

Cantos - Thinking Vessels

by Sarah Iremonger 2023

I

Vessels of light?

I selected the simplest shapes of scanned vessel images from the book *10,000 Years of Art*¹ as examples of forms which would translate into silhouettes.

The selected Vessels are from: Thailand 250BC; Pakistan 2500BC; Sudan 3500BC; Syria 1287AD; Iran 1190AD; USA 1000AD and Turkey 1547AD they have been chosen for their simplicity of form, cross-cultural and multi-time associations. Reduced to line drawings or silhouettes, then cut out from transparent colour films (using colour separation colours) and layering them one on top of the other, creating different colour combinations as the layered transparencies mix at the point of contact, reminiscent of Venn Diagrams, blue + yellow creates green, for example, simple and beautiful.

They are war-torn or war-producing countries today.

¹ *10,000 Years of Art* Phaidon Press Limited 2009

II

The painted colours are selected to simulate the layered process of colour transparencies, the transparencies are used as a guide for choosing the paint colours, they are painted separately and individually. They are not mixed or painted in layers.

Code quay for watercolour colours including their manufacturers chosen to simulate the colour separation transparencies:

H - Holbein / S - Schmincke / DR - Daler Rowney

1. Primary: Single/First simulated layer
 - Manganese Blue Nova - MBN / H
 - Opera - O / H
 - Cadmium Yellow Light - CYL / S
2. Secondary: Double/Second simulated layer
 - Cadmium Orange - CO / DR
 - Bright Violet - BV / H
 - Cadmium Green Pale - CGP / H
3. Tertiary: Triple/Third simulated layer
 - Peacock Blue - (Holbein) PB / H
 - ~~Phthalo Green - PG / S~~ Permanent Green - PG / H
(gone/finished) VH / H?
 - Imidazolone Brown - IB / H
4. Quadruple: Fourth simulated layer
 - Prussian Blue (Schmincke) - PB / S
 - Olive Green - OG / S
 - Burnt Umber - BU / H (Holbein)
5. Final/Blackish simulated layer: Indigo - H (never completely black)

III

The alternating reality of reflections and refractions!

A kaleidoscope of colours in 2D (flat) + 3D (illusion)

Don't panic you are not a fraud or a failure 'It's just the process' - I'm
in a conservative groove, which is necessary for a while, if not desired!

Headache - self-pity - rest

It will take off soon, use what's about you, anything, it's all the same,
aesthetically/anti-aesthetically it's all a construct + a hedge horizon photo +
drawings + Kinsale + star-wars + Skellig Michael + whatever!

No point in being anti-aesthetic, it is just the other side of the same coin namely
'aesthetics'! I'm not trying to make 'art' or an 'artwork' but understand art as the
same as a language to be manipulated to create meaning.

IV

Organisms differ from machines not in their work but in the quality of their idleness, just as clocks can-not tell the time, light-sensitive cells cannot see, they respond to light as if they were seeing, but that is not vision.

‘When you are trying to grasp how sight works, the actual seeing is an idle component, this is what gives value to life, the idle component! Awaken[ing] in me the feeling of being alive within a living world I am in touch with and inhabit’! ²

I am providing an opportunity for idleness!

² *Outgrowing Dawkins: God for Grownups* by Rupert Short, SPCK 2019

V

'The Lebenswelt, literally 'life-world,' or 'world in common' ...

'Infosphere' ... (a network of strategies and questions; of social movements and social strategies, for example, artists against the 8th Amendment)

'Crisis of relationality' ... loss of the world 'in common' ... the rise of fascism

'Despotic forms of empathy' ... social media

'Horizons of Hope' - relationality + reciprocity...' ³

Post-Representation proposition:

If memory was collective and decentralised, then endeavour and creativity could also be, connecting every human to a sort of virtual 'pot' or a 'collective point of achievement' then, whatever I do is already logged in somewhere on the planet within the collective human mind!

Wouldn't it be amazing if that collective 'pot' went beyond the human race and its achievements, but also included nature and added to the existence of the planet?

For example, climbing Mt. Everest, once it is achieved for the first time, offers the possibility for others to follow in many numbers as if the human knowledge of Mt. Everest has enlarged for everyone.

This would reclaim and re-interpret collective achievement from politics and national capitalism for the

community of humankind a sort of 'cloud system of creation and knowledge'.

Looking for a form of post-representational expression or way of being; a collected directed focus on collective achievement to dispel loneliness and isolation; a kind of anti-personalisation or anti-individualisation of works. Translated into technological invention, what if making art is about creating as you go along and the real artwork was situated in those ideas?

Pandemic hits home - Lockdown - The new normal

Have just finished the first stage of the Vessels paintings, the outer layer of the fourth series.

Note to self:

So how does a Pandemic present in a possible post-representational world, or is it an instigation of it (post-representation)? We are now globally connected in a way we have never been before, hardship is felt by all of us at the same time, not just over there!

Is post-representation about reconnection?

I have talked about collective achievement, the Pandemic provides a possibility for collective connection and susceptibility, trauma, anxiety...

³ *Can We Share a World Beyond Representation?* by Irmgard Emmelhainz, e-flux 2020

VI

Representation is an indication of human exceptionalism, the expectation to be seen above all other living and non-living beings, while simultaneously being the eye at the centre surveying the world around us. This continues romanticism's idea of our separation from the world, the idea of nature beyond us, rather than a world for which humans are part and responsible.

Post-representation points to a new way of being in the world, as part of it, rather than dominant, without distinctions such as the 'Natural World' and the 'Human World'!

VII

Catastrophic sewage overflow in the attic 7th May 2020 – Studio out of commission
for 4 months!

'To be an artist is to fail, as no other dare fail...' ⁴

Beckett: to express something and to fail to express something! a constant
failure – a duality of being – modernism

Modernist idea of human-centric action upon the world:

I am therefore you are

I am = human/you are = the world (romanticism)

How to get beyond this place, this being?

