewise, where Barnett Newman’s
(1905-1970) fields were developed within atmospheric expanses of colour bisected by
vertical opaque *zips*, a sense of the *tragic* was conveyed metaphysically through
formlessness. Newman sought to unlock palpable planes, each opening vertically and
drawing the viewer toward the *zips* and into the impalpable matter of infinite time, as
opposed to space. It is through the reading of spatial representation in abstracted painted
forms that we can trace a trajectory from Turner’s atmospheric horizons and Friedrich’s
emblematic visions to Mark Rothko’s (1903-1970) and Pollock’s radical implications for
unseen space. This new interrogation of form, presented by artists such as Rothko, Pollock
and Newman through unbroken horizons and experiential dimensions would also underpin
the spatial investigations of many other artists, as is evident, for example, in the boundless
voids of Newman’s works.

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90 Ibid, p.10.
91 E. Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture*, Harper and Row, New York, 1964, pp. 25-26 and
93 Ibid.
95 Nikos Stangos, *Concepts of Modern Art, from Fauvism to Post-modernism*, Thames and Hudson,
1:2:2 (ii) Concealed worlds

A desire for distinctiveness in creativity by means of experiential dimensions can also be suggested by the use of concealed spaces in which objects are presented as emerging out from a fog. Presenting objects as partially concealed can imply a more mythical illusion of depth than is necessarily possible via literal modes of representation. Such use of concealment is epitomised in Frederic Church's painting *The Andes of Ecuador*, 1855 (Plate 8). Here, unseen implied depths beyond the visibly protruding mountains, are amplified by the use of fog.

1:2:3 Shifting sensations

The idea of shifting sensations can be explored in terms of multiple perspectives and reductionism towards time and space. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries an emerging desire for distinctiveness in creativity would prompt artists to focus on transforming painting into an art about art, rather than an art about nature. Elements of nature would become signifiers to accomplish compositional structures creating a form of meta-art—an art beyond art. Painting, therefore, was no longer a copy of the world, but rather a transformation through the painting process, in and of itself. As a result, late nineteenth century non-Euclidean geometry (space beyond our perception could be curved)

100 Ibid, p.122.
101 Ibid.
102 Ibid, p. 123.
and early twentieth century Einstein’s fourth dimension (simultaneous coexistence of space-time-motion in more than one dimension) inspired changes in the basic knowledge and structures of art.\textsuperscript{104} These structural changes in art, which were directed towards a range of shifting sensations, were variously explored, for example in French Impressionist painter Claude Monet’s (1840-1926) synthesis of depth and flatness (Plates 9, 10 and 11), French Post-Impressionist painter Paul Cézanne’s (1839-1904) separation of planes (Plates 12 and 13), German-American Expressionist painter Hans Hofmann’s (1880-1966) pulsating surfaces (Plate 14), American Abstract Expressionist painters Newman’s binocular spaces (Plate 15) and Pollock’s motional configurations (Plate 16), as well as German Post-Modern painter Gerhard Richter’s (b. 1932) accelerating intervals (Plate 17).

1.2:3 (i) The synthesis of depth and flatness

To a certain extent, Impressionist artists such as Claude Monet explored the synthesis of depth and flatness through the use of multiple light sources, effectively pre-empting the aforementioned conception of shifting sensations created by multiple perspectives and reductionism in time and space.\(^{105}\) Shifting sensations were conveyed in various ways including a combination of dashes and dots, whilst continuous intermittent flickering light created recursive changes in depth and flatness, with each change effectively negating or affirming others.\(^{106}\) Impressionist artists were particularly interested in the effects of sunlight as employed to dissolve linear form.\(^{107}\) Intermittent flickering light depicted with dark-light and colour contrasts, as exemplified in Monet’s *La Grenouillère*, 1869, (Plate 9), appears to form a grid of dense “all-over” image; the technique used to achieve this would later be extended by Jackson Pollock.\(^{108}\) In this way, surfaces and images were treated as elements

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\(^{105}\) Ibid, p. 130.

\(^{106}\) Ibid, p. 131.

\(^{107}\) Ibid, p. 133.

\(^{108}\) Ibid, p. 134.
of equal importance.\textsuperscript{109} Whereas the shimmering particles of light that characterise Monet’s famous 1894 paintings of \textit{Rouen Cathedral, west façade} (Plate 10)\textsuperscript{110} and \textit{Rouen Cathedral, sunlight}, 1894 (Plate 11),\textsuperscript{111} seem separated from one another when seen at close range, these conversely appear to be amalgamated when viewed from a distance.\textsuperscript{112} When Monet was painting his \textit{Rouen Cathedral} series and \textit{Haystacks} series, he maintained constant light changes throughout the execution of each painting in a series, in order to recreate the sensation of the passage of time.\textsuperscript{113} In both series, Monet not only implied the passage of time but also fragmented space into a succession of observed moments.\textsuperscript{114} When the paintings are seen together as a body, the changing light—as seen at different times of day—is evocative of different slices of time.\textsuperscript{115} Monet succeeded in creating luminosity over each entire painting, which allowed the image to dissolve and all but disappear in a kind of blazing sunlight.\textsuperscript{116} The recession of facades in the \textit{Rouen Cathedral} series and \textit{Haystacks} series was not developed through the use of dark-light values, but through colour temperature contrasts adjusted to close tonal values throughout the painting surface.\textsuperscript{117} Certainly, the Impressionists’ search for light led them to break colour, causing form to dissolve into “arbitrary units of colour”, which were expected to fuse in the retina as the viewer moved away from the painting.\textsuperscript{118} This created an awareness of the canvas as a single physical presence encompassing both depth and flatness in the same painted surface.\textsuperscript{119} Later, Post-Impressionist painter Paul Cézanne’s idea of separation of planes

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[109] Ibid.
\item[110] Ibid, p. 138.
\item[111] Ibid, p. 140.
\item[112] Ibid, p. 139.
\item[114] Ibid.
\item[115] Ibid.
\item[117] Ibid.
\item[118] Ibid.
\item[119] Ibid, p. 140.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
would reconcile the sensation of depth and flatness within a two-dimensional painting surface.¹²⁰

1:2:3 (ii) The separation of planes

The idea of Einstein’s fourth dimension had not yet been established during Cézanne’s life. Cézanne, however, applied this idea as it was initially hypothesised in the nineteenth century during explorations of the intricacies of non-Euclidean space.¹²¹ By the early twentieth century, conceptions of a fourth dimension would start to influence cubist artists such as the Spanish painter Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), as expressed by his simultaneous views of objects. Picasso’s planar representations of objects in several simultaneous views suggest either the movement of the painted object or the movement of the viewer.¹²² Einstein’s theory of a fourth dimension would of course continue to underpin later artistic explorations of shifting sensations in form—perhaps most notably within post-WWII Abstract Expressionism.¹²³

Impressionists, as exemplified by Monet, variously explored problems in the relationships between the three major painterly realities: the flat picture plane, the depiction of depth within that flat plane, and the real depth and space of the perceived world outside the painting.¹²⁴ Post-Impressionists, led by Cézanne, took up Monet’s challenge by

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 142.
¹²¹ Ibid, p. 152.
amalgamating the Impressionist’s flat surface of the picture plane with depth and the world outside of the painting.\textsuperscript{125} This problem was resolved through Cézanne’s separation of planes, in which he re-employed the colourful flatness of Impressionism, together with the Renaissance and Baroque volumetric dark and light effects.\textsuperscript{126} The three-dimensional perception of planes is particularly evident in Cézanne’s \textit{Mont Sainte Victoire}, 1902-1904 (Plate 12),\textsuperscript{127} which features contrasting dark/light and warm/cool colours.\textsuperscript{128} Here, each landscape scene is fragmented into planes, some advancing and some receding, altogether creating a three-dimensional perception of reality on a two-dimensional painted surface.\textsuperscript{129}

Another good example of three-dimensional perception via separation of planes is found in Cézanne’s \textit{Still life with apples}, 1875-1877 (Plate 13). In this painting, Cézanne divided apples into separate planes of red (warm), yellow (transitional) and blue-green (cool). This approach established that the nearest (focused) sides of the apples were red-orange, while the receding and furthest (blurred) parts were blue-green.\textsuperscript{130} Cézanne’s brushstrokes did not follow the shapes of the object, but instead remained parallel to one another in order to emphasise flatness and depth whilst displaying multiple points of view within a single object.\textsuperscript{131} Cézanne’s discovery that the world could be identified as a series of planes, rather than as a combination of lines and shading, represents a turning point in Modern art.\textsuperscript{132} For Cézanne, the sensation of depth was more significant than the illusion of depth;\textsuperscript{133} each dab of paint effectively became a living cell within the whole painting.\textsuperscript{134}

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid, p. 143.
\textsuperscript{127} Hajo Duchting, \textit{Paul Cézanne}, Benedikt Taschen, 1994, Germany, p. 213.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid.
Cézanne paid particular attention to assigning each separate part of his paintings a finish of equal importance. This helped to avoid the problem of vague receding backgrounds.\footnote{Thomas B. Hess, \textit{Abstract Painting}, Viking, New York, 1951, p. 31 and W. V. Dunning, 1991, p. 149.} Cézanne’s atmospheric perspective, presented as a myriad of disconnected areas within a single painting, resulted in a fracturing effect. This development can be seen as pre-empting pluralistic, as opposed to singular, artistic interpretation.\footnote{Ibid, p. 150.} Cézanne’s speculative conception of spatial fragmentation and multiple perspectives would continue to influence artists throughout the twentieth century. American artists, in particular, would direct this sense of spatial fragmentation towards ever more extreme forms of Abstraction in Modern painting.\footnote{Ibid, p. 160.} These ideas, although originating during the 1930s—a period in which aesthetic principles were shaped by rapid economic, political and social change—would culminate in post WWII America’s new significance as a centre of cultural influence.\footnote{Irv ing Sandler, \textit{The Triumph of American Painting: A History of Abstract Expressionism}, Praeger, 1970, New York, P. 5 and W. V. Dunning, 1991, p. 160.} Abstract artists “emphasised the individual aspect of their creation”, yet at the same time demonstrated little explicit evidence of painting’s critical function as a symbol of freedom from oppression.\footnote{Serge Guilbaut, \textit{How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom and the Cold War}, Trans. Arthur Goldhammer, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1983, p. 197 and W. V. Dunning, 1991, p. 162.} Artists now felt the need to free themselves through bigger, bolder, more literal and more direct artistic processes—typically self-consciously produced as somehow instinctive, instantaneous, and using ideas that were “not acknowledged” by Contemporary European artists.\footnote{Op. cit., B. Rose, 1969, p. 66 and W. V. Dunning, 1991, p. 163.} At any rate, this new generation of artists extended their ideas through the use of fragmented spaces as previously demonstrated by Cézanne and implied by Einstein’s fourth dimension. Although these new artists’ motional effects were achieved via processes that were very different from Cézanne’s, they nonetheless convey an expression of movement.
1:2:3 (iii) Pulsating surfaces

Shifting sensations, as interpreted through Hans Hofmann’s idea of pulsating surfaces, represents a strategy of “giving life” to static space. This approach is based on spatial tension formed between contrasting colours, otherwise described as the *push and pull* effect. This strategy involves careful spatial positioning of planes to produce protruding and receding effects, creating an illusion of moving space perpendicular to the plane of the canvas.\(^{141}\) This spatial movement, as conveyed through a tension between planes, creates sensations that appear to shift back and forth as the viewer blinks in front of the painting, thus destroying the painting’s stability in favour of dynamic changing relationships.\(^{142}\) Hofmann suggests that space is not static and, consequently, might be expressed by forces and counter forces that vibrate with colour, light and form “in the pace of life.”\(^{143}\) A dynamic pictorial space traced with two alternating images, being that of illusion and reality, exist simultaneously within a single picture plane.\(^{144}\) Hofmann invited the illusion of depth into his paintings, but this exists in conjunction with opposing forces that might draw the viewer’s awareness back toward the surface of the paint.\(^{145}\) Hofmann’s idea of pulsating surfaces, as typified in his painting *The gate*, 1960 (Plate 14),\(^{146}\) provides an example of his desire to impart power and visibility to the subjective world, through ambiguous spatial placement that invites interpretation as alternating push and pull motions\(^{147}\). Hofmann reveals invisibility through the use of multiple, repetitive spatial images achieved through the simultaneous coexistence of both push and pull effects.\(^{148}\) The simultaneous existence of flatness and

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\(^{142}\) Ibid.
\(^{148}\) Ibid.
depth within a single painting can be directly related to Einstein’s conception of a fourth
dimension, in which movement is described in terms of the relationship between time and
space.\textsuperscript{149} Hofmann’s push and pull movements, developed by placing planes of contrasting
colours next to each other, were clearly influenced by Cézanne’s separation of planes.\textsuperscript{150}
Echoing some of the most advanced speculations within human enquiry, Hofmann declared:
“Life does not exist without movement and movement does not exist without life. The
continuation of movement throughout space is rhythm. Thereby, rhythm is the expression of
life in space.”\textsuperscript{151}

1:2:3 (iv) Binocular spaces

Much artistic activity of the 1960s involved experimenting with the formal structures of
painting and these structures were rapidly becoming reductionist and even microcosmic in
focus.\textsuperscript{152} While discussion of painterly effects enjoyed diminishing critical currency by the
end of the 1950s, flatter pictorial spaces offered an expanded set of possibilities for the art
of the 1960s.\textsuperscript{153} Thin washes of paint, for example, soaked into raw surfaces left little
evidence of the materiality of paint.\textsuperscript{154} Although many paintings of the 1960s were physically
flatter, they were not necessarily visually flatter, because thinner layers of paint created a
transparency that invited a new sense of atmospheric visual penetration and depth.\textsuperscript{155} Within
the two dominant trajectories of Abstract painting (action and colour field), many painters
attempted to rid their art of explicit references to nature, primarily because they felt such

\textsuperscript{149} Linda D. Henderson, \textit{The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art},
\textsuperscript{150} Irving Sandler, \textit{The New York School, the Painters and Sculptors of the Fifties}, Harper and Row,
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., pp. 198-199.
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid.
references would elicit predictable responses.\textsuperscript{156} Artists also wanted to escape the confines of the picture frame by painting large open areas that seemed to swell beyond the edges of the painting, conveying the limitlessness of time and space.\textsuperscript{157}

The idea of shifting sensations, as interpreted through Barnett Newman’s construction of binocular space, essentially evoked unpredictability within perceptions of time and space. Newman’s idea of binocular space, as exemplified in his painting \textit{Vir heroicus sublimis}, 1951 (Plate 15),\textsuperscript{158} was demonstrated through the use of contrasts of vast expanses of atmospheric colour\textsuperscript{156} against a narrow vertical \textit{zip}.\textsuperscript{159} This dynamic contrast, characterised by a narrow opaque strip of paint across a wide atmospheric ground, is startlingly binocular in effect. Furthermore, although the spaces on either side of the \textit{zip} are palpable, the \textit{zip} nonetheless appears to be ravaged by a nebulous infinite space seen through its deep and eroded crevice-like edges.\textsuperscript{160}

\begin{enumerate}
\item Motional configurations
\end{enumerate}

The idea of shifting sensations, as interpreted within Jackson Pollock’s motional configurations, is embodied in the idea of action painting.\textsuperscript{161} Dramatically and self-consciously playing the part of the mythologised artist, Pollock’s commotion of line and colour activity was not a display of automatism but a connection between the unconscious and the hand in the action of processing paint.\textsuperscript{162} Abstract Expressionist artists found it difficult to create interesting shapes from their own minds so they learned to abdicate control

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{157} Ibid, I. Sandler, 1970, p. 151 and W. V. Dunning, p. 200.
\item \textsuperscript{161} Ibid, I. Sandler, 1970, p. 173.
\item \textsuperscript{162} Ibid, pp. 177-178.
\end{itemize}
by using large brushes or splashes of paint. Pollock’s penchant for risk taking involved experimenting with drips and splashes of paint poured onto canvases arranged on the floor. For some, Pollock’s control over his material was impaired by a lack of space. What appears to be “accidental” was controlled by the Jungian approach of the unconscious (as opposed to Freudian surrealists’ automatism). Pollock, thus, was in search of the so-called unconscious image when he tempted accidents. Pollock created his paintings by trying to empty his mind from imitation in order to make room for the willed action of drips, therefore implying the dynamic presence of unexpected or unconscious imagery. Pollock’s motional configuration was not a reflexive performance of the physical application of paint; rather, it seemed to trigger the mind to map the physical action of the painter’s mark making. Shifting sensations via motional configuration are exemplified in particular by Pollock’s painting White light, 1954 (Plate 16), a dramatic material demonstration of allowing wet paint to drip over a still wet canvas, such that one colour sank into and merged with another. Through this technique, although each line and colour is physically detached from the others, they are all ultimately visually connected. For American art historian William Seitz, this process occurred involuntarily, “like the web of the spider or the crystallization of a mineral, line can form cellular structures, labyrinths, webs, nets and membranes, thus losing…autonomous separateness.” Pollock’s complexity of line and colour, as applied in a painterly context, created a unified surface, evoking a field that at times seemed invisible. Here, Pollock blurred the boundaries between painting and drawing, establishing

164 Ibid, p. 177.
166 Ibid, p. 178.
an experiential sense continuity of time in space. By effectively resolving the division between spatial illusion and the real picture plane, Pollock treated his paintings as a “confrontation of space with flatness, movement with stasis, and mass with emptiness.”

1:2:3 (vi) Accelerating intervals

The idea of shifting sensations as interpreted through Gerhard Richter’s notion of accelerating intervals is animated especially in terms of Richter’s strategy of freezing accelerated intervals of time and space within moving images, creating a resemblance with motion pictures. This strategy is exemplified in Richter’s self-described “photo-painting” Woman descending the staircase, 1965 (Plate 17). This painting reveals the descent of a woman down a staircase as if she was somehow frozen within an accelerating motion picture. Richter’s woman depicted in a blurry downward motion echoes each of her sequential steps as imaginary progress, almost as if the image was photographed from a moving car. This portrayal of accelerating intervals seems to move away from reality and then approach it again. Richter’s accelerating intervals, in many ways, seem to reflect the spatial limitlessness famously explored in Marcel Duchamp’s (1887-1968) Nude Descending a Staircase, 1912. Richter’s conception of accelerating intervals can be understood as being directed away from the presentational content—the fact as fragment captured in an image—and towards the material presentation of the image itself. In contrast with Duchamp, who finally abandoned the “retinal” preoccupation of painting in favour of the artistic strategy of the “readymade”, Richter continues to use the distinctive embodied

172 Ibid.
175 Ibid.
176 Ibid.
177 Ibid.
178 Ibid.
179 Ibid.
presence of the “handmade” by dynamically re-engaging the rich material possibilities of painting.\(^{181}\)

### 1:2:4 Multiple perspectives

Presenting the world as a composite of multiple viewpoints can also imply multiple perspectives. Whereas Modern artists engaged in the manipulation of individual perceptions of the world, in many instances guided by metaphysical convictions, Post-Modern artists have explored decidedly more cognitive, linguistic and discursive methods.\(^{182}\) In the second half of the twentieth century, artists would become increasingly aware of an accelerating flow of fragmented information that demanded a new interpretation of time and space through multiple perspectives.\(^{183}\) Just as ideas of non-Euclidean geometry and the fourth dimension\(^ {184}\) had previously expanded Renaissance objectivity,\(^ {185}\) many new and exciting concepts such as those emerged from Einstein’s theory of relativity in 1905,\(^ {186}\) and Planck’s twentieth century theory of quantum,\(^ {187}\) as synonymous with vacuum fluctuations,\(^ {188}\) helped artists to create new models for painting\(^ {189}\) linked with multiple points of view that refused to locate the viewer within any singular position or identity.\(^ {190}\) The picture plane—something that had formerly relied upon the painter’s competence in controlling the illusion of volume—
was now transformed into something potentially seen as *flat*. Moreover, the idea of the picture plane as flat became accepted as a given.\(^{191}\) As a result, the idea of an all-purpose picture plane liberated some Post-Modernist painters into making their art as astonishingly unpredictable as possible.\(^{192}\) When Cézanne depicted his world as multiple planes, he was formally experimenting with the very idea of multiple perspectives. Cézanne transformed the direct eye level, one of the most characteristic viewpoints for the perceived object, fractionating it into planes and resolving it via a combination of multiple motional views within a single painting.\(^{193}\) The idea of multiple perspectives is variously demonstrated through the work of artists such as American Post-Modern painter David Salle’s (b. 1952) colliding images (Plate 18), English Modernist painter David Hockney’s (b. 1937) multiple views (Plate 19) and German Post-Modern painter Gerhard Richter’s (b.1932) degrees of visibility (Plates 21, 22, 23 and 24).

\(^{192}\) Ibid.
Based on the advances described above, multiple perspectives could now potentially function as a signifier for the limitlessness of time and space, as opposed to simply constituting an illusionistic exploration. Accordingly, one of the most compelling areas of investigation would become a variously interpreted importation of quantum mechanics language into conceptions of painting; painting was no longer understood in terms of Modernist logic, autonomy, purity or unity alone but, rather, as a language relying on “outside references, quoted images and disharmony of its parts.” Building upon the expanded idea of the importance of fragmentation new multiple perspectives, as exemplified by Salle’s colliding images in *Dual aspect picture*, 1986 (Plate 18), demonstrated the potential for unrelated pieces of information to suggest multiple meanings. Here, Salle explicitly avoided the Modernist mythology of authenticity, instead favouring the use of imitation and repetition. Salle’s rejection of Modernism’s singular logic is typical of Post-Modern art’s emphasis on fragmentation and multiplicity. Salle’s colliding images appealed to a new pluralism, primarily because their fragmented complexity invited the kind of uncertainty and randomness suggested within quantum mechanics. In this sense, both quantum mechanics and Salle’s use of images reject the possibility of fixed meaning, preferring...
instead to emphasise the apparent omnipresence of paradox. This new “fuzzy” form of representation seemed appropriate for describing a seemingly “fuzzy” reality. The stage was now set for the image, containing pluralistic points of view, to become more compatible with the complexities of Contemporary society.

