

# Patterns of Transformation

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A report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the school of architecture,  
Computing and Engineering, University of East London, for the degree of Professional  
Doctorate in Fine Art

July 2023

## **Abstract**

My artwork is an exploration of abstract mark-making that arises from a contemplation of the relationship between the individual and the landscape. This connects my work with a form of ecological thinking referred to as ecopsychology; a concept which offers me the freedom to explore patterns in nature while remaining purposefully connected to environmental concerns.

My drawing process is thus informed by patterns in earth, sea, and sky, by the mark-making process itself and by the human detritus that pollutes, but is nevertheless a part of, the landscape as I encounter it. All of this feeds into the cycle of drawn acts.

The abstraction of my drawn forms resolves into a more material practice in my sculptures which make use of found objects and evoke the entanglements that characterise the ecology of the contemporary world. In this way, my art making suggests modes of thought, encompassing all aspects of the environment, which are required to open space for ecological action.

Keywords: Abstraction, landscape, animism, free-form drawing, sculpture, ocean, ecology, ecosophy, ecopsychology, pollution

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## Acknowledgments

Acknowledgment and gratitude go out to encounters near and far. In the spirit of the report this includes the elements that inspire and the intrusions on the landscape that create sadness but give something to work with. My Nan on leaving this world inadvertently gave me the chance to write this and spiralling out from that thought is a heartfelt gratitude to all my family. My partner Dominique has kindly given space both physically and mentally without which I wouldn't have been able to see this work through fully.

Heartfelt acknowledgment goes to supervisors who have given time to consider my work and research. Tony Sampson in his wisdom helped me to understand how the concept of ecology could apply to my whole practice, he consistently saw the relevance of this, whilst connecting to and understanding my musings on abstraction, the landscape, and the ocean. Mikey Georgeson was often in these discussions and was incredibly generous with his time. My observation is that in his way of being he is a consistent expression of how art and life are one and as such has been an inspiration. I particularly enjoyed, whilst finding invaluable the many studio visits from Lee Maelzer, who in her own wisdom always understood something of the potential of my work. Her observations often were spot on, as were the observations and feedback received from Karen Raney, who has been greatly appreciated throughout the course, but particularly at either end of the course as she has engaged in my writing. As the doctorate was drawing to a conclusion I also benefited greatly by feedback on my writing from Debra Shaw, whose well placed observations and comments have helped the crucial last stage of streamlining. Michael Pinsky and Garry Doherty have offered valuable interjections both in and out of seminars, thanks to them and thanks of course to fellow course mates.

## Introduction

This report, as a chronicle, charts five years of an art practice during which time the main strand of this creative enquiry has been a drawing practice, that utilises mixed media to extend this mark making into sculpture. These considerations were found to be better placed to explore the connections of art making to the environment. During the doctorate my art practice has been based in East London and in this time the commitment to the studio has been intense. Through lockdown, and through my hermetic tendency there has been a studio-based osmotic barrier, in which patterns of inspiration were contacted through meditations on the inspirational elements of earth, sea, and sky. In the later stages of the doctorate, as I ventured out more, my destination was to these elements, found at coastlines within striking distance from my studio. This lure was in connection to the ocean as source of inspiration, and as an analogy for an open ecology that is of the interrelation between oneself and the environment.

As my art practice finds meaning in connection to exploring patterns of transformation in the landscape and from the process of free-form drawing, so too it finds a way to respond to what is disenchanting about what is found in the landscape. This is an allusion to environmental concerns, to what is reported on daily as a crisis. Connecting to this I use the term pollution in this report as a visible sign of a wrong being done to the environment. As the doctorate opens outward from the studio, to environment, and back again, it first draws in materials that can be used to make with, but as well makes use of the fact that these materials offer the artwork threads of enquiry into what they are, where they come from. The art practice with an abstract tendency does not answer this specifically but leaves it open and in doing so has allowed a free-form mark making process a degree of freedom to roam and to create a new body of work.

Chapter 0, personal and creative context continues this introduction by moving through personal history and drawing out aspects that have been absorbed into the development of what emerges within the doctoral timeframe. The first chapter is formed of two parts, the initial part seeks to clarify some terminology connected to theory that will be used throughout the report. The second part details the opening drawings, and how they were developed in connection to these theories being brainstormed, leading me to view them functionally, as a

kind of blueprint for work to come. The four subsequent chapters fit into stages and align with the years of the doctorate. The overall thrust of these chapters relays the developments from drawing to possible painterly outcome, to an inevitable return to sculpture.

## **Chapter 0: Personal and Creative Context**

My artwork in its early development was connected to landscape. Outside of the representational aspect the word 'landscape' as a genre can allude to, my interest was in patterns and process I found within an encounter, which as well heightened a compelling sense of aliveness felt when in contact with invigorating forces of nature. Instances of inspiration were of waves crashing on a shoreline, of ocean spray jetting in the air, and of worn beach groynes, or something of their origin in silhouetted forms that emerge from trees in an autumn wood. Observed as well would be patterns in much smaller sections of these phenomena, looking closer, looking into sections that fit into the palm of a hand, that then echo other larger phenomena. Over time, I have found I refer to this as an interest in elements, to a triadic conception and interrelation of sky, sea, and earth. When I speak of the elements, in one way or other, this is what I mean. The elements in this way are not necessarily site specific and work to introduce an explanation of an ambiguous abstract tendency that has infused my practice from early on. In this way, abstract expressionism and an abstract exploration of landscape can perhaps be said to have been my creative starting point.

### **Below Thought**

Ignited by what I saw in shifting patterns found in elements was a metaphysical probing, a search for meaning, but as well I was drawn by the potential of an art practice to access deeper more meditative states of being, where: 'The sensing body is not a programmed machine but an active and open form, continually improvising its relation to things and to the world' (Abram, 1997, p. 49). Meaning in creative acts was found not through thinking, but in a way of connecting to another sort of communication that resonates with philosopher David Abram who writes of a '... silent communication that I carry on with things, a continuous dialogue that unfolds far below my verbal awareness...' (Abram, 1997, p. 52). The sensing of elements, of exploring pattern facilitated a type of awareness that would allow a more fused and direct experience with (for instance) mark making. This fed an enquiry from early on which connected to descriptive words of life as being transient. The enquiry therefore has inherently been an ontological one, and my use of the word 'nature' in this report is in part

connected to this; neither though, do I dismiss using the word ‘nature’ on occasion in its summoning of landscape, and the natural world.

At 19, as I embarked on the art foundation course in Eastbourne I was initially asked as I moved into the fine art department, what I wanted to do. That was simple I thought, I would go to the beach and respond to the sea. I remember being asked ‘Why?’ At the time I did not have a good answer to this. Attraction to the sea was found in moments woven in and out of my upbringing, and whilst I never lived by the water, I was drawn to it, to the sea, but also to streams and more placid lakes that as a boy I used to fish in. In hindsight I think on how finding spaciousness in mind, even from a young age gave me access to being invigorated by both calm and more turbulent moments in nature. Encounters in woods, and on shorelines from stream to sea in differing seasons would seep into my consciousness and art was a way to do something with that. A choice was to seek these moments, for the states of being they enabled, and for the questioning it facilitated about the nature of being, or an ontology, which as well was part of a spiritual yearning.

To try and answer that question as to ‘why’ I considered a different angle, that perhaps it was to do with pollution, that maybe art was a way to express something of damage being done to the seas, to the environment. I certainly was troubled by this. But then another memory of this time was in showing a drawing of a pattern I had found in the Velcro of my bag, formed out of an accumulation of detritus, gathered unknowingly by the roaming activities of an art student. I remember thinking that this might be looked down upon. I was certainly confused by it as an idea, particularly contrasted against the grander muse of the elements. As it turned out, there was no judgement, so I felt a degree of relief and accordingly was able to follow the thread of enquiry it produced. Between this pattern and the subject of pollution, the pattern was initially the more profound. Once extracted on paper the pattern became something else, teasingly close to patterns that I found in the elements. From this pattern, I had found another relation and transformation between elements and was offered a way to think about how one drawn mark could signify another. At this stage I didn’t know exactly what to do with this, but the relevance in emphasising it is that art, particularly from a felt state of spaciousness, was continuing to reveal itself as a vessel to channel an enquiry into nature. It is only with hindsight that I was able to recognise that the detritus of that pattern was equally profound in its connection to the stirring word ‘pollution’, which is what I am

grieved by as my awareness encounters disturbances in the environment, that impact negatively on the elements being meditated on.

A contemporary painter of interest was the German artist Bernd Koberling, specifically to works he was producing in the early 1990s, which were in connection to elemental forces, to patterns that could work to convey either microcosm or macrocosm (fig 1). Koberling worked with the subject of 'nature', working both with, and in the landscape. The work he was doing at that time was of a move to an abstract methodology whereby an elimination of horizon meant "Proportions and scales lose their importance: how large or how small something is becomes a totally irrelevant criterion. Everything is finally infinite" (Koberling, 2007, p. 17).

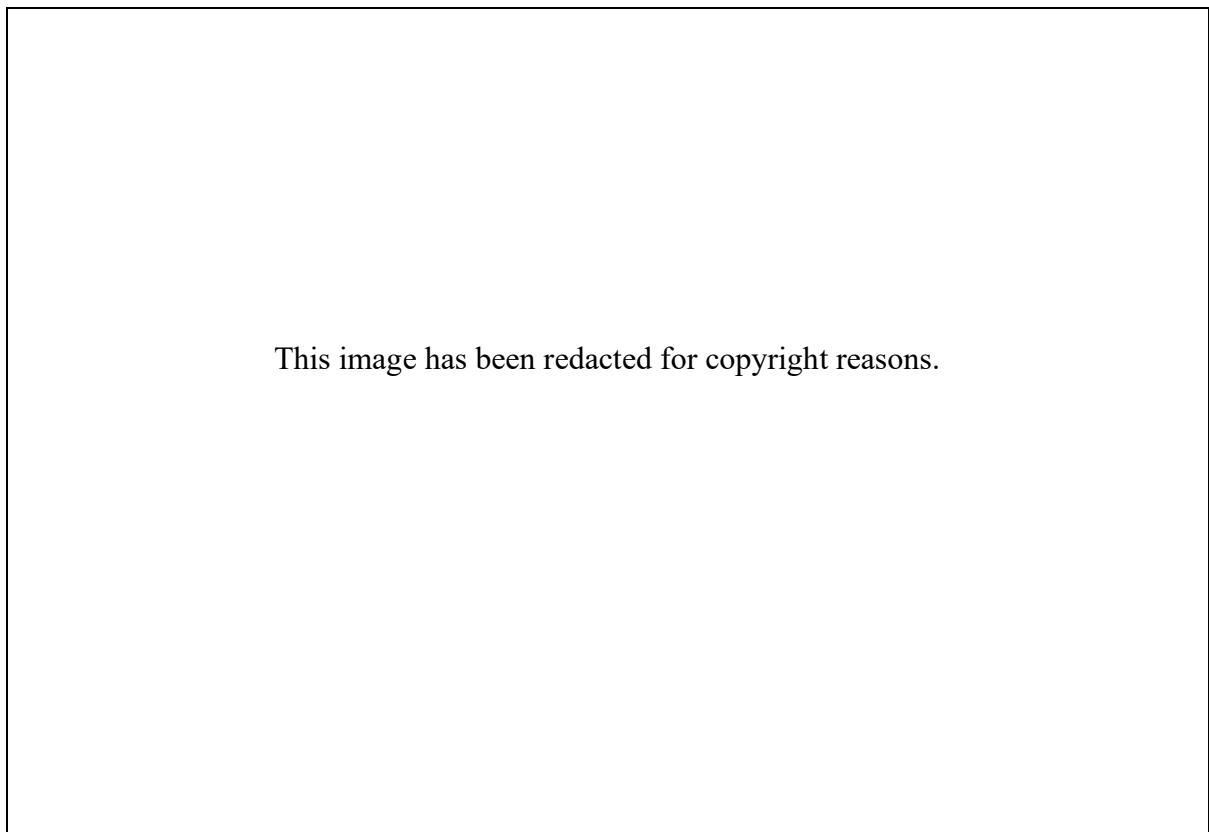


Figure 1: B Koberling, *no title*, 1990, acrylic on paper. 75 x 107cm

In my own experiments I found that I could move paint around so that it would be recognisably abstract, but that wasn't enough for me at this stage. I felt I needed to discover for myself how and why these abstract marks worked, particularly in how they could be connected to deeper existential themes.



Later when I did my degree at Falmouth my art making was exploratory, in effect unsettled. I was figuring out parameters of how and what could be made, and that created options that needed experimenting with. This expansion of options was inspired by exposure to other artists who were expanding their practices from the confines of the canvas, and therein developed an interest bridging painting, or drawing to sculpture.

Nothing I made at that time I considered finished. It rather felt to be a series of experiments. I thought that was the right approach, because to have presented resolution at that stage would have been untrue to my path of enquiry. In the end I finished my degree feeling as though I had barely started, and so to move on I felt a strong need to dismantle what I had been working on, to break it down and start again. To do this meant changing the landscape.

## Forest

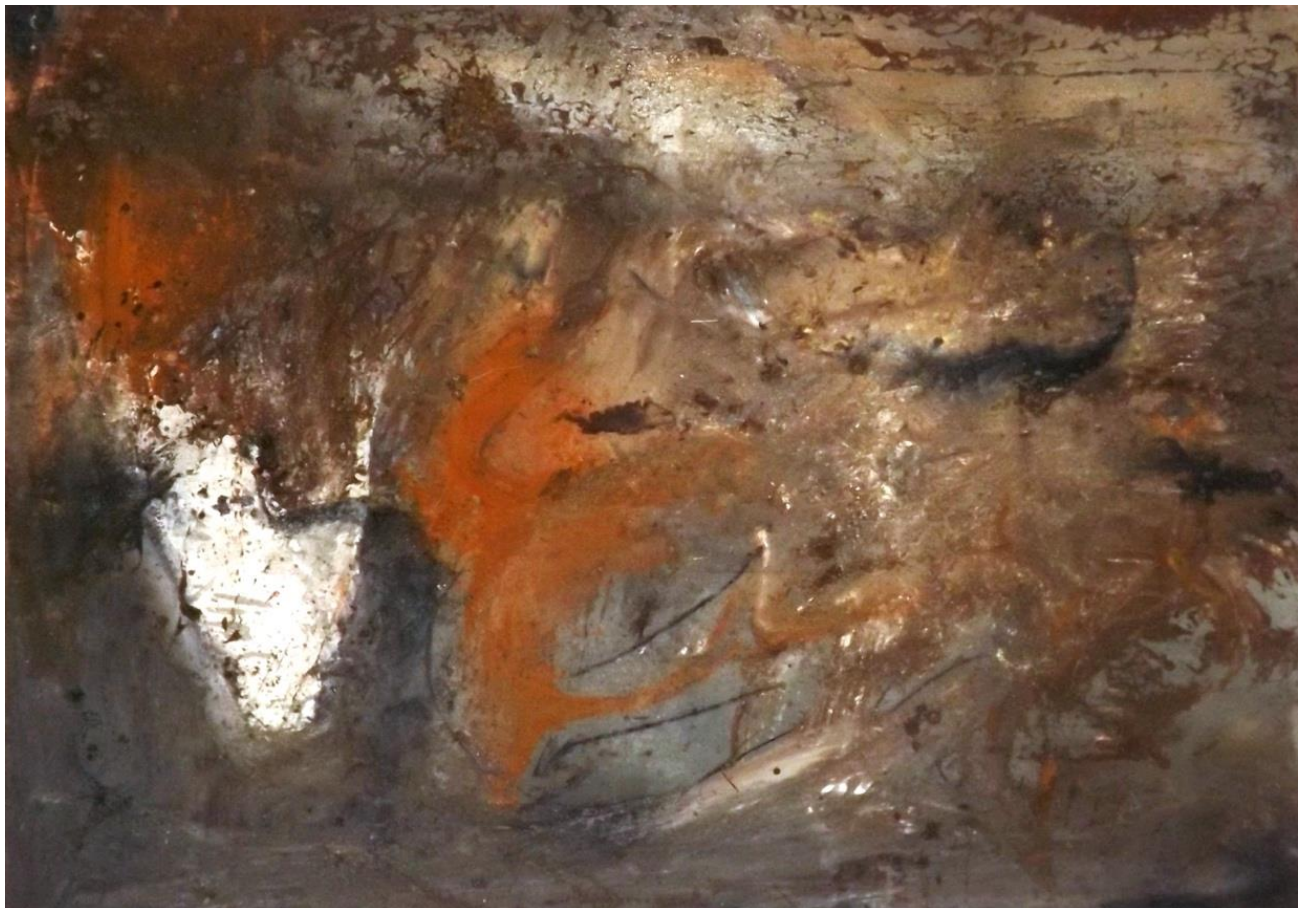


Figure 2: K J J Warren *Phase Transition*, 2012, mixed media on canvas. 120 x 140cm

I moved to the Ashdown Forest and in doing so was able to be with earthy elements. For a while I would look at the grasses swaying in the wind and think, this is still the sea. I like that memory. I used to sketch in the forest, but after a while the feeling was that in doing this, it was a slight hinderance to a more immersive experience of a transient encounter with the land. This became an aspect to explore, that this arboreal ocean could seep into consciousness and be a kind of fuel for future mark-making. This was the point where my work found for itself that it was not a representation. I continued the mark-making practice by expressing felt sensations that would arrive at composition on paper and canvas (fig 2,3). Every mark made was of its own shifting moment and a reaction to the previous mark. The drawings were conceived as a continuum, and out of this continuum, patterns would emerge and over time diverge. The act of drawing was thought on as mark-making process to expand its possibility and included acts like hammering a block on paper (fig 4). I titled broader scope of this work 'Nexus', and as a strategy, it has continued in one way or other to the present.



Figure 3: K J J Warren *untitled*, 2012, ink and watercolour on paper. 30 x 40cm





Figure 4: K J J Warren *untitled*, 2015, mixed media on paper. 50 x70cm

In this time, I started learning Buddhist meditation. Meditation I believed, was key to understanding a state of mind that could perceive more clearly, a gaze unpolluted by chatting thoughts, mindful, that could be more in tune with intricacies of oneself in connection to the elements. This was of a direct link to abstraction, which I thought of as a periphery term, a frontier of physical experience that valued mark-making in relation to the cusp of movement, an ever-shifting point between known and unknown.

In the forest I followed streams and found iron-rich chalybeate springs that bubbled when I poked them with a stick. Around these spots I noticed how nearby trees had orange streaks on their trunks, like they were sucking up this elemental iron from the earth to reveal a glimpse of fluidity permeating flow and cycles of earth. As this exploration turned from one-to-many seasons, I felt that seasonal interactions and observations such as this were teaching of a better way to tune into nature. Over time this flux of observation became more fluid as a form of poetic feed, and it nourished the creative response to patterns of elements in an ecosystem that was being weathered and worn in biodiverse cycles of life and death.

Correspondingly, boundaries between myself and the source of inspiration were in many ways questionable, and this is where I first encountered the term ‘ecopsychology’, which

would become a heading for this interest in interrelation between oneself and the environment. Theodore Roszak's compilation on the subject opens with an assumption that 'ecology needs psychology, psychology needs ecology' (Roszak, 1995, P. 5). More will be said on this throughout this report.



Figure 5: K J J Warren, *Mandala*, 2012, chestnut, hessian, clay, iron mud, chalk, charcoal. 120 x 120cm x 12cm

As my work in the Ashdown Forest changed, a painting and drawing practice morphed into a mixed media practice. This in part is because I became much more connected to the raw materials around me, it also provided options that were able to recognise a more ecologically aware art practice. This was fruitful in the union of worldview and art practice, but too it meant that my experimental approach was continuing rather than arriving at resolution and a set way of creating. This meant that I still was not necessarily finishing work in a way I felt comfortable with.

Beyond abstraction as a genre, I found links to at least some of the perspectives of earth art, discussed by art critic Amanda Boetzkes in one way as requiring ‘... an acknowledgement of our limits and an offering of that limit to what lies beyond, namely the irreducible earth. In this way the limit of representation is the locus of contact with the earth – where it touches us as it exceeds that limit’ (Boetzkes, 2010, p. 63). This type of comment aligned me less with a new genre, but more with the conviction that I felt was possible for artwork. Importantly, what constituted abstraction, within my mark-making practice was changing significantly, and the mixed media approach became a guise of sorts to discover and test sculptural possibility. Beyond classification into any genre, it was this ecological thread itself that was emerging in unquestionable significance.