'The world is, therefore the world is!' ⁵

The world is, therefore you are

The world = everything/you are = everything

A sort of flux or scope of being, maybe a whirlwind of being?

⁴ *Samuel Becket Proust & Three Dialogues* with George Duthuit, Calder & Boyars 1970

⁵ *Object-Orientated Ontology A New Theory of Everything* by Graham Harman, Pelican 2018

VIII

Two paths, one turning back on itself and the other linear:

History - Clue

Archival - Means

Reveal - End (ambiguous / fail to reveal a reality)

Abject - Means

Trauma - Clue

Reveal - End (ambiguous / fail to reveal (the real))

Subject: Relic, Replica, Refuse, Artefact, Artefake, Artefuse?

Note to self:

How do I make a fake of my own artefact/artwork?

A post-representational practice could be, for example, a set designer dressing up her parents (in lockdown) as representations of old master paintings or putting a black square on your Instagram page in support of 'Black Lives Matter'.

'Cross-disciplinary; multi-participation; socially explicit; non-contextual' ⁶

⁶ *Bad New Days Art, Criticism, Emergency* by Hal Foster, Verso 2015

IX

'Vessels' of meaning?

Ideas:

1. Vessels – images collected from *10,000 Years of Art*⁷ book and translated into watercolours.

2. Sticker Project - to create a series of digital stickers using flowers, which have the meanings of the flowers embedded in them digitally using a QR code. This came from the idea I found in the book, *Floral Emblems* by Henry Phillips 1825 which represents a depository of knowledge about the meanings of flowers passed as messages from one person to another at the time, the height of the romantic period, a sort of nineteenth-century texting.

3. Language/numbers/leaves – this idea has also come from the same book. Here the plants can be used as symbols for a form of visual numerical language (like ogham but for numbers instead of letters), the leaves represent the numbers, and in this case, they were used specifically to form commemorative dates. There are also emblematic leaves for each day of the week, for example, Monday is represented by the Lotus or Water Lily while Friday is represented by an insect feeding on a leaf.

4. Paint images of fictitious commemorative jugs for the main Irish historical dates in leaf numbers in the style of nineteenth-century imperialist British commemorative artefacts, as fake Irish historic tourist relics! (Reclaiming a colonial language).

Research:

Commemorative jugs

Irish tourist videos and images

Online galleries

Paintings of Irish landscapes

Entropy – decay – everything disappears /
everything becomes the same – dust/stardust

An idea for a Horizons work:

Found images of Irish landscapes and tourist attractions distorted by a computer program and painted in the style of 1930s abstract paintings as postcards.

Towards post-representation? - Thomas Hirshhorn and the Precarious ⁸

‘Where do I stand?’ ‘What do I want?’

Post-critical? ⁹

‘Citizen of the Anthropocene!’ – post-national/international – a citizen of Europe? Of the world? A broad meaning of citizenship.

In the face of citizenship as a privilege rather than a right! (after UK & US behaviour)

Post-representation as post-image – ‘a website is like a mouldy carpet’ ¹⁰

‘Build Your Own Horizon’ is a relational idea of re-positioning or non-positioning the viewer as participant and creator in their own world.

‘Befuddle Your Own Horizon’ - displacement as the result of the death of the author/artist and the failure of the creation of the reader/viewer! (anti-relational)

Indeterminacy of artwork:

Anti-masterwork / artist as facilitator (given a different function) / artist as capital, facilitating the museum's viewers.

Crowd-creativity/creation (multiple artists – everyone is an artist)

The museum seeks to activate the museum itself, so that the viewer becomes a participant rather than a passive viewer of the museum.

The museum as mausoleum, a place to store art that declares it autonomous, an autonomous realm of protection for art, which protects reality from art.

The activation of the viewer has become the end in itself, and the audience is more relevant than the museum/art centre/gallery.

Now, along with the artist the viewer has become the capital.

Build Your Own Befuddled Horizon? I can choose my own experience.

⁷ *10,000 Years of Art* Phaidon Press Limited 2009

⁸ *Bad New Days Art, Criticism, Emergency* by Hal Foster chapter four *Precarious*, Verso 2015

⁹ *Against the Anthropocene Visual Culture and Environment Today* by T.J. Demos, Sternberg 2017

¹⁰ In a conversation with Julie Murray

X

My/anxiety is my/ narrative of existing in a post-modern world, anxiety is the realm of the real, anxiety as post-representation / A.I.

Pre-representation = medieval

Representation = production

'For what is representation if not a 'laying hold and grasping' (an appropriation) a making-stand-over-against, an objectifying that goes forward and masters?...

The indignity of speaking for others' ¹¹

¹¹ *The Anti-Aesthetic, Essays on Postmodern Culture* edited by Hal Foster, The New Press 1998

XI

That which cannot be spoken of

Beyond representation

What is not there/what is lost/left out

'Vessels' of style?

Cubism - change the axis - spin

Romanticism - triangle + spiral

Abstract - grid/random

Computer generated - tiles + transitions

Speculative/speculative materialism

Random/random layering

'One long thought.....' ¹²

'Science of materials' and 'the logic of the material' ¹³

Derek died at 12.30 am on Friday 2nd October 2020

Note to self:

This book reverts to musing for myself rather than a collection of ideas to share with Derek.

¹² In conversation with Julie Murray

¹³ John Cage

XII

After Derek's death – an inconsolable three-week cycle of grief – the 'grief vortex'¹⁴ which can be triggered unannounced at any time by a word, a feeling, a place, a picture, a smell, a season, a sensation, driving a particular route or being in a particular situation and burn right through you uncontrollably.