1:2:4 (ii) Multiple views

An expanded idea of multiple perspectives in painting would also potentially operate as a vehicle for critiquing “oppositionality”. This fractioning of reality is particularly apparent in Hockney’s multiple views. Hockney’s example of Post-Modern painting is essentially one that no longer conceives of space as something that draws the eye from one point of view, but through multiple perspectives, none of which locate the viewer in any specific position. Hockney’s perception of the Grand Canyon, 1982 (Plate 19), for example, was based upon this very idea of multiple perspectives. Here, the concept of multiplicity in perception was demonstrated through a remediated assemblage of photographs taken of the Grand Canyon. Hockney used fractioned images of the Grand Canyon in order to circumscribe his own limitless journey through time and space—yet within the limited space of the canvas. Hockney’s study for A bigger Grand Canyon, 1998 (Plate 20) offered new perspectives and dimensions of reality, demonstrated by means of placing each segment of the perceived Grand Canyon in relation to its representation as a whole. Hockney’s obsession with movement in space evoked through fracturing vastness, helped Hockney to imply limitless realities of time and space. For Hockney, although that which we think about might not offer a conclusive answer about multiplying perception, A bigger Grand Canyon provides an

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200 Ibid.
201 David Hockney, That's the way I see it, Thames and Hudson, London, 2002, p. 98.
199 Ibid.
204 The National Gallery, Australia.
experience within paint’s materiality that could simply entail another layer, perhaps more blustery than the first.206


1:2:4 (iii) Degrees of visibility

The idea of multiple perspectives is perhaps most evident within Gerhard Richter’s degrees of visibility demonstrated through erasures of reality. Within the bounds of Richter’s blurred images, an absence of explicit mark making might be said to demonstrate a strategy of concealment. Richter’s concealment of the “non-paintable” reveals “something” through the “fluidity of paint” one that nonetheless lacks any representational specificity.207 In this sense, Richter’s approach of suppressing any need to “explain” or “give an opinion”208 is demonstrated in his photo-painting series October 18, 1977 as something dissolving through multiple layers of thin paint. These events were used as source material to effectively distance the viewer from any “meaningful” form of representational specificity.209 Similarly, Richter’s blurred imagery of terrorists being arrested, imprisoned and dying in his photo-painting series comprising Arrest, 1988 (Plate 21), Cell, 1988 (Plate 22) and Man shot down

206 Ibid. p. 168.
209 Ibid.
I, 1988 (Plate 23), were also created partially dissolved by means of thin layers of paint. Richter went further: by effectively emptying January 1989 (Plate 24) of the terrorists’ presence, he left the painting stripped of any trace of life through the use of multiple layers of thick paint. Although January had been emptied of specific form, the surface still retains an appearance of animated visibility. Where Arrest, Cell and Man shot down I seem to attest an immaterial manifestation, January seems to infer a material appearance. Richter’s strategy of emptying the image in January from any trace of life was evoked through the use of dull, grey and mostly saturated painting layers. This act of diffusing the image implies the very failure of re-presentation. In this sense, Richter paradoxically uses painting as an experiential acknowledgement of the impossibility of accounting for reality through painting in painting. Richter’s notion of degrees of visibility set himself the task of converging Realism and Abstraction, past and present, time and space—all the while acknowledging the very impossibility of the task—within a single painting.

1.3 Reflecting on the spatial aspects of limitlessness via the phenomenology of perception and pictorial models

Some artists attempt to convey specific truths about perception of the world that remain beyond common understanding. Whilst science cannot clearly discuss ideas that are framed beyond materiality, artistic and philosophical propositions reflexively acknowledge this incompleteness and inadequacy in their very attempts to comprehend and materialise them. This studio-based investigation attempts to retool philosophical conceptions, which

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211 Ibid.
212 Ibid, pp. 124-128.
213 Ibid, p. 130.
214 Ibid.
215 Ibid.
explore the “pictorial” as a means of potentially unlocking the complexities of the notion of invisibility in the limitless passage of time through space. This expanded conception of the “pictorial” is explored through twentieth century French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s (1908-1961) *Phenomenology of Perception* and Hubert Damisch’s (b. 1928) perceptual, technical, symbolic and strategic *Painting Models*.

An emphasis on transformation over finished product is supported by both Merleau-Ponty’s and Damisch’s philosophies. Moreover, this emphasis can be regarded as a central machine of invention in the materialisation of ideas. Where Damisch’s philosophy emphasises painting processes through *painting models*, Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy emphasises painting processes through a *phenomenology of perception* as a way of grasping something in the world. For Merleau-Ponty, “To see the invisible is to see something in accordance with the axis and pivots, levels and line forces of the visible.”

Merleau-Ponty refers to this something as the invisible – something that is extracted from the visible world – just as Cézanne had instantiated the invisible with his brush as an extension of his body interacting with his mind. In instantiating the invisible Merleau-Ponty refers to the eye as “that which has been moved by some impact of the world, which [was] then restored to the visible through the traces of a hand.” Merleau-Ponty argues that what the artist restores to the visible is much greater than the “visible in the narrow and prosaic

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216 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 1945, Trans. 1958, 2002, pp. vii- x, 135-136. Merleau-Ponty Phenomenology is a way of thinking. It shows us the living-world as it is presented to us, a world of paradox and ambiguity already there before any reflection begins. It offers an account of space and time as we experience them linking mind-body in perceiving the world without any explanation of psychology or science might provide.


218 Ibid, p. 257.


sense." Merleau-Ponty suggests that "expressing" what exists is an "endless task" and, moreover, a task in which the mind and body are inextricably intertwined in the act of creation, in opposition to Descartes' dichotomy. Merleau-Ponty's *phenomenology of perception* offers a new way of painting through a synergy of mind and body in the act of conceiving the invisible, as he writes:

> It is the same world that contains our bodies and our minds, provided that we understand by world not only the sum of things that fall or could fall under our eyes, but which connects our perspectives, permits transition from one to the other.

The interaction of mind and body in the act of grasping the invisible as *something* from the visible world is explained in Merleau-Ponty’s unfinished manuscript *Visible and the Invisible*, published after his death in 1968. The invisible is described as a "presence" or *something* to be grasped: "Our first truth – which prejudges nothing and cannot be contested will be that there is a presence that "something" is there..." This concept is presented in Damisch's 1984 book *Fenetre Jaune Cadmium ou les Dessous de la Peinture* as the urgent need to transcend the stifling concept of image and instead adopt an idea in opposition to the "imaging consciousness." Damisch sees in Mondrian’s and Pollock’s ideas, an opposition to the "imaging consciousness" through their appeal to a spontaneous and...
meaningful swarming ambiguity of form in conveying their hidden world.\textsuperscript{231} This significant idea is encapsulated within the following passage from Damisch:

If the painter has chosen to prohibit the imaging consciousness from giving itself free rein…it is for the purpose of awakening in the spectator the uneasiness with which the perception of a painting should be accompanied.\textsuperscript{232}

Damisch insists that this task of the painter is the basis of his art; it is what makes his canvas a specific theoretical model, the development of a thought, the proper pictorial aspect of which cannot be bypassed.\textsuperscript{233} Damisch takes this further by arguing that, “there comes into play, beyond the sensorial pleasure granted us by Sartre, some secret activity of consciousness, an activity which exhausts itself in the constitution of its object.”\textsuperscript{234} This theoretical model of perspective in painting, as introduced by Damisch and demonstrated through Mondrian’s ideas of pictorial thought, seems to disturb the permanent structures of perception. Furthermore, as Damisch indicated through Mondrian’s idea, this figure/ground relationship might appear ambiguously dissolved “beyond which one would be unable to speak of a perceptive field.”\textsuperscript{235} Likewise, Dubuffet’s great 1950s period is deciphered by Merleau-Ponty’s direct appeal regarding perceptive ambiguity:

By treating the figures as so many vaguely silhouetted backgrounds whose texture he strives to decipher and—conversely—by carrying his gaze towards the less differentiated backgrounds to catch their secret figures and mechanics, this painter has restored the idea of form to its original meaning.\textsuperscript{236}

\textsuperscript{232} Ibid Yve-Alain Bois, 1993, p.248.
\textsuperscript{233} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{234} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{235} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{236} Ibid, p. 249.
With or without the experiential figure of the painter, Merleau-Ponty's hidden world is explained through his *phenomenology of perception*. This notion of invisibility is described as the “indeterminate vision”, that is, the kind of perception we might have of the hidden side of an object—as a vision of “je ne sais quoi” or “I do not know what.” Merleau-Ponty suggests that perceiving and materialising the invisible might be possible through pictorial ambiguities, and more specifically within an aesthetic that transforms rather than reproduces. In this respect, Damisch suggests that the invisible might also be materialised through pictorial thoughts, techniques, emblems and strategies within historical, philosophical and theoretical frameworks that could be taken for models with which one might compare or engage. Both Merleau-Ponty and Damisch propose that if one is going to paint the invisible in terms of *thinking*, one should also get rid of unnecessary information which could only prompt dependence upon illustrative or reproductive methods and potentially deny freedom of creativity. Accordingly, Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology might facilitate an understanding and reception of lived-experience—Levenswelt—within the world. Merleau-Ponty presents the world of paradox and ambiguity without reducing it to that which it is not, but rather to that which is contained in its truthfulness. Merleau-Ponty suggests that a primordial contact with the world might be possible through the *phenomenology of pre-reflective perception*. In bracketing or reducing our perception of the world in terms of determinations of absolute truth and certainty of the idealist thinking, a pre-reflective view of the world of our experience is where we situate consciousness.

239 Ibid, p. 245.
240 Ibid, p. 246.
Ponty affirms, pre-reflectively perceiving, that we all make an initial assumption that there is something to be perceived: “The moment he opens his eyes… it is at the same time true that the world is what we see and that, nonetheless, we must learn to see it.”

Merleau-Ponty’s assumption of experiential perception is fundamental to a vision of “je ne sais quoi” or a vision of “I do not know what” to bring it back to existence in its truthfulness. This truthfulness, in revealing the invisible, however, is carried out in the context affecting experience. This canonical kind of indeterminate visual presence, for Merleau-Ponty, is the visual presence of the background against which a figure appears to a subject even though it makes no determinate contribution to his experience. For example, “if I am looking at the lamp in front of me, then there is a sense in which the books, the wall and the door behind it are all part of my visual experience.” Accordingly, this research project attempts to perceive and reveal the invisible limitless passage of time in space by using Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of perception. It is through the very materiality of painting that the researcher identifies the invisible with the real lived-world as projected through Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of perception. Art as experienced through phenomenology is, finally, an idea—a way of seeing—and a means of re-fragmenting perception into relational composites of shape and colour. The possibility of sensing the invisible world through Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology and Damisch’s perceptual, technical, symbolic and strategic painting models is modelled in relationship to certain artists’ ideas such as Dutch Expressionist painter Piet Mondrian’s (1872-1944) pictorial thoughts (Plate 25), in which he uses the perceptual model to demonstrate simplicity.

245 Ibid.
246 Ibid.
247 Ibid.
of perception. Similarly, Cézanne’s pictorial technique (Plate 12) tests the technical model to explore transformation over reproduction. While Pollock’s pictorial emblem (Plates 27 and 28) utilises the symbolic model to signify meaning, his pictorial strategy (Plate 29) demonstrates anticipation of procedure over product. Moving beyond materiality and towards the structural, French Conceptual artist Daniel Buren’s (b. 1938) serialisations employ an idiom of patterns as a process of association (Plates 30, 31 and 32) to signify continuity. For Buren, however, these serialisations function as an anti-aesthetic critique of the institutional boundaries of art and its commodification.

(25) Piet Mondrian, Composition with red, blue, yellow, black and grey, 1922. Oil on canvas, 41.9 x 41.9 cm. Museum Toledo of Art.
(12) Paul Cezanne, Mont Sainte-Victorie, 1902-1904. Oil on canvas, 69.8 x 89.5 cm. Philadelphia museum of Art.
(26) Paul Cezanne, Mont Sainte-Victoire, 1885-87. Oil on canvas, 65.5 x 81 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY.
(27) Jackson Pollock, Guardians of the secret, 1943. Oil on canvas, 123 x 191 cm. San Francisco Museum of Art.
(28) Jackson Pollock, Full fathom five, 1947. Oil on canvas, 129.2 x 76.5 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York.
1:3:1 The perceptual model: pictorial thought

To see is to enter a universe of beings, which display themselves…thus every object is the mirror of all others.\(^{248}\) (Merleau-Ponty)

The perceptual model is principally aimed at facilitating *simplicity* in both perception and interpretation of the invisibility notion of the limitless passage of time in space, as constructed by adapting Merleau-Ponty’s and Damisch’s notions of pictorial thoughts.\(^{249}\) This pictorial process, when established in terms of thinking, might assist to reveal invisibility within the visible world. In this respect, the complex physical world is rearranged in its new simplicity, in order to elucidate essential layers of perception with which to convey the invisible simply through ambiguity of form—yet, *truthfully* presented within an aesthetic that transforms rather than replicates.\(^{250}\) Sartre argues that there is no such thing as an aesthetic that transforms perception because any perceived form is recognised as we see it in a material sense.\(^{251}\) Damisch responds to this kind of assertion by acknowledging that, “recognising what we see materially speaking” we should consider *meaningless* as, in a sense, missing the power of reasoning to transform perception. After all, Sartre’s suggestion will only hold painting as an aesthetic of mimesis.\(^{252}\) What is important about Damisch’s assertion is that he takes this aesthetic to be emblematic as it will be discussed later when dealing with the symbolic model.\(^{253}\) Damisch sees in Mondrian a painter of the perceptive

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251 Ibid, Yve-Alain Bois, pp. 246-247.
252 Ibid.
253 Ibid.
Aporia precisely the opposite of the “geometric abstraction” genre of which he is supposed to be the herald. Mondrian’s enterprise in destroying perception was carried out through the abandonment of curves and instead, by using line. Line can function to destroy the picture plane inasmuch as the line is required to be straight. In this instance, Damisch’s argument is notoriously anti-Sartrean and opposed to the “imaging consciousness” when considering Mondrian’s, Pollock’s and Picasso’s works each with its own modality within a kaleidoscope that offers aesthetic perception a task of endless meaningful forms of ambiguous appeal. Damisch sees here that the painter chooses to dismiss the “imaging consciousness” by giving itself free rein, within a theoretic model that enables thought to be developed through pictorial aspects that cannot be bypassed. Damisch suggests that Mondrian’s simplicity of perception is demonstrated through pictorial thoughts. Pictorial thoughts imply that each time “perception thinks,” it can go beyond awareness and, in doing so, significant elements are transformed to reveal the invisible in its simplicity. Damisch’s pictorial thoughts can be analogised using Mondrian’s Composition with red, blue, yellow, black and grey, 1922 (Plate 25), in which the puzzling transformation of a tree (Figures 1-5) is not mimetic, but rather a pictorial aesthetic of transformation in which thought is applied to develop perception in its simplicity.

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254 Ibid.
256 Ibid.
257 Ibid.
259 Ibid.
This simplified process is emphasised by Mondrian's most basic elements of form, thereby establishing relationships between verticals and horizontals and creating rectilinear shapes with the use of only primary colours.\textsuperscript{261} The emphasis of Mondrian’s use of simplicity in determining perception by abandoning all curves and adopting lines was demonstrated with a purpose to escape from imitative interpretation of reality. After all, line flattens volume.\textsuperscript{262}

\textbf{Invisibility/Visibility}

The perception of the world in its simplicity is also deciphered by direct appeal to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception as an essential moment in this history of perceptive ambiguity.\textsuperscript{263} Merleau-Ponty suggests “by treating the figures as so many vaguely silhouetted backgrounds whose texture he strives to decipher and—conversely—by carrying his gaze toward the less differentiated background to catch their secret … this painter has restored to the idea of form its original meaning.”\textsuperscript{264} Phenomenology applied in painting might assist with the perception of the world—either as real because it is always there before any reflection begins, or because it is absent yet felt as a presence—and offers an account of time and space just as we really live in the world.\textsuperscript{265} It tries to give a direct description of our experience as it is, without taking account of its psychological origin and the casual explanation, which the scientist, the historian or the sociologist may be able to provide.\textsuperscript{266} In this sense, phenomenology brings us to things themselves, as they are experienced in the real everyday world.\textsuperscript{267} Merleau-Ponty suggests that when our visual field

\begin{footnotesize}
\bibitem{262} Ibid.
\bibitem{263} Ibid, p. 249.
\bibitem{264} Ibid.
\bibitem{266} Ibid.
\bibitem{267} Ibid.
\end{footnotesize}
is inundated with perceptual complexity, the *phenomenology of pre-reflective perception* can assist in bracketing them off, by setting aside judgment prior to the climax of our visual interest.\(^{268}\) Cézanne’s *Mont Sainte-Victoire*, 1902-1904 (Plate 12)\(^{269}\) exemplifies this visual interest; simplified by comparison with reality and yet truthfully conveyed (see below).

Merleau-Ponty asserts, that through his *phenomenology of pre-reflective perception*, there is an initial unquestionable belief that there is “something” to be perceived the moment we open our eyes.\(^{270}\) This “something”, a vision of "je ne sais quoi"\(^{271}\) or “I do not know what”, is described as the “indeterminate vision”\(^{272}\) of an object—one that is brought into existence in its truthfulness precisely because it is evaluated without assumed or cognitive judgment;\(^{273}\) one that would take us directly into the realm of our lived-experience and not neglect any of its meaningful metaphysical (being and knowing) features.\(^{274}\) According to Merleau-Ponty, the truthful existence of the invisible is manifested gradually as an experiential process through the development of multiple relationships rather than as a singular event.\(^{275}\) In this respect, Cézanne’s tree in *Mont Sainte-Victoire seen from Bellevue*,

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\(^{268}\) Ibid, p. 47.  
\(^{274}\) Ibid, p. 45.  
\(^{275}\) Ibid, p.53.
1885-1887 (Plate 26)\textsuperscript{276} can be perceived not as one object on its own, but against a background of other objects. Merleau-Ponty, through his phenomenology of perception, suggests that the view of the tree extends beyond its materiality, with the mind driven to believe in not only seeing the visible sides of the tree but also its invisible sides.\textsuperscript{277} The assumption of existence of the tree’s invisible sides might be made because, while the tree shows its façade to us, it also shows its sides not seen by us, to the other trees seeing on the left side of the picture, to the bridge, to the mountain at the back and so on. In this way, all visible and invisible sides of objects are held together in the act of perception.\textsuperscript{278} Once again according to Merleau-Ponty, seeing the invisible sides of objects is justified by lived-experience in which the background is experienced as somehow visually present even though it makes no determinate contribution to experience.\textsuperscript{279} Merleau-Ponty explains how objects-seeing-one-another is simply about trying to figure out how the background objects are present to us in our experience of the object on which we are focused.\textsuperscript{280} Merleau-Ponty’s account in this respect is that the background objects are experienced as stand-ins for the point of view one gets on the focal object from the position in which they sit. In this respect, Merleau-Ponty claims “although I can never stand everywhere at once, I can see all the objects surrounding my focal object as together making up the view from everywhere. It is in this sense that I experience objects seeing one another.”\textsuperscript{281} Merleau-Ponty suggests that to look at an object is just to see it as the spatial centre of focus onto which all the objects surrounding it converge.\textsuperscript{282}

\textsuperscript{278} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{279} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{280} Ibid, p. 88.
\textsuperscript{281} Ibid, pp. 91-92.
\textsuperscript{282} Ibid.
Simplicity of perception: ambiguity of form

The notion of simplicity of perception, as ambiguously visualised and yet truthfully presented,\textsuperscript{283} is not about depicting an illusion of reality, but is rather concerned with a spatial arrangement that engages both mind and senses in the act of perception. Within this ambiguity of form,\textsuperscript{284} thought is highly permeable to the imagination. It is through the imagination that the artist can enter the picture and invite the viewer in.\textsuperscript{285} Perception that involves unity of mind and senses in the act of awareness\textsuperscript{286} is in precise opposition to Descartes' idea of exclusive reliance on the rational mind to provide as truth.\textsuperscript{287} Merleau-Ponty claims that any explanation of the inner nature of art cannot be separated from exterior influences on the synthesis of a work.\textsuperscript{288} In this respect, the body is considered a dynamic container of sensory awareness constantly interacting with the mind while the world is experienced. Here, for example, Pollock's brush becomes an extension of his body interacting with his mind in the act of conception and substantiation of ideas, and without the mind/body separation suggested by Descartes.\textsuperscript{289}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{283} Op. cit., Yve-Alain Bois, 1993, p. 249.
\item\textsuperscript{284} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{285} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{289} Ibid.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
1.3:2 The technical model: pictorial techniques

I venture to depict matter as it takes some form, as the birth of order through spontaneous organisation.\(^{291}\) (Paul Cézanne)

The technical model is focused upon the *transformation* of both the perception and interpretation of the concept of the invisible limitless passage of time in space. This model is based on Merleau-Ponty’s and Damisch’s notions of pictorial techniques, and within an aesthetic that acknowledges process as the foundation of painting.\(^{292}\) This process, which aims at transformation rather than mimicry of the world, intends to reveal the structure of the invisible by taking apart the layers of perception and then disclosing meaning within a simplicity that is still truthfully presented.\(^{293}\) In this sense, Merleau-Ponty compares photography with painting. Whilst the photographer taking a “snapshot” captures a moment frozen in time and space, painting emphasises the artist’s shifting perceptions through the use of expanded pictorial techniques.\(^{294}\) In this sense, painters who have a close relationship between their powers of reason and imagination can give their subjects a new identity, generating meaning and form by manipulating, distorting and transforming paint into what

\(^{294}\) Ibid.
they see in the world. A set of painting effects generated in this way can be considered as constituting an artist’s own work modality. By way of partial justification for this idea, Merleau-Ponty explains how Cézanne’s use of artificial perspective might have helped to potentially disclose a way of allowing paint to be worked without excessive control. Cézanne revealed that by “abandoning himself to the chaos of sensations”, he might distort his view of the world. For Merleau-Ponty, this abandonment of thinking—and its association with painting—is possible only if it is structurally organised not as independent experiences, but rather as multiple sequential experiences. One experience arrives after another, each conditioning the previous experience, as these are all concomitantly revealed to expose the idea as a whole. This conception of pictorial technique suggests that each time sensing occurs, it offers the potential for an artist to move beyond representation, toward meaningful pictorial effects that work to reveal the invisible through distinctiveness of form. This phenomenon is exemplified in Cézanne’s Mont Sainte-Victoire, 1902-1904 (Plate 12).

Here, depth of awareness in terms of line, shape, colour and composition were effectively applied by Cézanne as shown in Figures 1 to 4, so as to gradually and systematically transform a mountain into a sequence of abstracted, mosaic-like colour.

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295 Ibid.
296 Ibid.
297 Ibid, p. 298.
298 Ibid.
301 Ibid.
As Cézanne built this perception of reality, he was clearly less interested in representational illustration than he was in the transformation of form.\textsuperscript{302}

1.3.3 The symbolic model: pictorial emblem

When the painter can paint while he is looking at the world...he thinks he is disentangling, deciphering or spelling out nature at the moment he is creating\textsuperscript{303}.