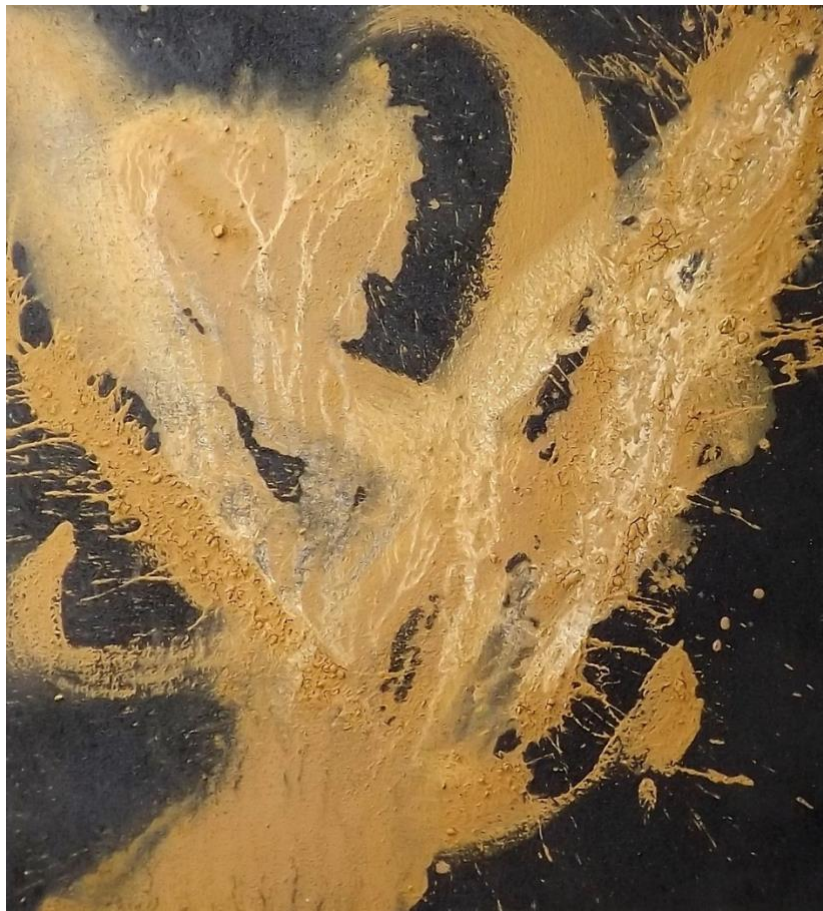


Figure 6: K J J Warren, *untitled*, 2016, clay, sandstone, charcoal on canvas. 160 x 140cm

I was also working as a rustic woodworker, using chestnut coppice. Practically this gave some income, but an incentive as well was in how wood could feed into the art, could connect to mark-making, and then into sculptural space. At this time the artists that inspired me were those working with raw materials, of the land. I was interested in artists David Nash



and Andy Goldsworthy whose work whilst different from mine, had common consideration in their investigation of elements. As I worked with notions like ‘rustic’, I found resonance in a connection made by writer Leonard Koren between the Zen-fuelled Japanese aesthetic ‘wabi-Sabi’, and a partial relation to the notion of the rustic. (Koren, 2008, p.21). The rustic, thought of as a rugged aesthetic was a way for me to think on and develop mark making. As this applied to the of element of wood, it led to working in a way that did not disguise its origin as tree and did not disguise the fact that it had been fabricated. Working in this way kept open the connection to the element wood, it found inspiration in the arboreal strata, and to the idea of entropy, that this element in changing form, even the forest itself, was a fleeting phenomenon, in a larger pattern of transformation.



Figure 7: K J J Warren, *untitled*, 2015, river driftwood bolted on bent iron beam, burnt poplar, concrete, and rope. 70 x 120 x 60cm

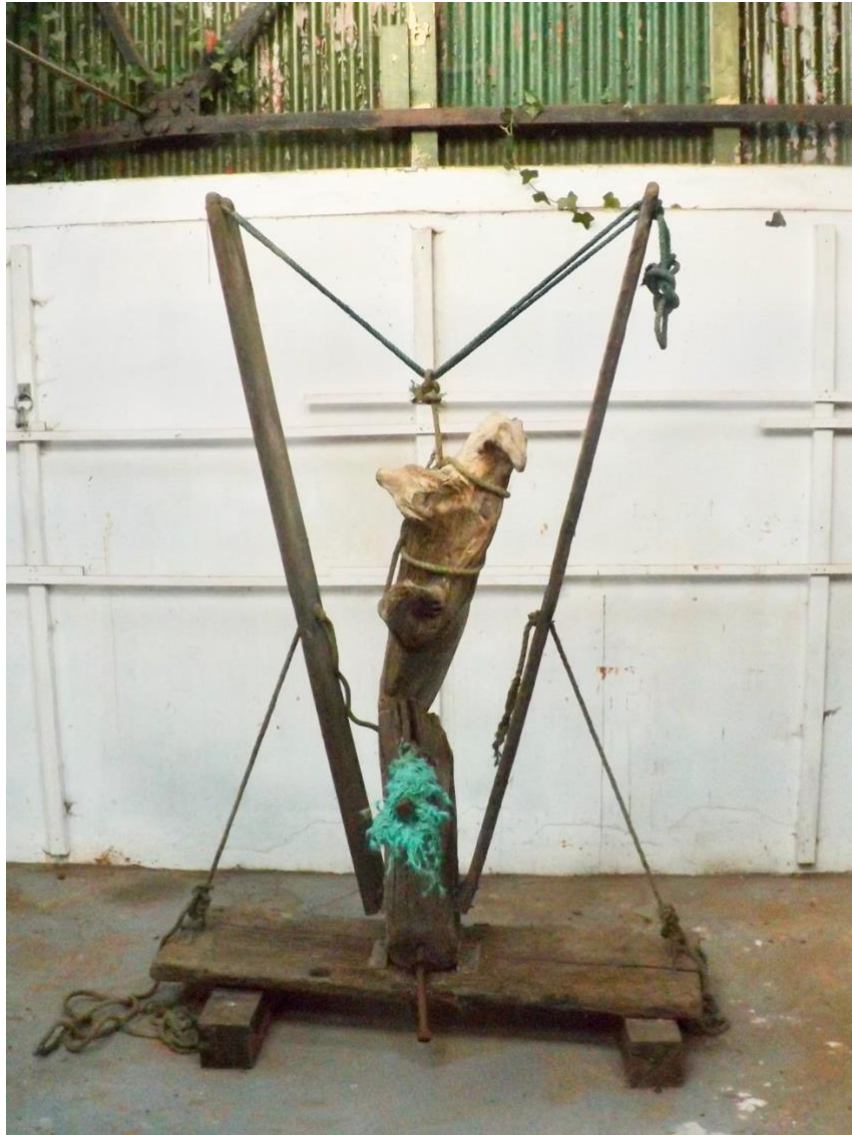


Figure 8: K J J Warren, *Work in progress shot*, 2015, found wood and rope. 70 x 240 x 90cm

In this period, I used to visit the beach, and would find driftwood to work with. In the forest I used to wade through streams, and as I did, I would find lumps of wood, that I used to think of as driftwood of these streams. These finds were more patterns shaped by process, by transformation, which I dragged back to the studio and could often do little other than wash off some mud to appreciate qualities of wearing, of roughness and ruggedness. As objects they held for me an aesthetic relation between form and of the raw arboreal matter emitting a working of the cosmos, in an elemental transition. This notion was something of the potential I wanted to achieve with my work and in these contemplations, it was thought that an act of observation too had become a mark, or at least was a part of it. Threads of enquiry such as this led to resonances with artists of differing disciplines. Earth artist James Turrell for example, according to Amanda Boetzkes considers *perception to be an act*, which in his case

was explored by creating situations to experience elementals (Boetzkes, 2010, p.119) such as vast swathes of earth and sky. Boetzkes wrote of the need to withdraw oneself to connect to work like this (2010, p.116), which in a way is a meditative technique that works in the end to heighten a sensual connection to the world. This insight was connected to personal change because for my practice, the thoughts around the driftwood, and my minimal intervention with them didn't satisfy my need and desire to be engaged more in the act of making, which is to say I valued creative labour. Because of this, as these pieces of wood occupied my studio space, they became a static obstacle to the dynamic flow of creative labour.

Correspondingly, I became aware that my pattern of life had become too isolated. I had become consumed by the experimental nature of what I was doing, in a routine that co-existed with woodwork and labouring three to four days a week. There was no time for much else socially, or in connecting my art to a wider audience. The money I was earning was meagre and meant that I was living unsustainably for longer perhaps than I should have. At about this time as well, I found myself doing some work at Rivendell, a Buddhist Retreat centre near where I lived. In the end I worked there for over a year, and an interesting insight gained was, inspired by psychologist James Hillman who explained how alchemy could be used from a psychological perspective to explore transformation of the self, or 'psyche' (Hillman, 1989, P. 19). This curious interweaving of Buddhism and an alchemy drawn from depth psychology was an aid in listening to the internal shift that was taking place.

The inevitable move was to exit my studio of the previous nine years, and this involved a burning of old work. Part necessity, due to lack of storage, part devastating because what really is the point of making when a fiery charade is the outcome, but in another sense, it was an extremely cathartic experience. It is this third cathartic aspect and the ashes produced by the fire that gave space for the next creative shoot to arise. For a short while I saw my studio as located in a small notebook. On walks in the forest something would catch my eye and inspire a word, sometimes a short poem. The last sculpture I made in this transition period was called *Earth & Sky* (fig 9) inspired by the emergence of such words I had written by a stream bank. These words were of an observation as to how these elements interact and feed each other, which as well I thought on as being a way to reflect on differing energies that go into artmaking, like intellect and intuition. Energies shafting within myself.

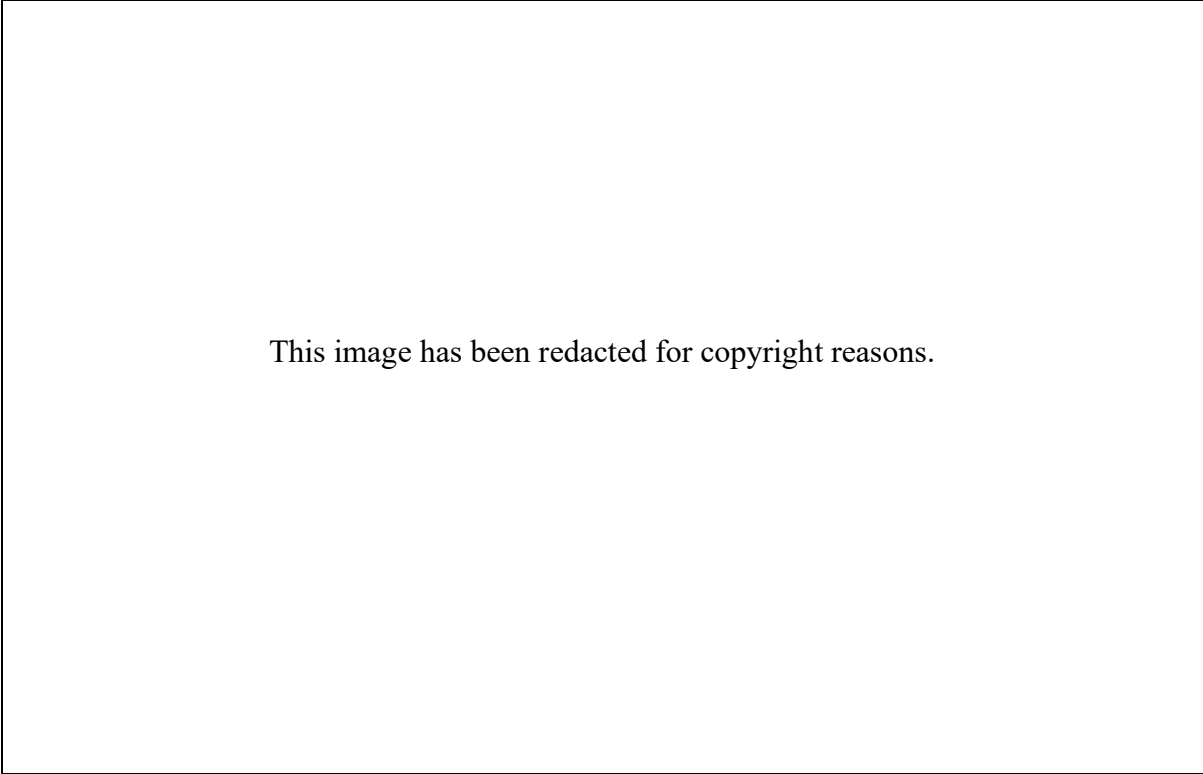




Figure 9: K J J Warren, *Earth & Sky*, 2016, wood, metal, clay, hessian, charcoal, concrete. 120 x 140 x 70cm

The opportunity to geographically move came as a personal relationship was progressing and I found myself lured for what I thought would be a temporary stay in London. Having been through what I felt to be an alchemical stage of breaking down, the next stage in this transformative process needed space and time for something new to emerge. The stage I was moving into felt to be an overhaul for a metaphorical vessel of being, and with this in mind I embarked on the doctorate to continue the creative exploration and to commence the overhaul.

## Chapter 1: The Blueprint



This image has been redacted for copyright reasons.

Figure 10: F Hundertwasser, *The Five Skins*, 1997,  
Indian ink on paper. 296 x 210cm

The beginning of the doctorate drew out core thoughts and these thoughts continued to be in relation to the union of differentiating branches implied by the term ‘ecopsychology’. This encompassing term functioned as an anchor for the ongoing enquiry into the porous linkage between ecological layers connecting oneself and the environment. A model that I continued to find helpful was by the artist Friedensreich Hundertwasser, in his conception of *The Five Skins* (fig 10). During the doctorate I have developed a similar threefold model, starting in the centre, and radiating out, to studio and then to environment.

Art, to reemphasise has been a creative tool for exploring patterns in elements of earth, water, and sky, that are transforming, interacting. The twining aspects of inspiration from elements and of a mark making practice, have developed by cultivating a primacy of perception that as a faculty is intuitive and is able to improvise. A connection to the notion of perception that is used in this report relates again to philosopher David Abram who described perception as ‘... the concerted activities of all the body’s senses as they function and flourish together’

(Abram, 1997, p.59). This statement of an integrating nature of perception resonates at the basis of my abstract mark making, as a continuum. A continuum that was generative of creative momentum. The raw starting point of my mark making has necessarily had a trust in feeling a way. When drawing went well, I had a sense of a flowing network that ran reciprocally from these elements and through these three points of self, studio, and environment. Yet, in urbanized areas that flow could be disrupted, I could feel saddened and alienated from the noticing of encroachment, in for example patterns of trash bobbing in canals. Disruption, as well as the inspiration seeps into my unconscious and forms part of what I process, part of what is fed out or expressed in mark-making. This is most clearly expressed at later stages of this doctorate in the expanded use of sculptural materials. But to begin, the goal, or form of outcome aimed for on commencing the doctorate was to embrace the task of unravelling the creative endeavour, in what I am referring to as an ‘overhaul’. The intent being worked towards was to have created a new body of work where the art emanating would come to exist in a reconfigured poise between triads earth, water, sky, and self, studio, environment. The lead in this would be the work.

Theodor Roszak’s title for the opening chapter of the book *Ecopsychology* ‘Where Psyche meets Gaia’ (Roszak, 1995, p. 1) unpicks more these two interconnected threads. Psyche is used as a reference point to the self, and the agency it has. Philosopher and founder of the deep ecology movement Arne Naess wrote of the ‘Self’ with a capital ‘S’ to relay the widest sense of the Self “... that expands from each of us to include all” (Naess, Rothenberg, 1989 p.6). I have found this a helpful way to think of it, as a term of interrelation. This thought informs my choice to herein use the term ‘ecological Self’, which for me suggests more clearly how this Self is connected as well to an encompassing ecology, that I think on as being ‘open’. This *open ecology* is a housing term that I use for both the ecological Self and Gaia. To connect to this most fully I have been developing what I have called an *oceanic methodology*. As mentioned in the introduction, the ocean is a source of inspiration, and as such acts as a driver for this research. The term *oceanic methodology* is used to connect to an optimal method of living and creating. In being articulated this was also something that I was driving towards.

The Gaia theory proposes that the planet Earth is a living self-regulating system. In his book ‘Healing Gaia’, James Lovelock writes that a way of understanding the Gaia hypothesis comes from the example of a giant and ancient redwood tree. 97% of the tree is dead wood

and the 3% that is alive (apart from the leaves) is the cambium layer between the bark and the heartwood. Lovelock explained that in a similar way the Earth has what can be thought of as having a cambium layer on its surface, and that the atmosphere above the ground is comparable to protective bark (Lovelock, 1991, p. 31). In relation to my artwork, it is evocative to have a name such as this for a living planet of which I am a part and in which I am participating.

The alignment of these considerations in a project such as ecopsychology nurtures care and wellbeing of both ecological Self and Gaia. From its emergence in the mid 1990s ecopsychology has continued to be developed. Art writer Suzi Gablik wrote that ecopsychology's '... goal is to lift the repression of our connectedness with the natural environment, and to evolve a mature "ecological ego," one that is aware of its ethical responsibility to nature. We need to see the needs of the planet and the needs of the individual as a continuum' (Gablik, 1995, p. 338).<sup>1</sup> A thinker in this area that has been useful for my research is psychotherapist Andy Fisher. Fisher's book 'Radical Ecopsychology' makes use of the additional word 'radical', writing that it 'simply means regarding our collective problems as deeper or more thoroughgoing than the mainstream view appreciates or is willing to recognize' (Fisher 2013, p. 197). This perspective digs into concern about the environment in a way that has focus on an importance of interrelation, and perspectives as to how we, as a species live:

'Ecopsychology is not about solving "environmental" problems but rather understanding how nature and psyche internally relate, how they are interior and exterior of the same phenomenon. It is about refusing all dualisms or splittings of reality (nonduality perhaps being ecopsychology's main pivot), seeking integrations instead' (Fisher, 2013, p. 205).

Two other thinkers that have helped my research are ecologist Stephan Harding and Jungian analyst Andrew Fellows. Fellows also posits a Psyche-Gaia conjecture, noting relevantly that '... neither domain is a closed system' (Fellows, 2019, p.117). Taken separately Gaia and Psyche can slightly cloud over the ways in which this openness happens to be, but the idea

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<sup>1</sup> As of writing this report ecopsychology has a presence online in a peer reviewed journal, and in its own definition includes the relevant point that it is '... not limited by disciplinary boundaries.' (<https://www.ecopsychology.org/about-ecopsychology/>).

pursued by thinkers such as Fellows and Harding is that these are in fact emergent properties from a singular source. Stephan Harding in his book 'Alchemical Gaia' refers to this as 'nondual Gaia'. There is no you and Gaia, he says, '... there is only being, only presence' (Harding, 2022, p. 115/116). Within my own working process, I began my day with slow meditative exercise because it helped me to feel a connection to this; it would clear my mind and provide access to creatively relate to being, and presence.

A large proportion of my time has been spent in the studio, in making, in thinking through with materials and developing ways for new work to emerge. Because of this my enquiry has a limit to how technically into philosophy it can go. A way of explaining the implication of this thought is in connection to Arne Naess's distinction between two meanings of the word 'philosophy'. The first is the field of study, and the second is '... one's own personal code of values and a view of the world which guides one's own decisions (insofar as one does fullheartedly feel and think they are the right decisions)' (Naess, Rothenberg, 1989, p. 36). This second aspect, relevant for my research relates to the development of an ecological philosophy, or 'ecosophy' which I will say more on below. In a creative play with these distinctions, the 'field of study', for myself is in the making of artwork. This had a bearing on informing my values, which was able to feed back into the artwork.

The emergence of a nondual Gaia, a scientific understanding of it has been formulated theoretically in differing ways. One such way, which has been of use to contemplate is also of consideration in Fellow's writing, namely a 'dual aspect monism'. Formulated by physicist and philosopher David Bohm (Fellows, 2019, p. 99), this can be thought of as a theory of space which acts as a hypothetical working model that gives rise to both Gaia and psyche, a model which offers (myself) at the very least resonance and inspiration for creative channelling – of free-form marks. In 1980 Bohm published a book on this theory of space that was formulated with the term 'The Implicate Order'. Within this theory, space is fundamentally a plenum, that is full of energy, and was explained with a metaphor of the ocean.

'What is implied by this proposal is that what we call empty space contains an immense background of energy, and that matter as we know it is a small, 'quantized' wavelike excitation on top of this background, rather like a ripple on a vast sea' (Bohm, 1980, p. 242).

Andrew Fellows also makes apt use of a phrase by ethnobiologist Terrence Mckenna, which connects this underwater aspect of the world as ‘wiring under the board’ (Fellows, 2019, p.98). This theory and its connecting metaphorical images were able to enliven my imaginative response. As well, a strongly felt connection to nondual Gaia nurtures the possibility of developing the ecological Self, which again entails a bearing on how one acts in the world. Conversely, as philosopher David Abram states ‘As long as we experience the invisible depths that surround us as empty space, we will be able to deny, or repress, our thorough interdependence with other animals, the plants, and the living land that surrounds us’ (Abram, 1997, p. 260). An art practice therefore getting at this *wiring under the board* is expressing something of the potential of nondual Gaia as I experience it. My reflections on this have been as an ecology that is open, inclusive of connections and that in its transformative aspect is dynamic.

Fellows refers to Bohm in a later book as saying: ‘...the implicate order is not static but basically dynamic in nature, in a constant process of change and development’ (2019 p. 102). This intrigued me because the words ‘static’ and ‘dynamic’, were also used by author Robert M Pirsig in his metaphysical novel ‘Lila’. Pirsig’s central character whilst living on a boat mused that the terms static and dynamic were relevant to understanding reality. When in consideration of what could be classically described as a subject or an object, Pirsig’s character says that this relation could be thought of better in terms of *qualities* that are static and dynamic (Pirsig, 1991, p. 126). Linked to this, physicist Karan Barad noted that a pre-existing distinction between subject and object feeds representational thinking (Barad, 2007, p. 90). This is relevant to reemphasise because the abstract art practice explored here, was inspired by, but not a representation of, the elements. The dealing was with live interconnected activity, whereby marks emerge, and in their accumulation could form compositions or sculptures. All existing with porous boundaries.

As terminology, ‘static’ and ‘dynamic’ led my thoughts to the notion of process, contemplated here as an apt fit for the evolving *oceanic methodology*. Ecological Self, studio, Gaia, form, and non-form, all in the end are dynamic in differing temporal ways, in differing stages of entropy, and growth. The dynamic current flowing between perception, mark-making, and states of mind cannot be underestimated, for as Abram writes, ‘Whenever I quiet the persistent chatter of words within my head, I find this silent or wordless dance always already going on – this improvised duet between my animal body and the fluid, breathing

landscape that it inhabits' (Abram, 1997, p. 53). In my experience, making art works best from a certain way of being and this in the end leads to an apt quote from Pirsig's novel whereby:

'The purpose of mystic meditation is not to remove oneself from experience but to bring one's self closer to it by eliminating stale, confusing, static intellectual attachments of the past' (Pirsig, 1991, p. 126).