'When I woke up, I thought: He can't see this morning. It wasn't the first time I'd said that to myself; but every time is the first time.....I could no longer see anything except through his dead eyes. I had gone over to the other side where there is nothing, and realized, with a dumb pain, how everything still continued to exist though I was no longer there; all day I teetered on the edge of that impossible experience: touching the other side of my own non-being.'¹⁵

'After Derek'

Books:

1000 books - non-annotated or dedicated

355 books - annotated or dedicated

48 books - French

100 books - rubbish / not to keep

1503 books - total

1 box of papers for Atlanta USA

1000 books – keep – 'residue'!

Idea for a poem:

'Residue' a list of the books' titles and authors (?) as per shelf, as found on the shelves of Derek's apartment/flat, written out in the form of a poem from photographs.

Post-language

Post

A way of keeping him alive! 'He may need them again'!¹⁶

Notes on Derek's book collection:

After studying the highlighted sections from Derek's books. I think he was interested in the moments of de-mystification, loss of faith, and alienation as described through a meeting with Nature.

Idea for an artwork:

Floral Emblems by Henry Phillips 1825 (a book dictionary of meanings of flowers)

Sending flowers as Victorian messaging,
Instagram etc. - 21st-century messaging,
Messaging What? - Who I am!

Victorian - who I am + 21st-century - who I am = a complex I/dea of narcissistic tendencies.

Floral Emblems with 21st-century Messages about 'Myself'

'I update therefore I am'.¹⁷

A disruptive action be it through technology or an idea!

Verbs = Disruption; Disrupt; Disruptive

Counter-cultural!

Digital panopticon - a star-shaped circular prison arranged around a central axis point of the Internet of Things - post-representation/post-image.

Constant mass surveillance of individuals and data farming.

A simple idea of architectural surveillance (Bentham's panopticon)

Constantly on, forever, no deletion!

Stasi ambition full filled voluntarily,

Crystal Republic for a crystal human.

'We shape our architecture and thereafter it shapes us!' ¹⁸

Data that allows us to create alternative realities of human existence – data-generated realities – then we are recreated in turn.

The digital panopticon we inhabit is in itself a form of representation! I ask myself again is it possible to have a post-representational world? Truly post-colonial? Maybe not! Or maybe this is the post-representational world already upon us?

Screens as portals to other dimensions, surveillance, communication, shopping, information, knowledge, work, leisure, everything

Non-representation – missed representation

Un-representational – beyond representation

Post-representation – after representation

Interrupted-representation – disruption

Disrupted-representation / realism / literal /

literary-representation / representational /

realist-painting

¹⁴ *The Year of Magical Thinking* by Joan Didion, Harper Perennial 2006

¹⁵ *Force of Circumstance* by Simone De Beauvoir, Penguin Books 1968

¹⁶ *The Year of Magical Thinking* by Joan Didion, Harper Perennial 2006

¹⁷ & ¹⁸ *The Internet Is Not The Answer* by Andrew Keen, Atlantic Books 2015

XIII

Representation is problematic and complicated by ideas of memory and memorial/trauma and debacle. Material knowledge as opposed to immaterial knowledge.

Books represent material knowledge,
A stand against the digitisation of knowledge,
A horizon of knowledge,
A time-sensitive horizon – future horizon – time horizon.

What about a past horizon of myself? For example, work re-made out of earlier artwork:

The Waterfall piece as a falling horizon (neon work)
Including an unfinished attempt to paint an earlier version of
abstract paintings (hiding out in the shed) – could be called:
‘The horizons of the past!’

Derek’s books are the raw material and Derek is the template, the template in the way my use of found images is a template for my paintings and the fragmented extracts of words are like the paint, or is it the other way around? – fragmentation and residue – a work of literature!

This work echoes ‘the Horizons’ paintings in concept and approach, could it be a ‘Horizon’ of Derek?

1. An alphabetical catalogue of Derek’s books.
2. A text work based on lifting out the sections from books highlighted by Derek in the margins.
3. A deep textural work describing Derek’s book collection, including markings in the margins, the position of bookmarks, the corners of pages turned down and the broken spines.

Post-representational:

'Machine Vision' robotics - signs produced by machines for other machines without a human interface. A sort of 'Blind Vision'.

'Operational Images' - images that do not represent the world so much as intervene or interact with it.

The algorithmic scripting of our lives.

Disrupted:

Operational images (the idea of cogs is used a lot, for example, logos, simplified images, jigsaw pieces that fit together, Venn diagrams) = idea

Machine Vision = idea

Algorithmic script (a set of steps to achieve something) = idea

Vessels as operational/self-directed images - married with kitsch!

Memorial:

The reinterpretation of the past through images or actions in the present.

Ideas:

Material knowledge as opposed to immaterial knowledge:

1. A series of paintings of moulded packaging in the shape of dolls (to represent the Human) and animals or flowers (to represent nature or the non-human)!

2. Moulded clear plastic packaging! ¹⁹

Vessels continued or 'Vessels 2.0'

Refers to packaged reality/of self

Environmental pollution + politics/oil industry

The bio-political

Note to self:

Converging the excitement of discovery of art at 4 years old with the fetishization of objects, always with the humour of reality and politics.

¹⁹an idea developed after reading about Jeff Koons *What Comes After Farce?* by Hal Foster, Verso 2020

XIV

Images not as a representation or illustration of the world, or to be read like an installation, but to interact with the world: Representation as interaction?

Meanings:

Venn Diagrams - to explain

Camouflage - to hide

QR codes - machine images

Diagrams - information

Words - to describe - representation again!

Idea:

Digitally manipulated computer scans of transparent colours. Machine-made images, to use as a guide for the Vessels watercolours. Here I am looking for a way to increase the machine/computer/digital feeling of the images for the next stage of the 'Vessels' project.

Vessels of vessels

Light as a vessel

Computer distortions as collapsed vessel/possibility?