(Merleau-Ponty)

The symbolic model is directed towards the \textit{signification}\textsuperscript{304} of both perception and interpretation, linking the notion of the invisible with the limitless passage of time in space, as explored through Merleau-Ponty’s and Damisch’s notions of pictorial emblems.\textsuperscript{305} Damisch considers the act of revealing pictorial emblems to be a crucial element of signification, a key neither mimetic nor analogical, but as with science or language, emblematic.\textsuperscript{306} For Damisch, pictorial emblems in painting do not exist as pre-arranged, isolated and static entities, but rather as intricate continuously changing compounds engaging numerous signifying possibilities in the creative process.\textsuperscript{307} For example in some of Pollock’s earlier “brush” works, such as \textit{Guardians of the secret}, 1943 (Plate 27),\textsuperscript{308} images borrowed from American totems possibly symbolising the archaic guardian of the “secret”, become part of Pollock’s allegorical vision rather than a literal form of representation. Pollock furthered this idea by later concealing the so-called “secret” with all-

\textsuperscript{302} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{305} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{306} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{307} Ibid, p. 254.
over dripping effects. This method of symbolically revealing the invisible via the application of paint is perhaps most apparent in later works such as *Full fathom Five, 1947* (Plate 28).

Did Pollock want to obliterate all signs of the presence of the secret through calligraphic drippings of thin paint poured systematically all over the picture plane? Pollock’s *all-over* approach to dripping was developed by attacking at once from all sides, swamping the entire surface of the canvas and, in doing so, generating physical resistance between new planes. Consequently, Pollock arguably created motional effects of emblematic nature, effectively overturning reproduction via transformation.

### 1.3:4 The strategic model: pictorial strategy

The problem, for whoever writes about it, should not be so much to write about painting as to do something with it… (Hubert Damisch)

The strategic model of painting is directed toward an *anticipation* of both perception and interpretation of the notion of invisibility of the limitless passage of time through space—as modeled by Damisch’s pictorial strategy and Merleau-Ponty’s *phenomenology of perception*. Perhaps most notably, Damisch famously compared the manoeuvres of the painting process to moves in a game of chess. In this sense, each step of the painting process invites continuity within an assessment of procedure over product. This pictorial strategy, as compared to a chess game, is also considered in Levi-Strauss’s *Voie des*

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309 Ibid, p. 29.
311 Ibid, p. 257.
312 Ibid, p. 254.
313 Ibid.
masques or the way of masks, 1982. Damisch agrees with Dubuffet’s writing about painting in asserting that, if one considers painting to be a theoretical operator as well as a producer of models, then painting “might also be a machine to convey philosophy.” While the perceptive, technical and symbolic models of painting are identified as constituent parts of the mechanisms of invention, the strategic model takes account of its existence as a method that shows its existence in history. Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of perception also offers a pictorial strategic model; although presented in non-historical terms, this strategic system recognises the role of history in shaping the content of experience. Merleau-Ponty suggests in Eye and mind, 1964 that Modern art uses a strategic system of organisation to represent the universe. He insists that when artists invent new means of expression or modify those already established, their efforts are targeted at finding new strategic systems. Damisch’s idea of pictorial strategy is demonstrated in Pollock’s painting Autumn rhythm, 1957 (Plate 29). Here, Pollock’s manner of deploying the paint becomes a strategic performance of technical invention in painting. Damisch adds that such performance is the core of invention in painting and that each step in the painting process is, therefore, specifically anticipated. Furthermore, each step occurs at a level in which thought and imagination intersect and, at the precise moment in which each rhythmic spattering of paint succeeds another,

316 Ibid, p. 257.
317 Ibid.
321 Ibid.
sequentially and precisely where it is needed. Consequently, the process of creative anticipation of continuous multi-dimensional visual fields that can be seen as having evolved through fluidity and meditative mark making, using line and colour, rather than as a one-dimensional descriptive approach.

1:3:5 Serialisations

Serial visualisation can be seen in terms of a strategic model through which each painting in a series is anticipated as a word that becomes part of a “conversational vocabulary of thought”; thinking serially is equal to processing fragments of thought and imagination, each coherently and sequentially displayed on a wall. Painting in a series also opens a historical sequence of individual moments. If these are created using traditional models they are just sequences of instances displayed according to their significance and relative positions in the process of thinking. Each moment in a painting series calls for another moment as part of a serial extension, which not only acknowledges the individual painting’s significance, but also serves as a connection with other serial possibilities of thought and imagination. The display of paintings in a series might be described as constituting a specific extension of the strategic model in terms of a relationship between expectation and presentation. Serialisation is the process of arranging contiguous units—an arrangement of an artistic language displaying, as a whole, an accumulation of moments of time passing through space. Serial practice can simultaneously suggest multiple ways of exposing an idea. The serial method of painting was pushed to the extreme by French artist Daniel Buren’s idiom of patterns in his works Within the frame, 1973 (Plate 30), Beyond the

324 Philip Armstrong, (et. al.), (eds.), As Painting: Division and Displacement, Wexner Center for the Arts, Ohio State University Columbus, Ohio, May-August Exhibition, 2001, p. 29.
325 Ibid, p. 47.
326 Ibid.
frame, 1973 (Plate 31)\textsuperscript{327} and The two plateaux, 1986 (Plate 32).\textsuperscript{328} In these works, Buren invites the beholder to symbolically follow a path towards an exhibition site via sequential displays and, in doing so, evokes an implicit critique of the very structure of denotation (a sign or symbol) that underpins the institutional framing of the exhibition site itself.\textsuperscript{329} After all, as Buren reminds us, both reality and the structures that have evolved in response to reality are always larger than any single denotation can faithfully imply. In this sense, the serial work reveals a self-reflexive acknowledgement that reality always extends beyond that which is actually shown. This is the key to comprehending limitlessness. The serial process, therefore, represents one way in which the artist can reveal a process of transformation as more important than the rarified possibility of ever really arriving at a finished product/destination.

\textit{1.4 Elucidating spatial conceptions of limitlessness through the sublime}

This investigation will now turn towards an attempt to reformulate some Modern, Post-Modern and Contemporary conceptions of the \textit{sublime} in connection with the notion of invisibility in the limitless passage of time through space, and its evocation through painting. Earlier in this chapter, the sublime was explored as a concept related to experiential dimensions (mind/sense based strategic alternatives in signification), which might be used to convey the idea of limitless space. By contrast, the idea of the sublime will now be examined, progressively, from its earliest Modern conception through to the so-called post-sublime and Contemporary techno-sublime.

\textsuperscript{329} Ibid.
In its earliest manifestation the sublime was typically discussed in connection with notions of beauty, as in first century AD Greek writer Longinus’ *On the sublime*, a text that was virtually forgotten until it was translated and published in 1674.\textsuperscript{330} For Longinus, the mind exercises powers of multiplication without end; and, in doing so, expands and exalts itself such that its judgments and responses become sublime.\textsuperscript{331} The eighteenth century Irish theorist Edmund Burke’s 1756 writings on *Philosophical enquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and the beautiful*,\textsuperscript{332} was also employed within this inquiry, portraying the sublime as somehow connected with the beautiful as a source of both pleasure and pain.\textsuperscript{333} Added to early Modern texts on the sublime was Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Judgement* published in 1790, in which sublime qualities were identified as those that appear to transcend understanding. Together, these foregoing concepts later contributed to the importance of the principles of grandeur and terror, fundamental to the Romantic frame of mind.\textsuperscript{334} Also significant to this investigation is Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s (1770-1831) philosophy, which regards everything that exists as the outcome of a process of transformation. More recently, French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard’s (1924-1998) commentary on Kant’s writing (particularly the 1790 *Critique of judgement*) in his *Lessons on the analytic of the sublime* published in 1991, describes the sublime as a manifestation of the unpresentable.\textsuperscript{335} For Lyotard, writing in his influential collection of essays, *The Post-Modern condition: A report on knowledge* (1979), the sublime is treated as part of the expanded role of art, in dialogue with the phenomenon of that “which can be conceived and which can neither be seen nor made visible.”\textsuperscript{336} This conception of invisibility is still at stake

\textsuperscript{336} Ibid.
in painting today. For the purposes of this investigation, the sublime can be described in
three distinct stages: the Modern sublime regarding vastness with *horror vacui*, the Post-
Modern sublime involving indeterminacy, and the Contemporary techno-sublime which
engages with immediacy.

1:4:1 The Modern sublime as *horror vacui*

The Modern conception of the sublime has its origins in eighteenth and nineteenth
century aesthetic theory, in which the sublime is manifested in terms of sensations of the
mind that extend beyond the mere physicality of the landscape. This idea of the sublime,
which presents vastness as *horror vacui*, assisted in painting that dealt with the invisible
as a sensation related to the limitless passage of time in space. This first stage in
conceptions of the Modern sublime is explored through the ideas of Longinus, Burke, Kant
and Lyotard. The Modern sublime of vastness as *horror vacui* is variously demonstrated
through the ideas of several artists: C. D. Friedrich’s raising of the mind to fear (Plate 33),
J.M.W. Turner’s igniting of the imagination (Plate 34), the terror of the sublime (Plate 35)
then followed by Turner’s simplicity of the sublime (Plate 36) and ending with Barnett
Newman’s reducing event-bound time (Plate 37).

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338 Ibid.
The concept of the sublime within the aesthetics of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was offered in striking opposition to classical thinking in art:\(^{339}\) the concept of the sublime newly privileging an art that emphasised the power of reason aided by imagination.\(^{340}\) Within this new paradigm, Kant worked to compare and contrast the experience of the sublime with that of the beautiful. In Kant’s view, the sublime and the beautiful might rest together pleasurably upon reason and imagination for both invest in the quality of objects that elevate the mind above its ordinary state.\(^{341}\) By contrast, whilst the beautiful connects the aesthetic to objects in relation to their form, the sublime asserts a relationship founded upon formlessness.\(^{342}\) Furthermore, pleasure in the beautiful is connected with enjoyable and agreeable aspects of life, whereas pleasure in the sublime

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\(^{342}\) Ibid.
relates to threat, pain, or the disagreeable. Kant argues that the negative pleasure in the sublime, although seeming to outrage our imagination, resides in the power of the mind to rise above that which threatens to engulf or annihilate us. The notion of the power of the mind to rise above what threatens it with annihilation was effectively demonstrated by Friedrich’s idea of raising the mind to fear. This idea is depicted in Friedrich’s 1824 *Arctic shipwreck* (Plate 33) featuring a ship mercilessly crushed by great icebergs in order to create a state of fear in the mind. Once again, this represents a marked shift away from classical attitudes. Turner’s and Friedrich’s ideas broke with the established trope of an ideal landscape in which humanity was seen to be in harmony with nature, instead conveying traumatic landscapes in which humanity was in conflict with its surroundings.

1:4:1 (ii) Igniting the imagination

The notion of vastness, as associated with the sublime in painting, was described by American James Fennimore Cooper in one of his 1840 poems using imagery extracted from the expansive forests of North America which Cooper compared with the most far-reaching confines of thought, which had the potential to overwhelm the imagination. Similarly, as the painter gazes into a limitless void, even into the obscurity of the night, the mind draws parallels to grand ideas that are limitless and abstract. Longinus observed that the mind exercises its powers of multiplying without end; by doing so it expands and exalts itself such that its judgments and responses become sublime. Cooper actively provided readers of

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343 Ibid.
344 Ibid.
346 Ibid, p. 201.
349 Ibid.
his poetry with a vast frame of reference, encouraging the reader to contemplate this in light of the sublime, which he emphasised as the most serious assertion of life and of the human condition.\textsuperscript{351} In contrast, Burke analysed the sublime by linking it to the beautiful. Ultimately, both Cooper's and Burke's conceptions were portrayed indistinctly as sources of pleasure and pain.\textsuperscript{352} However, whilst more light-hearted and invigorating sensations were projected upon the beautiful—the gloomy, awful and solemn were considered to be generated through the sublime. On the one hand, the beautiful adds a quality to objects, which inspires pleasure by materialising a sort of internal elevation and expansion, thereby offering a degree of wonderment, astonishment and surprise that is positively delightful.\textsuperscript{353} On the other hand, the sublime introduces a sense of fear to objects by materialising them as menacing and unpleasant, yet at the same time this is accompanied by a certain pleasure.\textsuperscript{354} In Kant's view, this pleasure results from the awareness we experience of powers commanded by the mind over the senses.\textsuperscript{355} The sublime, therefore, displays sensual experience as feelings of displeasure until the power of the mind transforms these feelings into pleasure and then again into displeasure.\textsuperscript{356} Kant extrapolates from the power of reason—aided by the imagination—a capacity for controlling the seemingly uncontrollable nature of the sublime.\textsuperscript{357} Kant echoes Burke's association of pain with the sublime by arguing that there is a painful distinction between the power of reason to assess the significance of an external phenomenon, and the power of imagination to reveal it.\textsuperscript{358} In this sense, the contemplation of natural disasters or humanity in anguish may not engender fear, but only an attempt to feel fear aided by the imagination.\textsuperscript{359} The importance of the power of reason in assessing

\textsuperscript{351} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{352} Ibid, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{353} Ibid, p.10.
\textsuperscript{355} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{356} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{359} Ibid.
the significance of an external phenomenon, coupled with the power of imagination to reveal it, is experientially conveyed through Turner’s manner of igniting the imagination, as exemplified in the 1790 *Snow storm* (Plate 34).\(^\text{360}\) Turner demonstrated this coupling by contrasting a vulnerable passenger steamboat trapped in the immensity of the horrendous and tempestuous vortices of the sea, thereby effectively signifying the ever-present threat of humanity being swallowed by nature’s limitless power.\(^\text{361}\)

1:4:1 (iii) The terror of the sublime

Jean-Francois Lyotard, writing in *The Post-Modern condition*, 1984, suggests that the terror of the sublime might be conveyed as a paradox between the complexity of subjectivity and the simplicity of objectivity.\(^\text{362}\) In this respect, when the viewer is almost overwhelmed by the effects of devastation, there follows a second moment in which the viewer understands the experience and then attempts to rationalise it and, by doing so, feels a rush of power that also involves the memory of pain.\(^\text{363}\) The terror of the sublime that is implicated in devastation is evident, for example, in Turner’s 1856 *The burning of the houses of parliament* (Plate 35),\(^\text{364}\) is demonstrated through an evocation of the dreadful apparition of fire.\(^\text{365}\) Here, unpleasant scenes that might overwhelm the viewer with fear are, in turn, followed by moments of reasoning and are thereby *fuzzily* transformed into affable yet massive, formless shapes of smoke engulfing the viewer. In this way, pleasure defeats fear through reason but the memory of fear persists. The cycling of reflexive awareness of both


mortality and the very condition of such awareness is what leads us to the sublime.\textsuperscript{366} The traumatic sublime becomes finally re-registered as a historical sublime, in which the experience of passing moments of pain is interrupted by reasoning and, in that split second of interruption, there is a rush of empowerment that \textit{sensationallly} alleviates the pain, even though the experience of empowerment is, itself, oppressive.\textsuperscript{367} Various effects of the traumatic sublime could also potentially have an impact, both on the conceiving of ideas and on the abstraction of these ideas into formlessness.\textsuperscript{368} Kant saw form as the \textit{a priori} aspect of experience.\textsuperscript{369} From this view, we are presented with a phenomenon that contains no meaning until the mind imposes meaning upon it.\textsuperscript{370} Formlessness is not related to what Italian art critic Bruno Alfieri has referred to (in discussing the work of Pollock) as an “absolute lack of harmony, complete lack of structural organisation, total absence of technique, or chaos.”\textsuperscript{371} On the contrary, what appears as formless matter in a traumatic conception of the sublime is that which becomes positive and creative, finding its own order that embraces and challenges a new way of thinking and seeing.\textsuperscript{372} Pollock’s manner of connecting human with mechanical judgment was made possible by \textit{constructing} abstractions, just as content and form were finally indivisible in revealing simplicity through formlessness.\textsuperscript{373} Here, the paradox between the complexity of subjectivity and the simplicity of objectivity is highlighted through formlessness.\textsuperscript{374} In this instance, as French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss suggested in \textit{The savage mind} (1966) that a mental

\textsuperscript{366} Ibid, p. 145.
\textsuperscript{370} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{372} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{373} Ibid, p. 201.
process as a Conceptual tool, and a physical process as a material tool, are inseparable in terms of elaborating abstract ideas as graspable within reality.\textsuperscript{375}

Such a notion of grasping the ungraspable also resembles Merleau-Ponty’s conception of the invisible,\textsuperscript{376} as explored through Paul Cézanne’s work. This idea of rethinking the indeterminate so as to make it determinate\textsuperscript{377} is particularly apparent in Cézanne’s \textit{Mont Sainte-Victoire}, 1902-1904 (Plate 12).\textsuperscript{378} Merleau-Ponty’s account of the articulated lucidity of the world is strongly echoed in French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy’s thinking, as described through the fable of a cave in which the imaginable and the unimaginable are modelled as a hand advancing into the void, just as a baby advances into the world at birth. A birth symbolises the moment of the beginning of a work, in which mind and senses are united in the act of creation—a moment frozen that somehow holds itself together by making \textit{something} visible.\textsuperscript{379} A symbiotic act of mind and embodied senses, in which visualising the invisible is enacted in the manner of handling the painting process, is the way in which the painter thinks. While the manner of handling paint in Pollock’s \textit{Guardians of the secret}, 1943 (Plate 27)\textsuperscript{380} was attempted through brushstrokes, in \textit{Full fathom five}, 1947 (Plate 28)\textsuperscript{381}, this process of thinking through painting was famously entombed through Pollock’s dripping techniques.\textsuperscript{382} If there is no embodied thinking within the act of perception, it is unlikely that there is an extended sense of visibility and, therefore, by extension invisibility cannot be worked blindly.\textsuperscript{383} Significantly, the particular areas of experience Kant calls “aesthetic” and the particular things he calls “works”, appear as

\textsuperscript{376} Ibid, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{377} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{378} H. Duchting, 1994, p. 213.
\textsuperscript{380} Jean-Luc Chalumeau, 1997, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{381} Ibid, p. 29.
\textsuperscript{383} Ibid, p. 8.
articulated in order to explain how objects that we experience and visualise stand with respect to each other and to the whole.\textsuperscript{384} Consequently, when the eye beholds form, it is only through reasoning that this form enters the mind and is then understood. In this sense, what is elevated by the mind is only effective through reasoning and this is what locates us within the sublime.\textsuperscript{385} We can only see because we can think seeing. The task of the painter is to facilitate a reflexive engagement with conscious form of beholding \textit{that} which we see.

\textbf{1:4:1 (iv) The simplicity of the sublime}

For Jean-François Lyotard, the sublime represents a conflict between a desire to recognise the intricacy of subjectivity, and the need to portray it in its simplicity.\textsuperscript{386} Intricate subjects with no real world reference might transcend understanding, such that their visualisation might be attempted in their simplicity through formlessness as a way of reasoning.\textsuperscript{387} In this respect, Turner’s idea of the simplicity of the sublime is concerned with experience that transcends visualisation, understood as the incomprehensible invisibility of vastness and delivered through formlessness and, perhaps more importantly, is able to instantiate its very incomprehensibility through simplified structures of line, shape and colour.\textsuperscript{388} Lyotard suggests that subjectivity might be rendered in \textit{Storm clouds looking out to sea} 1856, (Plate 36)\textsuperscript{389} through formlessness that can be grasped only in terms of thinking.\textsuperscript{390} Further, Newman’s presentation of the mythical through simplicity of form indicates an emptiness that is at the same time full.\textsuperscript{391} In this sense, Newman’s work also

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotenum{384} Ibid, p. 11.
\footnotenum{385} Ibid, p. 13.
\footnotenum{387} Ibid.
\footnotenum{388} Ibid.
\footnotenum{391} Ibid, p. 51.
\end{footnotes}
utilises simplicity as a means of portraying the sublime in his work *Vir heroicus sublimis*, 1950-1951 (Plate 15). It is arguably this strategy of sublime evocation via the most minimal of means that has largely dominated the visual pursuit of incomprehensible infinitudes in the inextricable relationship between reality and human consciousness.