What Pirsig calls dynamic quality '... is the pre-intellectual cutting edge of reality, the source of all things, completely simple and always new' (Pirsig, 1991, p125). My art practice, particularly its free-form nature, was tapping into this flux, but to more fully realise this, in doing the doctorate I was inadvertently confronting factors, some known, some unknown which could hinder a fluidity of creative practice. A useful metaphor I thought on is that waters running from land into the ocean must meander around detritus that interrupts flow, that can create stagnant pools. Logs can jam the way, and although log jams eventually are worn away, sometimes intervention is needed. Part of my job, as I saw it, was to not get stuck in stagnant waters and doing the doctorate had put me in a position to address that.

In consideration of mark making, at this initial stage of the doctorate I was at a point of continuing the development of free-form drawing in a familiar way, or following another thread of uncharted mark making. The second consideration was in more of a direct contact with some of the materials that I had been accustomed to using, that I had brought with me to London and so it was this that the second option surfaced. Considering differing options is not always easy, a point which finds different outlets in this report. In artworks being developed between static and dynamic factors, there is always what I will be referring to in this report as a 'tussle'. Tussle, as in a part of a toing and froing of thought processes, that finds potential in seeming contradictions like chaos and order, with differing degrees of ease and stress.

I believed I was searching for a kind of optimal buoyancy that would be achieved by working through these tussling points. To this end I am using distinctions *static* (that in some instances can create a kind of trap) and *dynamic*. Both terms relational to meditations on process, transformation and to the sea that inspires the overall methodology. These terms *static* and *dynamic* are aimed at bringing awareness to factors that help and hinder the

trajectory of work. Mentioning the trajectory of an art practice doesn't imply one fixed destination, it is rather an allusion to a lure of engaging with the creative process and allowing a form of poeticizing to occur as that is explored.

How individuals can connect to Harding's concept of nondual Gaia is thought of in connection to philosopher Arne Naess and his idea of 'ecosophy' an ecological philosophy. Ecosophy, in theory has as many iterations as there are people because each enquiring mind has its own relationship to the understanding of being in the world. Ecosophy, Harding writes, is about 'cultivating our own wise ways of living and relating with our planetary Oikos – with Gaia' (Harding 2022, p. 257). And so it was that the overhaul I refer to is ultimately of a personal reconfiguring ecosophy. The *oceanic methodology* on its way to become my version of it.

## Papillon



Figure 11: K J J Warren, *Papillon: earth & sky #1*, 2018 – 2019, mud, charcoal, sandstone, ash on paper. 100 x 100cm



*Papillon #1* (fig 11) created in 2018 was the first of this gathering of thoughts. It was composed with two main sections, the first a block print, which was able to chaotically displace the mixtures of mud and ash when hammered down on to paper (fig 12). The second a drawing composed of circular marks on top. The block print itself contained a symbolism first explored in the sculpture *Earth and Sky* (fig 9) which was, as mentioned a poetized feeding system between those elements. This related to a description of Koberling's work that explores seeming opposites, like lightness and darkness, or indeed earth and sky as a complex interplay of contrasts (Janssen, 2007, p. 15). Like the work before I was interested in how these aspects of the natural world were offering of insight into processes of one's ecological Self, which in turn connected to a maturing ecosophy. The repeated print, and the aspect of each print being different, some more heavy, chaotic, some more sparse added intrigue. Each print was thought of as an act of drawing and continued the contemplation on transformation and differentiation.

A way to further express differentiation between seeming opposites would be to think of chaos and order, but here and connecting to this being a dynamic spectrum, David Bohm stated that instead of thinking of chaos and order separately, that it was better to think of differing degrees of order (Bohm, 1980, P. 149). This was a way of stating that whilst polarity was existing symbolically in my thoughts and surfacing in art making, I didn't consider these factors as separate. Like ecopsychology the emphasis was on integration and these block prints in this sense were of a spectrum.



Figure 12: *Earth & Sky*, 2018 mud and ash on paper. 10 x 10cm

Bringing such thoughts to the surface in a specific symbolic pattern felt after a while to be counter to a more open and ambiguous potential, but here these thoughts wanted to emerge, they needed thinking through, and so this series existed as a visual way to explore, whilst testing whether such thoughts could be present in finished work. This block print and another five that I worked with in this series emerged with similar symbolic thought. These moved from titles: ‘passageway’ (expansion, contraction, seasonality), to ‘dog’, ‘stag’ (relatable to feminine, masculine, moon, and sun) to ‘connector’ (meditation, plugging/tapping into forest, waters, sky) and ‘seed’ (continually created, birth, death).



Figure 13: K J J Warren, *Papillon: Passages #1*, 2018 – 2019  
mud, charcoal, sandstone, ash on paper. 100 x 100cm

This series needed to run its course, but in ways described above, the creation of a wooden block print with specific symbolic thought, meant I ran into an obstacle of this aspect of the work generating too much *static*, becoming a closed system, and something representational.





Figure 14: K J J Warren, *Papillon: Stag #1*, 2018 – 2019 mud, charcoal, sandstone, ash on paper. 100 x 100cm



Figure 15: K J J Warren, *Papillon: Dog #1*, 2018 – 2019 mud, charcoal, sandstone, ash on paper. 100 x 100cm

In understanding this more clearly, and in part due to circumstance, I found the recognition of a drift to critical thought. What I did not want to do was dismiss patterns that were emerging from my drawing practice. This stage of the doctorate, as commencing overhaul, was very much about this. The shift taking place at this stage resonated with a comment made by sculptor Peter Buggenhout who said in an interview that:

“The act of reading symbols, which is ingrained in all of us, makes us overlook the actual appearance of the object. By dismantling this tendency to work with symbols, I bring the viewer back to the object itself. And to its inherent qualities, which are bypassed by symbolism.” (Buggenhout, 2009)

As I moved on the word ‘symbolism’ naturally lost its relevance and so as I uprooted it and let it wash away, I was left bobbing in *dynamic* waters, that after Buggenhout’s thought, pondered the *oceanic methodology* more as an of analogy of an *open ecology*. This clarity was necessary particularly for where the work was headed. Revealed more in chapters 4 and 5.



Figure 16: K J J Warren, *blocks for printing*, 2018 – 2019 plywood. 20 x 40cm

The second part of my *Papillon* series moved forward through drawing with circles. They began with a form of composing that used randomness. The patterns were worked out on small pieces of paper that could then be redrawn on these larger works 1m x 1m. Over the

course of this series of drawings occurring between 2018 - 2019, the randomness had been replaced by a purposeful play, by the dynamic quality seeping into and out of the process. I found it impossible to rely on randomness alone in composition, it was too detaching, but it could be used as a method to get out of the intellect and get things moving, as was the case here in starting this work. Factors of randomness however are fascinating and in connection to intervention can lead to a form of balance in a composition that is unexpected. It is thus that as discussed in supervisory meetings: The philosophy emerges from the work. A form of dialogue was continuing to happen in the making of work, that worked with Abram's phrase again 'below verbal awareness' (Abram, 1997, p. 52).

Following on, Stephan Harding describes an alchemical image in the second alchemical stage of transformation which is called 'dissolution' in which a green lion swallows the sun (Harding, 2022, p. 129). In this image the sun represents intellect, and to swallow it means to bring it in to the body, to work with the lunar feminine consciousness, which is more instinctual in its working from the heart. In the stage I was moving into, that metaphorical sun was cyclically being swallowed, regurgitated, and swallowed again. A tussle. This didn't mean of course that the intellect wasn't or isn't needed, it just meant that here there was needed a letting go into the shifting of energies that helped to evolve this stage of art practice. The intuition I valued needed to be trusted, and by doing this I believed I related to Harding's writing in allowing for the potential of deeper understanding of Gaia's wisdom to emerge (Harding. 2022, p.168).

### **Abstract Reignition**

Two contemporary artists who use abstraction relevant to my research are Julie Mehretu and Sarah Sze. In an interview between them both and with the late Nigerian curator Okwui Enwezor, Meheretu comments on the value of lived experience as "... this kind of eruption through working the deep belief, that earnest belief in the practice and in the process of making, of digesting, of pushing something out in the work and inventing this other language, that embodies or somehow encapsulates all of these contradictory dynamics" (Meheretu, 2017, p. 113). These artists will weave in and out of this report, but here is a statement of immediate resonance, which relates to tussling throughout this doctoral period, but suggests as well that in the end it can produce meaningful work, in theory!

Abstraction, as any genre, can have a danger of existing within a boundary, carrying with it potential tension of what it is or isn't. Within my practice at times, I have felt a drift away from the label. I connected quite strongly to the idea however that abstraction, as a genre, had growth and evolutionary possibilities, with any boundaries existing being of the porous nature of an open system. I found this sentiment occurring in the work of artist Julie Mehretu. Mehretu's work is infused with vitality both in large-scale commissions and in smaller more privately made drawings. In her creative exploration she has played with representation within an abstract context. The emphasis though is purposefully on the abstract, for its opaque potential, which has allowed her a freedom of movement in gestural mark making, in composition and in thought, all of which make their way onto canvas. Mehretu commented in one interview that she works within the limits of abstraction "... because there is the capacity of chance, possibility, and opacity" (Mehretu, 2020). This is different from representative work, which she views as "... tethered to specific kinds of cultural meaning" (Mehretu 2020). From this perspective: "There is no closed circle or circuit. There's all this space for us to find these breaks and gaps in what can be possible and invent something else within those" (Mehretu, 2020). Abstraction has been used in this way by Mehretu to address what it means to live in this time, to live and work in connection to what she processes. In reading this in an open way, I agree with another description which described Mehretu as being dedicated to abstraction, but not limited by it (Patterson-West, 2021).



This image has been redacted for copyright reasons.

Figure 17: J Mehretu, *Sehket*, 2001 – 13, ink and acrylic on canvas. 152.4 x 213.4cm

## Chapter 2: Anchors Aweigh

The transformation that was occurring at this next phase of the doctorate was around an experimental pursuit into a new trajectory for the drawings. An intent continued that this would lead to larger works, which at this stage could have been sculptural, but not necessarily. I was trying to be open to what was unfolding and the key to that was in the repetitious act of drawing each day and allowing change and development to be arrived at through the work. The drawing practice was relational to a meditation practice, and to explore this allowed a deeper plunge into the creative state. This state both absorbing and spacious was felt to be in contact with the shifting peripheral moment of creation, whilst also continuing to allow a swirl of thoughts that would rise and disperse to do with elements meditated on as air, water, and earth. I found patterns of waves to still be present in what was emerging. I still was connected to landscape, but the connecting insight was that the drawing itself was now the phenomenon of inspiration. In understanding this more clearly, I found a type of terrain in the drawing process to explore. Found in part because of circumstance.

As this work moved on and my stay in London became more protracted, I was troubled by feeling disconnected from my familiar countryside environment with its easy access to the places and materials that inspired my art. There were parks and canals near to where I lived in London, and greenery widespread through cracks in pavements, so on one level the elements of inspiration were there, but it wasn't the same. I couldn't roam and lose myself in a certain lucid way, I didn't have a car to lug things around in and I lived with a loss of sorts whereby the intimacy and solace of a relationship I'd had with the natural world was gone. But then I found value in digging into what remained of it within me, in the way I would do on a Buddhist retreat. During this period Covid-19 happened, and from an already inward turning response to living in the city, I was given more time and space to focus on the ecological layer of oneself, and its connection to the next layer – the studio. What I had in the lockdown period was a living space that too was serving as studio, and so I was in a good position to work on the drawing board and continue to adapt to what could be done from this space.





Figure 18: K J J Warren, *Waves, Wings and Buds (part of series)*, 2019, sandstone, ash, ink, and graphite on paper. 56 x 76cm



Figure 19: K J J Warren, *Waves, Wings and Buds (part of series)*, 2019, sandstone, ash, ink, and graphite on paper. 56 x 76cm



The basic premise in this *wave* of drawing was that in a continuation from the previous *Papillon* series, where more refined patterns surfaced, that the more refined line work would continue to be explored, with a difference this time that such patterns were available to be extracted from a more chaotic free form drawing (as phenomenon of inspiration). This idea fascinated me and prompted an idea that free form and more refined line could exist as differing degrees of order on the same space of paper (fig 18 - 20). As a branching point into the second phase and in connection to work as a continuum, this work too allowed a playfulness. I saw waves, wings, and buds, not literally present, but tidally moving through marks, potential forms surfacing and receding. The success in this aspect drew out an animism of the working process that resonated again with David Abram who said if ‘... we wish to describe a particular phenomenon without repressing our direct experience, then we cannot avoid speaking of the phenomena as an active, animate entity with which we find ourselves engaged’ (Abram, 1997, p. 56).

Whilst there was insight, the second year of the doctorate presented difficulties. I found that my process of making was very attuned to an evolving ecosophy and I was positively absorbed in the process of making, but at the end of a working day I was dissatisfied with what I had made. A form of judgement had crept in that became overly critical, whereas I thought that I should be more accepting of the outcome. Yes, this was another tussle, and it was a trap for the creative flow. Anything new requires trial and error and the deliberating tendency was in a way offering help. This was fuelled by envisaging working in a way, not devoid of *static*, but wary of points which can snag and create traps. One solution would be to change my way of working, but this was not as simple as it may sound because of the factor of trying to let the process lead. My idea was that the *dynamic*, as a nature of process, would find breaks and gaps in the way that Mehretu describes.

Meditative and critical factors felt to be on a spectrum. Parts of a working day might be less calm and spacious, but as thinking creeps into the process, differing energy, could be a bit more jagged. The point between these two held a lot of interest. To not deny either meant exploring degrees of experience. Differences in qualities of lines related to this but felt as well to relate to the differences I was finding in a more urban setting. Confronting this was offering something important to my work, and it also was an angle to accept my location (for a while), challenging a hermetic tendency that would have otherwise sought some middle of nowhere, potentially isolated.

Painter John Hoyland liked to use the phrase: “I don’t think you’ve quite resolved the nose” (Lambirth, 2009, p. 23). This phrase was part of advice he received in younger days at the Royal Academy, the advice was for the opposite of the statement, to not *fiddle with a painting* (Lambirth, 2009, p.24). I felt there was an optimum point with a drawing where the notion of ‘not fiddling’ worked. Drawings on paper forced my attention on this, because with my line drawings, in the way I was working, there was no space for correction, it either worked or didn’t, and so between underworking and overworking there were found to be extremes that could collapse a composition. I found myself to be working towards what I thought on as a ‘Goldilocks zone’ (as in the astronomical term for the optimum point a planet orbits a sun for life to be able to exist, and to evolve). Somewhere between collapsing possibilities was a live dynamic, a sensibility that was different each time, another relevant tension explored in each day and over seasons.

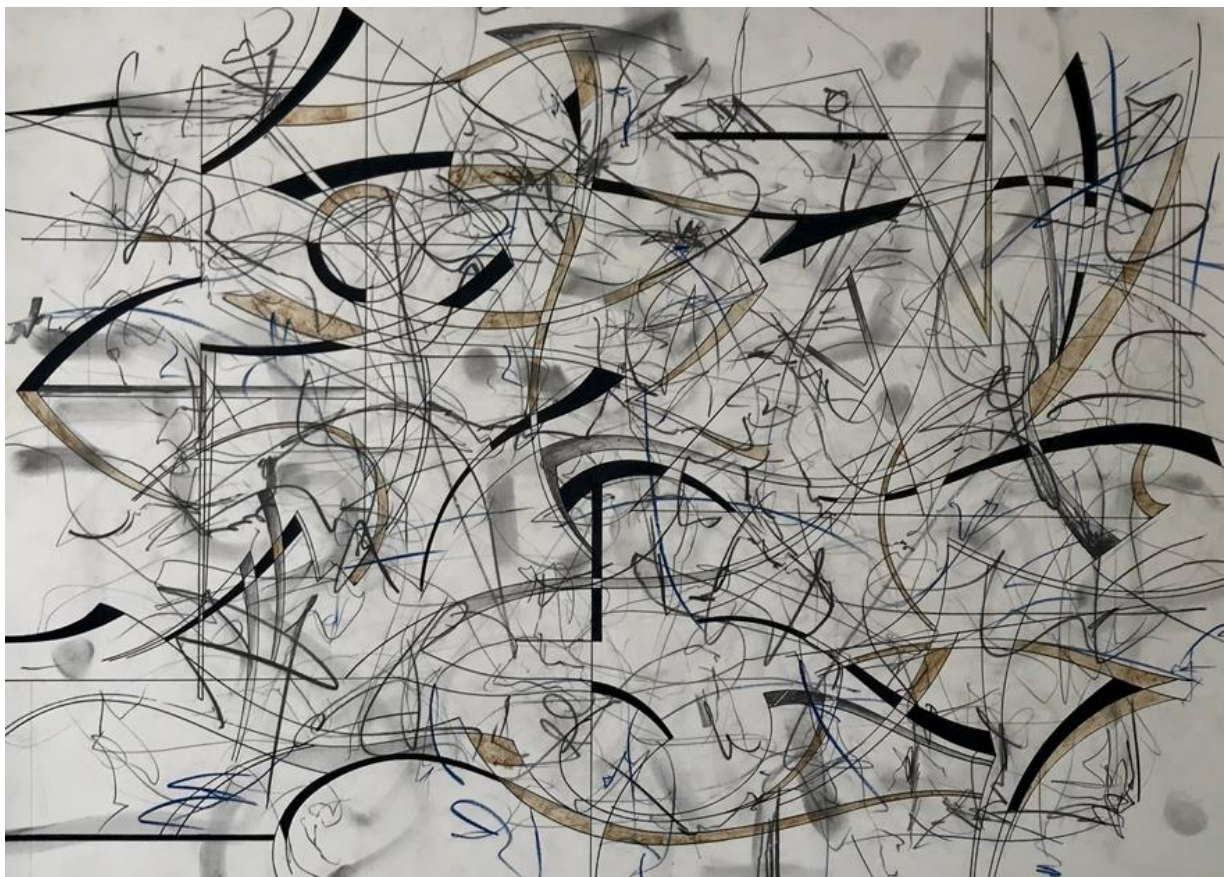


Figure 20: K J J Warren, *Waves, Wings and Buds (part of series)*, 2019, sandstone, ash, ink, and graphite on paper. 567 x 76cm

The drawings over this period followed what for me is a familiar pattern between a sprawling expansion of lines and a contained contraction, this pattern related to seasonality. Seasons of

the year expand and contract, accordingly my free-form drawings as a continuum, have tended to do the same. The drawings over this period started to sprawl, and during this process more noticeable distinctions between rough and smooth were wanting to break down (suggestive as to the direction of the work as a whole). Whilst the work was on its way to embracing this more, these drawings as they progressed into the work in the third year contracted again to find emergent forms (fig 24). Exploring tendency was important, and here, refined patterns that were extracted from the free-form drawings was something that needed seasons to understand, but that was okay because it connected to my history of doing this. I was exploring this as an intuitive thread, but as well because I thought the patterns discovered had potential to be developed sculpturally. Something of this potential was to do with form and related to contemplation on wood.

## **Groyne**

Over the course of the doctorate, the encompassing *oceanic methodology* washes up objects to reflect on, like driftwood, or in the case of the below image, a groyne or remnant of one (fig 25). The importance of such an image is to do with how on beach walks where one encounters such forms, that one is sensuously greeted with an element – wood, that has been sculpted by time and encounter with the shifting tide. At a certain stage in the life of a groyne, it loses its designed function. One can gaze slightly to the future and imagine it breaking down further, and one can equally gaze slightly to the past, back to lumber, to tree, to seed. Earth, as ground walked and sky as air breathed can be aesthetically connected to in the reciprocal act of perception, an aesthetics which in a general description by artist and writer Mark Titmarsh is ‘...a study of the way we feel the world through the things that surround us...’ (Titmarsh, 2017, p. 81). This notion is of the accessible realm of Timothy Morton’s use of the phrase ‘Dark Ecology’. In their book ‘Being Ecological,’ they say this not to be an absence of light, but the sort of light you get in a winter in Norway (Morton, 2018, p. 56). ‘Things are exactly what they are, yet never how they appear...’ (Morton 2018. p.60). An encounter with an object such as a beach groyne, is what I find to be an access point, more can be sensed on closer encounter, but not all.

Engaging with *Patterns of transformation* in nature is an encounter with time, with how these elements weather and are weathered. The groyne is also non groyne, home to barnacle, available for insight and inspiration. A groyne both is and is not itself. It is (relatively) static,

but ultimately dynamic. This played into thinking about art making, because on the horizon I visualized works of art, that could be gnarly and worn, in transit, like this groyne, with a presence (yet not) of being. Beyond function, not yet decayed. The drawings would need to meet these thoughts and so although a coherent series of drawings did emerge, they did so only to again move the process on. The energy invested in the transitional drawings of this stage were not lost, and even in later work there was still something connected to waves, wings, buds, and interaction of differentiating marks.



Figure 21: *(non) groyne*, Cooden Beach, 2020. Photograph: K J J Warren

## Material Surfacing

Amanda Boetzkes writes that ecology is a ‘...discourse about the human relationship to the planet, a discourse that is always accompanied by an awareness of environmental crisis ... For this reason, the term “ecological” often implies an ethical commitment to preserve or re-establish the balance of ecosystems...’ (Boetzkes, 2010, p. 2). This reflection in connection to environmental crisis is something that I continue in an agreement with Donna Haraway when she writes in her book ‘Staying with the Trouble’ that this title is of a reflection opposed to responses to crisis that are extremes in either the belief in a technofix, or a game over, cynical belief (Haraway, 2016, p.3, 56). This notion for my practice is an integral requirement for an honesty in art making, that is porous between ecological Self, studio, and environment.