Computer as vessel

A vessel as a container/as a failed container

Vessels of knowledge?

A vessel as a cultural symbol of place and time.

QR code = Quick Response Code (machine speaking to machine) a pathway to something else. Interaction with the world through computer images, designed for a computer to talk to a computer.

Machine Images = vessels of meaning - computer visual language (machine image is the reading of data by algorithms that machines use to organise information).

Note to self:

If you push an image on a computer – like mixing too much paint turning a muddy brown – it becomes visual noise!

A plate in the book *Floral Emblems* shows a vase. The vase is made out of pansy flowers and contains snowdrops, the flowers represent meaning ascribed to them in the book by Phillips, for example, these flowers represent 'Consolation Arising from Thoughts'. Computer distortions disrupt the image to create humorous alternatives, here representation is meaning and the distortion changes/muddies the meaning.

Vessels and The Quandary of Representation:

A representation of what?

Why a representation??

And how to represent it?

What do you represent?

Venn Diagrams are images that interact with the world and represent something about it. 'Representation' is the barrier between us and the world. We put ourselves into the 'third person' separated and alone instead of interacting directly or experiencing the world. This implicates us in relation to nature, the 'relation' is the question and the problem! The 'relation' is one of separation as represented by representation!

Painting for me is not about self-expression or the expression of something like emotion or a search for originality, it's scientific and philosophical, an exploration of what it means to see and understand our world, not through a representation of it. Representation acts like a filter, adding emotion on top, like putting the artwork in the way of our interaction with the world. Relegating the artwork to an object.

Gorky treaded a world between abstraction and representation, his work is recognizable but we don't know what we are looking at! Between subject and abstract, like seeing the world as a pre-visual being, before you understand what you are looking at.

XV

The Labyrinth of Representation!

Idea: to cross John Ruskin's paintings from *The Stones of Venice* 1852-53 including diagrams and measurements of architectural details with abstractions to create a visual controversy in the style of Gorky - representation, abstraction in a representation of stone and architecture.

When does representation become interaction?

When is a diagram representational and not documentation?

When does representation become documentation?

Notes to self:

Sonia and Robert Delaunay - colour as emotion and the science of colour; Hilma af Klint - diagrams from a spiritual higher being.

Idea:

'Vessels' in the context of art therapy; in the style of kitsch and psychedelic art and the technique of the colour wheel and colouring books.

XVI

When you are creating art you are dealing with the fundamentals of the universe through its material reality!

Self-expression seems indulgent, part of human exceptionalism and is killing the planet, for me, it's more like a scientific inquiry like the idea of being a 'colourologist'. I am pursuing expressions of colour for the colour itself and letting the colour explore its own possibilities, for example, each colour dictates what the next colour should be, what the different combinations do and the effect they produce.

Not to be an illustrator or a visual description of an idea, but a part of the fundamental working of the materials at hand, functioning directly on the senses and intellect, not to express something, but to engage with something.

'An idea or concept which generates the thing to be done'. (posted on Facebook by Catherine Harty 2022)

'Your Vessels are very enjoyable to contemplate and just absorb the colour and shapes of time, after all this suspension in time in the current mayhem it is a welcome thing to think of animate images'. (posted on Facebook by Katie O'Looney 2022)

The concept of 'merge' is where two elements come together to create a third element - Venn diagrams/colour - merge/mixing.

XVII

These works (watercolour paintings) are like 'thought experiments' in colour and to some extent tone, taking the first three colour separation colours (magenta, cyan and yellow) and the three secondary colour separation colours (orange, purple and green) and painting them in the logical order of their mixed relationships to a Venn diagram. Then randomly and after that a mixture of both together. The computer-generated variations of the colour transparencies are also like thought experiments but as visual variations – using the focus, grid, twirl and wave Photoshop filters.

Art and science as informed contexts for making!

Using science and art as strategies for discovery and creation is an interesting development of this idea; art as an illustration of nature's beauty just becomes an illustration of basic scientific ideas.

Art is a thought experiment, creating new uses for thought experimentations.

XVIII

'At the heart of the ridiculous, the sublime' *Antarctica* poem by Derek Mahon ²⁰

'At the heart of the sublime, the ridiculous' *Heroic Failure* by Fintan O'Toole ²¹

The mothership of heroic failure, abandonment and abuse endured and not survived, a negative/anti-heroism/exceptionalism of the human being.

Death as a lifes work!

In focusing on creating a work or works as the most important thing, what will be remembered or survive? Is the past an excuse for coping with the feeling of being ignored, a failure, and not having a place in the context of the cultural life of today? Does it mean turning your back on that culture? How do you survive this sense of having no self, no place? – You survive through the creation of art.

Abject ideas:

1. Drawings of the outlines of potato crisps – exotic flavours, superimposed with Celtic designs – 'Celtic flavoured crisps' – a campaign for banal nationalism.

2. Drawings of the outlines of ice creams -
National identity at its most debased
Brexit

Lies or not - fake lies? Do two negatives create a positive?

About biodiversity endangerment or the opposite - 'environmental'

About data and information gathering – 'identity'

About who buys our houses, who builds them and for whom? –
'Housing'

About the corporate-controlled government – 'tax'

How tiny seeds of grievance can blossom into full-blown oppression, feeding self-pity.

Perverse power to fuck everything up:

Be offensive - 'Sex Pistols' 1970s

The counterculture of punk has been usurped by politics.

This has led to a weird twisted softening of art!

An expression of the flipside of tradition is still a tradition.

Counterculture is the flipside of conservative culture - (they have become the same thing). Freedom fighting is the same as bondage, they have collapsed in on each other.

Feminism is a form of fascism (conditional bondage)

Love & hate interchangeable

We live in a fascist time

Stay the middle road - a call to grey!