1:4:1 (v) Reducing event-bound time

The multifaceted nature of the Modern sublime continued to be artistically explored in the early twentieth century. Once again, while the beautiful was associated with the presentable revealed through form, the sublime was associated with the unpresentable revealed through formlessness. In this sense, the influence of Kant’s philosophy would remain central. In Kant’s formulation of aesthetics, as laid out in *Analytic of the Sublime* 1790, whilst the beautiful delights in form incited by the senses, the sublime delights in formlessness incited by the mind. This Kantian formulation is less concerned with the beautiful or the artistic form of an object, and more with the sublime, which is the process that leads one to admire that object for what it is. When the sublime terrifies us, it at first generates a negative pleasure because it reminds us of our human limitations within a limitless world. The phenomenon of nature rests in chaos, desolation and vastness, giving to the sublime signs of magnitude and power, which predominantly excite the mind through the imagination. It should be noted, however, that the sublime is not *in nature* as the beautiful might be *in nature*, such as in the order of the petals of a rose. Kant argues that

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392 Ibid.
397 Ibid, p. 128.
398 Ibid.
the sublime, in the strict sense of the word, cannot be contained in any form but within the power of reason which may call on the thoughts to be sensuously driven as though formless.\textsuperscript{399} The impending storm is not the sublime, but its mental interpretation as an ominous threat of the fearful, formless and limitless is what takes us to the sublime. This is precisely why the sublime can function so effectively within the subjectively constructed interpretation of the beholder of aesthetic experience. After all, aesthetic experience is only summoned by the vehicular medium of painting. Imagination is required in order to expand the experience into that of art. The uncertainty of the unknown evokes our worries and demands that we think about our human frailty, so we reason fearfully when in an uncertain situation.\textsuperscript{400}

In anguish, however, pleasure can be discerned. This pleasure in the exercise of reason relieves the pain brought by the anxiety created by the sublime.\textsuperscript{401} In responding to the threatening anxiety of the sublime, described as an impending storm, the beholder begins to acknowledge his or her human frailty, giving in to the sublime signs of power that excite the mind to fear. Importantly, in both the literal presence of the storm and in the presence of its representation, imagination is required to actually evoke the sublime. The storm itself is not the sublime, its mental interpretation as ominous is what takes us to the sublime. In suffering this ominousness, a tangible pleasure occurs through reasoned interpretation, relieving the pain of human existence. Awareness of the sublime, according to Kant, is constituted by inextricable sensations of both pleasure and pain.\textsuperscript{402} The way in which humans derive pleasure from pain might be experientially demonstrated. For example, when the imagination fails to present the power of the infinite, even in its simplest

\textsuperscript{399} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{400} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{401} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{402} Ibid.
form, there is not enough capacity within the imagination to either behold or portray it.\footnote{Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, (eds.), Art theory 1900-1990, Blackwell Oxford, UK, 1992, pp. 1012-1014, cites Keith Crome and James Williams (eds.), The Lyotard Reader and Guide: Newman, The Instant, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2006, pp. 128-131.} With every attempt to conceive something from nothing, and then in turn present it as something, the nominated object will appear painfully inadequate.\footnote{Ibid.}

Kant shows that it is possible to present the \textit{unpresentable infinite} through something that is visible, and therefore reachable, through formlessness because the absence of form is a potential suggestion of the unpresentable.\footnote{Ibid.} Similarly, in Turner’s painting \textit{Snow storm}, 1790 (Plate 34)\footnote{Op. cit., M. Lloyd, (ed.), 1996, p. 33.} the invisible is conveyed through formlessness because since these horrendous, tempestuous vortices of the sea are indiscernible to the viewer’s eye in this painting, they are also absent of form. Herein, there is a potential suggestion of the unpresentable.\footnote{Ibid.} By way of justifying this aesthetic of the sublime in painting, the invisible can only be made invisible by making the mind see it through formlessness.\footnote{Op. cit., C. Harrison and P. Wood, (eds.), 1992, pp. 1012-1014, cites J-F Lyotard, 2006, pp. 128-131.} By the same token, in Malevich’s white paintings, the mind enables us to visually negotiate blankness as something \textit{through} the sublime. Seeing invisibility through the sublime is pleasing only by rendering something painfully hard to see;\footnote{Ibid.} and yet the form, because of its recognisable vestige, and despite being vaguely presented, nonetheless continues to offer to the beholder a degree of visibility and, by extension, pleasure.\footnote{Ibid.} An inextricable coupling in the sublime of pleasure and pain is particularly evident in Barnett Newman’s strategy of reducing event-bound time. In this sense, Newman’s \textit{Onement I}, 1948 (Plate 37)\footnote{Op. cit., H. Foster, 2004, p. 362.} conveys the sublime as it emerges when the threat of pain is removed.\footnote{Op. cit., K. Crome and J. Williams (eds.), 2006, p. 334.} Sensations emanating from stressful
phenomena reducing event-bound time, such as an impending death, can indicate self-preservation. For Burke, in *The Lyotard reader and guide* (2006) this is the very terror of the sublime.\(^{413}\)

Artists in the form of shadows, solitude or silence have widely explored this terror of the sublime in allegorical terms as a synonym for extinction of the human gaze.\(^ {414}\) Since the sublime of reducing event-bound time signifies that after something disastrous happens, things will usually somehow turn out well, despite an overwhelming sensation that everything seems to have come to an end. This sublime can be evoked through only minimal visualisation.\(^ {415}\) The human imagination, shackled as it is to the mortal vehicle of consciousness, will do the rest. For this reason, artists need only hint at infinitudes. Yet, Burke considers that formlessness or minimal visualisation in painting is finally unable to satisfy the sublime, for in his view, painting is still burdened by figurative representational constraints.\(^ {416}\) This kind of reading of painting was, of course, oblivious to the expanded structural potential of painting as a language *after* Modernism. Burke, however, acknowledges that “the notion of minimal information in painting” ignites the mind to create infinite associations with the idea of limitlessness that are never in excess of what the eye can recognise, even in the vaguest of representation.\(^ {417}\) Painting through formlessness as a “solution”, however, is still open to Burke’s objection that painting has no prospect for the sublime because of its “residual fragmentation of perceptive reality”; it is simply been assembled in a different manner.\(^ {418}\) Kant immediately responds that there is another solution to the problem of the sublime in painting in his *Critique of aesthetic judgement*, 1790.

\(^{413}\) Ibid, p. 335.
\(^{414}\) Ibid.
\(^{415}\) Ibid.
\(^{416}\) Ibid.
\(^{417}\) Ibid.
\(^{418}\) Ibid.
Kant argues that one cannot represent the power of infinite vastness within time and space because this is, after all, only an idea; however, Kant suggests, one can at least allude to it by means of a negative presence or formlessness.\textsuperscript{419} This central paradox within the representational logic of painting is something that seeks to somehow represent the unseen, and is ultimately that which prompted the Minimalists and Abstractionists to break away from the now redundant figurative rules of conventional painting.\textsuperscript{420} What is needed in order to make this breakthrough possible is to learn to think past painting as a representational medium and towards painting as a representational idea. Although Newman breaks away from figurative rules, he does not entirely disregard the classic rules of painting, but rather acknowledges them in order to trigger and frame new ideas of reductionism based on the sublime as it arises from the absence of the threat of pain.\textsuperscript{421} For Newman, in painting one should expect something rather than nothing.\textsuperscript{422} This idea of reducing event-bound time, as explored in Newman’s \textit{Onement I}, 1948 (Plate 37)\textsuperscript{423} was demonstrated through ominous chromatic vastness, zipped from top to bottom with a narrow vertical line, in order to coordinate the parts with the sensation of time moving across the surface, as with the universe.\textsuperscript{424} As Newman declares in \textit{Prologue for a new aesthetic}, 1949: “my paintings are concerned neither with manipulation of space nor with the image, but with the sensation of time.”\textsuperscript{425} Such an assertion, it might be argued, provides an example of the potential for painting to extend beyond the \textit{experiencing} of ideas.

\textbf{1:4:2 The Post-Modern sublime of \textit{absence/presence or indeterminacy}}

\textsuperscript{419} Ibid and Kant’s \textit{Critiques of Aesthetic Judgment}, 1724-1804.
\textsuperscript{420} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{421} Ibid, p. 334.
\textsuperscript{422} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{425} Ibid.
Post-Modern conceptions of beauty and the sublime, which variously developed within some art in the second half of the twentieth century, were manifested as sensations of the mind extending beyond tactile signifiers and towards notions of absence, presence and indeterminacy that were seeking a way out of nature through language.\(^{426}\) Initially attempted through recalibrating the idea of formlessness in painting, and assisted by the visualisation of the complex notion of invisibility pertaining to the limitless passage of time in space as developed in philosophy, Post-Modern variations on the sublime extended to other media. Accordingly, this section of our investigation will traverse the ideas of German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard (1924-1998) and Welsh art critic and painter Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, 1999. The Post-Modern conception of the sublime, in terms of its relationship with the dialectical notion of absence/presence and indeterminacy, will also be explored through the work of artists such as Barnett Newman’s idea of bouncing depths (Plate 15) and Neo-Impressionist Henri Matisse’s (1869-1954) idea of returning spaces (Plate 38) as well as Turner’s idea of ethereal visions (Plate 39). Once again, our focus will be to further illuminate the complexity of the limitless passage of time in space through painting.

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1:4:2 (i) Bouncing depths and returning spaces

Jean-François Lyotard, in a 1991 essay on *Barnett Newman and the sublime, The Inhuman Reflections of Time* noted the way in which the artist employs “extreme simplicity” in referring to the great solemnity of the sublime as taking the form of absolute silence.\(^{427}\) Lyotard’s idea is no longer viewed as something incomplete awaiting completion but rather as one potentially conveyed through the dialectical notion of absence/presence and indeterminacy. For Gilbert-Rolfe, in his elaborated rumination upon this subject, *Beauty and the Sublime*, 1999, Newman actually postulated a version of the Post-Modern Kantian sublime that offered a way out of nature itself.\(^{428}\) Newman’s use of bouncing depths in *Vir Heroics Sublimis*, 1950-1951, (Plate 15)\(^{429}\) indicates a conception of limitlessness in which time and space are presented as essentially formless, that is, an emptiness which is at the same time full.\(^{430}\) This formlessness is conveyed via an indeterminacy which Lyotard has described as bouncing depths conveyed by a zip that does not advance or recede but which seems to float in a middle ground of vast reds.\(^{431}\) By contrast, Matisse’s use of returning spaces in *The red studio*, 1911 (Plate 38),\(^{432}\) the vast reds hold together the foreground and background in relation to the whole, which in Heidegger’s opinion, makes painting a matter of the return of the origin at the end, and as an end.\(^{433}\) In other words, whilst implying the origin of the traced ground in Matisse’s painting also suggests a culmination, therefore

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\(^{431}\) Ibid.
\(^{432}\) Ibid, p. 52.
\(^{433}\) Ibid, p. 51.
defining its pictorial space. Newman’s sublime contains no traces of the ground, yet within the “zips” there is an absence/presence of roughness presented within simplicity and indeterminacy. American art historian Richard Shiff describes Newman’s application of the first colour and then placing of tape over the painting as an act of subdivision, whereby Newman engages the temporal being at once subtracted and replaced. In this sense, Newman’s placement of tape over wet paint creates a provisional third space. In *Vir Heroics Sublimis*, 1950-1951 the zip (or third space) becomes an environment in which no boundaries suggesting proximity are contained; an open-ended area inherent within the temporal. This conception is therefore linked with an idea of limitlessness of time and space in which entities appear as either suspended or superimposed on a vastness of red spaces, which effectively dissolves into a void. Whilst the void in both coloured areas potentially envelops the spectator, the vertical stands as the presence of an absence. This presence of absence, that is an emptiness that is at the same time full, provides a sign of an imminent manifestation of a metaphysical or divine presence.

Where Modernist artists conveyed the limitlessness of the sublime as a vastness still rooted in Germanic Romanticism, Newman’s Post-Modern sublime is conveyed as the presence of an absence, directed towards the potential for freedom of movement. This expression of freedom to move originated in Newman’s interest in a form of Native American dance in which the dancer places a pole in the ground and then dances in response to it,

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434 Ibid.
435 Ibid.
441 Ibid.
thereby evoking an idea of varying mobility that is also dimensionally limitless yet retains a constant centre.\textsuperscript{442} Newman adapted this idea of limitlessness, in which one can turn through 360 degrees yet remain level\textsuperscript{443} into the otherwise flattened space of painting. In this case, we can once again concede that painting contains the potential to experientially represent that which it cannot literally represent. Whether it is an idea of limitlessness with a fixed centre, or one of flatness, Newman’s sublime implies principles of both origin and return\textit{ and} absence as a sign of imminent presence.\textsuperscript{444} Newman’s ideas were subsequently elaborated to imply the invisibility of air filled with electromagnetic signals, a futuristic connotation of limitlessness contemplated in relation to technology.\textsuperscript{445} Consequently, the idea of limitlessness can be said to have partially given way to a technological, augmented conception of immediacy—or as Lyotard calls it, the enigma of “is it happening?” The paradox of the Contemporary condition of the sublime of\textit{ blankness or immediacy} of no return is a technological age that moves through an accelerated duration, an almost unstoppable instantaneity of the electronic that is invisible to the naked eye.\textsuperscript{446}

1:4:2 (ii) Ethereal visions

The notion of indeterminacy within the sublime of absence/presence can be retrospectively considered through a rethinking of Turner’s idea of ethereal visions, a simulacrum of speed as is evidenced in \textit{Rain, steam and speed}, 1844 (Plate 39). Here, Turner appears to be pre-empting a futuristic and imperceptible force, perhaps greater than that of nature, where the passage of time in space is reassembled, as uncertain variables found closer to the borders of a futuristic sublime. In this respect, Turner’s idea of ethereal

\textsuperscript{442} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{443} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{444} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{445} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{446} Ibid and Jean-Francois Lyotard, 1991, p. 93.
visions of space is interpreted as the indeterminate sublime of absence/presence, and might be comprehended in natural terms as an eerily irreducible power.\textsuperscript{447} This irreducible power of indeterminancy is produced by an idea that is not concerned with being (an idea of nature) but, rather, one that overwrites nature within technology.\textsuperscript{448} The notion of indeterminancy, as read through Turner’s idea of ethereal visions in \textit{Rain, steam and speed}, 1844 (Plate 39),\textsuperscript{449} was perhaps prompted by technological changes during Turner’s time which were perceived as potentially greater than forces found in nature.\textsuperscript{450} Turner’s idea of ethereal visions of the steam engine—a force harnessing fire and boiling water to create pressure that propels steel through rain—is a depiction of this industrial subject as not only opposed to nature, but also as part of the landscape.\textsuperscript{451} Perhaps Turner was predicting a world in which technology might surpass nature (certainly a prudent anticipation when considered in light of the current threat of global warming). Turner’s perception of power, determined through reason rather than by the senses alone, is, however, about the present rather than a potentiality.\textsuperscript{452}

1:4:3 The Contemporary techno-sublime of \textit{blankness or immediacy}

Contemporary recalibrations of beauty and the sublime are now extending art into sensations of the mind in ways that do not necessarily rely directly upon sensory perception. Extending beyond the Post-Modern sublime notions of \textit{blankness or immediacy} is a friendlier techno-sublime that unravels immediacy as a synonym for acceleration. This notion of immediacy can be approached through a multi-faceted concept of blankness in which formlessness not only prevails as a potential way of revealing invisibility, but also as a

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\textsuperscript{447} Ibid, p. 67. \\
\textsuperscript{448} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{449} Ibid, p. 68. \\
\textsuperscript{450} Ibid, p. 67. \\
\textsuperscript{451} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{452} Ibid.
possibility for reassigning the tangibility of the paint towards the intangible domain of spatial and temporal limitlessness. The following section will explore these ideas, utilising the thinking of German philosophers Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), together with twentieth century French philosophers Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) and Jean-Francois Lyotard (1924-1998) as well as American art critic Meyer Schapiro (1904-1996).

The notion of blankness was ultimately a response to the pictographic rather than necessarily a prerequisite for it. Such a response to the pictographic was evident in cave painting that offered an “uninterrupted” field, for the ground was already implicit and unrestricted by any other presence. After all, human beings characteristically extend territorial claims into the dematerialised realm of the cultural. Meyer Schapiro suggests that the notion of blankness imaged as an “uninterrupted” field has come to be associated with the pictorial representation of infinite space. Infinite space, as identified with smooth white ground has, therefore, defaulted to become a signifier of something rather than nothing. Accordingly, the invisible is transformed into a new kind of space—one in which a passage from the sublime to the beautiful, beginning as unbounded and rough and ending as bounded and smooth, can be played out. Schapiro’s model of an “uninterrupted” field also suggests that blankness emerges as a condition of an absolute temporality before becoming one of an absolute spatiality. It is in the blank face of the technological era that one finds immediacy as a hyper-acceleration, through the instantaneity of the electronic that is invisible to the naked eye. As a result, blankness defined as a surface both continuous

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454 Ibid.
455 Ibid.
456 Ibid.
457 Ibid.
458 Ibid.
and “uninterrupted”, provides a good working example of something that moves fast.\textsuperscript{459} The notion of blankness in painting, as analogous to absence, becomes a Contemporary version of an approach to formlessness, accelerated towards a Post-Modern sublime simply because it is presented as a space without incidents, whilst also implying that its temporal equivalent is without change.\textsuperscript{460} A blank painting is therefore not simply an empty canvas, but rather a symbolic representation of the presence of blankness formed through the application of paint.\textsuperscript{461} Among those who have famously produced paintings, variously based upon a notion of blankness are: Kasimir Malevich, Alexander Rodchenko, Robert Rauschenberg, Yves Klein, Mark Rothko, Ad Reinhardt, Robert Ryman, Barnett Newman and Gerhard Richter.\textsuperscript{462} A whole trajectory of twentieth century painting might be better described as a flight from rather than as a flight towards literal presence. The texture of the surface of an “almost blank” painting may vary from the dense and detailed to the smooth and even.\textsuperscript{463} It does not necessarily follow that this surface should exclude all possibilities of figuration (or association with it), but rather that any specific identification that one might presuppose should be excluded.\textsuperscript{464}

Since Contemporary conceptions of the sublime are now engaged with multiplicities of signification in a way that both evokes and extends the networked nature of a technologically augmented reality, issues are now not only related simply to the incomplete or the rough, but also to how connections with differences and repetitions\textsuperscript{465} are played out. While this connectivity within differences and repetition—as foreshadowed by Kant—might

\textsuperscript{459} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{460} Ibid, p. 110.  
\textsuperscript{462} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{463} Ibid, p. 144.  
\textsuperscript{464} Ibid.  
threaten the individual’s autonomy within nature (now and ultimately), Contemporary sublime originates not only within knowledge and production but also within nature per se.\textsuperscript{466} Of course, some would argue that humanity’s very extension into technologically augmented spaces simply constitutes a logical extension of that which is “natural”. This inclination towards rapid changes in knowledge and reproduction in general finds its most instantaneous forms through the notion of immediacy, which as a condition of everyday life is a state in which the message is already at its destination, or where one cannot separate the start from the finish.\textsuperscript{467} This is a world in which networked relations across a present that seems as dense as history itself have essentially replaced earlier narrative trajectories. As nature was once autonomous to the play of human culture, and knowledge is obviously not, nature invaded by technology originates competition and contradiction within immediacy (at a banal level through the television or computer), and essentially technology together with nature becomes a “continua” of culture that includes that which happened a minute ago, that which is happening right now, and that which cannot end.\textsuperscript{468} The enormity of such a conception is, of course, beyond a single mind to comprehend and represent and, therefore, enters the realm of the sublime. Consequently, the extreme mobility of the Contemporary sublime erodes autonomy because it calls for movement through heteronomy, that is, in itself, a provisional singularity taking the place of the irreducible—movement being the basis of what is instantaneously erased and represented through heteronomy. Lyotard argues that in the determination of the pictorial, the immediate is the paint and the painting—that is, the very thing that “is happening”.\textsuperscript{469} The Contemporary notion of a technologically augmented sublime thus is linked to a notion of immediacy as exemplified through artistic ideas including

\textsuperscript{466} Ibid, p. 55.  
\textsuperscript{467} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{468} Ibid.  
Barnett Newman’s speculative space (Plates 37 and 15) and Gerhard Richter’s vanishing perceptions (Plates 40 and 24).


1:4:3 (i) Speculative space

As technology increases exponentially in complexity, Contemporary comprehension of the sublime, variously modelled as blankness and immediacy, follows suit. From perception to production, the sublime has become more than simply a signifier for absence or invisibility. The sublime has been somewhat transformed into a speculative tool, albeit one that interprets time and space as uncertainties within the immediacy of a futuristic technological presence.470 Uncertainties of time and space, as speculated within the

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immediacy of futuristic technological presence, are now approached through a dynamic relationship between beauty and the sublime that has radically extended eighteenth century conceptions.\textsuperscript{471} For Welsh art critic and artist Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, the sublime and the beautiful now potentially coexist in a divergent relationship. Although the sublime and the beautiful are not traditionally seen as equals, they nonetheless assist one another. Some things may be sublimely beautiful, but not all things can be beautifully sublime.\textsuperscript{472} Whereas the Post-Modern sublime was concerned with consciousness as characterised around oneness, the Contemporary sublime is now based upon on a plurality and multiplicity of knowledge and contemporaneously instantaneous speculative production.\textsuperscript{473}

These characteristics of the Contemporary sublime are exemplified through Newman’s idea of speculative space through different ideas in different times in \textit{Vir heroicus sublimis} (Plate 15).\textsuperscript{474} The idea is presented as a zip, which allows speculation that the passage of time in space is eternal.\textsuperscript{475} For Lyotard, in Newman’s paintings, even though the sublime is based on reason, “the inadequacy of the images is a negative sign of the great power of ideas.”\textsuperscript{476} Newman’s idea of speculative space concerns spatial nature which gives way to temporality—the convergence of time that simultaneously exists between first and last, origin and end—an idea that is not about surfaces but simply about time.\textsuperscript{477}

In this respect, Newman’s speculative spaces, as discussed in a 1998 interview with American painter Shirley Kaneda conducted by American aesthetician David Carrier,\textsuperscript{478} is

\textsuperscript{471}Ibid, p. 1
\textsuperscript{472} Ibid, p. 111.
\textsuperscript{473} Ibid, pp. 54-55.
\textsuperscript{474} H. Foster, 2004, p. 363.
\textsuperscript{476} Ibid.
an idea of speculative spaces being crucial to painting; it responds to the relationship between temporality and the electronic media which dematerialises form, as opposed to creating a sense of reality.\textsuperscript{479} This dematerialisation of form, conveyed as “absorption felt before the television screen”, reminds us what it is to feel \textit{before} an idea about art is subjectively formed.\textsuperscript{480} While dematerialisation of form in technology might occur quickly and unexpectedly, it might also potentially occur within the context of art as an instantaneous dematerialisation of perception.\textsuperscript{481} In painting, this relationship between the surface and what is represented, is one that Carrier refers to as handmade (in contrast, to what is happening on a video screen).\textsuperscript{482} In this respect, early twentieth century German philosopher Martin Heidegger pre-empted this dematerialisation of form in art whilst observing the transformation of raw material, the paint, by human hands.\textsuperscript{483} Heidegger noticed that although the paint was exhaustively spread over the canvas until it seemed almost dissolved, it still remained visible as a material appearing either as a trace of the hand or recognised as a process that deferred the presence of the hand.\textsuperscript{484} For example, while Pollock’s drips might have been interpreted as gestures through which the temporal had been delayed, others such as Poussin might have interpreted this as lacking in gesture by deferring the hand to an idea, or some artists by using spray painting, which might also be interpreted as a negation of gesture.\textsuperscript{485} Kaneda also discussed this Heideggerian transformation of perception in response to Carrier’s question on ambiguity.\textsuperscript{486} Kaneda argued that there is always a parallel between making works within or without the visual culture in which we live, but ultimately. She added that the painting space is complex and

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{480} Ibid, p. 61.
\textsuperscript{481} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{482} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{483} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{484} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{485} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{486} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
does not have to adhere to any logic or organisation.\(^{487}\) Moreover, Kaneda claimed that painting should function like a hypertext in which diverse qualities of surface or structure of colours, or any reference to similar or different materials, should be working to link one another in relation to the whole.\(^{488}\) To this end, diversity and similarity working together as a whole might be possible if their parts are accessed within the immediacy that electronic technologies offer.\(^{489}\) Consequently, this notion of a linkage between similar and diverse fragments of information appears to be the real content of both digital systems and painting as universal media.\(^{490}\)

This Contemporary blankness, seen as immediacy, whether in perception or production of visual works, is a signifier for absence or invisibility that is speculative in nature; in which the interpretation of time and space are inferred via uncertainties within the immediacy of a futuristic technological presence. Kaneda proposes that this concept of immediacy of a futuristic technological presence, considered as a synonym for absence, might be viewed from the perspective of an idea of “meaning-production” which is not only tied to the logic of the body, but also processed by means of thought.\(^{491}\) This interdependence between meaning and production offers to technology a way of modelling the organic, inorganic and alternative through rational analysis. Lyotard relates this interdependence to both the faculties of sensing and to reasoning through painting\(^{492}\) as the affinity between the sublime and reasoning facilitated by formlessness,\(^{493}\) just as affinities within technology are irreducible to the logic of linkage.\(^{494}\) In both painting and digital

\(^{487}\) Ibid, p. 62.
\(^{488}\) Ibid.
\(^{489}\) Ibid.
\(^{490}\) Ibid.
\(^{491}\) Ibid.
\(^{492}\) Ibid, p. 63.
technology, the notion of immediacy might remain ungraspable entirely through reason.\textsuperscript{495} This immediacy, as constituted by the idea of an accessible techno-sublime, is concerned with how surfaces are painted rather than with what surfaces are.\textsuperscript{496} This is the sense of immediacy in which Newman sought to visualise the invisibility of time and space in order to articulate a temporality conceived within the sublime, found not in the relationships between beginning and end or between origin and potentiality but, instead, imaged as spatial blankness through formlessness.\textsuperscript{497} Whilst the Modernist sublime as exemplified by Newman’s idea of binocular space in \textit{Onement I}, 1948 (Plate 37) represents the idea of limitlessness through expansiveness, the Contemporary sublime also exemplified by Newman’s idea of speculative space in \textit{Vir heroicus sublimis}, 1951, (Plate 15) would conceive it as a process within an immediacy and accessed via a technological continuum.\textsuperscript{498}

The conception of a technological continuum within the blankness of the painting process was also effectively pre-empted by Cézanne’s interpretation of a blank—that is, empty and white—canvas, seeming to be already deep and waiting to be carved.\textsuperscript{499} Such a blankness, potentially waiting to be carved, as opposed to an emptiness waiting to be filled, is no longer an object of the Modern sublime of horror, or the sublime of absence or indeterminacy, but a Contemporary sublime of \textit{blankness or immediacy} in which depth is attached to human perception in its instantaneity or in its limitlessness.\textsuperscript{500} In this respect, Cézanne’s ability to see depth was therefore the ability to see beyond appearances and, by extension, the blank canvas was the site of presentation for his perception of the world.\textsuperscript{501}

\textsuperscript{495} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{496} Ibid, p. 65.
\textsuperscript{497} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{498} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{499} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{500} Ibid.
The blank canvas was activated by the white paint in its pre-painting preparedness in a manner reminiscent of the way in which electricity activates the screen of the television. Without the activation of both the canvas and the television screen the idea would simply be perceived as the dead side of objects. Although the television is activated it cannot produce depth, for instantaneity precludes depth to the extent that depth requires duration for its realisation.\textsuperscript{502} This notion of immediacy or instantaneity thus becomes active by requiring experiential activity. As an active signifier in painting, one can convey depth through continuous changes or progressions, whereas in electronic blankness the signifier is passive, allowing one to only see depth as events, the properties of which have a beginning and an end.\textsuperscript{503} Where Post-Modern painters concealed blankness through the use of transparency, Contemporary artists exposed blankness through the use of immediacy. In this respect, blankness has effectively moved away from an earlier association with the idea of process towards an idea of instantaneity.