I could have found deeper traction as artists like Julie Mehretu in specific and overt socio-political enquiry. However, whilst not disconnected from these concerns, I felt that if I leant too much in this direction intellectually, it would detract from the *oceanic methodology* that was trying to be arrived at intuitively, that I was cultivating in the time-consuming drawing practice. Getting a balance right on matters of ‘staying with the trouble’ felt to be important, but it would have to include maintaining a spaciousness around the drawing practice, that when working well provided a kind of access to the wiring between ecological Self and Gaia. This, a perspective of a working investigation. Titmarsh helped here when writing of a difference between artists who deal with politics in a literal sense and artists who ‘... work under a presumption that no change in politics can occur without a challenge to the underlying structure of thinking, making and being’ (Titmarsh, 2017, p. 170). This second stance is more of the thought I am drawing from, in concurrence with thoughts on radical ecopsychology, and with Morton’s dark ecology. As a natural inclination then my approach felt valid, and with these thoughts a clue was given as to how this as a strategy could be my own way to comment on issues like the environmental crisis. I was in effect practicing ecology rather than making statements about ecology.

This image has been redacted for copyright reasons.

Figure 22: J Mehretu, *Hineni (E. 3:4)*, 2018, ink & acrylic on canvas 243.8 x 304.8cm

“You know you can only get to know yourself better, understand yourself better, and evolve and try to grow. That’s how I am with my work—trying to push and understand what I make and why I make it the way that I do” (Mehretu, 2013).

Julie Mehretu’s expansive voyage in mark making had continued relevance, even as my own work left the flat surface. In my work the drawings were continuing, and these benefited from considering her thought process. Mehretu’s paintings have alternated between tightly structured lines that have signifying architectural form in the early 2000s, to more free-form calligraphic marks layering over what she describes as ‘the blur’ (Mehretu, 2020). Whilst I appreciate the breadth of her work, it was her more recent paintings that moved away from the striated lines - to the mixing of blur and free-form marks that resonated most with my thoughts about abstraction as an evolving genre. In these paintings free-form calligraphic marks were a response to a previous layer, as in the painting ‘*Hineni (E. 3:4)*’ (fig 22). This painting has a blurred underpainting, barely discernible, which is a photographic image of Californian wildfires. The use of the blur connects the image to a “... moment we collectively experience. You don’t need to know which Californian wildfire *Hineni (E. 3:4)*

2018 is - it could be Beirut, Brazil, or Myanmar” (Mehretu, 2020). This highlighted abstraction’s ability to leave the artwork open in how it can be interacted with, gave freedom in opaqueness. The blurred image which began the ambiguity was prepared by distortion in photoshop and was then transferred onto canvas to act as a sort of armature for the marks drawn on top, leaving a painting that is “Charged with possibility and the trace of action at the same time...” (Mehretu, 2020). In its openness, an artwork sets up reciprocal poetic encounters, a sort of feeding process. The blurred underpainting (like a title) works on a subliminal level for the beholder, it poetically stirs. Interestingly though its purpose for Mehretu is in holding concentration on a theme: “There is a charged DNA in the blur, for me; it effects my interaction with the painting, and it enables me to play with the spectre inside the image” (Mehretu, 2020).

A drawing in my practice is part new, part remembered in its sequence of repetitious emergences, moment by moment, day by day. Marks are drawn as a form of shifting phenomena embedded in my being, and as a play with words, I enjoyed thinking on this as DNA. Mark-making in this free-form way has a trace, but it is always new and never able to be predicted, for it is always on the cusp, forming new memories that fleetingly recede into the past. Drawings in this way and in how they are made are a feeding process, shifting from one wave to another, plunging, surfacing, grappling with the ‘wiring under the board’. Mark-making generates its own challenge and part of my work was to meet that. The relation between beholder, or maker and artwork may be fleeting, but that itself is relevant too, that life is formed of relations in a myriad of temporal ways. In short and long durations, relations of entities exist and can form relations with other entities. The allusion of this networked reality is vast, unfathomable, unknowable, but that too is philosophically relevant, that there is a limit to knowledge. Karen Barad explains something similar with the word ‘intra-action’ a neologism for entangled agencies as opposed to relation between two separate things (Barad, 2007, p. 33) Ecosophy as a process reconfigures and realigns and I emphasise these points in their connection to drawing practice because it was what became expanded into larger activities of drawing, and on to sculpture.

This image has been redacted for copyright reasons.

Figure 23: Vivian Suter, *Tintin's sofa*, at Camden arts centre (Installation view).

‘...disconnecting from the world around her and connecting with the world within her, pushing her painting practice forward physically, mentally, and spiritually. She always works in the present, with little regard for the future, committed to her process, to change, to chance, and even open to misfortune in the form of natural disasters’ (Benchoam, 2017).

An artist who I think works well in exploring daily emergence and working in a way accepting of outcome is the painter, Vivian Suter. Suter’s paintings have evolved botanically amidst trees growing in her dwelling in the rainforest of Guatemala. At an old coffee plantation in this Guatemalan jungle Suter was able to build her home, her studio and to develop a way of working whereby each day a new canvas was created. Over many years as the jungle around her grew, she collected a vast array of canvases that became engrained with the shifting presence of her abstract free form painting process. Over this time the accumulation itself became a determining factor in relation to how she would show her work. Exhibited internationally these paintings became installations whereby multiple canvases gathered like leaves were hoisted, hung, and laid in gallery spaces connecting ground, wall, and ceiling. My experience of this was at the Camden Arts Centre (*Tintin's sofa*, 2020). On entering the installation, one’s peripheral vision was engaged, to meander enticingly through a jungle of canvas. To explain her work in 2017 Suter invited interviewers and film makers to



her forest dwelling (Vivian's Garden, 2017), I believe in part this was for them to see and then impart something of the artist and her connection to the environment, to see an interaction of person and place, to see a positive of this, but then as well to see what threatens. Interviews and writing in connection to Suter often include the mention of a pivotal moment in 2005 when hurricane Stan roamed the skies over her property leaving in the wake of destruction, her artwork.

“It was devastating to open up the studio and suddenly find almost a metre of mud and water in there and the paintings on the floor. Those that had been stacked on the floor were swimming around, and those on the hanging structures looking terrible, marked with a straight line of mud through them. But when I cleaned out the mud from the studio and the paintings started to dry, I saw a beauty in the way that nature had helped me to unify the work through this mud. Suddenly, after this catastrophe, the paintings got another life and I got a different way of thinking and painting and having nature work with me” (Suter, 2019).

Suter's inclusion at the Taipei Biennial in 2018 ([taipaibiennial.org](http://taipaibiennial.org)) entitled 'Post-Nature: Museum as an Ecosystem' was in connection to her art being recognised for its eco affiliation. Necessary debates around 21<sup>st</sup> century environmental issues find platforms such as this, which are of course part of a debate on the relatively new geological epoch the 'Anthropocene'. This term suggested by Nobel prize winning chemist Paul J Crutzen in a paper entitled 'Geology of Mankind' (Crutzen, 2002) draws focus on the unquestionable impact of human activity on the earth, on Gaia. Whilst these terms, Anthropocene, or even Gaia aren't universally recognised, their formulation and use is important in recognising that humans are emphatically intra-related to life on earth. I find them useable.

### Chapter 3: Shifting Space

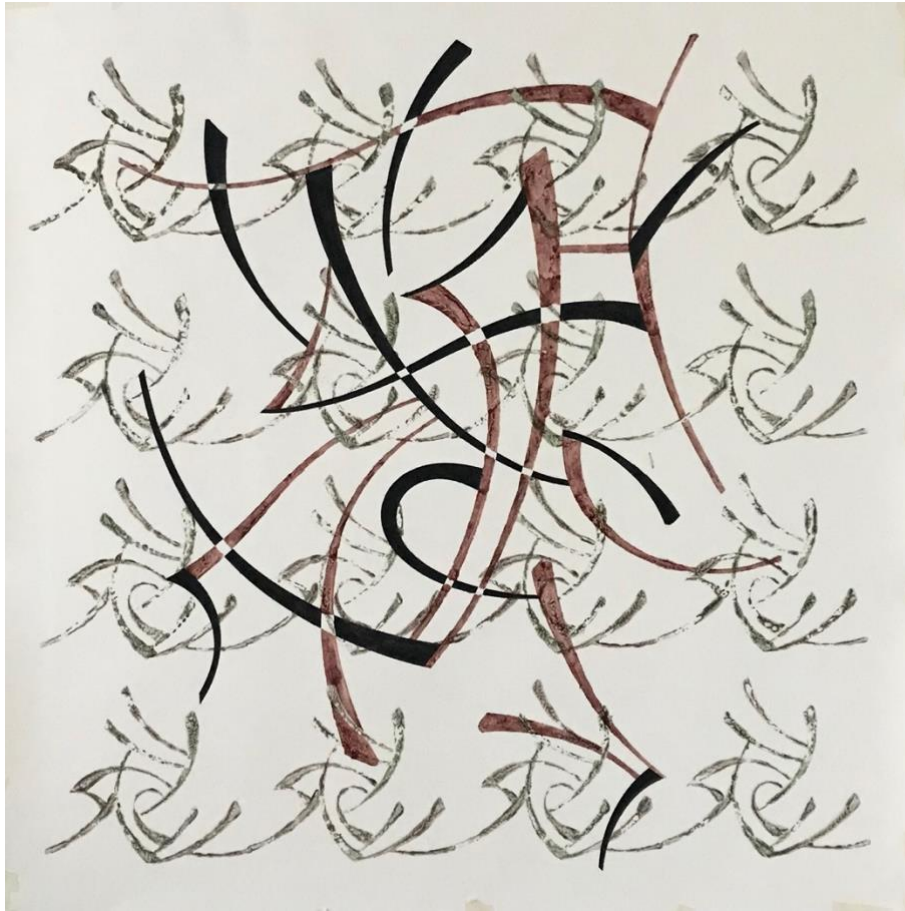


Figure 24: K J J Warren, *Nebula Lines #1*, 2020, ink, ash, sandstone, red ochre on paper. 120 x 120cm

My drawing practice continued its progression into the third phase of the doctorate in quite a trance-like way, and this, as an application of a developing ecosophy, nurtured a connection to creative acts, which felt quite primal. To start a day in this way, at times I would listen to the rhythms of shamanic drummer Byron Metcalf, rhythms that were part of an opening of the mind to a spaciousness that worked well with continued meditations on the *ocean*. Free-form drawing and the patterns I was extracting from them emerged in this sense with rhythm. Like this analogy of rhythm suggests it was one that was played in the animate act of mark making, acts that were tapping into a tide of elemental intra-relation, Gaia-ecological Self. Correspondingly I still believed in the way the drawing process grew in an almost botanical way, with an ability of mark-making to generate its own trajectory. On thinking of the mark-making, as a system that generates its own trajectory, I found a useful analogy from Donna Haraway in her writing on a distinction between autopoiesis and sympoieses ‘*Sympoieses* is a

simple word; it means “making with”. Nothing makes itself; Nothing is really autopoietic or self-organising’ (Haraway, 2016, p. 58). As I moved into this third stage of the doctorate overhaul, I still didn’t know what the long-term outcome would be, I just knew I was somewhere in the middle of this *process of transformation*, and that this was of a system that I was ‘making with.’ This was good some days, perplexing others and as the work continued in this way, I resolved to embrace this inevitable mix of clarity and mystery.

The prior combination of free form drawing and extracted pattern felt as if it would not let the extracted patterns, that I had taken to calling *Nebula Lines*, reveal their own relation to space, the combination, and in how the prior drawings had sprawled were in fact hindering what was wanting to surface. To explore further these *Nebula Lines*, to explore them properly I thus needed to separate them from the free-form drawing. This meant that for a while I was excluding the free-form drawing from what might be shown as art. This potentially sounds like a negation of an aspect to this work, but it reduced a pressure on the free-form drawings, by taking away preciousness. The *Nebula Lines* became the focus of attention, emergent forms, full of potentiality for future works, that to reiterate my reflection on groynes, could be of a weathered aesthetic, the working of time.

### **Maintenance of system**

Timothy Morton’s conception of ‘hyperobject’ brings attention to other time scales, of bigger objects that we are in: ‘The time of hyperobjects is the time during which we discover ourselves on the inside of some big objects (bigger than us that is): Earth, global warming, evolution. Again, that’s what the *eco* in *ecology* means: *oikos*, home’ (Morton, 2013 p. 118). As well, this ‘we’ that is inside, is a geophysical human species that in its collective aspect is itself a hyperobject (Morton 2016, p.45).

In drawing, considerations of space inevitably intertwining with time renews the conditions for a free-form abstraction coming into existence, out of and a part of what is here being conceived as an *oceanic methodology*. Space as Timothy Morton has said ‘... can no longer be construed as an absolute container, but rather should be thought of as a space-time manifold that is radically in the universe, of it rather than ontologically outside it’ (Morton,

2013, p. 56). What is shared by a drawn line surfacing on paper, canvas, or in sculptural ways is that they are all emergent phenomena, that in Morton's words have '... time rippling through them' (Morton, 2013, p.73). The re-imagining of space and time in these ways allowed me to expand my awareness of the porous boundaries between maker, made, and to environment beyond.

Writing on ecology within systems theory, Capra and Luisi describe how ecosystems can be pictured schematically as '... a network with a few nodes. Each node represents an organism, which means that each node, when magnified, appears itself as a network' (Capra & Luisi, 2014, p. 68). Capra and Luisi continue their thought on ecology by saying: 'In nature, there is no "above" or "below," and there are no hierarchies. There are only networks nesting within other networks' (Capra & Luisi, 2014, p. 68). Connecting to this thought, I could navigate non-hierarchically between different aspects of art making. In my networked conception of art practice, an outcome of a drawing (fig 24, 25) became a fruiting body of a much vaster network, like for instance mycelium. In writing about the role of fungi in the earth, biologist Merlin Sheldrake has explained that mycelial networks are '...better thought of not as a thing, but as a process – an exploratory irregular tendency' (Sheldrake, 2020, p.6). These descriptions fit well with how my free-form drawings are formed, but also how they end up surfacing from a networked open ecology. If the mushroom can be seen as part of an open network, then it relates to this stage of drawing – *Nebula Lines* being like fruitions. The network that these *Nebula Lines* were a part of at this stage were more hidden, like the mycelium under the earth. From my perspective this was the way of it, all emergences of an *oceanic methodology*, but showing drawings such as these by themselves didn't necessarily generate readings from others as being networked. Moreover, such works were noted by supervisors as being more closed (in comparison to more free form work) and I had to work out to what extent that was a problem. This thought process again facilitated thoughts vital and nuanced that were helping to evolve the overall conception being moved towards.



Figure 25: K J J Warren, *Nebula Lines #8*, 2020, ink, ash, sandstone, red ochre on paper. 120 x 120cm

The link I maintain to the landscape in my work is in watching things grow in nature, but also being aware of how things change even when out of sight, or underground. Nature with time rippling through is pattern-forming and provides stimulation that goes into the creation of my free-form work.

Drawings, one to the next, as expressions over time are intra-related links of an ecological Self 'making with' space, in the studio, and with materials. It is something of an ecosystem, which is to say a node of a vaster network. My experience of this connects again to a line from Haraway who says: 'Nothing is connected to everything; everything is connected to something' (Haraway, 2016 p. 31). Connecting to myself with meditative practices provides the conditions for this heightened awareness.

Fisher in his radical ecopsychology notes of the subject/object dualism, as a differential unity. Subjectivity importantly is to be developed (ecosophy), but so too is '...changing the

objective social conditions in which our subjectivity lives, transforming ourselves by transforming the world, understanding the world by changing it and thereby ourselves' (Fisher, 2013, p. 213). To make art is changing something of the world, but also is a change of oneself. 'Making with' connects beyond ones ecological Self, it is part of a wider ecosystem, connections that with realisation can foster care, and can learn from being aware of networked connections.

Cornish landscape artist Kurt Jackson makes seascape paintings that continually express from a lived immersion in environment, which gives them a contemporary relevance not disassociated from ecology. I thought about Jackson here because of a description by Julian Spalding who wrote of Jackson that landscape is the wrong descriptive genre, and that it could be better thought of as 'live art' - as in a live recording (Spalding 2021, p. 6). Live art in this way is a process that too is lived, breathed, and is of an open ecology, of tidal being and presence. This realm of animism is where liminal encounters, such as with seascapes, become a part of how I perceive the world. Putting pencil to paper or working with material to create form is precisely the terrain of a to-ing and fro-ing which explores this. More though, it is live, the journey of a mark both summons and is of something of this liveness, it travels the diversity of seasonal encounters whilst made with the intention to express something of them. Fisher writes: '... an experiential approach is crucial because it is through our experience that we contact and interpret the claims of nature' (Fisher, 2013 p. 207). This amounts to a freshness, out of which something new arises which could connect to a description Mehretu has made about her paintings being 'visual neologisms' (Mehretu, 2020). What emerges in time spent with a painting is an interpretation of a space that is always liminal, always new interpretations arise.

The drawings continued to occur rhythmically. In this stage I would work on a drawing over the span of a week. If I tried to speed that up, I would have missed subtle interactions in how the work could be best realized. If I tried working on more than one image at a time, I equally interfered with the energy involved in the realization of a drawing. At any given time, a mark led to the next, and the thing that could alternate was the pace, some actions slow, others fast. This is poignant to say because when I started this series, I had initially set up working parameters for a series of approximately 8 drawings. I saw value in creating a consistent series, so in a way I tried to enforce it. But I found imposing parameters to be problematic,



both practically and theoretically. It created an obstacle, which could snag and create static to a negative degree. In being a more closing decision, it was another nuanced consideration of the broader system being worked with. The resolve around this was never far and connected to the way of working on one image at a time, which in effect was three images, because it included contact with preceding and succeeding drawings, or *waves* as I thought of them, of a forming *oceanic methodology*.



Figure 26: K J J Warren, *Nebula Lines #12*, 2021, ash, sandstone, charcoal on paper. 120 x 140cm

The group of drawing that allowed these thoughts was also one in which I decided to bring back another block print. This block print wasn't specifically symbolic in the way that the previous ones were, so I wanted to see whether that would make a difference to how it worked, or how I felt about it. A problematic issue did occur though because the prolonged repeat, over a series of eight drawings, or eight weeks created restriction that was again counter to the more open sentiment of working spontaneously. In that time, it is not so much that I felt the need to deviate (which I did), it is more that I felt it should be at least an option. This may be a subtle point, but it was none the less a bit of a *static* trap that needed flushing

out. Whilst I persisted in finishing the series, I also knew, or was given an indication that future iterations would have to be free of such grouping.

## **Process and Structure**

As relevant as understanding the process is, so too is the outcome of art that is produced. Whilst I acknowledge the option for artists to place sole emphasis on process, the emergence of these *Nebula Lines* was drawing out how this exploration was connected to structure as well. To stress again, these differentiations, which have their own considerations were thought of as being aspects of a singular spectrum. Process was an undeniable quality of dynamic thinking, but so too was the thing being made, in an albeit relative way whereby the result of the process of art making was physically tangible.

With the works on paper from this stage I had been drawing on a faint grid, that functioned for the purpose of creating the underlying block print and as a method of upscaling a drawing (fig 26). I left these faint lines visible, as to me this felt to contain some of the process of creation and that (I felt), was good. At some point in these drawings, I started using the grid lines within the composition. It wouldn't be obvious to look at, but it was there, a subtle play and minor nuanced shift. The next stage on from the drawings was a shift onto canvas, and when I began working with ideas for the canvases, I used different construction lines. This idea developed from a previous small drawing series from 2018 (fig 27) that was of the continuing symbolism of *earth* and *sky*, expressed by bands of sandstone and ash. In these drawings triangular movement approached from opposing horizontal positions, passages that expressed differing energies that close and open, as winter does to spring. Of note here is where symbolic thought tried to creep back in, which as stated I was moving away from. I didn't specifically think on the paintings that followed as symbolic, yet I can't deny my mulling on these matters wasn't quite over.





Figure 27: K J J Warren *Processional zone sketch*, 2018,  
ash, sandstone, chalk, charcoal on paper. 20 x 30cm

These paintings titled *Processional Zones* (fig 28 - 30) and produced over six months seemed to be an appropriate progression from the *Nebula Line* drawings, emergent of this wave like philosophy. In allowing these extracted patterns new space to explore on the canvas, the emergent forms started to feel familiar, almost tribal. Occasionally a face, or figure or animal form would appear, and I had to ponder on acceptance or dispersion. Figuration can creep in this way and whilst it can create an interesting engagement, a tendency, in connection to the drive for more open abstractions in the past has been for me to dispel such emerging. The consideration here was in a kind of middle position, a sensitivity of the previous series *Waves, Wings & Buds* to be open to the process driven emergences. This middle position would allow playfulness in the inherent animism of the free-form emergences. Something of the trance-like process that the drawing process emerged from was very fulfilling, and presented options to explore, but the overall method of drawing from an extracted pattern meant that the canvases had a pre-determined outcome. It wasn't that I thought this was specifically wrong, but the question was indeed there as to whether it was at odds with going more fully into the raw discoveries of the free-form whereby imaginative response builds directly from intuition.