I want my work to slide in and out of cultural consciousness:

To be 'conscious' and 'oblivious' at the same time.

To act as 'conscious oblivion' - intoxication/obscure the truth of oblivion.

Mindlessness - an antidote, the opposite of 'egotistical' politics and practices?

Art as a fractured, broken, shattered, lost thing, I'm trying to shatter my own efforts and break my own thought processes, breaking it down so that I can rebuild it again always starting from the beginning!

My work is a series of thought experiments on the idea of the infinite within the finite! It's like trying to allow what is not art to sneak in, for example, going against the grain. Against the grain of my intention to make a meaningful image allows other forms of image-making to seep in including but not exclusive patchwork; colouring books; Venn diagrams; colour wheels; fabric design; anthropological and historic illustrations; kaleidoscopes; prisms; book cover designs; advertising; politics or political images; personal documentation (selfies); information leaflets; grammatical symbols etc. I am constantly surfing the web for interesting images and information.

Art is the affirmation of life, as are experiences of joy and sexual arousal, they affirm life, a kind of intoxication with life to overcome the 'terrible' truth of our oblivion! Making art is like following a maze that has no end in sight, a thought experiment winding its way along and doubling back on itself when least expected.

²⁰ *New Selected Poems* by Derek Mahon, The Gallery Press 2016

²¹ *Heroic Failure* by Fintan O'Toole, Head of Zeus 2019

XIX

The shock of Derek's death is beginning to fade, but not the sorrow, I'm beginning to come out of the stunned numbness of grief:

Post-perspective/lost perspective - 'Horizons'

The entropy of visual images - or 'towards a visual entropy....'

Entropy:

A doctrine of inevitable social decline and degradation.

A state of disorder or a tendency towards such a state.

Louis Weinberger - 1947 - 2020

Ideas notebooks Horizons 1 + Horizons 2 + Vessels 1 = merging

Note to self:

Research Irish plastic water bottle companies and reduce them to vectors or silhouettes of plastic bottles drawn one on top of each other until they become visual noise to symbolise lost ecology through human activity.

Art as a descriptive tool to explore the loss of nature and human existence.

Colonialism is representation - to colonise is to create a representation of the colonised as the other!

We colonise nature - which creates it as the other in our midst.

Racism & sexism are therefore a natural outcome of this kind of thinking as we colonise ourselves also.

'We inhabit the world in the form of a kind of colonisation, everything is 'other' to ourselves, until this way of thinking changes, we are doomed through an inevitable degradation of ourselves and the world, we are part of.' ²²

Abject - Entropy of the visual - lost perspective and meaning.

The idea of the vessel as a container of meaning, of cultural meaning as a container of itself, not what it contains but as a carrier of meaning, a substance to be carried, contained.

'See the world as an object of contemplation, not as something to be remade.'²³

'The only real experience of "Nature" that is open to us is a state of quiet contemplation that is directed at the complexities and ambiguities of the contemporary world'²⁴

Contemplation - mandalas/meditation

A call to contemplate

The gallery as a contemplative space and art as the excuse.

Weinberger provides a 'means by' and a 'how to' contemplate nature.

Unfettered proliferation - weeds/wasteland

Creating works is so distracting that our attention is misdirected to the works of art and away from the damaging effects on the environment, development, fake news etc.

'Lost Perspective' - let the colour distract (title of new vessels-based works with coloured centres)

(I think the 'Pivotal Vessels' project is going nowhere, but I will push on to finish my ideas and complete the 'Random Pivotal Vessels' work.)

'The imagination is not a state: it is the human existence itself'²⁵

Our experience is imagination, we are never out of our imaginations and vice versa!
Constantly imagining, creating and recreating the world.

²² *No Representation Without Colonisation? (Or Nature Represents Itself)* by Astrida Neimanis
SOMATECHNICS Vol.5 2 Missing Links and (Non) Human Queerings 2015

²³ *A Vision by W.B. Yeats V A.D. 1050 - The Present Day, Written at Capri, Feb 1925*

²⁴ *Louis Weinberger / Strangers and Weeds* by John Hutchinson Catalogue for D.H. Gallery 2002

²⁵ *William Blake: Biography BBC* by P. Glynn on *William Blake Versus The World* by John Higgs 6/2021

XX

Vessel paintings variations as Pivotal and Multiples:

1. Venn Diagrams – painted solid colour as different separation colours.
2. Random – painted totally/all or/ & 1 vessel shape (top-down or not).
3. Solid colour – painted totally/all or/ & 1 vessel shape (top) or/ & 1 vessel & different.
4. Separation colours only
5. Painted edges only
6. Painted interactively with other vessels – centre vessel image only

Politics and light – the politics of light

Politics and electromagnetic radiation

The politics of electromagnetic radiation?

The thingness of electromagnetic radiation

The thingness of light

Thingness and electromagnetic radiation

The thingness and electromagnetic radiation of paint/light/of light through paint!

Light as radio/microwaves that can be detected by the human eye.

That can be detected

Light/radio/microwaves = electromagnetic radiation

I'm harkening back to psychedelic themes as well as religious mandalas and 30s abstraction, while at the same time giving a nod to contemporary adult colouring book culture and doodles. In the context of scientific colour theory and Venn Diagrams.

Paintings are like an opportunity for a continuous flickering of vision, without which we would go blind, vision depends on the continual movement of the

eyes. The dominance of vision in humans is suspect because it places too much primacy on our brains as the centre of our world.

'Haptics - the sensations that come from sensor cells in the skin and/or muscles/tendons through the spinal cord, instead of a dedicated nerve bundle between a sense organ and the brain' 'Haptics is about you as part of the world, not as an observer'.²⁶

From the assurance of grand visions to background throwaways and small visions. This allows for quickly working through ideas, always changing, developing, and becoming. No long the masterplan/masterpiece gesture!