Contemporary blankness thus signifies a Contemporary idea of immediacy in which the invisible and the visible are presented instantaneously as one.\textsuperscript{504} Immediacy can, therefore, facilitate the bringing together of contrasts, which Gilbert-Rolfe has nominated as a form of “Contemporary subjectivity”.\textsuperscript{505} Some of what is signified in this way is non-visual in terms of Merleau-Ponty’s definition of the Cartesian concept of vision; that is, some of what is signified is not tactile.\textsuperscript{506} This concept is modelled on the sense of touch, with the electronic surface of the video screen presented as non-visual in the Cartesian sense and, therefore, non-tactile.\textsuperscript{507} From this view, there is no such thing as a blank form, just blank

\textsuperscript{503} Ibid, p.114.
\textsuperscript{504} Ibid, p. 116.
\textsuperscript{505} Ibid, pp. 116-117.
\textsuperscript{507} Ibid.
surfaces. A smooth surface might be blank, but a smooth form is still a shape with figural relationships. Contemporary presentations of uncertainty, *blankness or immediacy*, thus, elude the sense of touch.\footnote{508}

Gilbert-Rolfe suggests that subjectivity can be presented by means of surfaces free from form because they can display freely and instantaneous mobility in terms of an "active blankness."\footnote{509} Active blankness produces active absences. When the smooth area of a canvas is left overly scraped it produces a sense of emptiness, as seen in Cézanne’s, Matisse’s or Ryman’s works; this emptiness transforms into an "active absence."\footnote{510} Similarly, for Norman Bryson (discussing David’s uninflected brushwork), this blankness becomes a signifier of transparency due to the absence of gesture.\footnote{511} Gilbert-Rolfe indicates that even if a surface is absent of gesture because the surface does not give way to what supports it from within or behind, we should expect to see the non-visual components of the visual as clearly as if these astonished us in a direct perception of the world.\footnote{512}

Although Burke describes the sublime, in terms of an astonishment associated with terror, as the highest sensation of awe, reverence and respect, the sublime presented through Contemporary technology might be rendered as having a relatively friendly nature.\footnote{513} This “friendly” techno-sublime, marked by its otherness, is effectively lodged in an idea of the “singular”, thus becoming a user-friendly sublime in which both the tactile and blankness, or the visible and invisible, are effectively brought together in order to unearth the singularity of its visual appearance (or at least presence); it is user-friendly sublime.\footnote{514}

\footnote{509} Ibid, p. 118.  
\footnote{510} Ibid, p. 119.  
\footnote{511} Ibid, p. 120 and N. Bryson, 1981, p. 238.  
\footnote{512}Op. cit., Gilbert-Rolfe, 1999, p. 120.  
\footnote{513} Ibid, p. 121.  
\footnote{514} Ibid.
This new conception of techno-sublime “singularity” (the property of seeing the uniqueness of two different things working together as a new conception of reality) cannot materialise but, instead, develops “blank expression”—just as the computer or an object cannot self-design techniques to reveal the tactile and the visual.\textsuperscript{515}

In the context of the visual arts, technological transformation presents the same problem, not in terms of designing methods of painting but, rather, in terms of the rapidly intensification of the task of making these methods technologically visible. This is, of course, already happening at an exponential rate.\textsuperscript{516} For example, the colours that are standardised in the USA for clothing, cars, toys and foodstuffs are hard to imitate.\textsuperscript{517} Because of this notion of inimitability, one might even divide visual artists of the past half-century into those who work with blankness and those who cover it up.\textsuperscript{518} Where the former respond to the demands of the sublime, the latter respond to narratives in which the idea of blankness assumes the form of “blank abstraction”. Such blank abstraction is perhaps particularly apparent in the case of minimalist artists.\textsuperscript{519} Such blankness originated in Neoclassical ideas that used greyness and colourlessness as symbols for sobriety, and a simplicity of form used in art presented as a pure idea—an art offered as a finished product.\textsuperscript{520} Examples of “blank abstraction”—ideas freed from form—are found in the works of Mondrian and Malevich, as well as Newman and Pollock.\textsuperscript{521}

1:4:3 (iii) Vanishing perceptions

\textsuperscript{515} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{516} Ibid, p. 122.
\textsuperscript{517} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{518} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{519} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{520} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{521} Ibid.
This notion of immediacy within the sublime can also be identified within Gerhard Richter’s vanishing perceptions, as demonstrated in Uncle Rudi, 1965 (Plate 40),\(^{522}\) in which Richter radically erased abhorrent World War II imagery and yet codified it as the “unnamed.”\(^{523}\) Although the “unnamed” is presented as unfocused through blurring effects, it still casts shading effects over the structure of the composition, paradoxically revealing vanishing.\(^{524}\) In other examples, Richter famously camouflaged images of terrorists as “unnamed” and simultaneously registered them as a presence that is only felt\(^{525}\). Of course blurring effects in oil painting are very old techniques formerly used to hide the sacred or to make the outlawed banal.\(^{526}\) Richter retooled these approaches to evoke the presence of the unseen or “unnamed” through a ghostly appearance of reality.\(^{527}\) In The Daily Practice of Painting: Writings 1962-1993 published in 1995, Richter states that he has tempered the effect of superficial blurring in order to convey his relationship with the uncertainties of reality and mediate this process through painting.\(^{528}\) For Richter, the drama of reality is presented with a great deal of incompleteness through invoking a sense of immediacy. Blurring effects are synonymous with imprecision or vagueness and potentially used to convey numbness towards pain; Richter has effectively used such effects to subjectively reveal human self-preservation responses to danger. Although Richter’s presentation of the self-preservation response eludes clarity of form, the viewer nonetheless truthfully feels it.\(^{529}\)

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524 Ibid.
527 Ibid.
529 Ibid.
The act of diffusing traumatic imagery also potentially highlights the very failure of re-
presentation. Richter’s depiction of the Baader-Meinhof arrest, imprisonment and death as explored in *Arrest*, 1988 (Plate 21), *Cell*, 1988 (Plate 22) and *Man shot down I*, 1988 (Plate 23) are all blurred in order to avoid any need to “explain” or “give an opinion.” Richter’s intention in obliterating the terrorists’ actions by presenting these as only ambiguously visible, serve as a reminder of the incompleteness and inadequacy of re-
presentation. Richter’s use of the “fluidity of paint”, which extends to removing any traces of life, may be interpreted as his response to the inadequacy of attempts to re-present dramatic imagery. Richter’s expression of instantaneity seems not to be frozen but, rather, slowed to an utter effacement of the laboriously constructed surface of the canvas. Richter’s painting, therefore, provides evidence that the painting is not its source image, and it is not this image that becomes the artistic work. Unlike its sources, painting is paradoxically able to present its inability to fully represent that which it “re-presents.” Richter’s idea of vanishing perceptions, as demonstrated in his Baader-Meinhof series, is rendered instantaneous through a blurring of the original photographic source, and reminds us of the possibility of simultaneity in painting, particularly when it addresses the instantaneous. Interestingly, where the Baader-Meinhof images were taken “all at once” and blurred “all at once”, the terrorists’ images in Richter’s more recent abstractions such as in *January*, 1989 (Plate 24) were developed layer by layer until the images were totally obliterated. Whilst Richter’s photographic images stand as a provisional, albeit fictional, document of the “truth”,

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530 Ibid.
532 Ibid, pp.124-130.
536 Ibid.
his non-representational paintings are seduced from the necessity of “truths” altogether through an act of immediacy that compels Richter to present these images as embodied within the fluidity of paint as giving way to movement rather than to form. This fluidity of paint embodied with traces of formless energy performs an immediacy of surface that seduces painting to reveal it as an emptiness, which is at the same time full.

If Richter’s use of the photographic stands outside of painting in acknowledging photography’s usurping of painting’s representational dreams, painting can represent a seductive blankness to which photography in turn might aspire. Richter’s works can tease something out of the photographic only by ignoring photography’s documentary role, in favour of a photographic idea of a surface meant to disappear, to an extent, by dissolving form through the rapid opening and closing of the camera’s eyes. This disappearance is also associated with the invisible nature of limitless space, for it speedily rearranges perception through the idea of immediacy, which of course belongs to the electronic rather than to the mechanical idea of speed. Importantly, paintings are made objects, such that perceiving them must also take into account the temporal and performed “event” of their production, an event that invariably transcends the specificities of any memories located in the immediacy of any source imagery. Hence, Richter’s portrayal of immediate events, predicated within a continuity of form, reveal a world of sublime invisibility conveyed through blankness. Herein lies the enduring, yet paradoxical, power of representing the very impossibility of representation. This paradox forms the author’s very raison d’être for this

540 Ibid, pp. 101-104.
541 Ibid, p. 104.
542 Ibid.
543 Ibid.
544 Ibid.
545 Ibid.
investigation into painting’s potential for representing the un-representable—that is, the incomprehensible limitlessness passage of time in space.
CHAPTER TWO

A practical exploration of relationships
between pictorial space and ideas of limitless space

In the preceding chapter several possible spatial interpretations were explored through artists’ ideas of space interpreted as an open-ended manifestation pertinent to the idea of limitless space. This chapter will now further consider practical applications of the aforementioned conceptions and their relationship to the invisibility notion in the limitless passage of time across space through four sections. The first account is concerned with a comparative analysis of invisibility and visibility as concepts seen through the notion of a continuum. The second account is concerned with the historical impetus towards exploring the idea of limitless space. The third account examines the idea of limitless space in terms of phenomenology and painting processes. In the fourth account attention is directed towards the sublime and painting processes in relation to the invisibility/visibility concepts of the limitless passage of time in space.

In attempting to understand the historical tension between limited and limitless space, identifying relationships between painting processes and modes of perception is a useful starting point. The idea of limitlessness has been linked with a conception of time and space without end and, in addition, with a cultural quest for instantaneity; thus limitlessness becomes a problem that is neither exclusively the domain of science nor art. Nonetheless, unravelling of the conundrum of spatial invisibility is tackled here through processes of linking cognitive, experiential and sensual dimensions of the painting process with

phenomenology and the sublime, in order to develop spatial conceptions of limitlessness. Accordingly, following a brief elaboration of the significance of painting as a suitable philosophical vehicle for comprehending the idea of invisibility, this chapter will turn its attention towards the author’s parallel studio investigation component of this undertaking.

2:1 Invisibility versus visibility: the notion of the continuum

Painting, in its very failure to literally represent the invisibility of the limitless passage of time in space, can also be paradoxically presented as capable of representing the impossibility of this task. Acknowledgement of this impossibility potentially becomes both part of the painter’s misery yet, at the same time, this misery is potentially attenuated by the heroically self-conscious failure of painting to account for reality. Given that painting can only aspire to providing a momentary account of reality and, therefore, cannot represent the ever-changing limitlessness of all of time and space, this self-conscious failure must exist as an exhibited feature of painting.

Phenomenology of perception might assist in accessing the unknowable qualities of the limitlessness of time and space, by helping us to search beyond the boundaries of consciousness. In bringing together the antithesis between the concept of the continuum (perception viewed as an everlasting succession of events) and the notion of fragmentation (perception viewed as segmented, then presented as a series of fictional events), time is indicated as passing whilst space is inferred, although not literally represented. In addition, this concept of continuum acknowledges that which remains unseen, is incorporated in relationship to the whole. The belief that one can paint beyond what one can see is at one with the world of paradox and ambiguity that exists before any reflection contained within the painting process begins. Although phenomenology helps to interpret the world, it can
only present the world as a mirage of a continuum. Phenomenology nevertheless, offers an account of space and time as it is experienced by the linked mind and body in the act of perception, and without a need for scientific explanation.\textsuperscript{548}

This research project, however, is not directly concerned with Merleau-Ponty's philosophy concerning the phenomenology of perception per se, but with a specific adaptation of this phenomenology through exploring the thinking of invisibility through painting. This use here of a continuum that links mind and body in perceiving the world is underpinned by a consciousness of the failure of visualisation as a key mechanism for driving this exploration of invisibility. Merleau-Ponty and Damisch, in considering painting as a driving tool of invention in art, agree that the primacy of painting, demonstrated as evidence of thinking through the act of making, results in painting itself becoming \textit{the idea}. Furthermore, the act of painting becomes the motivating force that spawns the painting process, which in turn becomes the idea itself. This occurs because painting is concerned with transformation rather than with reproduction of reality. In this sense, idea and paint are kept in close proximity, just as the mind and the senses are united within the act of artistic conception. Here, the mind processes ideas, whilst the senses materialise ideas through the hand that holds the brush. The artist, if mindful of these relationships, reframes the limitations of perception and, in doing so, self-consciously fails to literally represent limitlessness in all of its complexity. Meanwhile, however, the painting—in its very incompleteness, and within its self-reflexive depiction of the fragmentary nature of any

\textsuperscript{548} Op. cit., Merleau-Ponty, "Preface", \textit{Phenomenology of Perception}, 1945, 2002, pp. vii- x, 135-136. Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology is a way of reaching to something in terms of thinking. It shows us the living-world as it is presented to us, a world of paradox and ambiguity already there before any reflection begins. It offers an account of space and time as we experience them linking mind-body in perceiving the world without any explanation of Psychology or science might provide.
human account of reality—remains paradoxically truthful to the human in relation to the “whole”. The very materiality of the painting process, as suggested by Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of perception, is identified with a real lived world. Whilst the paint remains dormant inside the tube, it is yet to be enlivened via transformation into the painter’s vocabulary of line, shape and colour. It is through the process of painting that paint is transformed into part of a continuum of the lived world of paint. Significantly, it is this very materiality that distinguishes painting from the metaphysical properties of philosophical ideas. In this sense, painting allows the interpreter to experience with the adaptation of French chemist, Antoine Lavoisier’s, 1743-1794 theory of matter that can be applied to support the interpreter’s use of paint as material as it can neither be created nor destroyed, but only transformed. In this respect, Merleau-Ponty suggests that there is always more than one intention in signifying something and, in turn, more than one way to say it. For example, Vincent van Gogh’s (1853-1890) suggestive spaces in his painting The starry night, 1889, (Plate 41) do not indicate some reality to be grasped but, rather, that which was necessary to the encounter between van Gogh’s gaze and his artistic vision.

Van Gogh’s (1853-1890) suggestive spaces in his painting The starry night, 1889, (Plate 41)

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549 Ibid.
552 Ibid.
Van Gogh’s intertwined sets of line, shape and colour have inspired the author’s response to the notion of the invisibility in the limitless passage of time across space in *Liquefying*, (Series 22).


Here, continuity of line is intuitively traced by way of restoring the possibilities generated by a single moment in perception. As Damisch declares in *Theory of Clouds* (2002): “if our vision halts…let the imagination pass beyond.” Consequently, it is crucial that the stance taken when interpreting invisibility is not only based on a mental formulation regrading invisibility but also on an impetus towards a continuum connecting transformation of perception within the painting process.

2:2 The historical impetus towards limitless space

This research project will now shift towards establishing a relationship between historical, scientific and theoretical concepts, and the practical studio in seeking and materialising ideas of limitless space through painting. For example, Arthur I. Miller in his 2001 book *Einstein, Picasso: space, time and the beauty that causes havoc*, describes the way in which research was developed at the common frontiers of art and science. Einstein’s approach to space and time was

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not primarily mathematical. Notions of aesthetics, design and installation were also essential to the 1905 discovery of relativity. Conversely, Pablo Picasso’s (1881-1973) artistic studies of space were extended by an interest in scientific developments. Picasso’s new aesthetics for the *Les Demoiselles d’ Avignon*, 1907 consisted of reducing geometric forms. Clearly, yet for different reasons, Picasso and Einstein both believed that art and science provided a means of exploring worlds beyond perception and appearance. Just as the theory of relativity overthrew the absolute status of space and time, Picasso’s cubism dethroned perspective in art.

A significant relationship between science and art was, of course, not unprecedented. Various artistic spatial conceptions of illusion and depth, derived from fifteenth and sixteenth century illusionist Renaissance ideas, employed the mathematics of perspective. This nexus between mathematics and aesthetics, as applied through Tommaso Masaccio’s atmospheric shadows, Leonardo da Vinci’s voluminous depths/receding sights and Caravaggio’s extending perceptions, would forever alter the course of art. The nexus between art and philosophy is also of significance. The contribution of eighteenth century Immanuel Kant’s (1724-1804) teamed notion of both mind and body in perceiving the world, contrary to Descartes’ mind/body dichotomy, was applied by some eighteenth and nineteenth century Romantic artists such as Friedrich’s emblematic visions, Turner’s atmospheric horizons and Church’s concealed worlds. Art was no longer understood as a product of an illusion alone, but as a way of extending thinking.

The nineteenth century concept of Non-Euclidean geometry (space beyond our perception could be curved), and the twentieth century discovery of Einstein’s fourth dimension (space-time-motion concept of simultaneous coexistence in more than one dimension) contributed to the

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555 Ibid.
acceleration of spatial ideas viewed as shifting sensations in art. These new discoveries in science prompted artists to challenge the development of new ways of representing space in their art. Impressionist Claude Monet’s idea of synthesising depth and flatness conveyed through multiple light sources, for example, effectively pre-empted the aforementioned conception of shifting sensations. Later, this idea was challenged by Post-Impressionist Paul Cézanne’s idea of separation of planes, in which space is fractured suggesting both depth and flatness within a single painting. The indissolubility of the mind/body dichotomy continued to be applied to the task of implying optical movement between planes, as demonstrated through the ideas of Hans Hofmann’s pulsating surfaces, Barnett Newman’s binocular spaces, Jackson Pollock’s motional configurations and Gerhard Richter’s accelerating intervals. The twentieth century discovery of quantum mechanics motivated the production of individual realities and generated new attitudes to illusionism by means of fractioning, simplifying and multiplying perspectives. This idea of quantum mechanics is still being experimented with by Contemporary artists such as David Salle’s colliding images, David Hockney’s multiple views and Gerhard Richter’s degrees of visibility.

This historical impetus towards limitless space will now be tackled in more detail to display various ways of conceiving ideas of Italian Renaissance illusion and depth, experiential dimensions, shifting sensations and multiple perspectives.

2:2:1 Ideas of illusion and depth
This studio-based investigation is underpinned by adaptations of several artists’ ideas regarding illusion and depth. These ideas include Masaccio’s atmospheric shadows (Plate 1), da Vinci’s voluminous depths (Plate 2) and receding sights (Plate 3) and Caravaggio’s extending perceptions (Plate 4).

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

2:2:1 (i) Atmospheric shadows

*Atmospheric shadows*, have provided the illusion of mass, spatial placement, depth and atmosphere—in turn implying a sense of infinity557—as evidenced in Masaccio’s fresco *Expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise*, 1427 (Plate 1).558 Here, Masaccio’s placement of human figures at the front of the stage, against a dark background, creates a sense of infinite depth. This use of atmospheric shadows has directly inspired the author’s attempt to reveal the passage of time in *Unfathomable* (Series 1) as amorphous masses of dark/light contrasts, some advancing and others receding. In this work, the aim was to render the constant shifting nature of light comprehensible via a sense of atmospheric limitlessness.

2:2:1 (ii) Voluminous depths

Illusion of depth depicted in terms of voluminous forms is exemplified in da Vinci’s *Virgin of the rocks*, 1483-1490, (Plate 2). Here, da Vinci’s lighted images protruding from the darkness imply an atmospheric sense of flotation. The idea of voluminous depths is coextensive with the idea of limitless space as somehow gradually unified, in terms of dark/light value contrasts—it not only strengthens volume over mimesis, but also limitlessness over limitedness. These effects underpin the author’s intention to conceive the passage of time in the production of *Esoteric* (Series 2). Once again, a higher priority was afforded to painterly effects rather than to linearity. Significantly, structure, clarity and detail were actively compromised in favour of mystery and fiction.


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2:2:1 (iii) Receding sights

An idea of illusion and depth, as attained through receding sights and structural perspective combined with volumetric tonal devices, can imply spatial depths beyond a direct field of vision.\textsuperscript{561} This mechanism is particularly apparent in da Vinci’s famous fresco \textit{The last supper}, 1495-1498, (Plate 3).\textsuperscript{562} Da Vinci’s integration of the figures with the background through the use of a common vanishing point and subtle dark/light effects successfully creates a sense of atmosphere. This idea of receding vision has inspired the author’s painterly elucidations of the passage of time in \textit{Focusing through a cone} (Series 3). This conical perception with subtle focus and unfocused contrasts were used in an attempt to evoke an atmosphere of limitless horizons. Dark areas appear relatively near and solid, while lighter areas seem, by contrast, atmospheric and spatially limitless.