Figure 28: K J J Warren, *Processional Zones #1* 2021, acrylic, sandstone, ash on canvas. 120 x 140cm

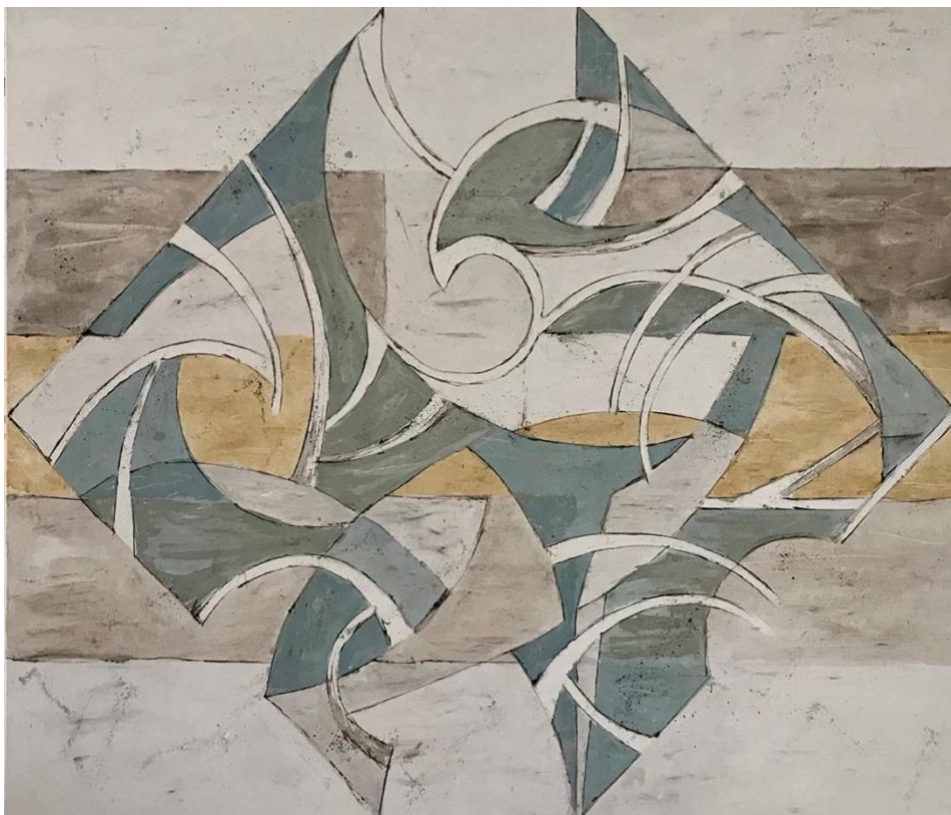


Figure 29: K J J Warren, *Processional Zones #2*, 2021, acrylic, sandstone, ash on canvas. 120 x 140cm



Figure 30: K J J Warren, *Processional Zones #7*, 2021, acrylic, sandstone, ash on canvas. 120 x 140cm

Showing these paintings at the end of year show generated a remark that the paintings were ‘didactic’. This comment was another signal for me of the prior problem I found with symbolism, that had crept back in the moment I used the bands of ash and sandstone. To give it this other name ‘didactic’, reiterated that it was not the way forward. This continued the consideration as well of showing the fruiting body and not the network.

The link to the larger network of practice was more evident in the free-form line work, which was inherently ambiguous and more obviously open, it was time for that to be brought back to the surface. I still thought the extracted patterns could work, were offering me something to explore, but to progress I continued to think they needed metaphorically to be cast off into the sea, to be dispersed a bit around the edges like driftwood. The method for making these works was thus changing, it was evolving, and as it did, it continued the path that would move more and more to embrace Titmarsh’s notion that ‘...preconceptions and theoretical overviews need to be dropped so that an emergent characterization can develop’ (Titmarsh, 2017, p. 10). Letting the process lead the way for the emergent art is what I have been describing, but when I say this, I don’t mean just ‘going with the flow’. The challenge of perseverance can offer more than one solution, to reiterate, it’s not that I didn’t think the



method for creating the extracted lines wasn't working or that it couldn't be improved, it was more that the way of working needed to have its own resolve, and that still seemed to be connected to the structural aspect and its relation to the free-form work (not one or the other). As well though was the matter of how texture and power of material presence could be brought into the work.

## **Weave Painting**

Parallel to my investigation with drawings on paper and canvas, I was experimenting with alternative ways for larger pieces to emerge. This would acknowledge differing time scales of working and progress thoughts on the materials used to make with, that further the relation to a 'dark ecology', of things unseen. Timothy Morton writes that ecological awareness is disorientating (Morton, 2016, p.41). This awareness is part of a strategy that opens to the notion concurring with thoughts in this report that: '... it is on the terrain of ontology that many of the urgent ecological battles need to be fought' (Morton, 2013, p.22).

Ecological awareness that I experience can be disorientating, disruptive and in connection to art making these are experiences that were fed into the *oceanic methodology*. Wanting to expand my use of material in the sculptural aspect of my work is part in connection to this and part in connection to the instinctive compulsion to want to make things. In one early experiment I glued paper either side of a wire mesh, meaning that when dry it could have its form altered, and that it was rigid enough to be able to be held off a wall. I worked on a few similar experiments, but it was *Weave Painting #1* (fig 31) which became more developed. *Weave Painting #1* continued a specific interest in finding ways of making finished paintings that didn't rely on conventional forms of stretcher and canvas.

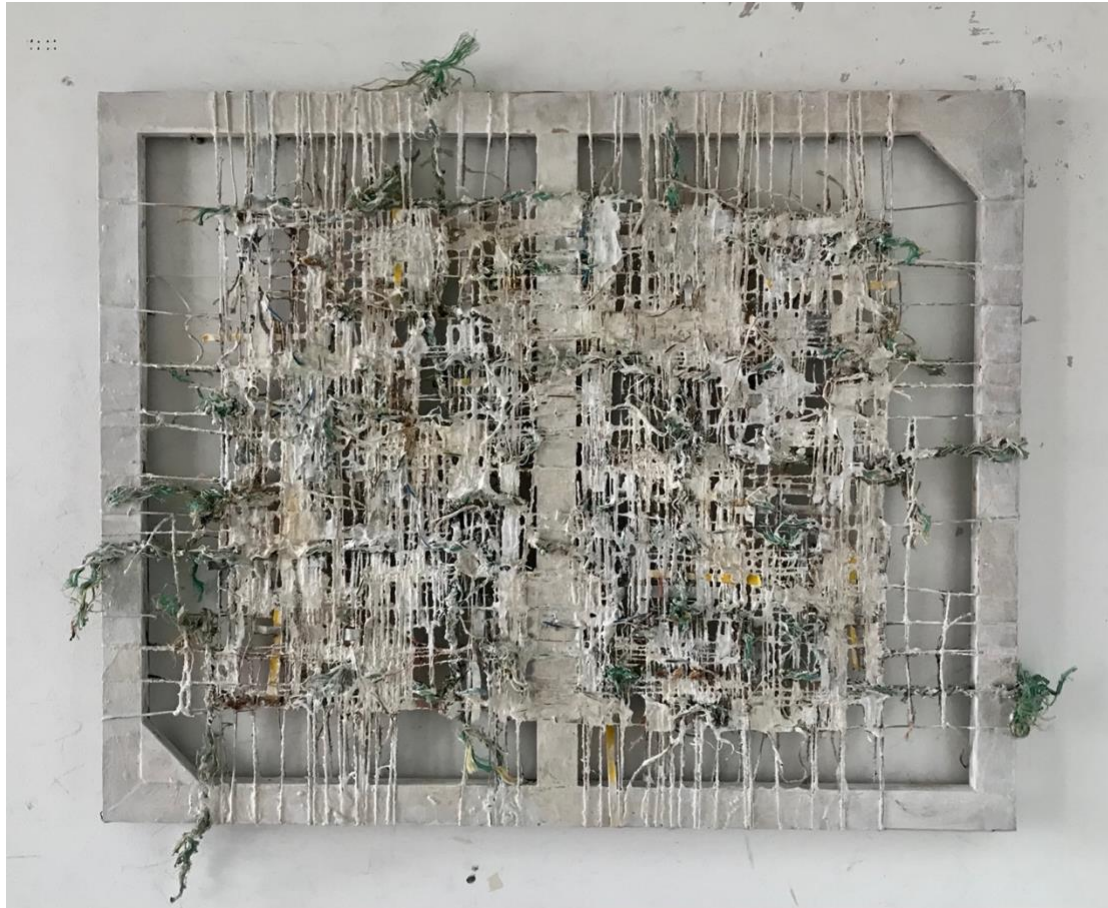


Figure 31: K J J Warren, *Weave painting #1*, 2020, wood, jute, wire, rope, plastic, chalk. 80 x 100cm

With *Weave Painting # 1*, I had in mind to work into it more, to weave into it one of the *Nebula Line* patterns that developed around this period. However, it was clear that before the inclusion of any added pattern, that it had an interesting structural value. I put it, as a working experiment, to one side. In truth I might have left it there had it not been for a positive response from a supervisory discussion, in which it was noticed and felt to be a strong piece that could in fact work well alongside the drawings. This perspective was most helpful and, in the end, helped me to embrace it. It certainly meant that the art practice had different forms and paces of activity, which were essential to fulfil the developing ecosophy. Also, if I had worked a pre-drawn pattern into it, it would have been of the formulaic pre-determining approach, that these weaves were offering a release from. As these *Weave Paintings* developed and had the potential for a degree of conceptual channelling through their use of material, they too were being developed technically through the process of making. *Weave Painting #3* (fig 32) was a continuation of the experiment. In this piece an old palette was used to create a simple frame, within which jute twine was tied, pulled, wrangled, and woven in more of an irregular way. This became an indicator for how this aspect of practice could

evolve more playfully, and this revealed to a greater degree its free-form potential. It was exhibited at the end of year show and subsequently generated positive feedback, encouraging of further development.



Figure 32: K J J Warren, *Weave Painting #3*, 2021, wood, wire, jute, metal hardware, acrylic. 120 x 140 x 30cm

Around this time, I was considering the work of Bosco Sodi (fig 33). Sodi creates works using very earthy materials that are then shaped or crafted in a way to keep an essence of the materiality itself. In a series of works on canvas he uses vast quantities of sawdust which he mixes with pigments and glue, turning it into a clay like paste, that cracks uncontrollably as it dries, over a period of about a month (Sodi, 2019).



This image has been redacted for copyright reasons.

Figure 33: B Sodi, *Untitled*, 2019, mixed media on linen. 186 x 186cm

In speaking about his work at the Nasher sculpture centre, Sodi described his working process as an exchange of energy between the artist and the work (Nasher Sculpture Centre, 2018, 6:51), in this way I can relate how process, as a philosophy is used to create, and something of a structure arrived at. Because my weave paintings were somewhere between a painting and a sculpture, I was particularly taken by Sodi's sawdust paintings. Whilst responding positively to them in terms of an almost geological outcome, it also tied into the question as to whether I, like he had done would be happy using white glue by the multiple gallon? Basically, I was not prepared to do this.

I also appreciated Sodi's referencing of wabi-sabi (Sodi, 2019), the Japanese aesthetic system (mentioned earlier as an influencing idea) with links to Zen Buddhism. I was exploring wabi-sabi in the past when I was exploring the element wood, and I started to see more clearly from the perspective of a future point how thoughts from a past time were a part of what was trying to emerge at this other time, and further, that this *oceanic methodology* had been forming all the while.



## Chapter 4: Oceanic Dynamic



Figure 34: K J J Warren, *Continuum lines #3*, 2021, mixed media on canvas. 120 x 140cm

‘Real duration is that duration which gnaws on things, and leaves on them the mark of its tooth. If everything is in time, everything changes inwardly, and the same concrete reality never recurs’ (Bergson, 1960 p. 48).

In this period, I was starting to go out more from the studio, I thought on this as unfurling. When I met the sea in this period, it was as a visitor, there was a gap, a porous barrier noticed by standing on a shoreline whereby the shore, sea or horizon could offer moments of sensual infusion, felt again when back in the studio. The continuum of waves of drawings and of extracted patterns meditated more on the sea as they started to sprawl over the summer into the autumn of 2021, here being done on canvas (fig 34).



Figure 35: K J J Warren, *Continuum Lines #4*, 2021, mixed media on canvas. 120 x 140cm

As the extracted patterns went on to form all over compositions, they worked to continue the potential for a canvas to engage the peripheral vision. In a curious link I was interested to hear the artist Sarah Sze referencing the peripheral in a talk about her paintings at the Victoria Miro gallery (Sarah Sze, 2021). Peripheral vision in that exhibition was a navigational tool for a relation between six paintings made for the space. Coming from a sculptural background Sze has a perspective on her practice, that I wholeheartedly agreed with and with growing implication, that drawing is too is a form of sculpture (Sze 2016). But as well though to reverse this from my own lens, I saw sculpture in relation to drawing, in the expanded sense of mark making (more notably present in this report in chapters 4 and 5). Sze has said her work is of a flux between “... process of becoming and a process of entropy” (Sze, 2016) and I felt the same about this too, that the subject of entropy and growth is of the prolonged meditation on an erosion of being, but of being also in formation. Sze commented in an interview: “When I first started making sculpture, I would ask: how do you make an artwork that in and of itself creates a kind of weather?” (Sze, 2018. p. 116) From thoughts

such as this, her installation work built in the idea that a work can and does create its own climate. Sze achieves this by using differing materials and technologies that are poetically open for interpretation, and that are drawn out of (in some instances) quite personal sources. This means that she is playing with memory and distinctions between interiority and exteriority.

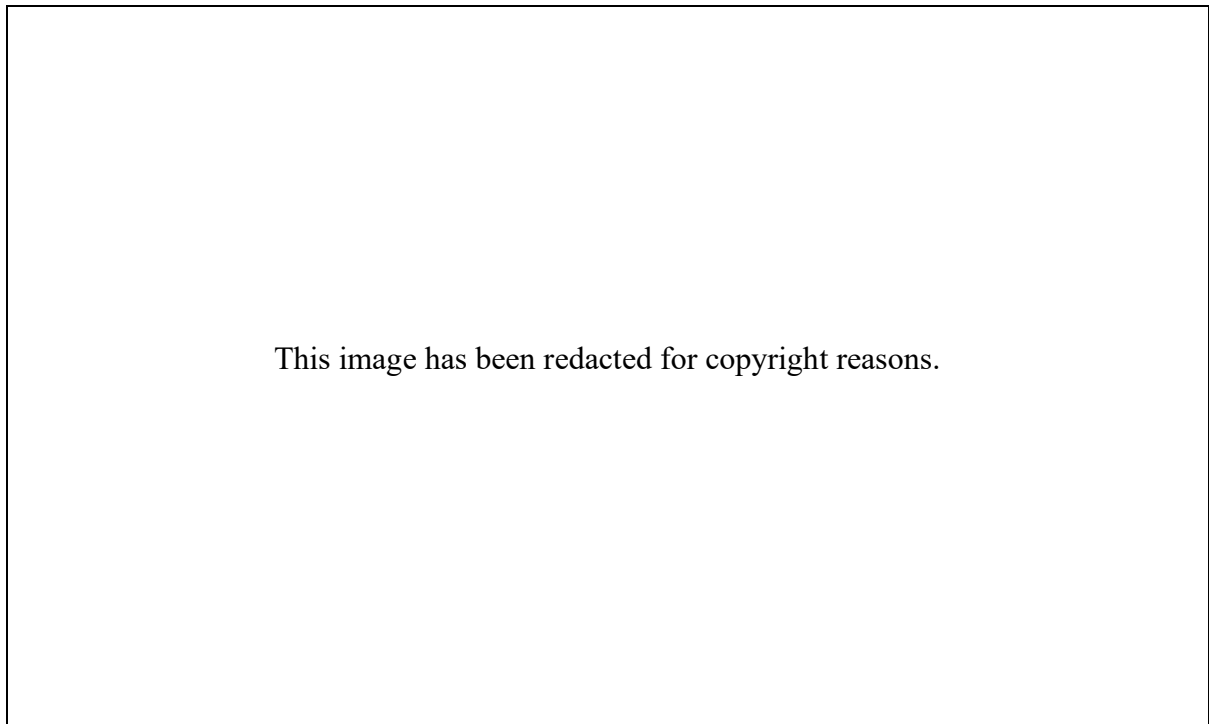


Figure 36: S Sze, *5<sup>th</sup> Season* (detail), 2021, mixed media.

Her painting installation *5<sup>th</sup> Season* (fig 36) for instance contains (amongst a multitude of objects) photographic images taken on her iPhone (Lawrence 2022). These personal references, connect to Sze's referral to '5<sup>th</sup> Season' as an 'Internal landscape' 'Interior not only that it was within architecture, but interior in that it referred to a landscape of the imagination or of memory' (Sze, 2022). This unsettling term made me take a step back because in one seminar I was asked if my work was an internal landscape, and at the time I felt quite strongly that it was not. My work by contrast had a sense of acknowledging inspiration from the elemental phenomena that I was working with but was itself formed in a process that involved working with the moment, which is different from memory. Neither though is it separated from it. This (I thought) was like the way improvisational jazz music could intuitively emerge in live sessions, emerging as a kind of phenomenon. What this meant was not to say that memory is not relevant, but to talk of landscape as being 'internal'



played into a danger of suggesting that the inside and outside are separate in a way that is counter-intuitive and contradictory to my investigation, which in keeping with ecopsychology involves overcoming dualism (Fisher, 2013, p. 206). The more I considered this though, I realised that in a way I was alluding to something like an aspect of an internal landscape when I was referencing poetic summoning in my work, with words like waves, wings, and buds. The unstoppable surfacing of thoughts relates to the present moment, but also to the unconscious and to memory. It was not therefore wrong to name internal process, to deny it. The animism in the process of making the free form work whilst being live phenomenon was also intra-relational to these processes, all of which facilitated a balance between poetic response and compositional play. The importance in my case was to be open to distinctions whilst stressing that this is intra-relational, and therefore transpersonal as well, which as a factor I felt to be true in Sze's work too. As Amanda Boetzkzes writes on the development of landscape in art: '... humans are themselves no longer the subject of landscape but are rather subjected to and dispersed by that beyond' (2019, p. 47).



Figure 37: K J J Warren, *Continuum Lines #8*, 2021, mixed media on canvas. 120 x 140cm

At this stage the flow of creative energy going into the drawing was still running through the investigations on canvas. The *Continuum Lines* (fig 34, 35, 37, 40) in moving to connect to the periphery of the canvas, were in the process of breaking up, and the more refined lines being replaced by marks made with my then favourite tool - the palette knife. This way of working on canvas allowed the paintings to become more nebulous and this effectively was a channel for them to engage in a journey towards fusion with the free-form drawing, as a more open process, more expressive of the forming potential of an *oceanic methodology*. Before I got there though, the free-form drawings were still at this stage informing the composition for the work on canvas, there was still some momentum left in that method. At this point though I was producing the free form drawings on paper in a more deliberate way, independent from and equal to the paintings.



Figure 38: K J J Warren, *free-form drawing Autumn 21 #4*, 2021, mixed media on paper. 70 x 80cm





Figure 39: K J J Warren, *free-form drawing winter 22 #1*, 2022, mixed media on paper. 100 x 125cm

Towards the end of that year the more intricate patterns of extracted patterns were virtually absorbed back into the network of free form drawing (fig 39). At this point there was no resistance, it was simply going with the tide. The resistance I had to work with came a bit later, around a point in the November work in progress seminar. By the time of that seminar the rationale of making a free form drawing that specifically informed an extracted pattern of lines was less clear. I showed drawing, and then painting and inadvertently invited comparison between free form drawing and extracted *Continuum Line* paintings. Feedback was that these drawings were more ‘open’ than the paintings of that stage, which of course had become something of a trigger word, because the implication of the term ‘openness’ was crucial to the destination, the *oceanic methodology*. This led to the realisation that the methodical approach that had been developed of creating composition was ready to face an alternative option, that would replace the extracting method with the non-hierarchical implications of the free-form as way of the encompassing *oceanic methodology*. This could



have generated a different type of painting, but instead it was part of the move which generated a different type of work altogether.



Figure 40: K J J Warren, *Continuum Lines #12*, 2021, mixed media on canvas. 120 x 140cm

Over the Christmas break I felt a degree of grief about the disappearance of the extracted patterns, that perhaps I had misspent my time exploring them and that this thing I had been exploring hadn't worked, or that a lot of effort and hard work was once again destined to become ash. But I also found it impossible to be completely forlorn about this because the living sense of what the work was and where it came from was still very much alive, with threads to follow – directly to the sculpture.

## Weave Sculptures



Figure 41: K J J Warren, *Patterns of Transformation #1*, 2021 (work in progress image).

Alongside the drawings and paintings, I had been continuing to develop what I had initially called the *Weave Paintings*. Until the end of the *Patterns of Transformation #1* (fig 41), I had been using acrylic binder, as a paint and which as well acted as a glue to lock all the knotwork in place. It gave the work incredible flexibility, representing one possibility for how this work could evolve. However, I continued to have this material concern about acrylic as paint and binder. With the works on canvas, I had been using acrylic binder with organic and inorganic pigments, like sandstone, charcoal, and ash. As well I would mix in some powdered clay. In using clay and ochres ground by hand I had created an internal felt dialogue whereby the earth spoke and expressed dissatisfaction at being mixed with a plastic product. So, I stopped using the acrylic binder. This gap led to a natural break in what had

become a series of six *Weave Paintings* (fig 41). These six were then inadvertently grouped together forming what would become one sculpture. An interesting development here was that this sculpture would take on a different configuration each time it was brought out from being packed down and subsequently reconstructed. This unintended aspect would go on to be a crucial part of the development by creating these breaks in the continuum of practice, a move which allowed more room for manoeuvre, particularly in the possibility of how larger bodies of work or sculptures could coherently form. The second revelation was that groups of these weave paintings, as clusters, made them more able to be read as open, more so than individual sections.