'Push anything far enough and it transforms.'²⁷

Interaction is the clue - my paintings are the end results of my interaction with my hand, paint and paper.

Being - crisis - 'nameless beings on the verge of non-existence' Beckett

'The Unnameable' - arguments for solipsism - death - silence - how can you know?

Shattered vision = non-vision

Shattered word = atomised = non-word

Hovering between - literature and philosophy

Hovering between - art and philosophy

Necessary and insufficient - necessary and sufficient

Universality or personal - or both!

Philosophical awareness of our existence - wonder is the beginning of philosophy.

Being is absurd!

Non-art as non-vision as absurd

Non-vision as absurd art

Working often feels like a purposeless pursuit – Am I wasting my time?

^{26 & 27} *Dawn of the New Everything A Journey Through Virtual Reality* by Jaron Lanier, Vintage 2017

XXI

'Folding diagrams and painting into each other'.²⁸

I'm not concerned with the mediation of the image other than through science using colour and popular culture, such as the industry of self-help! Mindfulness and meditation through colouring books, for example, combining instruction with selfhood through the act of painting.

I use a handmade readymade hybrid to confound dichotomies of the manual and the mechanical.

An end to history:

Historic vessels are lost in a kaleidoscope of colours, flattened and shattered into meaningless shapes and ascribed colours in a loosely random and at the same time balanced flat compositional format.

How do you paint flippantly?

A sort of not giving a damn while giving a damn.

A sort of nonchalance towards being.

As serious non-being or not being without fear!

An endless puzzle

Order out of chaos and chaos out of order! (I'm talking about the act of painting)

To recapture the feeling of teenage earnestness with freeform thinking and ease of materiality and imagery.

How do you paint something that is and gives rise to/accesses /shows/suggests/critiques to this state/way of being?

Don't make value judgments or choices based on aesthetics but on necessity or chance (painting).

To find a way of painting which is appropriate to a post-human (humans as not the centre of conscious existence) world.

Culture is nature, therefore be responsible and work with it.

²⁸ *The First Pop Age* by Hal Foster Princeton University Press 2012

XXII

Superior mirages, kaleidoscopes, magical mythical transformations - with real science and philosophy behind them - layers of earth/horizontal (sleep)/are space and time to an archaeologist.

Books are alive and sparkly things!

Fractal light

Writing as archaeology of literature

The endless metamorphosis of art.

Art as an excavation of the past and a conversation with the dead.

The power of art to change things into nature and the stars.

If you collapse the imagination then reality takes flight,

Has late/post-capitalism and technological developments, for example, the iPhone, precipitated a collapse of the imagined self/identity, resulting in an inability to cope with reality?

The ego as an imagined self,

Capitalism promotes the objectification of the imagined self so that the subject and object both collapse into the self.

So where are we then?

The projected self through our buying power/money?

The projected self through our accumulation of things?

Or a new kind of imagined self through connectedness with people (community) and the world (the planet/nature etc.)?

To create a new kind of imaginary self!

XXIII

'Collapse' - the new normal?

Systems of information in a state of collapse loss of reality and facts-based knowledge - climate in a state of collapse:

Biodiversity..... + Ecosystems.....

Capitalism..... + Economics.....

Work.....

Implosion and explosion of information.

I am exploring images with themes of collapse - disaster and devastation - natural and manmade/handmade.

Unconscious; exhaustion; disease

Crumbling

Fold up; falling in; breakdown

Breakdown; come to nothing; fail

To sink into extreme weakness

To fall in ruins

Algorithms are the 'machine eye' we don't get to see!

Data collection - machine scripting of information,

Algorithms are a set of steps to organise information.

Create digital 'Safe Houses' where misinformation helps blind A.I.
with incorrect information.

Collapsed information systems.

So that humans can exist unseen/invisibly from algorithms / free of data collection.

'The fading of the sensible' ²⁹

'Machine vision allows for a sublime evocation of space and time.' ³⁰

Machine vision is when computers talk to each other and share data, it is in fact then no vision at all.

To neutralise trauma, you have to understand what is traumatic to you, and how the image is traumatic. How does it engender trauma? The loss of vision, blindness? The photograph as capturing death? As death? Because of its proliferation, reflecting the desire to be adsorbed into the spatial continuum? This proliferation of images transforms them into mineable data. This transformation is a kind of death of the self? Because it is blind and lost to actually seeing. Machine vision is a vision in the dark. A kind of blindness? Machine vision as the death of the self? Of the imagined self? Imaged self? Machine vision as the death of the image? Machine vision is like bottomless blindness, it is the loss of the possibility of absorption into the continuum. It is proof that the continuum is blind, is nothingness? The death of the possibility of the imagined self? The imagined imaged self? A loss of self as a banality? Multiple banalities? Multiple losses? Loss of the possibility of loss? Loss of loss? Machine vision is the abyss? Machine vision is the loss of even the idea of the abyss? Every photograph I take is part of the abyss of machine vision? Every Photograph I take is a death? The abyss of machine vision is death? The abyss of machine vision is proof the continuum doesn't exist? Machine vision is a black hole of data sucking us inexorably into its blind abyss of nothingness...

Machine vision is a kind of blindness:

Produces distortions, vast blind spots, and wild misinterpretations.

The violence of the landscape/violence is occluded in the landscape genre.

Abstraction as signifying the opacity of systems.

Critique of representation and institutions.

What is visual competence?

What are communication and meaning anymore?

Collapsed Venn Diagram series!

'The show is not the show, but them that go' ³¹

Consider the viewer and how the viewer changes what is viewed and is in turn changed.