\textbf{Series 3: Focusing through a cone, 2008-2009. Watercolour on paper, 18 x 23 cm.}

2:2:1 (iv) Extending perceptions

Perhaps the most effective approach for conveying illusion and depth is via extending perceptions. This conception, developed in the context of displacement in space constituting the most essential attributes of existence, has unlocked new possibilities for depicting

imaginary limitless worlds. This idea of extending perception is powerfully instantiated in Caravaggio’s *David and Goliath*, 1609-1610, (Plate 4). In this work, the viewer is confronted with body parts emerging from the picture plane and into the real space of the viewer. This use of extending perceptions has inspired the author’s attempt to display the passage of time in *Tongues of fire and smoke* (Series 4). Here, clouds of blazing smoke seem to invade the viewer’s space, linking the invisible with the visible and the limited with the limitless. The passage from illusion to reality potentially unlocks optical illusions implying movement—a sensation somewhat similar to the passing of time. Yet again, painting is presented as a vehicular medium with which to link the idea of painting to the painting itself.


2:2:2 Ideas of the experiential

In searching for new ways to visualise the idea of limitless space through painting, this investigation now moves towards a meditation on the aesthetically experiential as a conduit for inimitability. This is, again, only possible via paradoxical unions between intuition and

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reasoning, between realism and speculation. The notion of the experiential—a consequence of Proto-Modernity’s futuristic emphasis upon a flight from literal representation—is perhaps most substantially explored and applied within Friedrich’s emblematic visions, Turner’s atmospheric horizons and Church’s concealed worlds.


2:2:2 (i) Emblematic visions

The idea of the experiential as conveyed via emblematic visions heralded a new dimension of perception aided by both the imagination and the senses, working in concert to evoke a sense of inimitability.\(^\text{566}\) Consequently, space stopped being mimicked and, instead, started to be *experienced*. Slowly, the mind reacted to the new ways of projecting a union between the real environment and its fictional interpretation. In Friedrich’s *Monk by the sea*, 1810, (Plate 5),\(^\text{567}\) a lonely human form merges with nature’s vastness—conveying a picture of humanity in perpetual bondage with the limitless power of nature. This


emblematic vision triggered the author's conception of the passage of time in *Ephemeral* (Series 5) as an almost indiscernible light. This light potentially functions to eradicate existence, yet still with embers of a life hopeful of being continued. Minimal use of colour serves to potentially reveal hidden, infinite worlds of inimitability.

![Series 5: Ephemeral, 2008-2009. Pastel on paper, 14 x 17 cm.](image)

2:2:2 (ii) Atmospheric horizons

Atmospheric horizons infinitely receding through luminous expanses toward unseen horizons provides yet another example of limitlessness. In Turner’s *Sun setting over the sea, with garnets*, 1836, (Plate 6), for example, sweeping brushstrokes blur forms to a point almost beyond recognition. Meanwhile, fragmented atmospheric and colour perspectives allude to an infinity presented via scattered horizons. This idea of atmospheric horizons has in turn inspired the author’s conception of the passage of time in *Converging sights* (Series 6) as shifting sensations of atmospheric nature gradually dissipating from foreground to background and, in doing so, generating hazy effects that seem to dissolve in the distance. The effect of haze is realised by using gradual changes in colour-value contrasts.

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2:2:2 (iii) Concealed worlds

Ideas are suggested to the mind of the interpreter through an aesthetic contemplation of concealed worlds. The idea of concealed worlds is potentially conveyed through manipulation of spatial dimensions such as depth and volume in order to create a form of perception that infers experience beyond time and space. Consider, for example, Church’s *The Andes of Ecuador*, 1855, (Plate 8),\(^5\) in which mountains emerging out of fog appear magnified in depth and volume as a direct consequence of that which is inferred, but not actually seen. Here, concealment potentially evokes a sense of limitlessness precisely because it infers that which cannot be actually seen, measured or directly comprehended. Church’s cosmological sense of expansion inspired the author’s conception of the passage of time in *Enigmatic* (Series 7) as something not visually experienced and yet assumed as an indiscernible moment in space. This series of seemingly fading imagery hidden behind walls of dust is brought into being through the process of painting materials and techniques. Here, painting becomes a theoretical operator, a model with which to evoke the conception

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of a paradoxical enterprise involving the “connectable” and the “non-connectable”, or the limited and the limitless.

Series 7: *Enigmatic*, 2009-2010. Oil on canvas, 16.5 x 19 cm.

**2:2:3 Ideas of shifting sensations**

Although certain intellectual advances of the fifteenth century had trickled into the art of the seventeenth century, significant advances in nineteenth century art were arguably more strongly influenced by fields other than art. During the nineteenth century, concepts such as non-Euclidian geometry (space beyond our perception could be curved) and the hypothesising of the fourth dimension (space-time-motion concept of simultaneous coexistence in more than one dimension) radically transformed both art and science. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, artists would generate new strategies for involving illusionism by creating shifting sensations. The language that comprised these new paradigms of shifting sensations was variously understood as operating in concert with conceptions of simultaneous existence in two or more dimensions. Einstein’s conception of a fourth dimension would enable artists to decode the timeless and limitless complexities of

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space. Nineteenth century artists’ conceptions of shifting sensations in part pre-empted Monet’s multiple perspectives through synthesis of depth and flatness (Plates 9, 10 and 11) Cézanne’s separation of planes (Plate 12) and Hofmann’s pulsating surfaces (Plate 14). These artists visualisation of timelessness and limitlessness was later extended through Newman’s binocular spaces (Plate 15), Pollock’s motional configurations (Plate 16) and Gerhard Richter’s accelerating intervals (Plate 17).

Given that this project is a studio-based investigation directed towards experimentation with painting materials, techniques and strategies rather than the finished work, the author uses artistic examples in order to trigger the ideas behind the works. As the passage of time in space cannot be visualised in its entire magnitude, the author’s endeavour was to manifest it in terms of a series of consecutive segments in order to display the flow of time passing as an illusion of sequential shifting sensations. For this reason, the author occasionally uses shape or colour or just line as tool for experimentation rather than for finishing a work. Therefore, experimentation with painting materials, techniques and strategies is one of an open-ended nature. In this set of Abstract paintings, or like figurative ones everywhere else, the author focuses on the dialogue between the grid, seriality and intervals. The grid allows fractioned units of information to operate simultaneously with a sense of wholeness. The serial visualisation offers a strategic model through which each painting becomes part of a conversational vocabulary of thought where thinking serially is processing fragments of thoughts. Furthermore, repetition and difference between the fractional units becomes central to comprehending the operation of registers within series.
2:2:3 (i) Synthesis of depth and flatness

Shifting sensations conceived through Monet’s synthesis of depth and flatness was effectively rendered through shimmering appearances of nearness and distance underpinning a sense of passing time in *La Grenouillère*, 1869, (Plate 9)\(^{572}\) and Cathedral series works such as *Rouen Cathedral, west façade*, 1894 (Plate 10)\(^{573}\) and *Rouen Cathedral, sunlight*, 1894 (Plate 11).\(^{574}\) Within an Impressionist remodelling of traditional

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\(^{573}\) Ibid, p. 138.
\(^{574}\) Ibid, p. 140.
perspective, the whole concept of near and far was being turned upside down in the face of new optical discoveries. The world was coming to be revealed as dispersed. Monet’s use of similar proportions of dark and light in the manner of flickering dots and dashes in La Grenouillière is epitomised sparsely in the foreground, whilst dissolving in the background. Leonardo da Vinci had long before nominated this effect as “the perspective of disappearance.” Shifting sensation, as achieved via the synthesis of depth and flatness and “arbitrary units of colour” that ultimately fuse in the retina offered a new interpretation of reality. This idea of shifting sensation is particularly apparent in Monet’s famous series of meditations upon Rouen Cathedral. Here, as the viewer moves away from the painting the linear form dissolves, while appearing separated at close range. These intermittent flickering light effects typified by Monet’s idea of synthesis of depth and flatness triggered the author’s conception of the passage of time in Scattering perceptions (Series 8) as something limitlessly fragmenting and flickering.

Series 8: Scattering perceptions, 2009-2010. Acrylic on paper, 18 x 25 cm.

While these glittering dots and dashes of colour seemed detached at close observation, they were seeing merging from a distance. This dispersion of matter also created “wormhole” like effects which conveyed a sense of airiness, giving the landscape

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576 Ibid, p. 139.
577 Ibid.
578 Ibid, p. 139.
an appearance of an open-ended nature pertinent to the boundless nature of the idea of limitless space. Perhaps it was this quest that prompted Cézanne to fragment space, separate planes and, thus, open multiple windows to the world.

2:2:3 (ii) Separation of planes

In combining Renaissance and Baroque approaches to volumetric dark/light painting with the Impressionists’ use of colourful flatness, a perception of shifting sensations can be achieved through a separation of planes. This approach effectively predicted avant-garde ideas of temporal and spatial fragmentation capable of accommodating multiple points of view and a sense of infinity. This idea is evident through the fragmentation and structuring of landscape into myriad frontal planes in Cézanne’s *Mont Sainte Victoire*, 1902-1904, (Plate 12). In this painting, advancing and receding elements perform a significant role in exemplifying fragmentation and multiplicity. Cézanne’s multiplicitous separation of planes sparked the author’s conception of the passage of time in *Oscillating* (Series 9) as multiple directional streaks of colour whirling, twirling and although splitting the picture plane, they seemed to allude to simultaneous connections thus generating movement. The author’s experimentation with fluctuating shapes—inspired by non-Euclidian geometry and its repetitive subdivision in quantum mechanics—demonstrates the possibility of visualising a sense of advancing and receding shifting effects to convey the passage of time in space.

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579 Ibid, p.143.
2:2:3 (iii) Pulsating surfaces

Shifting sensations revealed through pulsating surfaces effectively delivering forces and counter forces that vibrate with colour, light and form “in the pace of life”\textsuperscript{582} can be understood as capable of producing push and pull effects that might echo the passing of time in limitless space. Such motional contrasting depths, suggesting infinity, are evidenced in Hofmann’s \textit{The gate}, 1960 (Plate 14)\textsuperscript{583} through the use of contrasting coloured planes positioned somewhat like motor car pistons; some protruding and some receding perpendicularly to the plane of the canvas.\textsuperscript{584} Here, the cohesiveness of mind/body experience is implied for the beholder through optical movement between planes.\textsuperscript{585} Hofmann’s use of contrasting colours to reveal the idea of pulsating surfaces has impacted the author’s conception of the passage of time in \textit{Sinuous} (Series 10) as winding conduits lyrically expanding and contracting. Whilst Hofmann’s movement was perpendicular to the plane of the canvas resembling motor pistons, the author’s is parallel to the surface of the canvas resembling sine waves typically seen on an oscilloscope.\textsuperscript{586} Here, repetition creates

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{584} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{585} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{586} http://spokenweb.concordia.ca/blog/looking-at-sound-waves/ (8/02/2014).
\end{itemize}

In 1822, French mathematician Joseph Fourier discovered that sinusoidal waves could be used as simple building blocks to describe any periodic waveform applicable to the study of waves and heat flow. A sine wave is a mathematically described curve that represents repetitive oscillations. It appears often in pure and applied
an illusion of rhythmic effects that play spatially within the picture plane and gently cut its wholeness, verifying the continuity of the passage of time in space.


The interpretation of limitless space as sinuous waves helped the author to understand a connection between opposing dynamic vibrations and a strategy of *giving life* to a static space.\(^{587}\) This idea inspired the author’s intention of conceiving the passing of time through space also as simulating the ticking of a clock. From this, the author visualised time as rhythmical appearances of form exemplified through mountain peaks and troughs—developed by tracing lines within the mountains’ triangular shapes—that appear to continuously bounce up and down. Accordingly, forces and counter forces are repeated parallel to the surface of the canvas, providing evidence of spatial movement analogous to the passing of time. This succession of light waves, as a synonym for vacuum fluctuations, is directly linked not only to Planck’s quantum mechanics,\(^ {588}\) but also to Kant’s suggestion (in his emblematic *Critique of pure reason*, 1781) that certain givens—such as sensations of movement, sound, sight or smell—can also be interpreted via the phenomenon of perception aided by both the senses and the imagination.\(^ {589}\) By analysing what the mind does in response to external data, we can begin to see how the various stages of the painting

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\(^{588}\) [http://universe-review.ca/R03-01-quantumflu.htm](http://universe-review.ca/R03-01-quantumflu.htm) (13/03/2014).

process develop in relation to experience. As Hofmann suggests, “The continuation of movement throughout space is rhythm. Thereby, rhythm is the expression of life in space.”

2:2:3 (iv) Binocular space

A sense of movement of time in limitless space can also be achieved through Newman’s idea of binocular space in *Vir heroicus sublimis*, 1951 (Plate 15), rendered through expanses of visually atmospheric colour partitioned by a narrow vertical line (or zip). This vertical strip of paint, situated in an empty vastness of reds, appears to be ravaged by an impalpable infinite space. Some viewers had the distinct impression that they could see around the zip in the same fashion as they could see around a vertical finger on an extended arm (Michelangelo’s Creation of Adam, 1508-12): none of the continuous atmospheric background appeared to be covered or interrupted. There is a certain similitude between Newman’s impalpable infinite space contained in the zip and quantum theory, as both hold vacuum fluctuations of energetic particles that are invisible to the naked eye. The author takes Newman’s idea of binocular space and Planck’s quantum theory in *Vir heroicus sublimis*, not for its colossal stature, but for the stance of the small area of the zip that provokes commotion of great speculation of the invisibility notion of limitlessness in *Reflecting ripples* (Series 11). Although *Reflecting ripples* seem to be so gently and unassumingly depicted in small scale, it operates with multi-ocular fluctuations of mirrored shapes and is partitioned by multiple horizontal and vertical lines. These multiple contracting and extending deep spaces seem to move uninterruptedly within limitless voids, generating optical

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discord that resembles temporal movement evocative of the limitless passage of time in space. Just as Newman’s zip in *Vir heroicus sublimis* does not act as an element of fission or separation of its vast reds, but upholds them in unity, the openings in *Reflecting ripples* are also united through the grids and intervals operating simultaneously with a sense of wholeness.


2:2:3 (v) Motional configurations

A sensation of continuity with the passing of time in space is also potentially accessible via a manifestation of shifting sensations signified through motional configurations demonstrated by tracing chaotic sequences of line and colour. This idea is not based on the literal application of paint per se, but rather on an active enterprise that aims to connect mind and hand within the act of processing the paint. This approach to painting, famously demonstrated by the “all over” performative “action painting” of Pollock, is therefore one of giving life to otherwise inanimate colours. The “action” of dripping paint is not only an act of intuitively pouring paint into and upon other paint, but it is also an act that reaffirms the painter’s relationship with the paint’s very materiality. As a result, each segment of colour not only maintains its distinctiveness but also contributes to the construction of an idea as a whole—as seen in the crystallisation of minerals entwined within labyrinths and

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600 Ibid.
601 Ibid.
membranes.\textsuperscript{602} Pollock’s dripping paint created tightly interlocked spaces that at times seem invisible, for the eye is forced to see a single, cohesive image\textsuperscript{603}. The motional configurations in Pollock’s \textit{White light}, 1954, (Plate 16)\textsuperscript{604} successfully demonstrate the union between thought and imagination through a clustering of minute elements and an accumulation of successive layers of paint that reject any traditional focal point.\textsuperscript{605} Furthermore, these motional configurations are not only the final register of a performance of the physical application of paint; they also trigger the mind to map the process of the painter’s mark making.\textsuperscript{606} In turn, Pollock’s motional configurations have inspired the author’s conception of the passage of time in \textit{Impulsion/expulsion} (Series 12) as something potentially enlivened and inhabiting the barely discernible boundaries of perception. The liminal space between flatness and depth, or motion and motionless, is demonstrated in \textit{Impulsion/expulsion} by the dynamic flow of line and colour against a static monochromatic background. While the tightly interlocked spaces in Pollock’s \textit{White light} appear to converge into a single entity, the spaces in \textit{Impulsion/expulsion} (inspired again by the non-Euclidean geometry and the quantum theory of fluctuations)\textsuperscript{607} appear to merge and yet they seem to be infinitely juxtaposing and flowing to resemble a sense of continuity associated with the passage of time.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{Series 12: \textit{Impulsion/expulsion}, 2009-2012. Wax sticks on paper, 13 x 20 cm.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{604} Ibid, p.181.
\textsuperscript{607} Op cit., \url{http://universe-review.ca/R03-01-quantumflu.htm} (13/03/2014).
The painting’s unique ability to freeze movement through the use of accelerating intervals can evoke a sense of continuity of the passage of time in space. Moving image reproductive technologies, such as spatial animation in motion pictures, offer new possibilities for the painter working in this area. The idea of accelerating intervals is famously embodied in Richter’s use of blurring. This is exemplified in Woman descending the staircase, 1965 (Plate 17), which depicts echoes of sequential steps in an imaginary progress and epitomises painting’s uniqueness when it comes to the representation of movement. Richter’s idea of accelerating intervals, understood through Einstein’s concept of relativity (the speed of light is constant), has also inspired the author’s technologically augmented conception of acceleration of the passing of time in space. In Spatial fluctuations (Series 13) the author attempts to conceive this idea through a repetition of motifs that work to resemble motional effects. Here, in order to move away from a literal interpretation of reality and instead towards a temporal register, the figure walking towards the house is implied through intervals in that each movement is presented as frozen and is followed by an imaginary trajectory that conveys the continuity of time passing in space.

Ibid.
Ibid.
2:2:4 Ideas of multiple perspective

In pursuing new ways of visualising the limitless passage of time in space through painting, this research investigation now turns towards the use of various scientific ideas such as quantum mechanics in which, multiple yet disparate units of information convey our uncertain perceptions of the world. While some Modern artists interpreted individual perceptions of the world as guided by metaphysical beliefs, other artists in the second half of the twentieth century were aware of the way in which fragmented information and uncertainty might be analogised in art. Here, aesthetic conceptions of a multiplicitous perspective might help to facilitate an understanding of spatial fragmentation and multiple points of view. Such conceptions are exemplified by Salle’s colliding images, Hockney’s multiple views and Richter’s degrees of visibility.

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2:2:4 (i) Colliding images

Sympathy for the emerging paradoxical conceptions of chaos and order within both Modern physics and Post-Modernist art has resulted in a broad emphasis upon fragmentation and multiplicity in Contemporary art. This is envisioned via multiple perspectives described in terms of colliding images, as is evident in Salle’s *Dual aspect picture*, 1986 (Plate 18).\(^{614}\) In this work, complex information is fragmented and reordered in a manner reminiscent of the uncertainties and randomness introduced to our perception of the world via quantum mechanics.\(^ {615}\) Salle’s idea of colliding images has directly inspired the author’s conception of the passage of time in *Flickering time* (Series 14) as the segmentation of perception, although fractioned in information, they are reassembled through the use of grids, intervals and serialisation. While the structure of the grids allows fractioned units of information to function simultaneously with a sense of wholeness, its serial presentation offers a strategic model where each painting becomes a part of a

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conversational vocabulary of thought. These constant playful segments and spaces in between create motional sensations of spatial intervals. In this sense, the spaces between the pictorial segments become the frames in which temporality is presented in terms of continuous limitless voids. Here, difference and repetition between the fractional units become central to apprehending the operation of registers not only within series, but between illusionism and depth, experimental dimensions, shifting sensations and multiple perspectives.

Series 14: *Flickering time*, 2010-2011. Oil on canvas, 19.5 x 25 cm.
2:2:4 (ii) Multiple views

The passage of time through space can also be understood through the use of multiple images and spatial innovations that attract the eye to multiple points of view\textsuperscript{616}. The multiple perspectives in Hockney’s *Grand Canyon*, 1982, (Plate 19)\textsuperscript{617} can deliver sensations that compel the observer to literally move when viewing this work.\textsuperscript{618} In *A bigger Grand Canyon*, 1998, (Plate 20) Hockney has fractioned perception by reassembling numerous photographs of the Grand Canyon into a whole new journey.\textsuperscript{619}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image1}
\caption{A bigger Grand Canyon, 1998, (Plate 20)}
\end{figure}

Hockney’s realisation of multiple views underpins the author’s conception of the idea of limitless space in *Accumulations* (Series 15) as spatial intervals of a cumulative nature to convey a new way of revealing the spatial perception of the passage of time in space. In this respect, the gradual gathering of houses creates a sense of multiple perspectives that can reveal a reality-based continuum, just as multiple brush strokes of paint can deliver repetition and difference within an illusion of wholeness of the passage of time in space.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{616} Op. cit., David Hockney, 2002, p. 98.
\item \textsuperscript{617} Ibid, pp. 98-99.
\item \textsuperscript{618} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{619} Property of the National Gallery, Australia.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
2:2:4 (iii) Degrees of visibility

The strategic concealment \(^{620}\) of the passage of time within painting moments can be attenuated through the use of degrees of visibility. In a material sense, this might involve the gradual removal of the explicit mark making on a sliding scale, towards invisibility. This process is particularly evident in Richter’s revolutionary use of blurring, as famously demonstrated in the series Arrest I, 1988 (Plate 21), Cell, 1988 (Plate 22), Man shot down, 1988 (Plate 23) and January, 1989 (Plate 24).\(^{621}\) Although this series indirectly depicts reality, Richter bypasses realistic representation through a curious process of compiling realism and illusion in a single painting.\(^{622}\) Richter’s controlled use of strategic concealment, also understood through quantum physics, has directly inspired the author’s conception of the passage of time in Imperceptible (Series 16) as something concealing, and yet revealing vestiges of its presence. This is achieved by alluding to the indistinctiveness of the surface and by preventing the viewer from bringing the subject into focus.

\(^{621}\) Ibid, pp. 126-131.
\(^{622}\) Ibid, p. 130.