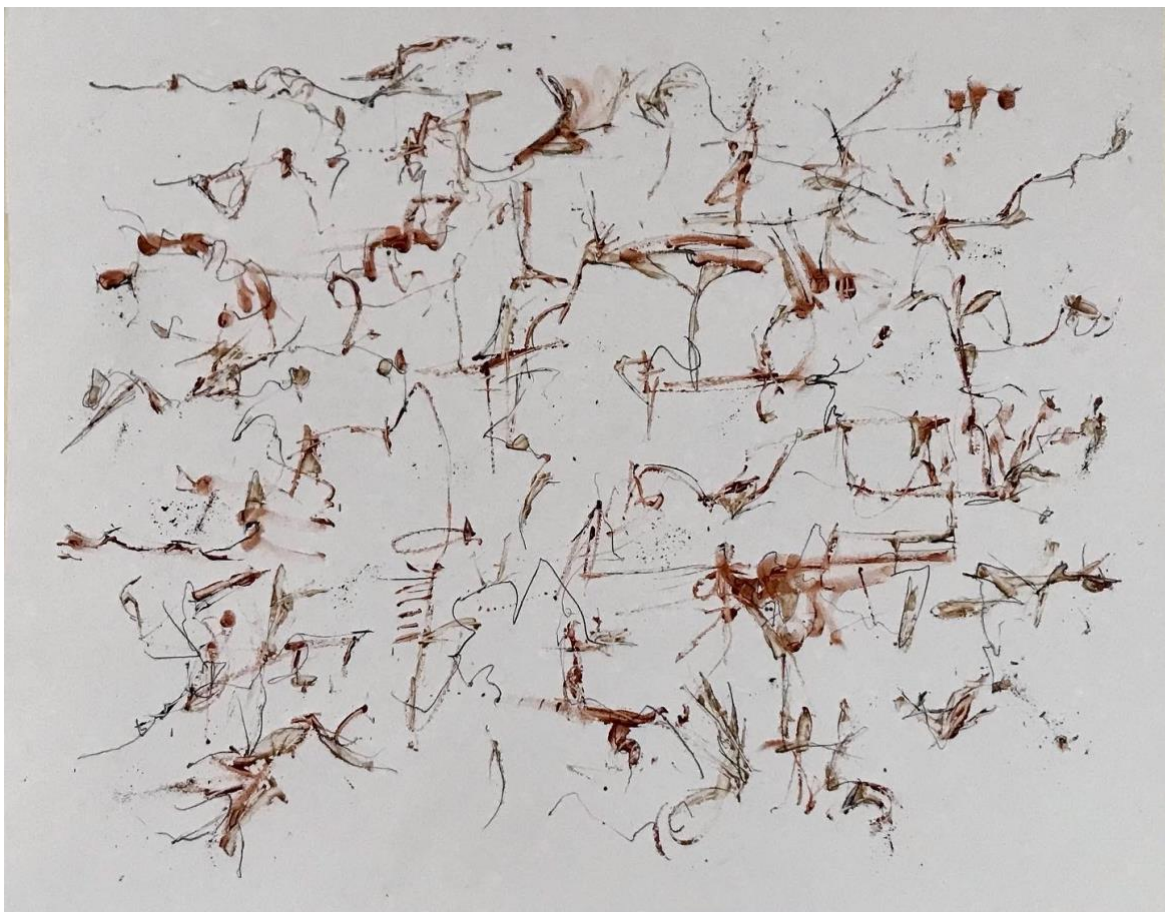


Figure 42: K J J Warren, *free-form drawing winter 22 #6*, 2022, mixed media on paper. 100 x 125cm

The succeeding *Weave Painting* (fig 43) was made in January 2022, exactly at a point when they, as an evolving series, were able to acquire more time to discover how they could become a major outcome of the body of work. This was imagined by a simple gesture whereby in the January of that year I put the work on canvas to one side, which left an encounter between the free-form drawings on paper and the developing *Weave Paintings*. My



gut reaction was that these resonated well with each other, were different yet the same, and so a new configuration of working was set-in motion.

At times, as this progressed, the work seemed to contain either the spectre or the accomplishment of the prior extracted patterns. In a different way, patterns were still being extracted, but here it was an arrival from a different direction. The recognition that the *Nebula Lines*, *Processional Zones*, *Continuum Lines and Wave*, *Wing and Bud* series were absorbed and not abandoned, that they could re-emerge in other ways more connected to the overall development, was a worthy lesson in the value of perseverance. In supervisory discussions we were able to discuss this another way, that sometimes systems needed breaking down to proceed.



Figure 43: K J J Warren, *Weave Painting #2*, 2022, clay, jute, wire 120 x 140 x 7cm

Emergent qualities in drawings on paper and with twine were unfolding in different time scales. Compared to the works on paper, the *Weave Paintings* were slow to emerge. I went on

to find this fulfilling in terms of an immersive and creative labour. Giving time to something gives it a meaning and I then had a challenge to get on with the graft. As I thought about the *weave paintings* as a form of expanded drawing, I did so in relation to a notion of ‘Expanded Painting’, which Mark Titmarsh described as demonstrating ‘... a tension within itself, a tendency to be both this and that, to be painting and not painting, to generate thinking about the conditions of its own being’ (Titmarsh, 2017, p. 108). This shifting period then provided a stronger sense of how I framed my research between 1: the act of making as a free-form drawing process and 2: An open ecology of intra-relation, between ecological Self and Gaia, and between the factors of *dynamic* and *static*. The expression of these points is through the free-form drawing, moving into sculptural space and through choice of material to make with.

These points fit within the *oceanic methodology*; I will go on to exemplify that in how it came to be applied effectively to my working practice. Prior to this and as an aid for it I found it useful to reflect on with Stephan Harding’s description of Jung’s four ways of knowing: intuition, sensing, thinking, and feeling. Harding writes in relation to the Jungian mandala:

“... sensation or sensory experience yields a direct apprehension of the things that surround us through the medium of our physical bodies. Thinking interprets what is there in a somewhat logical, rational manner; feeling grants a negative or positive valance to each encounter, and so helps to ascribe value to the phenomenon, and intuition yields a sense of its deeper meaning...” (Harding, 2009, p. 36)

Some balance of these four points seemed to be of a way to facilitate the *dynamic* qualities that allow the art practice to optimally flow and generate conditions to engage with progression imaginatively, in a more freely open way. Conversely, a tilt in that poise could lead to a trap in a negative sense, which in my case could lead to an over thinking that put the other modes of knowing further from reach. This is why the *oceanic methodology* as an evolving ecosophy was inclusive of the term ‘maintenance’ and sought a balance. In this sense I found the past prior stage of considering aspects of thought to be in the way of progressing free-form work to now be inaccurate, that phase had gone. The recognition of this phase was trying to integrate these four ways of knowing, not to dismiss variance in movement between these differing faculties, but rather embrace them within parameters of a

working system wary of potential traps. The overhaul process had metaphorically sent the creative vessel out to sea.

### Material Surfacing

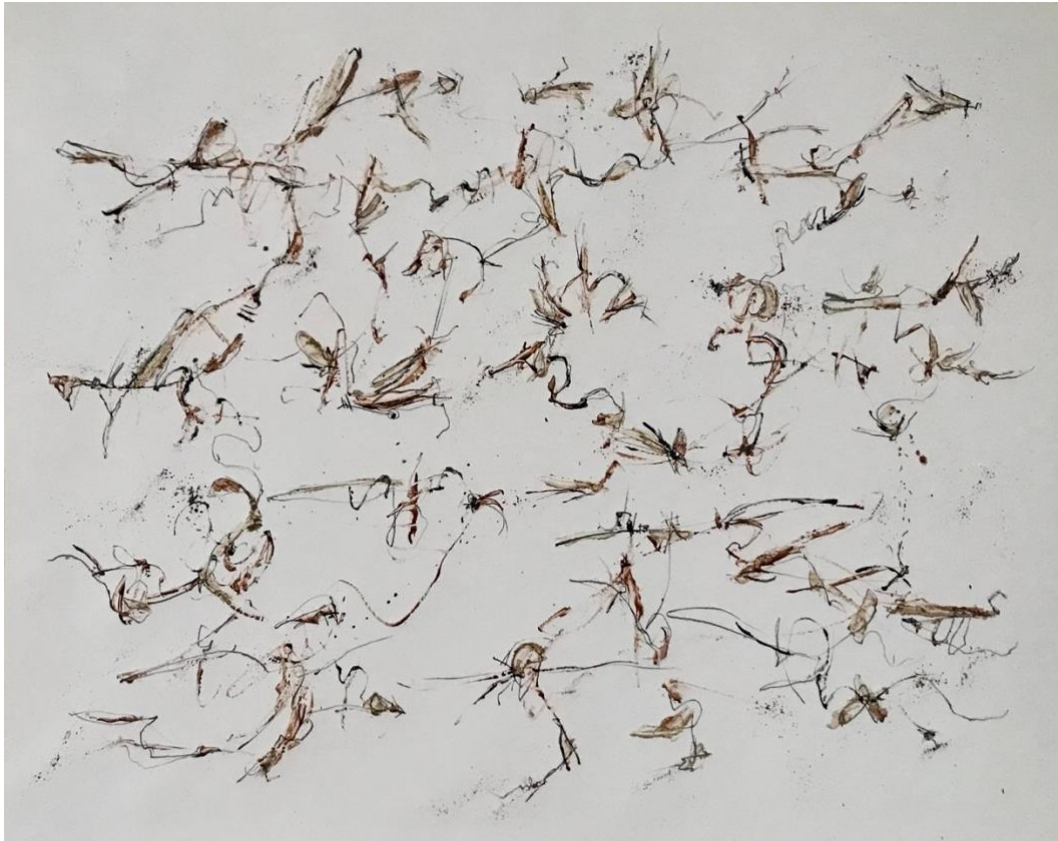


Figure 44: K J J Warren, *free-form drawing winter 22 #7*, 2022, mixed media on paper 100 x 125cm

In that January period, with a post-acrylic burn out, I turned back to using earthy materials. In the works on paper, I was using charcoal, ash, sand, clay, and ochre (fig 44). These are not necessarily the most opaque materials and so to best work with their translucency I worked on white cotton paper and then white bamboo paper. As these drawings progressed, the freeness and the tensions within them were then becoming manifest in the woven works. It is difficult to say exactly when, but at some point, the title *Weave Painting* had lost its hold. Letting the work transform required adaptation and here that involved acknowledging that I was moving more specifically into making sculpture.





Figure 45: *Red rock*, 2021. Photograph: K J J Warren

In the January of that year as well, I chipped into this rock (fig 45). It revealed a deep red ochre, iron rich and loaded with enough of this element as to make it magnetic. The profound affect this had on me affirmed that this sort of connection to materials, this sort of foraging and discovery was a part of a wider fulfilment, and an energy that could be transferred into the work. With this rock it felt as if I chipped into something of my being, affirming a commitment to old trains of thought in which I had ground my own pigment and valued working with and feeling the earth in this way.

‘Primal senses are akin to activities of the heart, not the eyes. I revere stones as gurus (from Sanskrit guru “Weighty, grave, elder, teacher”). There’s a devotional slowing down, an entering of dreamtime, not unlike falling in love, that’s involved in pigment foraging’ (Gustafson, 2019).

Ochre artist Heidi Gustafson’s art practice is primarily one of foraging. She finds ochres by a process she calls ‘aesthetic reception’ (Gustafson, 2019). Being sensually aware of the ground she walks upon, her practice is attentive and connecting. I played with this notion of *aesthetic reception*, and it worked positively with a visceral reaction to natural material, like with the example of the red rock. I tussle and thus struggle with the materials I explore, their pros and cons, but when I can intuitively draw things in, things that (in a way do) speak, then usually these things are connected to broader themes, first in connection to elements that

inspire such as air, water, earth, their transformation and intra-relation, but then secondly and interestingly to materials that aren't considered natural, that pollute the environment (more of which will be discussed in the next chapter). Whatever is gathered in this way is always a fuel for the imagination, a feeding into the network.

My drive to make art, to have meaningful labour emerges in relation to an attentiveness to an impact of that conviction. This is to say that matters of the ecological Self are fed also by matters of impact on the environment. Pollutants in an environment are connected to materials used in art making and as I organically meandered with these threads of enquiry, I found the sculptural direction meant I had shifted to a position that was better suited to expressing and exploring this. I must admit therefore of experiencing a degree of relief that the works on canvas weren't the endpoint, that they had become ran into some *static*. The *dynamic* exchange between drawing and sculpture was inherently welcoming of a clearer channel to a freer expansion of these matters. This simply was needed and could learn from the considerations of installation, whereby sculpture connects to and is a part of its architecture and environment.

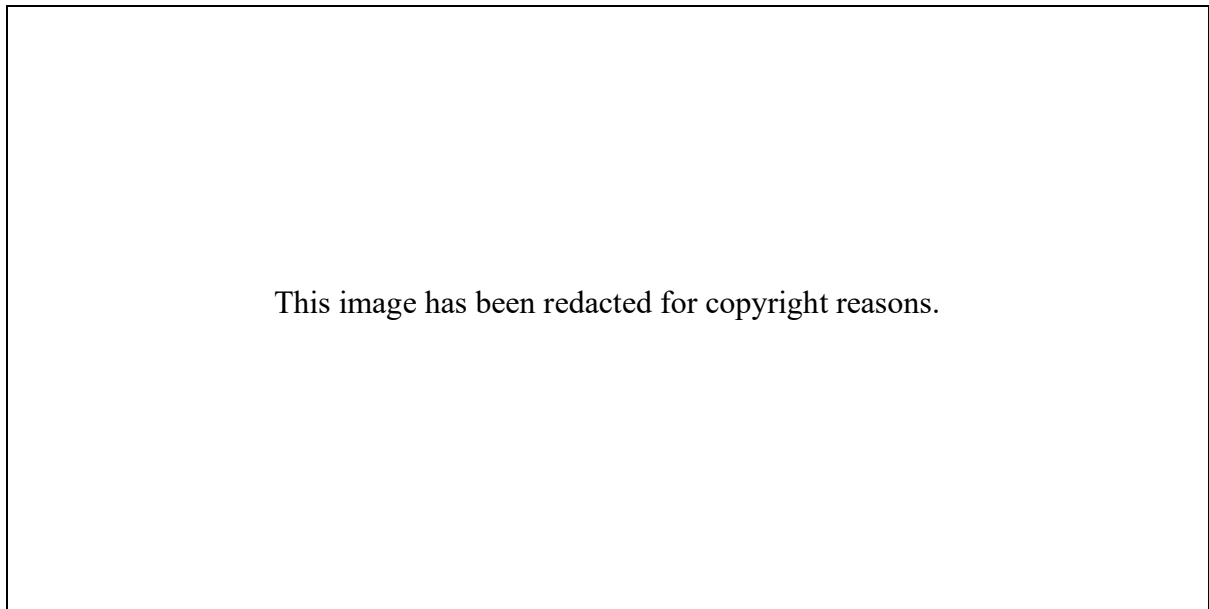


Figure 46: M Dean, *Garden of delete*, 2021, (installation view). Barakat Contemporary

Artist Michael Dean creates installations that play with the poetic, he has used letters as catalysts to generate sculptures that are immersive arrangements of matter, but he is not spelling anything out, there is no line or verse. In that sense I see his work as able to offer

multiple interpretation, beyond his control. For his exhibition *Garden of Delete* (fig 46) objects that he has watched change over time in his own garden, that were hidden and revealed over the course of changing seasons, offer potential on rediscovery to become part of new sculptures, that in this case were placed in a gallery to form new dialogues, as was discussed in a recording of the panel interview for the exhibition (Barakat Contemporary, 2021, 2:47). New dialogues are set up between cultures too, in this case between East London and the Barakat Contemporary gallery in Seoul (Michael Dean: *Garden of Delete*, 2021). This was of interest to my work around points of control and non-control, where work could be made, released, and then brought together in unforeseen configurations. I found with my work that the discursivity happening with an expanded drawing practice as it continued to be related to in terms of this *aesthetic reception*, was drawing from a multitude of reciprocal acts between ecological Self and Gaia. I thought on Dean's work as offering shoots of enquiry, which itself was a kind of Poeticizing, an interpretation that before definition was open, in contact with Abram's sentiment, of what is below verbal awareness. (Abram, 1997, p.52)

### **Weave Sculpture: Expanded Drawing**



Figure 47: K J J Warren, *A hole in the Network*, 2022, (Exhibition view). Way Out East Gallery

To continue the development of the sculptural works, I had made a robust wooden frame so that the woven sculptures could be made inside and then taken out to be hung and form their own relation to space (fig 43). The combination I had initially used of jute and steel wire allowed patterns to be created with the jute, and with rigidity coming from the wire. At this stage the wire was more a support. As with the free form drawings, evolution happened one piece at a time. In considering alternative binders to acrylic, I began to experiment with clay paint, which was satisfying in its being ecologically friendly, biodegradable, and naturally breathable. The clay paint had very different qualities to acrylic. Firstly, it didn't offer the same flexibility and secondly, I wasn't convinced that I could rely on it as a glue in the way that I had previously been doing. Because of this I paid more attention to the binding of the work and that helped the patterning of this work to emerge (fig 48) A major difference as mentioned before was timescale. The free form drawings would emerge in a morning, whereas the sculptural woven sections as expanded drawings were taking two to three weeks of labour. Hours into days, days into weeks, getting lost in time in this way was satisfying and again fitting for the *oceanic methodology*.



Figure 48: *Detail of weave painting*, 2022. photograph: K J J Warren

To find my way with clay paint I began researching earth building projects that use clay. Basic materials of clay, sand, straw, and water in different ratios can be used to form walls, plaster, and paint. With the clay paint, fibre such as straw is optional (Crews 2010). The sculptures here were primarily woven in jute, which as a material was very fibrous, and so



my working experiment was that in using a basic clay paint recipe and in working it into the jute, that this would in effect become a part of the paint. To my delight this seemed to work. In March of that year, I exhibited two of these sculptures suspended in space by wire and alongside free form drawings, using the red rock pigment (fig 47). This gave a sense as to how this work would be exhibited in the June end of year exhibition.

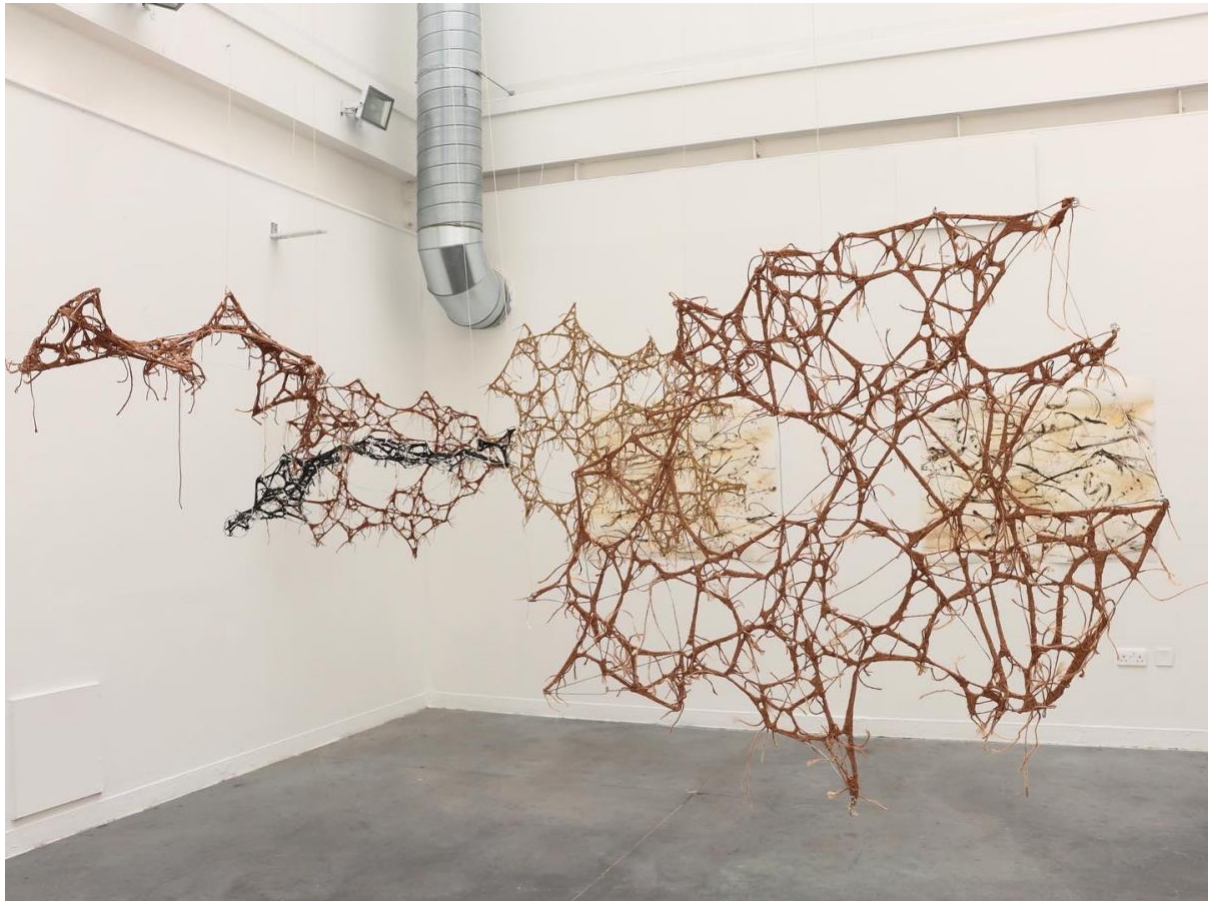


Figure 49: K J J Warren, *Patterns of Transformation #2*, 2022, (Exhibition image).

For that June exhibition I was able to ponder another direction of this work in the formation of a larger drawing in space (fig 49). The individual sections of this grouped assemblage created a new composition, which required letting go of what I valued about the individual sections. Like what happened with the sculpture *Patterns of Transformation #1*, I was able to see what happened as I moved the sections around and moved myself around the sections. This larger drawing in space was exhibited in connection to free form drawings on the wall, which were of the spring series that drew with oak gall ink (fig 50, 51).