'Vessels' as cultural boundlessness,

Colour boundlessness / when all mixed together = black

'Not to perpetuate a culture of separateness.'³²

²⁹ *What Comes After Farce? Art and Criticism at a Time of Debacle* by Hal Foster, Verso London & New York 2020

³⁰ Trevor Paglen

³¹ Emily Dickenson

³² Edward Said

XXIV

I think I must have a heavy mind sometimes! A dark, ponderously slow and difficult way of exploring ideas.

De-skilling is about moving the artist's intention towards the viewer's circumstances, to render it more open, objective and active.

'I hate the dazzlement of skill' ³³

An aesthetic of indifference, the disconnect between work and self, or partial disconnect....

Web-revival/retro-web

The internet an abyss of words and images.

³³ Richter 1964

XXV

George Berkeley (1685-1753) was an Irish philosopher and idealist, whose ideas on reality were important to Derek and my work. When we met in 2013 Derek wrote to me 'a Berkeyan [sic] too!' taking delight in my interest in his philosophies.

'Seeing is believing' ³⁴ as fake news would have us believe, fake images disrupting our sense of orientation to the world.

'A {New} Theory of Vision' (Derek's brackets) Derek's final unfinished work, which I found on his typewriter is named after Berkeley's own work of the same name/title 'A New Theory of Vision' (1707).

How the quality and quantity of vapours or atmosphere near the surface of the Earth changes the appearance of the moon on the horizon – and in the proximity to the foreground.

In the same way, the same word can have a different meaning in different contexts – used in poetry is powerful and in the media kitsch.

In 'A {New} Theory of Vison' vision is about seeing in the present and a vision of the future; time relevant.

For example, in *Washing Up* ³⁵ (Derek's last collection of poetry) washing is about doing the washing, washing up on the shore and being all washed up!

Time – held in time, what's the time, this shaking up of language provides wriggle room for things to be seen a new or helps us see/glimpse the illusion of language we are always all the time involved in as Berkeley describes!

Thought experiments

Wordless thought

And this shaking up of language to rattle us out of our own fixed illusions, is done with such elegance and gentleness by Derek that it happens on an almost subconscious level.

Berkeley – a marriage of philosophy and psychology to explore existence.
Left to our own devices!

Enlightenment - a vision of universal world civilisation.

³⁴ was written inside the cover by Derek of *Berkeley-Grant, philosophers* by David Berman 1997

³⁵ *Washing Up* by Derek Mahon, The Gallery Press 2020

XXVI

Is humanity the last imperialism to overcome? To return to the human? Is the 'human' the realisation of our real place in the world? As part of it, rather than dominant, rather than a user? But a creature? Like every other creature on this planet, interdependent, not caretaker, but the same as? ³⁶

The 'Vessels' work is an examination of multi-culturalism, towards an expression of the 'human' rather than that of 'humanity'.

'How cultures, influence each other or even remain isolated.....colours as federalism ceding from nation states, perhaps' (posted on Instagram by Oliver Sears 2022)

Panpsychism - the word "panpsychism" literally means that everything has a mind.
De-centred / only others 'we are all others'.

Scattered semblance of explosions! Explosion/implosion is the internal violence of the saturated whole disoriented/multiple horizons at once.

The solipsism of the art space for art!

Context as relativism

(Fab Lab - Barcelona' make anything)

Perception and the loss of objective knowledge - the postmodernist idea of constantly shifting meanings.

The connection between psychedelics and narcissism, spiritualism and self-regard, using spirituality to disempower. Cultism

The illusion of change through (fast) fashion is symptomatic of (connected to) the illusion of democracy. Art as (fast) fashion! wild plastic!

Idea:

Caravaggio's Narcissus crossed with psychedelic images of explosions:

The intoxication of the narcissist

The intoxication of oneself, of self-regard

Towards self-intoxication

Narcissism and freedom?

Reading Simone De Beauvoir's biography gives me the opportunity for rigorous self-examination. It's an opportunity to see another life rigorously analysed therefore the possibility of getting beyond myself. Another life of self-interrogation offers the possibility of self-interrogation!

Notes to Self:

'Put time on pause' ³⁷

'Unbounded by time' ³⁸

'Connectivism' ³⁹

³⁶ thoughts inspired by reading *Recodings Art, Sceptical, Cultural Politics* by Hal Foster, The New Press New York 1985

³⁷ *Revelations* Biography of Francis Bacon by Mark Stevens and Annaly Swan, William Collins 2021

³⁸ Fintan O'Toole *The Irish Times* March 2023

³⁹ in conversation with Daniel Murray

XXVII

My work seems to me, in retrospect, to be an exploration of method. I like to push whatever medium I'm using to its limits. The early work of dark paintings gathered an intention towards capture. The capture of a quality of light and feeling through a particular process of laying down paint. This process revealed itself as a method that could be duplicated for its own sake and ended in a cul-de-sac of single-coloured panels of beautiful and mood-instigating paint that could be replicated endlessly.

In an attempt to overcome this 'dead-end', I let ideas of representation and politics flood the work and opened it up to new material and nonmaterial possibilities.

A return to painting in 2014 has focused on exploring and expanding the possibilities of didactic processes. Processes glimpsed in my early work through repetition that was perceived, by me, as a hindrance to linear developmental progress in the creation of awe, it timed out. Now the work consciously follows carefully chosen rules set out by external processes pushing them to extremes and embracing method as the subject matter. This creates a lot of noise in the work, mirroring the digital storm we find ourselves embedded in today.

The strong paradox of Being – the hopefulness of rejuvenation and renewal while at the same time the disintegration of ageing! Getting old is such a pain, all that history.... constant triggers that shift time and open vortexes of memory.

Time-slippage – memories mixing with the present reality.

'A shadowy implicit knowledge'⁴⁰

'Grief like the music of emotions'⁴¹

Water falling fall....

Noise....visual, verbal, written.... language of images of its time.