2:3 *Phenomenology, painting and the impetus towards limitless space:*

*Invisibility/visibility*

Until now, this research project has dealt with various interpretations of the notion of invisibility in the limitless passage of time across space through ideas concerned with illusion and depth, the experiential, shifting sensations and multiple perspectives found within the observable world. This research now attempts to interpret the notion of invisibility in the passage of time through ideas associated with the phenomenology of perception relating the imperceptible world. As science cannot necessarily account for the immateriality of the world of ideas, philosophy might contribute to this area by using the process of thinking to reveal the imperceptible nature of the passing of time. This might be attempted through the involvement of lived and embodied experience. The task of comprehending the invisibility of time through philosophy concerns processes of transformation rather than destination. Such a process of transformation might be targeted towards the “pictorial”, that is, a visual tool with which to unravel the invisibility of limitless space as “something”, rather than as something that is infinitely deferred. This notion of felt invisibility has been variously tackled in twentieth century French philosophers’ Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception*[^623] and Hubert Damisch’s conception of painting as referred to—through his

“painting as model”\textsuperscript{624}, such as perspective, technical, symbolic and strategic—in the preface of his book \textit{Fenetre Jaune Cadmium ou les Dessous de la Peinture}, 1984 reviewed by Yve-Alain Bois’s \textit{Painting as model}, 1993.\textsuperscript{625}

Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology is essentially a way of thinking. It shows us the living-world as it is presented to us, a world of paradox and ambiguity before any reflection begins. It offers an account of space and time as we experience them linking mind-body in perceiving the world without any explanation that psychology or science might provide.\textsuperscript{626} Whereas Damisch’s painting as model is also a way of thinking, he uses perspective, technical, symbolic and strategic painting techniques to render invisibility only if painting is articulated as a theoretical operator in order to understand philosophical concepts about space and time, visibility and invisibility.\textsuperscript{627}

Arguably, the zeniths of both Merleau-Ponty’s and Damisch’s ideas rests upon the painting process and its inventive potential.\textsuperscript{628} While Merleau-Ponty’s argument considers phenomenology in painting, Damisch also appeals to painting-based model. In this regard, Merleau-Ponty and Damisch present a common front: an attempt to grasp the invisible as “something” rather than “nothing.”\textsuperscript{629} While Merleau-Ponty argues that to see the invisible is to see according to the axis and pivots, levels and line forces of the visible,\textsuperscript{630} Damisch emphasises that to perceive the invisible is also possible through the visible material of paint.

\textsuperscript{624} Merleau-Ponty, \textit{Phenomenology of Perception}, 1945, Trans. 1958, 2002, pp. vii-x, 135-136. Merleau-Ponty’s Phenomenology is a way of thinking. It shows us the living-world as it is presented to us, a world of paradox and ambiguity already there before any reflection begins. It offers an account of space and time as we experience them linking mind-body in perceiving the world without any explanation of psychology or science might provide.
\textsuperscript{626} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{629} Ibid, p. 257.
An example of this is Cézanne’s instantiating the invisible upon the visible materiality of paint as applied with a brush. Here, of course, the brush needs to be understood as an extension of the body interacting with the mind\textsuperscript{631}—and not as separate from the mind, as Descartes had famously suggested.\textsuperscript{632} Significantly, Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of perception and Damisch’s conception of painting both essentially work against Descartes’ mind/body dichotomy, offering a way of visualising and interpreting ideas through a synergy between imagination and the manner of handling the painting process.\textsuperscript{633}

Painting, as realistically or ambiguously processed, is of course only one of many vehicles through which to conceptualise everyday relationships. In addition, painting processes used to interpret ideas of the passage of time are also inspired by observing the otherwise imperceptible nature of the changes of light passing over the earth as it orbits the sun. English physics professor Brian Cox refers to this phenomenon when describing the earth orbiting the sun, creating night and day by changing magnetic waves of energy passing from the sun to the rotating earth. In this sense, the passage of time in space might also be manifested through patterns that simulate the ticking of a clock.\textsuperscript{634} Other ways of revealing the passage of time might be through observing clouds moving across the sky or, by viewing the wind’s creation of sine waves on the ocean’s surface or oscillatory traces created over the sand. In this way, the unseen passage of time, yet felt, is conveyed through the indexical marks left by the passage of time in space. Since the passage of time in space cannot be revealed in its entirety, for science cannot meaningfully venture beyond understanding, art and philosophy can through the painting process. In this sense, painting can be considered

\textsuperscript{634} Professor of Physics Brian Cox talks on \textit{Do you know what Time it is?} A BBC/Discovery Co-Production, 2010.
as a tool and vehicle for the development of thought through “pictorial” means. As a result, Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology, for painters, is the act of handling the brush as an extension of the body simultaneously exchanging with the mind. This simultaneous exchange is also retooled through Damisch’s use of perceptive, technical, symbolic and strategic painting models. To this end, these ideas are applied through the work of artists such as Piet Mondrian’s pictorial thought (Plate 25), delivered as a process of simplification; Cézanne’s embodying invisibility (Plate 26) as well as his pictorial techniques (Plate 12), depicted as a process of transformation; Pollock’s pictorial emblems (Plates 27 and 28), portrayed as a process of signification as well as his pictorial strategy (Plate 29) as a process of anticipation; and Buren’s idea of serialisation (Plates 30, 31 and 32), rendered as a process of association.
2:3:1 Ideas of pictorial thought: the process of simplification

To see is to enter a universe of beings, which display themselves…thus every object, is the mirror of all others.\(^{635}\) (Merleau-Ponty)

An appreciation of the notion of invisibility in the limitless passage of time across space can potentially be realised through the use of pictorial thought in which perceptions of boundlessness are simplified to form the appearance of motion. Although this process is impervious to observation, Damisch refers to this process of thinking as that of engaging pictorial thought.\(^{636}\) The transformation of perception related to ambiguity of form is not an aesthetic of mimesis\(^{637}\) but, rather, an aesthetic of thought and imagination. Simplification of form is evidenced in Piet Mondrian’s *Composition with red, blue, yellow, black and grey*, 1922, (Plate 25),\(^{638}\) (Figures 1 to 5). Discarding all curves and adopting only line, in order to avoid an imitative reading of reality, achieves just such a pictorial thought, or aesthetic of simplicity in perceiving the world.\(^{639}\)


\(^{637}\) Ibid, pp. 246-247.


Mondrian challenges a traditional simplicity of thought in painting by establishing relationships between verticals and horizontals, creating rectilinear shapes with the use of only primary colours. Mondrian’s idea of pictorial thought has triggered the author’s conception of time moving through limitless space, in its most elemental form, in *Pensiveness* (Series 17A). Here, a mountain has been reduced to minimal representation to indicate the rapid changes of time in space. Similarly, in *Diaphanous* (Series 17B) a perception of the invisibility of the passing of time is revealed through blurring perception in its most transparent appearance within the realm of simplicity. Here, by allowing only certain indexical elements of reality to remain, as observed within one moment, the transformative passage of time is implied.

Series 17A: *Pensiveness*, 2013. Ink on paper, 14 x 20 cm.

Series 17B: *Diaphanous*, 2013. Oil on paper, 18 x 20 cm.

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Cézanne’s embodying invisibility

The distinction between form and matter can no longer be given any ultimate value.\(^{641}\) (Merleau-Ponty)

An impetus to perceiving the world’s simplicity, suggested by Merleau-Ponty, is inundation of a visual field with complexities of form, which registers in a viewer’s \textit{pre-reflective perception} as simplicity of form.\(^{642}\) Merleau-Ponty believes that when our visual field is inundated with multiple configurations, there is always an initial unquestionable perception of “something” as significant, the moment we open our eyes.\(^{643}\) This “something”, an “indeterminate vision”\(^{644}\) of an object, is what is experienced as a vision of “je ne sais quoi”, \(^{645}\) or “I do not know what”; the object is brought back to existence in its truthfulness, because it is evaluated without any assumption or judgment.\(^{646}\) By way of example, the tree in Cézanne’s \textit{Mont Sainte-Victoire, seen from Bellevue, 1885-87} (Plate 26)\(^{647}\) can be perceived not as one thing on its own, but as against a background of other objects.

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.3\textwidth]{Cezanne_MontSainte-Victoire.png}
\end{center}

\textit{Cézanne’s Mont Sainte-Victoire, seen from Bellevue, 1885-87 (Plate 26).}

\(^{643}\) Ibid, p.48.
This compositional view of the tree, however, extends beyond its materiality. The tree is therefore not seen as having only its visible sides, but also its unseen sides.648 This, of course, is possible because although the tree shows its façade to us, it also shows its unseen sides to the other trees on its right, to the bridge and to the mountains at the back, and so on. In this respect, as stated earlier, all visible and invisible sides of things are held together via a potential network of perception.649 In this case, the invisible is potentially revealed as “something” that is already in the world prior to and following the act of painting. Such an experience is built in the mind of the interpreter of a painting rather than by direct sense perception. Cezanne’s idea of embodying the invisible triggered the author’s evocation of the passage of time in Encounters (Series 18) as playful appearances of hide and seek to demonstrate that objects do not exist in isolation but rather in relation to a background of seen and unseen objects. In this respect, the roads that appear in front of the mountains are assumed to continue behind and around them. Similarly, the mountains are not presented in isolation, but in relationship to the sea and islands behind, to the roads below, to the sky above and the other unseen objects surrounding them—all connected through a continuity of time and space. Accordingly, painting is not processed in isolation, but rather, each colour relates to the other just as the background and the middle ground relate to the foreground, unfolding the process as a whole.

649 Ibid.

In addition, the author’s depiction of the *unseen* sides of the mountains is rendered through an assemblage of temporally fragmented spaces that are potentially held together within the act of perceiving. The “indeterminate” can also be observed particularly when peering narrowly at the mountaintops in the distance as depicted in *Encounters*. In determining the indeterminacy, both Damisch and Merleau-Ponty have proposed that if one is going to paint *something unseen*, one should not only link mind and body but also get rid of unnecessary information that might rob perceptive freedom.\(^{650}\) In this sense, minimal appearance of form can provide evidence of the invisibility of the passage of time.

**2:3:2 Ideas of pictorial technique**: the process of transformation

I venture to depict matter as it takes some form, as the birth of order through spontaneous organisation.\(^{651}\) (Paul Cézanne)

The notion of invisibility in the limitless passage of time may also be implied through the use of pictorial techniques that create perceptions of space as a continuum analogous with time. Although this process of transformation might seem fractional, it nonetheless can

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depict a sense of continuity of parts in relation to the whole, a feature specifically relatable to ideas of pictorial technique. Such continuity can be delivered through ambiguity of form, an aesthetic that rejects mimesis and welcomes imagination, as exemplified in Cézanne’s *Mont Sainte-Victoire*, 1902-04 (Plate 12). Both Merleau-Ponty and Damisch, thus, regard the process of transformation as the painting’s foundation, a performance of mind and body in the act of conception. Arguably, this transformation of perception through the painting process, is finally what is significant to the idea of pictorial technique. This freedom is not experienced independently, but rather sequentially in relation to the “whole.” Here, Cézanne’s photography of *Mont Sainte-Victoire* (Figure 1) is transformed from Figures 2 to 4 into a sequence of shapes and colours that point toward the passage of time through space.

Cézanne’s idea of pictorial technique has directly challenged the author’s conception of limitless space. The outcome of this challenge is *Metamorphosis* (Series 19), which depicts limitless space through a process of transformation rather than through the impossible task of literal imitation. It demonstrates how a process of fractioning, blurring and repetition can deliver a sense of continuity of the invisible and visible parts as a whole. Here,

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653 Ibid.
656 Ibid.
with the transformation of the landscape from certainty towards ambiguity, although form is incomplete, the passage of time is nonetheless rendered simply and sequentially. Correspondingly, painting is also intellectually and intuitively applied to the impossible task of revealing a sense of the invisibility of the passage of time in space.


**2:3:3 Ideas of pictorial emblems:** the process of signification

When the painter can paint while he is looking at the world...he thinks he is disentangling, deciphering or spelling out nature at the moment he is creating. 659

(Merleau-Ponty)

An impression of the notion of invisibility in the limitless passage of time across space can also potentially be achieved through the use of pictorial emblems, 660 an approach in which inner and outer limits of perception are engaged to stage new possibilities for revealing the passage of time. Pictorial emblems in painting do not exist as pre-arranged, isolated and static entities but, rather, as visions linking multiple, meaningful creative possibilities. 661 For example, in Pollock’s early works such as *Guardian of the secret*, 1943 (Plate 27), 662 tangible objects or totems were painted to efficiently symbolise the inner

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interpretation of the observable world. By contrast, in later paintings such as *Full fathom five*, 1947 (Plate 28), Pollock fuses inner and outer limits of perceptions of the world through the use of “all over” painting drips. These systematic “all over” drips appear to have been poured at once from all sides of the canvas, eventually swamping the entire surface and generating physical resistance between new planes. Consequently, planes appear to alternate within emblematic motional spaces—all working in concert to overturn reproduction paradigms via a radical reframing of process in action. Iterative processes as evidenced in Pollock’s aforementioned use of pictorial emblems have informed the author’s conception of the passage of time in *Permeable* (Series 20) as a series of repetitive motifs—dots and dashes of colour—used to generate painted surfaces that produce a sense of airiness to evoke the open-ended nature of the invisibility concept of the limitless passage of time in space. In this sense, painting becomes an emblematic tool to break the cosmological boundaries of the painting process through strategic and aesthetic experimentation with painting materials and techniques.


By contrast, when enacting and engaging the inner and outer indicators of perception in *Impermeable* (Series 21), something happens whereby the emblematic conception of the passing of time is delivered only as a memory of a dynamic moment of reality that existed

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663 Ibid, p. 29.
665 Ibid.
as an unyielding appearance of form. This form becomes impenetrable to the beholder as it is hidden in the creator’s mind.

Series 21: Impermeable, 2014. Watercolour on paper, 15.5 x 18.5 cm.

2:3:4 Ideas of pictorial strategy: the process of anticipation

The problem, for whoever writes about it, should not be so much to write about painting as to do something with it.ª66 (Hubert Damisch)

A pictorial framing of awareness of the notion of invisibility in the limitless passage of time across space is potentially revealed through the use of pictorial strategyª67 which involves the notion of anticipation. Such a strategy, in which perception is aesthetically anticipated in terms of sequential steps in the passage of time, focuses on experimentation rather than on the final product.ª68 Inventiveness in this regard, as exemplified in Pollock’s Autumn rhythm, 1957 (Plate 29),ª69 occurs at the point of intersection between thought and imagination, in precise moments when each rhythmic spattering of paint succeeds the next, sequentially and precisely to the last or where needed.ª70 This process is comparable to a

ª67 Ibid, p. 245.
chess game in which the artist performs through both the act of thought and deployment of paint.\textsuperscript{671}

![Jackson Pollock painting](image)

_Autumn rhythm, 1950_

Photograph by Hans Namuth (1915-1990)\textsuperscript{672}

A longstanding appreciation of Pollock’s pictorial strategy implicitly underpins the author’s own aesthetic conception of the idea of limitless space in _Liquefying_ (Series 22) as something anticipated through infinitely changing and connecting multiple traces of wavering line. Here, each movement of line is employed in anticipation of space and manifested as temporal succession—the ebb and flow of the ever-changing and never ending continuum of reality. Consequently, the painting process is inextricably linked to a metaphorical extension of the predictive processes of transformation through experimentation with painting materials, techniques and strategically structured new ways of conveying the idea of the passage of time in space.

![Series 22: Liquefying, 2012-2013. Acrylic on paper, 18 x 23 cm.](image)

**2:3:5 The idea of serialisation:** the process of association

\textsuperscript{671} Ibid.

The perception of the notion of invisibility in the passage of time across space can be projected through the idea of serialisation, insofar as any perception of reality can only be represented in a series of fragmented and fictional segments made comprehensible in relation to the whole. Although pictures displayed on a wall are fractional in terms of the information that they provide, they nonetheless convey a sense of a continuity of progress towards something yet to be known. The idea of serialisation instantiated in Buren’s installations673 *Within the frame, 1973* (Plate 30), *Beyond the frame, 1973* (Plate 31)674 and *The two plateaux, 1986*675 (Plate 32) are a compound of connected idiomatic patterns.676 These serialisations involve strategic associations between paintings through their arrangement on the wall, developed not only within the whole body of work, but also by virtue of its relation to a surrounding reality that becomes vicariously framed as apart from the work.677 Furthermore, each painting becomes a fragment of a vocabulary that persists as a memory of the meaning as a whole. Buren’s serial practice attempts to elaborate decisive ways of thinking through the work’s exposure, which also functions as a paratextual invitation to the exhibition.678 Buren’s idea of serialisation stimulated the author’s desire to evoke limitless space through a linear progression of time, a concept used to demonstrate how a succession of events can describe a chronological passage of time in space. This approach was challenged by observing the changing of light over the earth as it orbits the sun. This succession of light, as displayed in *Slices of time – fragmented space* (Series 23), functions to resemble motional effects of the passing of time. In this way, the passage of time becomes a complex inference of infinity through and across time and space. Each

676 Ibid.
pictorial moment is selected and frozen in a series to anticipate a fictionalised passing of time. This serial representation of temporal motion is a way of aesthetically historicising the passage of light within static imagery to entomb its memory.


2:4 The sublime and the impetus towards limitless space
This investigation now turns towards the sublime to wrap around the practical exploration of relationships between pictorial space and ideas of limitless space. The sublime was used as a form of conceptual framework that opened out onto the broader question of limitless space-invisibility/visibility. The purpose of this research project was to engage this theoretical investigation of the various modalities of the sublime not as a parallel discussion, but as a fundamental component in the painting laboratory that reveals the invisibility notion of the passage of time in space. As a result, the sublime is to be used to deepen the understanding of the invisibility notion of the limitless passage of time in space, not only as sensations of the mind transcending the physicality of the landscape viewed as vastness of the horror vacui, but also as absence/presence or indeterminacy, and as blankness, immediacy or the vanishing.

Since more light-hearted and invigorating sensations are aroused by the beautiful, the sensations of gloom, awfulness, seriousness and solemnity are aroused by the sublime.679 This investigation repurposes the gloominess, awfulness, seriousness and solemnity invoked by the sublime in association with the enormous impossibility of understanding and materialising the invisibility/visibility concepts of the passage of time in space. Although the techno-sublime is continuously engaging with scientific and technological advances, it remains as a subject of speculation and as an open-ended dilemma to be resolved through experimentation with painting materials, techniques and strategies.

For the first century AD Greek writer Longinus, referred to in the first chapter, the mind exercises powers of multiplication without end. In so doing, the mind expands and exalts

itself so its judgment and responses are targeted either towards the beautiful or the sublime.\(^{680}\) Whilst more light-hearted and invigorating sensations are aroused by the beautiful, sensations of gloom, awfulness, seriousness and solemnity are aroused by the sublime.\(^{681}\) This investigation repurposes the gloom, awfulness, seriousness and solemnity invoked by the sublime in association with the ungraspable enormity of time in space. These invisible phenomena can be: retooled using ideas of the Modern sublime as *horror vacui*; identified through the Post-Modern sublime conveyed as *absence/presence* or *indeterminacy*; and revealed through the Contemporary techno-sublime interpreted as *blankness, immediacy* or *the vanishing*.

**2:4:1 Ideas of the Modern sublime as *horror vacui***

Any conception of the notion of invisibility in the limitless passage of time through space can manifest in the mind as *horror vacui*, wherein perception is magnified into a sense of time that passes without end.\(^{682}\) Here, the power of reasoning to assess the significance of an external phenomenon can work through the power of imagination to reveal the invisibility of the passage of time in space.\(^{683}\) This facet of the research project is illustrated using various artists’ ideas such as Friedrich’s raising the mind to fear (Plate 33), Turner’s igniting the imagination (Plate 34), his terror of the sublime (Plate 35) and simplicity of the sublime (Plate 36) as well as Barnett Newman’s reducing of event-bound time (Plate 37).

\(^{681}\) Ibid.
\(^{683}\) Ibid.
(33) Caspar David Friedrich, *Arctic shipwreck*, 1824. Oil on canvas, 96.7 x 126.9 cm. Kunsthalle, Hamburg.

2:4:1 (i) Raising the mind to fear

Friedrich’s idea of raising the mind to fear might be characterised as a symptomatic manifestation of the mind that is potentially retooled toward the task of aesthetically interpreting our perception of time in space. In this case, the condition of perceiving vastness as something imperceptible can translate into a provisional sense of the overpowering fear of the unknown. Yet in this instance, the sublime is not contained within the landscape but rather within the mind—a vehicle for a consciousness that magnifies vastness into an overpowering fear of death. In this conception of the sublime, as revealed in Friedrich’s horrifying *Arctic shipwreck*, 1824 (Plate 33), an overwhelming sense of foreboding is

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685 Ibid, p. 201.
borne not by the small ship mercilessly crushed by great icebergs, but rather by the mind that magnifies the shipwreck into a sense of impending death. It is with this infinite vastness unleashing the sublime, that Friedrich has inspired the author’s own conception of the menacing infinitudes of time and space that charge mortal beings with the threat of absolute and endless silence. The overwhelming fear of infinite stasis, outside of the unfolding lived time and space of conscious existence, is explored in the aptly titled *Ominous* (Series 24A) and *Menacing* (Series 24B). While in *Ominous*, a sense of deadly silence is conveyed through two isolated figures heading towards an impending unknown, in *Menacing* a sense of extreme threat is portrayed through a haunted house. The sublime is neither in the impending unknown nor in the extreme threat, but in the mind of the beholder who, by means of the power of imagination, feels threatened. Here, time and thought are inseparable, passing fleetingly and magnifying a fear of the unknown impending danger. After all, it is the very thought of danger that stimulates the mind to fear and increases awareness of mortality as the sublime is in the beholder’s state of mind. Where the beast might only instinctively flee danger, the mortal realises that he or she cannot escape the overwhelming fear of finitude. Although this is the burden of consciousness, it is precisely this consciousness that is also capable of aesthetically apprehending its inability to represent the invisible infinitudes of time and space.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oil on canvas</td>
<td>16.5 x 19 cm.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pastel on paper</td>
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Turner’s unique aesthetic vision to igniting the imagination can be described as simultaneously manifested through a sensual response to paint and as something built within the mind insofar as it also evokes that which is beyond the realm of direct sense perception, albeit aesthetically. In this respect, Turner was a master at conveying our immaterial sense of the invisibility of time’s passage. Here, the mind’s eye is enlightened in the presence of something of impalpable quality, creating an overwhelming fear of isolation. In a sense, the sublime nature of igniting the imagination, as exemplified in Turner’s *Snow storm*, 1790 (Plate 34), is born not from perceiving a very small passenger steamboat hopelessly trapped in the immensity of a horrendous tempestuous sea but, rather, from the mind magnifying this image into a sense of annihilation. The hopeless situation of a small vessel pitched against nature does not engender fear in and of itself but, rather, fear is emergent within the imagination. Turner’s unique aesthetic has inspired the author’s conception of the invisible notion of the passage of time in *Forsaken* (Series 24C) and *Isolated* (Series 24D)—in a twenty first century context—presented as something entwined within the powers of nature. While a lonely figure in *Forsaken* seems trapped in the immensity of the landscape, a small boat in *Isolated* is lost within a vast sea. Here, the sublime is not in the vastness of nature, but in the individual’s mind contemplating these images, which potentially elicits feelings of horror at being lost. In contrast with the limited specificity of Turner’s narrative, a more generalised sense of foreboding, seemingly derived from our own doing, characterises these works.