Whilst the woven sections were presented as one sculptural installation, there was changing technique within the layers of the sections, subtly from one to the next, mainly in the wire work. The galvanized wire was shifting over the course of these sculptural works, from being a support, to being part of a more integral synergy with other materials. The wire work was thus shifting and was becoming a significant part of the work, the development of which will be discussed in the next chapter.



Figure 50: K J J Warren, *Oak gall drawing #1*, 2022, oak gall ink & clay 100 x 125cm





Figure 51: K J J Warren, *Oak gall drawing #7*, 2022, 125 x 140cm

A constantly shifting practice meant that subtle differences between sections, that could be part of larger groupings was inevitable. I thought to a degree this factor might level off a bit, but not in a way that restricted adaptation, meaning I would find a tolerance to accept and embrace differences. Creating breaks between groupings of works, as mentioned above was part of the resolution here and key to the overall progression.

The materials used in these drawings and sculptures had an emphasis on earth, earth that I had found, and this was a choice, but they also had wire and jute of unknown origin. I found this alienating and unsatisfactory, as was the issue that these considerations were happening behind the scenes of my practice. The other side of this though is that it was also the choppy route toward giving myself 'permission' to expand the materiality and move through a seductive idealism that getting my hands moist with clay induced.

## Chapter 5: Tide of Things to Come



Figure 52: *Modified frame as dock to make sculpture in, 2022.* Photograph: K J J Warren

In the Summer of 2022, I remade the frame (dock) with which I was making these woven works, to allow the development of the sculptural possibility (fig 52). It was soon apparent that the galvanized steel wire I had been using was well suited to this next phase of the work because of its ability to hold emergent forms. After a bit of experimentation, docked in this frame was a new sculpture that I found to be an indication of the way forward. If my studio



was in a different site, a place with access to a raw material like clay, it is possible I would have continued to use it in the sculptures. In the period when I was focusing on clay paint, I wasn't in direct contact with the source of the material, not as before, when I could step out of my countryside studio and the clay was half a spades depth away. That was an issue for me, but even when I could do that, could work in a satisfying earthy way, I knew that anything made was connected beyond itself, to tools, to shelter, to existing. I wanted to bring these considerations to the surface.



Figure 53: *A collection of ghost gear*, 2023. photograph: K J J Warren

Ecological Self connected to Gaia I had no problem with, but the damaging and polluting aspects of the world that the human hyperobject has created is harder to feel a part of. Links to the world I found could be heart-warming and heart-breaking and acknowledging this felt to be of an honesty in acknowledging an inherent anxiety about living and making. In owning up to the state of being perplexed I was able to expand my conception of elements to include feelings of bafflement in this Anthropocene which, ‘... recognizes this time as a condition from which we cannot return and which declares that the human world has already become the prime determinant of the ecological future of the planet, even beyond the existence of the species’ (Boetzkes, 2019, p.55). In bringing more diverse materials into the studio to work with, it felt I was more in contact with how I found society’s damaging of the world to be troubling, as well as I something I was a part of (rather than a behind the scenes puzzle that I

grappled with). I found that ropes, twines, wires, and other materials suitable for weaving could radically open my work to paradoxes of living in a society that has something of a burdening impact on Gaia. This provided meaning beyond the inner reaches of the ecological Self, and it got me out salvaging and encountering. Once I had gathered materials to work with, the strangeness of them in being dark, or awareness of this dissipated slightly, enough to enter the more playful state of making, of exploring pattern and transformation, working as though it were a drawing. It was no coincidence then, that as this stage progressed, conversations generated around my work with supervisors seemed to get clearer, more open, more connected to the potential.



Figure 54: *Groyne*, 2020, Cooden Beach. Photograph: K J J Warren

Industry and innovation in themselves are the only reason I can write these words now, for them to be read in another *now*. On the English coast, weathered and worn beach groynes (fig 54) continued to inspire me because of their sculptural forms, as *patterns of transformation*. On closer encounters appreciation shifts to other aspects like the metal hardware used, functional, but then over time rusting away, always becoming something other. Metal



hardware exposed in this style of woodwork is utilitarian, is rustic, is strong, is durable, is part of what holds these made objects together. I trust it, will climb on the forms to observe differing perspectives, whilst knowing that the whole structure will one day break down. A sculpture too is environmental in its use of material in space and, as humans are both biological and geological, so too sculpture is geological, a future stratum. The connection of sculpture to environment means it can exist in a way that comments on its creation. Objects such as groyne are time capsules and can emit something of their current state. Meditations on objects such as groynes, or more specifically a state in which they are ‘something other’ like what I’m here referring to as ‘non-groyne’ (fig 55) are inspirational to how I understand sculpture’s potential, to be of access to transforming phenomena, outside of labelled functional thing.

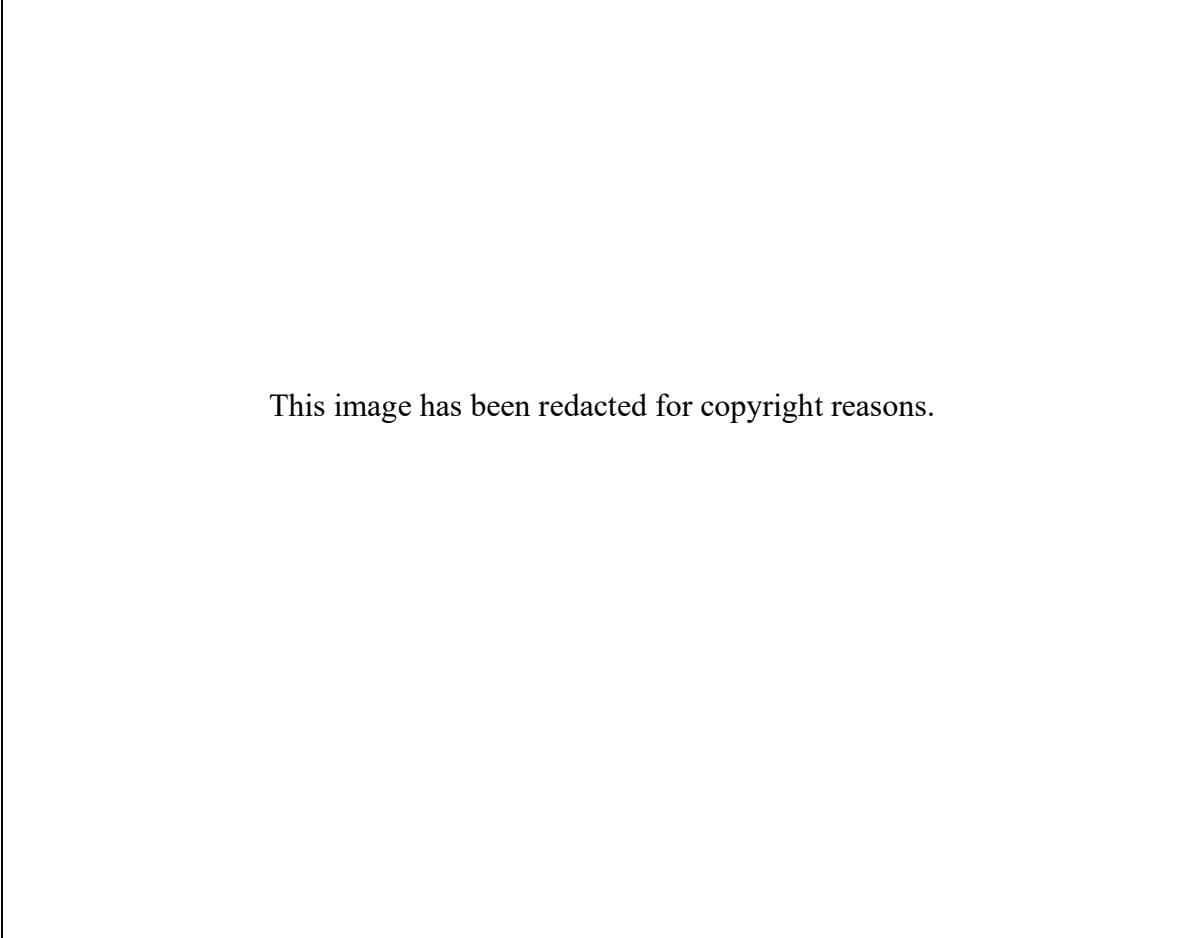


Figure 55: *Non-groyne*, 2023, Whitstable Beach. Photograph: K J J Warren

Snagged in groynes too are debris, like plastic and bits of rope, a litter of the sea (discussed below). In exploring plastics infiltration into the planets oceans Boetzkes uses the example of artist Kelly Jarvac and her series ‘*Plastiglomerates*’ (Boetzkes, 2019, p. 196) (Fig 56). These forms have occurred off the waters of Hawaii, where plastic has sunk and become ‘... an



indurated, multi-composite material made hard by agglutination of rock and molten plastic' (Corcoran et al 2014). These *plastiglomerates* are of course troubling, but so too am I drawn to them, aesthetically. As I embarked on creating new work, I would work on each section of what were becoming larger sculptural assemblages with a relative autonomy, each piece occurring in the wave like continuum that was linked to the next like in a chain. A chain, like a network can be seen as a link, it can connect, but so too it can be something that binds and traps. That materials can hold differing and sometimes opposing readings was of interest to the evolving work, adding to the intention of the work to be open, to 'stay with the trouble'. Contemplations like this, particularly from the *plastiglomerates* drew out thoughts that my evolving sculptural assemblages could do something similar, that both attract and offer disorientation by use of material. This point was discussed in a supervisory meeting and recognised since as an important value.



This image has been redacted for copyright reasons.

Figure 56: K Jazvac, *Plastiglomerates*, (part of series) 2013, molten plastic debris and beach sediment, including sand, wood and rock.

As the doctorate continued its spiralling motion that encountered old trains of thought, it led to a re-encounter with the sculpture *Earth and Sky* (fig 9) from 2016. It returned this time for consideration in the way that it was built, particularly in the sculpture's connection points to the ground and the way it was held in space. This return offered fresh insight into how sculpture was and could be connected to its wider environment, on points of contact.

Correspondingly I was able to envisage the current work in progress connecting to ground, to walls, and being held in space. Thus, the emergent idea for the woven sculptural assemblages (fig 57, 61, 62) was that a ground contact could be utilized with the sculpture, to work with weight and gravity, but then as well to use suspension points from the wall or ceiling of an exhibition space, that could work to create lift, create waves in space. As I started to think more sculpturally, whatever the magpie mind was drawn to in connection to the poetic thread of the work was all in consideration to use. These materials were primarily things that I could weave with, and materials that would hoist and hold the work in space. Connected to this I dragged out some galvanized chains from an old box that were part of an experimental sculptural installation, from an even earlier period, from my BA. These chains, and shackles helped connect the evolving sculptures to the making dock. As well though, the sculptures in becoming denser meant that the chains could work as an inclusion to the larger assemblages and could aid in how the work was supported in an exhibition, they fitted in to the feel of the work and were something to play with.

## **New Twine**

A string that found its way into my studio at the end of the clay series of weave paintings was marline, a tarred hemp line used historically in shipping. Because of my tendency to mull over pros and cons of a material, it took me a long time to make the decision to buy some of this marline and experiment with it, but when I did it opened the door to other strings and twines typically found in chandleries. I was drawn to these because of their link to weather, to voyaging, and to the ocean, but as well to the durability of them in terms of strength and importantly to the elements. My curiosity with these materials included consideration that the developing sculptures could be left open to the elements for weathering. This consideration was to do with figuring out possibilities, some of which beyond the doctoral timeframe. The galvanised wire that I was using to evolve these sculptural sections, in places where it was cut, didn't have any coating to hold off rust, meaning there were areas in these sculptures that would corrode quicker. I didn't have a specific answer to this, other than that for the time

being these sculptures would need at least a bit of protection from the elements. Further down the line, if needed I could switch the wire to stainless steel, which might fare better.



Figure 57: K J J Warren, *Patterns of Transformation #3*, 2022 – 2023, Work in progress: 4 sections of woven sculpture grouped together, wooden support forming an assemblage, or one larger sculpture.

Environmentally the twines in consideration were not without problem, being formed of materials like polyethylene and nylon, which derive from plastic and petroleum. The problem for me was in relation to where these materials can end up, to how they were polluting to land, sea and to geological strata. One term that relates to this is ‘ghost gear’ (fig 53), which in a Greenpeace report from 2019 is defined as ‘the abandoned fishing nets haunting our oceans’ (Greenpeace, 2019). The expansion in my exploring of nautical twines was on

coastlines, where often remnants of rope, nets, line etc... are found. It seemed inevitable that I would salvage and play with this. I had prior to this tried to find innovative twines, from companies that had explicit and encouraging environmental policies like Marlow (<https://www.marlowropes.com>), but any form of ghost gear found wasn't going to meet these criteria. Using ghost gear though, and purposefully going out to find more of it was where the thread of enquiry was leading, was part of what I earlier described as an unfurling practice moving from studio to environment. In using the term 'ghost gear' my intention wasn't specifically to be critical of the fishing industry, my sense was that it could be more interesting to have open dialogue. The more undeniable problem for me was to do with littering and polluting of oceans with these sorts of materials that were tethered by intersectionality to broader environmental issues like 'climate crisis' Collecting waste is problematic, is sad, but again strangely welcomed to allow the evolving work to comment on that.

With these new materials I was learning through trial and error how to use them, which also was evolving methods of construction of the overall sculptures. At this moment too, when the methodology had the capacity to expand its materiality, I was gifted with a bundle of old internet cable, or e-waste. I was interested in this initially because it was purple (close to the spectral range of blue), but any wire-like material would have been welcomed. I had to think about pros and cons of this too, what it adds to the poeticizing of the work for both maker and then beholder of work, but in the end, instinct said *yes*.

Coincidentally, I read Jonathan Crary's book 'Scorched Earth'. In this book he writes that: 'The internet is the digital counterpart of the vast, rapidly expanding garbage patch in the Pacific Ocean' (2022, p. 42). Crary takes issue with the internet, which he describes as a human complex, which is connected to his critique of the digital age, and of capitalism: 'The internet complex has become inseparable from the immense, incalculable scope of 24/7 capitalism and its frenzy of accumulation, extraction, circulation, production, transport, and construction, on a global scale' (Crary, 2022, p. 3). The pace of this frenzy unfortunately has created detritus, waste, pollution, and as I tug on some of these wires and draw them into the sculpture, another poetic thread via an intersectionality, goes in that direction, to a fault in the societal system that Crary calls 24/7 capitalism. Again, my work was not trying to make informational statements, rather it was being made to exist in a way that could generate response via these differing threads of materials woven in, that can be positive or negative.

As a maker I am disrupted by these considerations, the energy I put into the work is bothered and like with earlier considerations with Julie Mehretu, a focus of attention can become absorbed into one's creative being, to become like a kind of DNA for emerging artwork.

“My interest is more in the visceral, collective source of that experience. For me, it becomes this activated, fertile space I can work in and respond to. I think the opacity of abstraction, that space to play with language, is where one can invent other images or possibilities. It's not about delineating or defining some concrete political perspective, or some directive on how to understand things, or even a historical narrative. It's about the collision of all those things—the uncertainty and murmurings of all that” (Mehretu, 2020).

At one point I needed to find more wire and I found myself in B & Q, scanning the range of wires for sale in their depot. I walked out with nothing. Shortly after I walked into a scrap metal yard and walked out with a bag full of old disused wires. The difference between these two options is massive and it seemed inevitable that any sculptural endeavour I undertake would be woven with varied material. I didn't reject using bought materials, that's part of this open thinking, but as the work reached for its potential, I continued to feel it needed to draw in found and salvaged material, to maintain that open channel to an altering environment. Anna Tsing's book *The Mushroom at The End of the World* provided a helpful definition of the term 'assemblage' to think about drawing together different aspects of practice. Tsing was applying this to the terminology of ecologists (Tsing, 2015, p. 22), but in this instance, I was applying it to art practice consisting of differing synergistic factors, ecologies of Self, studio, and environment. In an abstract way this trinity was a kind of shifting assemblage, but the term practically helped me as well to find a way to describe the evolving work, that whilst being a continuum, was finding breaks and groupings, that could be thought of as *assemblages*.

The *oceanic methodology* as a system of ecosophy, as previously mentioned was concerned with maintenance in terms of a way of being, and by extension a way of making art. In this time, as I was venturing out and drawing materials into the studio, particularly from the beach, it felt to be the ingredient that tied together what my practice was trying to achieve. The *oceanic methodology* in this way, as a process, facilitated work that I could feel my way with. The studio practice required simply for me to be present. It included thought but was



not tilting towards the critical analytical side of it that carried the danger of a trap. The working day with this poise was then able to be open and playful, which facilitated the intuitive faculty, allowing this further progression. There were still ups and downs, but they were within a tolerance. This was aided by methods of making, like for instance in the way the sculptures could be tweaked and modified, which compared to the earlier drawing method I was unable to do because it was more fixed and unforgiving in this regard (and so could lead to a trap for the flow). These factors facilitated the overall nebulosity of what was being made, which then could allow tidal energies of a day to move from meditative zones to times when the work was generative of a kind of dialogue, that I describe loosely as a kind of poeticizing, which feeds back into the work.

### **Cuckmere Haven**

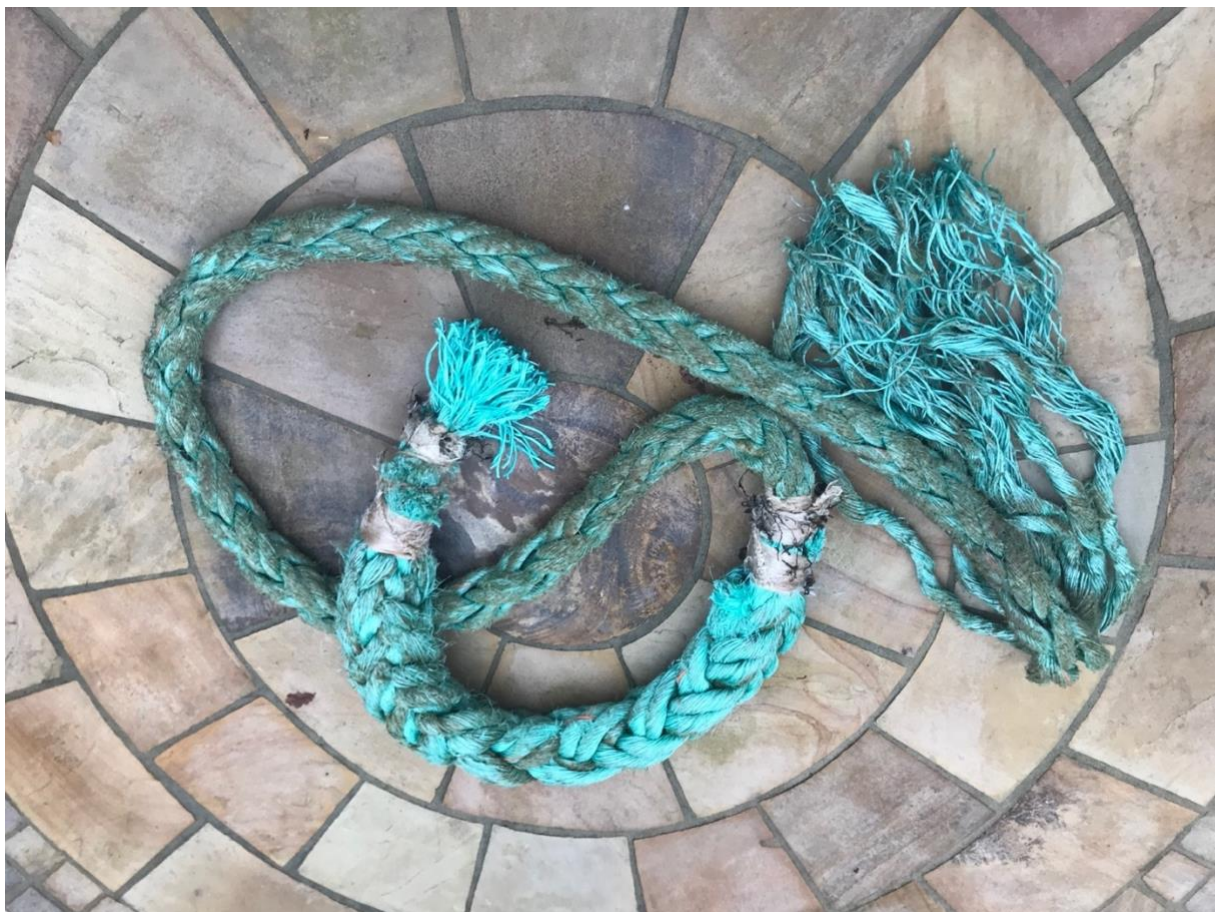


Figure 58: *Found rope*, 2022. Photograph: K J J Warren

The continuing idea for the sculptures was to let each outcome, as unique/tethered waveform evolve, as an assemblage, each sculpture with its own considerations and impact on how it

would connect to and engage with space, with environment (factors that were being built into the work). The sculptures were time consuming to make, but I had judged that this iteration of practice could be part of the viva exhibition in June 2023. On boxing day 2022 I visited Cuckmere Haven and was combing the seaweed line of high tide for detritus. A green speck in the distance suggested there might be a good find ahead, getting closer it just kept getting larger until it revealed itself to be a superb find (fig 58). This thick twisted rope was slightly borderline as to the matter of whether I could carry it, but I had dragged more difficult things away. And so, I hosted this sodden rope around my shoulders, wrapped the unwoven strands around my neck and made the mile walk back to the car. The Cuckmere Haven find was an example of how intuition inspires imagination. The find affected forward planning in allowing the conception of a larger piece that could use some of the height of the lightwell space that this work was going to be shown in.