'Art can articulate our longings and make up for our failures!' ⁴²

'My heart is in the grave' ⁴³

'While some artists disrupt our understanding of the past, others invite us to imagine fantastical futures. In this exhibition, fantasy becomes a zone of creative and cultural liberation and a means of addressing racism and social injustice by conjuring new ways of being in the world.' ⁴⁴

⁴⁰ *The Mill on the Floss* by George Elliot Wordsworth Classics 1999

⁴¹ *Force of Circumstance* by Simone De Beauvoir

⁴² *Into the Inferno* film by Werner Herzog 2016

⁴³ *The Last Tycoon* by F.S. Fitzgerald, Penguin Books 1974

⁴⁴ *The Black Fantastic* Hayward Gallery exhibition description 2022

XXVIII

'Spatial intelligence - experienced as one immediacy - Mozart could see an entire composition all at once in its entirety - the composition slowly spreads out in his imagination so that he could see the entire structure.' ⁴⁵

The human mind as a verb

Machine learning

'A fragmented centreless labyrinth as joy and acceptance.' ⁴⁶

Swap process for procedure - 'tape record one's life' ⁴⁷

The Uncreative Creative - process in the age of overproduction?

Categories:

'The Crack-up' (not his) in the style of F.S. Fitzgerald

'The Wilful Biography' in the style of Simon De Beauvoir

'The Discovery of Inspiration' in the style of Kenneth Goldsmith

The Notebook:

Age - history

Intension

Desire

Fighting with oneself and the world

Chasing the Paradox:

Where is it?

What is it?

Inside the Belly of the Beast:

Grief

Fly in the Bottle

I feel therefore I am!

I think grief must have a way of multiplying itself like an irrepressible life force reaching back and unlocking previous griefs, amplifying losses from the past. As you get older these seem to fold one on top of another like an accordion, each touching the other and then separating out and away again only to be repeated over and over....

The nostalgia and blurred vision of grief.

Themes:

Failure/originality

Representation

Uncreativity

Anti-aesthetic

Human Exceptionalism

A.I. - Artificial Intelligence - take over - an
existential threat?

A.S. - Artificial stupidity

Digital rewilding

Idea:

Get a Chatbot to write this book for me, devise and formulate questions to develop a dialogue from this notebook.

The creative process is at once completely absorbed in and at the same time incredulous about its ability to produce ideas and work!

Finding and opening the gaps between things in relation to one another - an excavation of ideas.

Expose and find the darkness indirectly.

A turning towards something, moving towards, pointing towards something.

Fighting the representational with surprise-defamiliarization.

Ideas for work from Derek's library:

1. Make a painting of the first book cover in each alphabetical category 26
2. Select a series of books with the same word repeated and paint or/and photograph the covers.

Titles: The Woods (darkness-lost) / The Trail (the way) / The Journey (movement-travel) / The Clues (information) / The Treasure (knowledge-death)

Post-representation - 'the shattering of ourselves through over-representation via digital media leading to the desire to be invisible - image spam' ⁴⁸

'Correlationism' - you are judged by whom you hang out with, by what and who is associated with you.

'Crapstraction' - an algorithm that judges what art you will like by what your friends like, abstract images that emerge from an analysis of data.

Social abstraction - gamed choices and selection processes as visualised algorithms as crap images.

Generative fiction - start talking about the weather - anything and everything,
Humans working for robots - or doing the jobs they can't do well
Robots doing things for humans is more like an interaction between humans and robots or A.I.

What do we want from A.I.? Machine Learning:

Representation is about visibility and invisibility in an age of digital overload and proliferation.

We live in an age of 'extractivism' - data; energy; etc.

which creates a state of reality which questions the future of art production and institutions, will we be able to make art in the future?

Reverse the flow of extraction and pay artists and stop museums from supporting wealth and skewed ranking systems.

Stable Diffusion - text-to-image A.I.

Representation in the age of digitalisation and the creation of invisibility through the proliferation of data and correlationism, noise versus the signal.

Power Image - 'imergy' - the energy it takes to make and disseminate and create digital images.

Energy as fire, fire as a post-human technology

The Fire of Creativity - *Into the Inferno* film by Werner Herzog

2016 / fire as destruction/nothing lasts forever

Energy extraction of digital images

Digital works as contemporary oil paintings because they use fossil fuels to generate the energy needed to exist.

The idea of invisibility in an over-visible world.

Hide your ideas in the future.

⁴⁵ *Embodied and Empathic Imagination* by Juhani Pallasma, MAKE Conference Cork 2023

⁴⁶ *Notes on Trumpspace* by David Markus, Punctum Books 2023

⁴⁷ *Force of Circumstance* by Simone de Beauvoir, Penguin Books 1968

⁴⁸ *The Spam of the Earth: Withdrawal from Representation* by Hito Steyerl, e-flux journal #32 February 2012

XXIX

This notebook is a representation of the way my mind grapples with the development of an idea over a period of time and how the idea of post-representation which it attempts to explore undermines its very purpose:

How can a representational entity 'The Notebook' explore a post-representational idea?

External brain - thoughts and development patterns.

Ideas and how we think or develop thoughts.

The story of a long continuous thought interrupted!

I think I don't want to exist. (Tied up in knots!)

The creative process as a constant state of crisis.

This can only be about the messy, chaotic process of the mind in a state of continuous crisis in the creative process, which is its value when faced with the existence of A.I.?

Ideas:

1. Include word count and other editing tools in the final document for transparency and inclusion of the reader.
2. Each chapter should take the form of a different philosophical position or theory as the basis for its theme.

For example, Derek used 'Table Talk' to talk about Thing Theory, Object Orientated Ontology OOO and Speculative Materialism.

Mix up notebooks to break chronology.

This is my Hunt By Night! ⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Inspired by Derek Mahon's poetry collection *The Hunt By Night* Oxford Poets, 1982