2:4:1 (iii) The terror of the sublime

Turner’s idea of the terror of the sublime is a manifestation of the mind that magnifies experience as an irrepressible sense of dread. This feeling of horror is manifested unpredictably via long and short–lived moments of horrific lived experience. In Turner’s *The burning of the houses of parliament, 1834*\(^{688}\) (Plate 35) for example, the fire moves from full volatility to extinction and possible reappearance. Here, perception of devastation may be followed by a moment of reflection in which the beholder reasons. This is then followed by a rush of power to overcome fear, but not without experiencing its memory.\(^{689}\) This inconsistency of sensation is due to the state of mind that emerges from the memory of fear.\(^{690}\) Turner conveys such changeable feelings of horror through vagueness of form and by provoking sensory experiences that incline the inner mind towards fear. Correspondingly, Turner’s terror of the sublime has triggered the author’s conception of the notion of invisibility in the passage of time through space as expressed in terms of changing states of matter. Whilst in *Chaos* (Series 25) the impending fire charges the mind with thoughts of devastation, provisional relief arrives through swirls of smoke in *Aftermath* (Series 26). The smoke slowly becomes a curtain of contention, offering a possibility of respite in *Stillness*

(Series 27), but not without a memory that might re-ignite the threat. This philosophy might help to explain the divergent thinking adopted around the numerous shifting perceptions and painting processes employed to interpret the passage of time in space.


Series 26: Aftermath, 2010-2012. Watercolour on paper, 15.5 x 19 cm.


In removing the threat, but not its memory, a new dreadfully empty space is impregnated with the potentiality of meaning, particularly given that meaninglessness invariably shows its hand until a sense of fright is imposed by the mind. The mind creates ways of escaping trauma, but not without returning to the trauma in spite of the shock this can induce. It is this continuous transformation of perception, analogous to formlessness that transports us to the sublime in Foreseeable (Series 28): the clouds darken until we lose sight of them and yet we know they are still there.
2:4:1 (iv) The simplicity of the sublime

Another impression of the notion of invisibility in the limitless passage of time across space is instantiated through Turner’s manipulation of the simplicity of the sublime, as demonstrated in Storm clouds, looking out to sea, 1845 (Plate 36).\textsuperscript{691} In experiencing nature as a minimal depiction of reality,\textsuperscript{692} an overwhelming feeling of emptiness, comparable to the invisibility of the passage of time, is revealed in its most transparent form.\textsuperscript{693} Turner’s idea of the simplicity of the sublime has triggered the author’s conception of the invisibility

\textsuperscript{693} Ibid.
notion of the passage of time in space in terms of the dispersion of matter. The vanishing effects in *Indiscernible* (Series 29) are attempted through dissolving perceptions of reality by means of scumbling the paint. The sublime, however, is not in the indeterminate landscape but in the mind of the beholder who feels the threat of falling, not knowing where the sky meets the earth.


2:4:1 (v) Reducing event-bound time

Another potential conduit through which the invisibility notion of the limitless passage of time in space might be perceived is in the aesthetic challenge produced by reducing event-bound time. This challenge forms a cornerstone of Barnett Newman’s speculative enquiry through paint. In this context, the perception of the passage of time can be considered as sensing time. Significantly, Newman was “concerned neither with manipulation of space nor with the image, but solely with sensations of time.” For example, in *Onement I*, 1948 (Plate 37) sensations of time are conveyed via a monochromatic vastness “zipped” with a narrow line from top to bottom to imply a sense of an impending passage of time, that is, a sense of vastness in its starkness. Newman’s approach to

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695 Ibid.
reducing event-bound time has inspired the author's conception of the passage of time in *Transient* (Series 30) as unpredictable fluctuating passing clouds, charging the mind with apprehension. Here, limitless space is evoked as the variable continuum of the passage of time. It is not about space or the image, but about sensations of time, just as the succession of colour, shape and texture can create unpredictable elements of surprise in relation to the passage of time in space. Once again, this variable continuum of the passage of time is not sublime per se, but rather that which threatens to transport the beholder headlong into an imagined infinity.

2:4:2 Ideas of the Post-Modern sublime as absence/presence or indeterminacy

A conception of the notion of invisibility in the limitless passage of time in space can also be presented as a cumulative manifestation of a Post-Modern mind capable of networking otherwise contradictory perceptions of the sublime in terms of absence/presence or indeterminacy. Here, perceptions of time in space simultaneously rebound and restore into alternating appearances of invisibility and visibility, linking with both the passage of time and culture. This paradoxical conception of the passage of time in space is explored through Barnett Newman’s use of bouncing depths (Plate 15) and Henri Matisse’s play of returning spaces (Plate 38) as well as Turner’s ethereal space (Plate 39).

(38) Henri Matisse, The red studio, 1911. Oil on canvas, 181 x 219.1 cm. Museum of Modern Art, N.Y.
(39) J.M.W. Turner, Rain, steam and speed, the Great Western railway, 1844. Oil on canvas, 90.8 x 121.

2:4:2 (i) Bouncing spaces and returning spaces

Newman’s use of bouncing spaces, demonstrated by experiencing the contrast between vast areas of reds and smaller somewhat concealed areas (the zip), evokes a powerful feeling of the eternal. This Post-Modern sublime, conveyed as absence/presence or indeterminacy, is described through Jean-Francois Lyotard’s The sublime and the avant-garde”, 1991, in “The inhuman reflections of time”, an essay on Barnett Newman’s sublime,
which is presented in “extreme simplicity” yet with great solemnity—almost taking the form of an absolute silence.\textsuperscript{699} Newman’s sublime is portrayed here not as something incomplete or waiting to be completed, but as something seemingly accomplished through the paradoxical play of \textit{absence/presence or indeterminacy}.\textsuperscript{700} Welsh art critic and painter Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, postulates Newman’s idea as a version of Post-Modern Kantian sublime which offers a way out of nature itself.\textsuperscript{701} Newman’s idea of bouncing depths in \textit{Vir heroicus sublimis}, 1950-1951 (plate 15)\textsuperscript{702} provides an example of an emptiness that is at the same time full and, consequently is analogous to the passage of time as conveyed through formlessness.\textsuperscript{703} For Lyotard, Newman’s vast areas of reds partitioned by zips are disconnected and portrayed through a formlessness typically associated with the notion of indeterminacy.\textsuperscript{704} In this respect, although the vast spaces of Newman’s \textit{Vir heroicus sublimis} are signified through smoothness, the zip epitomises roughness within its simple indeterminacy.\textsuperscript{705} Furthermore, Lyotard suggests that Newman’s verticals contain certain presences that do not advance or recede, but instead float limitlessly in the middle ground.\textsuperscript{706} Similarly, with Matisse’s idea of returning spaces as evidenced in \textit{The red studio}, 1911 (Plate 38), objects float over an apparent ground as if they are continuously travelling back and forth over the picture plane without end, and seemingly returning to their point of departure by doing so.\textsuperscript{707} Here, a vastness of red holds foreground and background together in relation to the whole.\textsuperscript{708} This relationship presents a powerful example of the way in which a Heideggerian concept of \textit{the return} renders painting as a matter of origin and end, an endless process of transformation through experimenting with painting materials and techniques.

\textsuperscript{701} Ibid, p. 51.
\textsuperscript{704} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{705} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{706} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{707} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{708} Ibid, p. 52.
Newman’s use of bouncing depths has inspired the author’s conception of an intermittent passage of time through space in *Timeless orbit* (Series 31), creating not only a sense of vagueness of form, but also an acceleration without a beginning or end, the very invisibility of the passage of time. This journey of uncertainty is analogous to recurrent open-ended infinite depths evoked through intermittent swirling clouds fragmenting towards the unknown is not the sublime, but it is that which threatens to transport us to an uncertain end.


Time passes as form fades, concurring with absence and presence. Here, a presence that offers a stimulus for a sublime pleasure in misery is potentially evoked through vagueness of form. This vagueness is not connoted by an empty canvas but instead created by paint that contains few receding or advancing boundaries, offering an open-ended idea of the invisibility of the passage of time in space. Where undefined flat areas envelop the spectator, encircled filaments of colour suggest a mythical presence. This stages a sublime that is formed in *absence/presence or indeterminacy* via ambiguity of form—a quality attributed to the notion of invisibility associated with the passage of time in space.\(^{710}\)

\(^{709}\) Ibid, pp. 109-111.
\(^{710}\) Ibid, p. 51.
Matisse’s play of returning spaces stimulated the author’s conception of the passage of time as continuous rebounding on a never-ending journey, in *Circumvent* (Series 32). The nature of this journey is revealed through objects that seem to move endlessly back and forth over the picture plane, implying the rebounding passage of time. This rebounding is, of course, not the sublime but rather that which threatens to transport us to the sublime by means of the immaterial power of thought.

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

2:4:2 (ii) Ethereal visions

The notion of the invisibility of time in space might be understood as an immaterial manifestation of the mind interpreting momentary appearances of fragmented reality. In Turner’s play of ethereal visions, the sublime is understood as something summoned through the dichotomy of absence/presence, or indeterminacy evoked by vanishing images. In Turner’s *Rain, steam and speed, the Great Western Railway, 1844* (Plate 39) this idea is presented through focusing on the unprecedented speed provided by rail technology. Significantly, Turner saw the steam engine, as not only in opposition to nature but also as an industrial subject that was part of his landscape.

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711 Ibid, p. 68.
Turner's conception of an acceleration of time, based on the incoming tide of industrial Modernity, demonstrates how fleeting moments that suggest annihilation which were formerly found in nature, can now be transposed to the *immediacy* of technologies that command forces comparable to the powers of nature. However, technologies are becoming nurtured through reason rather than solely through natural forces.\[^{714}\] In this sense, this *indeterminacy* notion of the sublime exists as an idea before it is given physical form and, therefore, painting as theoretic operator becomes also a register of the process, a process that renders the passage of time in space through ambiguity.\[^{715}\] Turner's play of ethereal visions of the sublime, understood as something absent yet present, has triggered the author's vision of time in *Orchestrating the invisible* (Series 36) as both ambiguous and fleeting. Here, time passes as smoke camouflages its journey to provide a memory of its existence, both of which elude the visible.\[^{716}\] As Hegel suggests, new outcomes will contain new conflicts in which further changes will occur and, for this reason, nothing remains the same.\[^{717}\] This indeterminacy of the sublime thus, cannot hold specific visual characteristics because it occurs undetermined and perhaps instantaneously.\[^{718}\]

\[^{714}\] Ibid, p. 68.
\[^{715}\] Ibid, p. 69.
\[^{716}\] Ibid.
Series 33: Orchestrating the invisible, 2011-2013. Oil on canvas, 92 x 76 cm.

2:4:3 Ideas of the Contemporary sublime as the techno-sublime of *blankness or immediacy: the vanishing*

The discernment of the notion of invisibility in the limitless passage of time across space might also be instantiated via cognitive reconstruction of mind/sense perception of through the sublime of *blankness or immediacy: the vanishing*. This is an approach in which perception is observed as infinitely segmented yet infinitely connected. Notions of absence or *blankness* can be conveyed as the immediate presence of a tacit, benign techno-sublime. This multi-faceted conception is presented aesthetically through the ideas of artists such as
Barnett Newman’s speculative spaces (Plates 37 and 15) and Gerhard Richter’s vanishing perceptions (Plates 40 and 24).


2:4:3 (i) Speculative spaces

The perception of the notion of invisibility in the limitless passage of time through space is presented as an extra-sensory manifestation of the mind, and involving speculation. Newman’s idea of speculative spaces is established as a gradual passage of time that somehow anticipates sensations of emptiness associated with an instantaneous and indifferent convergence of time and space. Since the sublime of speculative space is

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719 Ibid.
grounded on a plurality of information and production within the most immediate of forms, this formulation also potentially pre-empts a sense of time unfolding. In this respect, this exegesis uses Newman’s ideas as an example to explain speculative spaces which are deep-rooted within timelessness related to his layering of paint. Newman’s speculation on time in Onement I, 1948 (Plate 37) and Vir heroicus sublimis, 1950-1951 (Plate 15) can be inferred through the painting process wherein each successive layer of paint presents a convergence of time. In this idea of time, origin and end occur simultaneously. Newman’s idea of speculative spaces has directly inspired the author’s conception of the passage of time in Tracking Time (Series 34) as a time-lapse depiction of repetitive passing of shadows during a summer’s day. Here, the rhythmic trajectory of each shadow was recorded to offer speculation on the marking of time, albeit within the formal narrative of the painting process. In this respect, as time passes and the layers of paint are processed, each moment leaves traces of the immediacy of its own historical existence. Time and painting thus became one in the act of revealing the invisibility of the time passing through space.

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720 Ibid.
721 Ibid.
726 Ibid.
Series 34: Tracking time, 2012-2013. Photograph and oil on canvas, 19.5 x 25 cm.

2:4:3 (ii) Vanishing perceptions

Conceptions of the notion of invisibility in the limitless passage of time through space can also be considered through Richter’s use of vanishing perceptions as manifestations of the mind grasping a process of gradual erasure. These manifestations, involving denial, are conveyed through a sense of incompleteness or formlessness. The use of vanishing perceptions in Gerhard Richter’s Uncle Rudi, 1965 (Plate 40) and January, 1989 (Plate 24) are two examples of paradoxical contingency, in that neither the prototype image nor its manipulation in paint accurately represents its literal subject. Significantly, painting (as both idea and medium) can reflexively inhabit this apparent inability to fully represent either sense of origin and end. In this regard, Richter’s idea of vanishing perceptions in Uncle Rudi, 1965 (Plate 40) is conveyed by an image partially blurred in order to register an “un-paintable” terror camouflaged and re-presented as an ethereal frailty of what was the real

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728 Ibid.
threat. Richter argues that he tempers the effects of superficial blurring to convey the uncertainties of reality.

Richter’s vanishing perceptions demonstrated as a process of gradual erasure, has motivated the author’s conception of the idea of limitless space in *Invisibility/visibility (Series 35)*, as something gradually revealing and concealing. Here, time in space is evoked as a passage that continues beyond its literal register as a reminder of how painting processes can bring the invisible into being through experimenting with painting materials, techniques and strategies. In revealing time passing in space through the use of *in and out of focus* configurations of the temporal, the invisibility concept of the limitless passage of time in space can be arranged in series so as to make this passage accelerate to a point where perception cannot come to grips with the speed at which this content is conveyed.

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Richter’s idea of vanishing perception in *Uncle Rudi*, 1965 (Plate 40) was furthered in *January*, 1989 (Plate 24), a work in which form is annihilated beyond the point of representation. Whilst the form of *Uncle Rudi* is blurred with thin layers of paint, *January* is reduced to formlessness with multiple layers of paint toned down towards tertiaries of black and grey. This technique of obliterating form through the multiple layering of paint generates a sense of immediacy of execution, just as segmenting time creates fictional moments of sensorial perception. In this context, rapidly obliterated surfaces not only cause vanishing perceptions of reality, but also work to conceal original images and transform these into new and laboriously constructed surfaces. As a result, painting as a vehicular medium serves to convey the inability to fully represent the invisibility notion of the limitless passage of time in space. While the surfaces of Richter’s “photo paintings” were intended to blur the “unpaintable terror” all at once, the surfaces in *January* were gradually built towards obliteration. This idea of obliterating the horrific specificity of terrorist imagery by re-presenting it as ambiguously visible is a reminder of the “incompleteness and inadequacy of all attempts at re-presentation.” Richter’s idea of vanishing perceptions, as demonstrated in *January*, constituted a process of oblation of reality, and accordingly, has inspired the author’s conception of invisibility/visibility of the passage of time through

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739 Ibid.
740 Ibid.
741 Ibid, p. 97.
space in *Virtual reality* (Series 36) as something evaporating and, yet struggling to be noticed. This threat of annihilation that remains concealed through incompleteness of form, demonstrates how the inadequacy of representing horrific disasters can unfold unnoticed so they can be conveyed as almost blank surfaces made with paint. After all, blankness eludes the visible.\(^{743}\)

![Series 36: Virtual reality, 2012-2013. Oil on canvas, 26 x 30 cm. (detail)](image)

This seeming absence of form invokes the notion of immediacy of the passage of time in space, or as Lyotard describes it, an enigma—in short, ‘is it happening?’ This sense of immediacy becomes one with perception of technological advancement, leaving the work of art to expand and be conscious of the Contemporary sublime of no return.\(^ {744}\)

\(^{743}\) Ibid, p. 69.

\(^{744}\) Ibid, p. 54 and Jean-Francois Lyotard, 1991, p. 93.
2:5 Afterthought

The author, enticed towards a sublime for its simplicity, elicits the *invisibility* as a notion viewed in accordance with Lyotard’s view of the sublime. This sublime seen in its simplicity is found in secret places, although invisible, they are felt as a certain “presence.” As these places are marked by indeterminate forms, they can only become visible in the mind of the creator. In this sense, the invisible becomes visible as suspended memories of either pleasure or threat. In the latter, although it is not positive in satisfaction it can infer relief of an indeterminate nature. Similarly, escaping from figurative painting might take the form of an art of reducing event-bound time in which the pictorial object is subjected to its materiality and layout. This in turn might inspire an assumption that there should be *something* where there appears to be *nothing*. Just as Malevich declared through his *Black Square* a century ago, looking at nothing the creator can instantiate something that is not literally accessible. The appearance of that something can deviate from our expectations of a dialogue between presence and absence or between form and formlessness, yet anticipating that the impending results will function together inferring *something* unexpected in the mind of the interpreter. In this respect, the author invites the readers to give free rein to their imagination in order to see *something* via structural expectations of their own which might provoke themselves to find a kind of pleasure or threat that is not all positive and yet of great relief in finding something of an unspecified nature.

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Daniel Mafe, *Art and the Sublime: The Paradox in Indeterminacy and Knowing and (Dis) Orientation in the Presentation of the Presentable*, Faculty of Creative Industries, Queensland University of Technology, 2009.
Conclusion

This research project has demonstrated how painting can be employed as the core of a theoretical and studio-based investigation towards building a pictorial vocabulary for elucidating the paradoxical invisible passage of time through the visible materiality of painting. The task of this research project, *Instantiating ideas of limitless space: Thinking through painting*, was carried out through a studio-based experimentation with painting materials, techniques and strategies, and supported by an intensive theoretic investigation. This process-based experimentation from which the final exhibition was drawn, not only revealed painting as a “register of the process”, but also as an “experimental laboratory” through which a series of pictorial propositions emerged. In this sense, painting was articulated as a “theoretical operator” that offered potential models with which to understand critical philosophical concepts about space, time, visibility, invisibility and limitlessness in relation to the idea of limitless space. These propositions which were supported by the theoretical research and research into the strategies of particular painters, triggered the author’s new procedures to interpret new ways of revealing limitless space. These strategies were evident in the manner in which the research project was structured and thus substantiated what has been done and what emerged through the dialogue between the final exhibited works and the exegesis. In the first chapter, the author investigated the relationship between pictorial space and ideas of limitlessness. This was then analysed in terms of the origins of concepts of limit/limitlessness through searching historical spatial ideas of illusionism and depth in the Italian Renaissance, experiential dimensions, shifting sensations and multiple perspectives. Spatial ideas of limitlessness was furthered via French philosopher Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of perception and Damisch’s painting as model to reveal new ways of thinking through painting. Philosophy was employed in order to discuss subjective ideas as rooted within lived and embodied experience. Accordingly,
the task of comprehending the notion of invisibility of the limitless passage of time in space was demonstrated via a process of transformation rather than an objective outcome, per se. In this way, the process of transformation was considered in the context of the “pictorial” rather than the finished work. Therefore, Merleau-Ponty’s and Damisch’s ideas offered a way of interpreting and visualising the endeavour of the invisibility notion of limitless space through a synergy of mind and senses in the handling of the painting process. The sublime was then wrapped around this endeavour as a form of conceptual framework to open out onto the broader question of invisibility/visibility in association with the limitless passage of time in space. In this sense, the sublime was used to elucidate the invisibility notion of the passage of time as sensations of the mind extending beyond the mere physicality of the landscape. This aspect was envisaged through the power of reasoning to assess the significance of an external phenomenon and through the power of imagination to reveal it. This rich abundance of ideas helped to frame the experimental works of the project which were brought together in the second chapter under the heading *A practical exploration of relationships between pictorial space and ideas of limitless space*. This was fundamental to establishing a strong connection between the invisibility notion of the passage of time and its visualisation through an extensive theoretic investigation and studio-based experimentation with painting materials, techniques and strategies.

Correspondingly, since this project was grounded in an open-ended and speculative relationship between the immediacy of thought and imagination, it focused on painting as both noun and verb, and as a tool and a vehicle for thinking ideas of limitless space in pictorial terms. For this reason, the whole research project was woven around the challenge of finding answers to this elusive research question: *How might painting be employed to build a pictorial vocabulary for elucidating the paradoxically invisible passage of time in space?* This question implied that painting is chiefly an idea that acts as a vehicle towards
unravelling new ways of evoking ideas about the limitlessness of space. As a result, the invisibility concept of the limitless passage of time in space was materialised through the visibility of painting.

This research project supports the notion that as time and space cannot be divided and cannot entirely be portrayed as an existing continuum, time and space can be evoked as their temporal fragmentation through fictional segments of sensorial perceptions. It is thereby claimed that painting is able to represent our inability to fully convey the invisibility of the limitless passage of time in space through its inherent indistinctness of form. This project reveals that although time passes intangibly, its uncertainty might be glimpsed through pictorial ambiguities, which in turn, play a central role in revealing the invisible. Notably, painting as both idea and vehicle can reflexively inhabit this apparent inability to fully represent either sense of origin or end.

The author considers that the conclusions extrapolated from the exegesis and from the final exhibition demonstrate how the dialogue between the grid, the serial and the interval, facilitate the articulation of the invisible passage of time in segments while presenting them as a whole. The author therefore observes that serial visualisation can offer a strategic model whereby each painting becomes a part of a conversational vocabulary of thought. Thinking serially thus is about processing fragments of thought that can appear invisible due to the passage of time. Furthermore, repetition and difference between the fractional units becomes central to comprehending the operation of registers within series.
At this point, it is asserted that the process of painting can play a critical role in materialising the invisible through the interplay of thought and pigment: I paint therefore I think. Furthermore, this interplay, in which perception is developed through a process of separation, division and deferral, is understood through hard work that sought to transcend the limitations of the hand. In stressing process over product, pictorial invention was grounded in chance-based procedure rather than in premeditated design. Painting is an intellectually demanding activity, one that Hegel aligned with a capacity for subjectivity and an uncanny ability to evolve as if it had an independent life. In this context, painting itself is seen as somehow able to think. For Damisch, the notion of thinking through painting processes affirms that painting is a tool for thinking—and, accordingly, becomes a subject for painters—such that the painting instructs the artist. Here, various playful conduits for potentially perceiving notions of invisibility in the limitless passage of time across space were envisioned through the seemingly incompatible processes of reasoning and poetic intuition and through experimenting with painting materials, techniques and strategies—for this is arguably a key raison d'être of art itself.
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