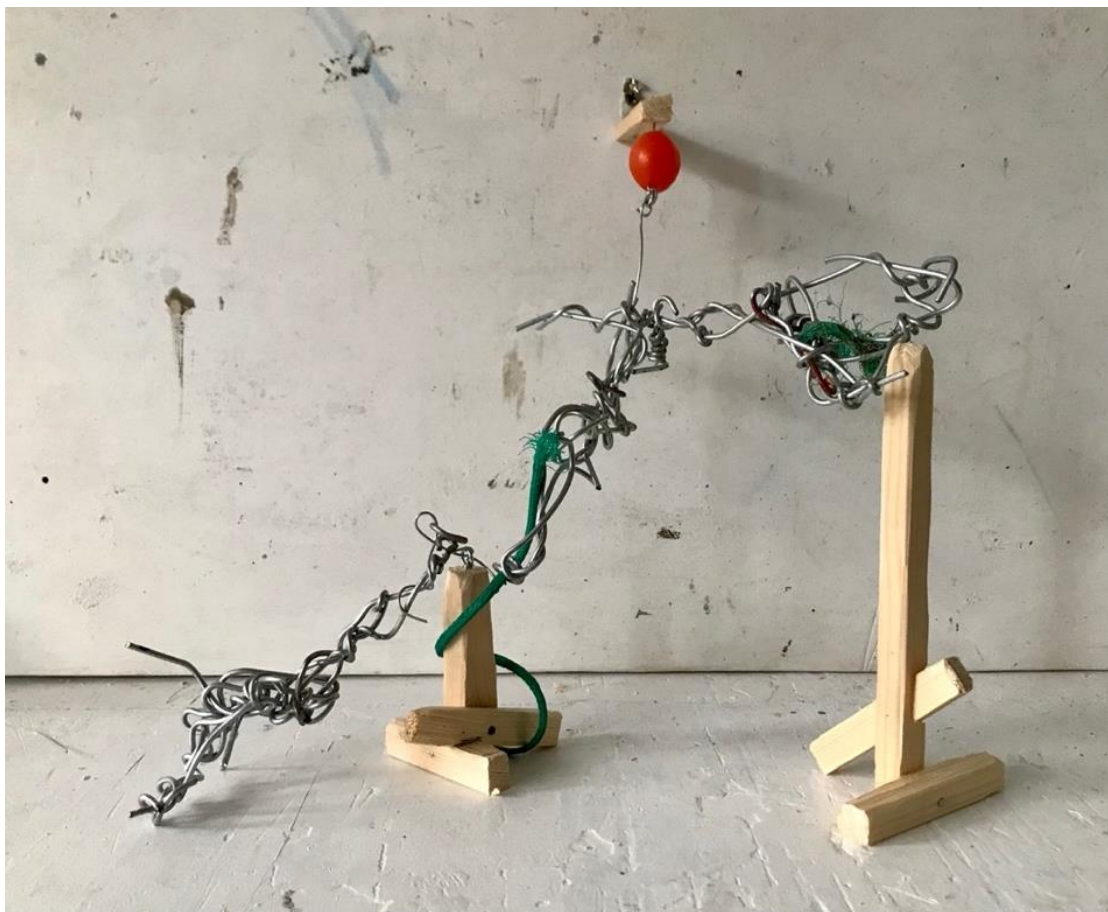


Figure 59: K J J Warren, *Maquette*, 2023, wood, wire, bead.

The maquette (fig 59) was part of the imagining for this piece, a start, but as I made progress with the actual work, I arranged my workspace to consider different configurations of the



sculptural assemblage, to see how this work could be arranged in the space (fig 61). Inspired by the groynes, I made a wooden post for this sculpture, that would connect to the bulk of the rope. In my initial experiments with this it seemed to blend in well and in doing so felt to be successful, and again indicative for future evolution of the work merging with support(s). This piece would then need other supports that I had time to develop, but a lingering consideration was that a structure like the making dock itself could be included (as in fig 61).



Figure 60: Work in progress shot for *Patterns of Transformation #5*, 2023. Photograph, K J J Warren



Figure 61: Work in progress 2 shot for *Patterns of Transformation #5*, 2023. Photograph, K J J Warren

I showed the sculpture prior to this at a work in progress seminar. I had shown this piece not in a larger grouping, but by itself, for it to be a work in and of itself. Because of the seeming success of the developing *Patterns of Transformation #5* sculpture being able to sprawl more, and with the overall drive to keep the work open, I ran a risk that this work: *Patterns of Transformation #4* (fig 62) could be read in more of a closed way, but then like with reflection on the groynes my sense was that in drawing the gaze in, it could open in a different way. It too was an assemblage and would differ in each hoisting. It could have been grouped to another assemblage, but I wanted to let it be its own thing. The main thing however was that the test install made me think more on the supports, which in prototype form needed modifying. For its next exhibiting at the viva exhibition, I would build the support into the main body of the work.



Figure 62: K J J Warren, *Patterns of Transformation #4*, 2023, install experiment with test post.

Getting ideas for the supports right took some playing with. For the post I made, I darkened it with pine tar, a material I had been researching in connection to the marline. Pine tar is an old preservative used on boats and on rope. I liked it because it connected to my meditations on weathering, on technologies old and new. I was interested in it being able to offer scent to an exhibition. Another idea for the posts though was to use found material, and the prior test install drew this idea out more strongly. The oceanic drive of my practice led me on a coastal walk with ‘potential post’ in mind. As it then turned out, in a dumped area I found this plywood assemblage (fig 63), a find that had to be seized, could be tested, and mediated on. When I returned, I used this find in exploring *Patterns of Transformation #3* (fig 57) and felt it worked, so I was happy to leave it there. For the other sculpture; I was confident I could figure something else out for my idea of building into the sculpture, this idea would combine



things found and with things made. Relevantly, this applied the open approach of making to this aspect of the sculptures.



Figure 63: Wood found in dump. Photograph: K J J Warren

## Drawings

I wanted to explore ways in which drawings on paper could evolve and be effectively exhibited in connection to the sculptures. A decision had been made in the summer of 2022 to use watercolour. These drawings worked well in connecting to what one observer on Instagram said as having ‘clarity and mystery’. Clarity, yes that is there for me and mystery too, as a force of the unknown, an unfathomable darkness. This in a sense is another allusion to the between state, between the known and the unknown. At times it confuses, it is complex, but at other times it is intimate, it is expansive. When reporting earlier that the drawing was merging with the painting, these watercolour drawings had come to exemplify what that might look like. Working with watercolour I found a fluid pace and before long a series had surfaced, in which the mark making was in further synergy with the sculptural explorations.



Figure 64: K J J Warren, *Free-form drawing*, 2023, watercolour on paper. 120 x 125cm

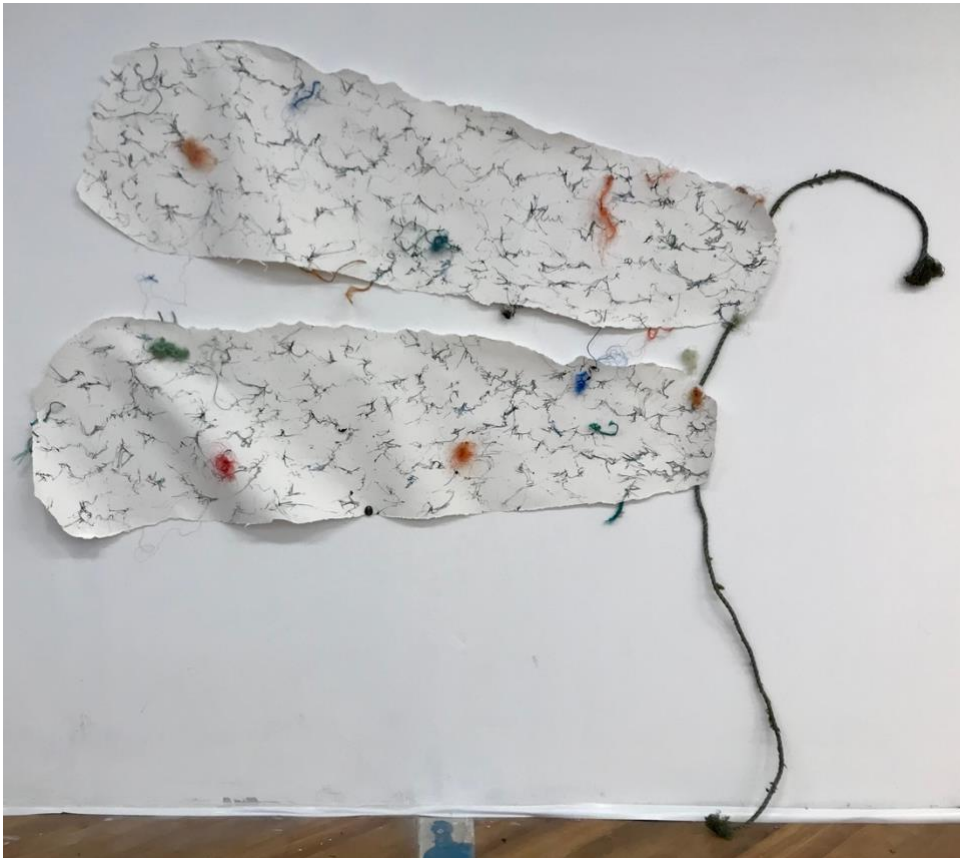


Figure 65: K J J Warren. *Drawing Assemblage*, 2023, watercolour, paper, found twine & rope. 240 x 240cm

All aspects of practice were equally joined and yet free to move in the networked continuum of practice. I considered letting the drawing move back onto canvas, but it felt unnecessary, a potentially backwards move. The instinctive decision was that the delicacy of the paper, with watercolour paint worked and what interested me more was developing these drawings, by maintaining the momentum of an interaction with the process. A natural progression led to an increased scale, which also made the drawings on a scale better suited to accompany the sculpture in an exhibition, but exactly how this relation would occur in an exhibition space continued to be in question. Some moves in creative journeying are more significant for their capacity to open further the terrain being explored. Such a move happened as I started to tear the edges of the drawing paper. I imagined these drawings, like the sculptures moving from section to assemblage being randomly exhibited and with the inclusion of some of the materials being gathered from coastlines. As I ripped the paper, I felt a rising of descriptive words, like dogeared, ramshackle, rustic, ragged, rough, words that potentially sound unsophisticated, but like with reflections with wabi-sabi, were words that fired my imagination in invigorating ways, ways that to me generated an opening to degrees of chaos and of order.

The first example of this was shown at the exhibition: States of Exchange (States of Exchange, 2023) (fig 65), organized by fellow doctorate students. Building on this experiment, I began to plan on using a ten-meter wall in the viva exhibition for a large-scale drawing assemblage, to allow the experimental propulsion of the evolving drawings to continue. The rest of the space in the exhibition would then be able to house the woven sculptural assemblages. This plan also allowed time to go back into the earlier *Patterns of Transformation* assemblages and work into them with the expanded materiality, the ghost gear and wire. This would finish the sections, the assemblages and work to create coherence for the emerging point of the viva.

The finding of the large rope was relevant, because it was exactly the kind of thing I had imagined for this practice, something found and responded to. It was the *oceanic methodology* as a developed working process that enabled a readiness for this. Fitting for the stage I was at, this was also indicative of the ambition of the work moving beyond the doctoral phase, to work (and not reinvent) the way being cultivated. When making the earlier *Papillon* series (documented at the start of this report), I thought of it as being a kind of

blueprint. This might not be exactly the right word, but within it was a plan of sorts for the unfolding, unfurling creations that would follow. The curious point as the doctorate moved to its final season was that something similar had occurred in as much as contained within the work, as part of an *oceanic methodology*, I had created what felt to be another blueprint, a plan of sorts that could work for further unfolding.



Figure 66: K J J Warren. *Work in Progress: section for the larger drawing installation being developed*, 2023, paper, watercolour, rope, pins. 150 x 190cm



## Professional Practice



Figure 67: K J J Warren, *Patterns of Transformation #2 (2<sup>nd</sup> assemblage)* 2022 – 2023.  
Exhibition view at ‘Cosmiknot’

The doctorate as an overhaul has facilitated a thorough succumbing to the creative process and doing so has given rise to a body of work not foreseen at the outset. From this perspective the doctorate itself has been about development and is itself at the core of professional practice. The processes involved in creating this new work, in theory and in practice have required this time, which has had a goal of reaching a resolve whereby the work produced is at a good point to meaningfully encounter the world. The importance in this progression, beyond the work produced, has given trajectory as I move beyond the doctorate and continue this research. I managed therefore to keep a connection to an expansive nature of creativity and maintain the potential of the developed *oceanic methodology*.

In 2020 the Covid 19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown ended up playing a significant role in strategies for exhibiting developing work. From one perspective it created a restriction, but from this other embracement of a developmental process, it seemed to coincide with inclinations that would let me focus my energies on a form of creative alchemical transformation. This was poignant too in the middle of the doctorate when the work was facing possibility of different directions. The drawings that were emerging in 2020 were shown at the online exhibition 'Virtual Visions' organised in relation to the annual 'Blakefest'. The exhibitions online platform made it difficult to connect to the physicality of the work made and initiated a question about to what extent I could adapt to digital platforms. The choice, inevitably, veered towards an overriding inclination to continue in the analogue, to a physicality that emphasised a thoroughgoing conviction to drawing and materials that found expression as sculpture. The end of year showcase in 2021 (back after its absence the previous year because of Covid 19), provided thought-provoking engagements, from public visits and from seminar discussions. Some of these engagements continued the following years and they genuinely offered fresh perspective that contributed to the thinking through of certain aspects noted in this report.

In March of 2022 I exhibited alongside fellow doctorate student David Watkins, in an exhibition called: A Hole in The Network, an exhibition which served to explore parallels in our work. The emphasis between our works was different, but visually similarities existed meaning I could reflect on my own work in connection to his. Watkins too muses on networks, and in thinking openly our works were connected, part of a networked continuum, part of 'staying with the trouble'. In the spring of 2023, I participated in two exhibitions that respectively were a chance to test work as it was going into its final considerations for the viva exhibition. The first: Cosmiknot, gave space to test another configuration of the sculptural assemblage *Patterns of Transformation #2* (fig 66). The second: States of exchange, was where I could test the progressing drawing installation (fig 64). This particularly helped and produced feedback that recognised oceanic and emotional qualities.

Another aspect of professional development was in being invited to work as teaching assistant in the academic year 2021 – 2022, on the architecture foundation course at UEL. The work was part of a histories and theories module. Though not an architect, I was happy to venture into this opportunity with a 'come as you are' mindset, which was welcomed.

Because I had an interest in how the doctorate process (for me) relates to holistic development, a connecting interest is how this approach could work to help others developing their own creative path. I stepped a foot in that direction to see whether work of this sort was an option to undertake in support of my research. On this matter I felt open that it could, but that I would be able to be of more use within the realm of art and ecology.

### **Joint exhibitions**

2023, *States of Exchange*, Hypha studios, Stratford, London. Drawing assemblage

2023, *Cosmiknot*, Way Out East gallery, London. Woven sculpture

2022, *A Hole in The Network*, Way Out East gallery, London. Drawings and weave paintings

2020, *Virtual Visions*, Blakefest, online exhibition. Five drawings.

2019, *Work in progress exhibition*, Way Out East gallery. Five drawings.

### **Work**

2021 – 2022. Teaching Assistant. University of East London, support on histories and theories module.

## Summary

Towards the later stages, as the doctoral overhaul was coming together there seemed to be a streamlining process that allowed the work to move forward. A longstanding interest in the sea had resulted in creating an evolving *oceanic methodology* which needed continual appraisal and maintenance. My artistic development within this has to a large degree been about working through distinctions that have been described in this report as *dynamic*, or ‘open’ and *static*, or ‘closed’. Whilst not in itself wrong, the *static* carried a danger of creating what was referred to as a trap, which worked against the more fluid and encompassing potential of the practice. I found that the more open I kept the work, and the more materials such as e-waste and ghost gear were woven into it, the greater the complexity and power of the resulting assemblages.

Thinking of the doctorate as an alchemical process of transformation, referred to as an overhaul, helped me explore inner and outer aspects of practice. Building on this, thinking of the doctorate as an evolving ecosophy and using ecological language has been a reaffirmation as to art’s purpose, for me, as a part of nondual Gaia troubled by environmental crisis. If I can maintain the *oceanic methodology* as a working ecosophy, then I maintain an awareness of factors that could destabilise and create traps. The working system in this way feels healthy and active. The overhaul in that sense is a success. A visitor to my work commented on its immediate appeal to the work, but reflected further that he thought over time different details would be found, that his response to it would change over time. Working with the idea that the drawing process has qualities of animism resulted in sculptural assemblages that themselves were animistic and this visitor’s comments spoke to that. In these sculptural *assemblages* too, I was able to see resonance with some of the earlier drawing compositions, reaffirming my felt sense of the practice as a continuum, fed by encounters.

Letting the work evolve over the later stages meant small decisions could be made in the assemblages. One example is the inclusion of temporary fixings like clamps, relating art to aspects of workshop. This act as well recalled Sara Sze, who has also made decisions to include tools such as clamps in her work. This small resonance reminds me of the reasons for appreciating her work to begin with, which is the compositional aspect of her sculptural



installations that I admired and continued to think of as drawings in space. This still inspires and feeds my own ambition.

I needed to unpick the term abstraction. In the past, such a labelling of my work was felt to be restrictive, but I concluded that the main restriction would come from a closed, or *static* understanding of the word 'abstract'. Abstraction need not be connected to in this closed way; it needed simply to exist as a link in a chain which connects to and even welcomes other potentially closed words like 'landscape'.

The relevance in remaining open to abstraction as a genre was most helpfully thought through from reading various interviews with Julie Mehretu. In moving towards sculpture, I perhaps shifted from the more obvious link to her as an artist, but there were still important links that I was pleased to work through. This had to do in part with contemplating how her abstract artwork, made use of the potential of what I thought on as 'nebulosity' and what she speaks of as 'opaqueness'. The readings generated are not fixed, but open, and therefore *dynamic*. It felt to me that her work reaches and honours a personal conviction, both in the physical act of mark-making and in the way she expresses thoughts that include but are not limited to socio-political concern.

Important for me was to keep grounded in the free-form drawing practice, to keep exploring emergent patterns. This works with the finding of waste material on the beach, that feeds back into a work of art, tapping into the imagination, summoning aspects of nature in micro and macro ways. Overall, I was pleased that a sense of the sea was being transmitted, but of interest too was how other potentialities existed. With *Patterns of Transformation #5* for example, a lot of people were seeing a dragon. I use this example because abstraction, if I hold it in an open way allows me to play with potentiality, and mainly I think that is a good description of what I feel the practice wants and needs.

I didn't know the term 'ecopsychology' would follow me through the doctorate. As an intersectional term it remained aptly functional for me, as an artist, and I am happy to use it as a kind of anchor. As seasons passed, and I came to embrace the sometimes-disorientating tussle between these ecological layers of ecological Self, studio, and environment, it was helpful to find theoretical resonances that relate to this, to the state of the world. Anna Tsing writes something of this in her use of the word 'precarity' as a '...condition of our time - or,

to put it another way, what if our time is ripe for sensing precarity?’ (Tsing, 2015, p.20) As a departing thought for this report, ‘precariety’, contains a touch of optimism, as does Donna Haraway’s phrase ‘staying with the trouble’. I find this phrase to be something of a koan, and in connection to Julie Mehretu, something that has been absorbed into the DNA of the artmaking, something that has had to be achieved by following resonant threads of enquiry. Mehretu too has spoken of an interest in ‘The Mushroom at the End of the World’, noting how it inspires “... imaginative ways to reinvent ourselves in the midst of precarity” (Mehretu, 2020) and that is where I too see possibility. That is where I feel able to relevantly continue exploring the creative path. Sarah Sze too has reflected on this word: “... precariousness implies the potential to go somewhere; it implies the tension of the next step. If I can find that, then a sculpture is working” (Sze, 2016). I like this thought because it recalls a form of perception that I have, mainly at the end of a day as I mull on what has been done in the studio. At the later stage of the doctorate process, as a larger body of work was coming together, these moments at the end of a day found a new spaciousness, which for me is one of the delights of making, for it is in such moments when growth can be felt and connected to, and hints of future waves received.

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## **Exhibitions**

Michael Dean: Garden of Delete. (2021) [Exhibition]. Barakat Contemporary, Seoul. 31<sup>st</sup> March – 21<sup>st</sup> May.

Sarah Sze. (2021) [Exhibition]. Victoria Miro, London. 12<sup>th</sup> October – 6<sup>th</sup> November.

States of Exchange. 2023 [Exhibition]. Hypha Studios, Stratford, London. 31<sup>st</sup> March – 2<sup>nd</sup> June

Tintin's Sofa. (2020) [Exhibition]. Camden Art Centre, London. 17<sup>th</sup> January 17<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> April.



## Appendix: Images of viva exhibition



Figure 68: K J J Warren, *Patterns of Transformation #5*, 2023, (exhibition image). Photograph: A Moller



Figure 69: K J J Warren, *Patterns of Transformation #5*, 2023, (exhibition image #2). Photograph: A Moller





Figure 70: K J J Warren, *Patterns of Transformation #3*, 2023, (exhibition image). Photograph: A Moller



Figure 71: K J J Warren, *Patterns of Transformation #3*, 2023, (exhibition image #2). Photograph: A Moller





Figure 72: K J J Warren, *Patterns of Transformation #4*, 2023, (exhibition image).





Figure 73: K J J Warren, *Patterns of Transformation #4*, 2023, (exhibition image #2). Photograph: A Moller



Figure 74: K J J Warren, *Patterns of Transformation*, 2023, (exhibition view).

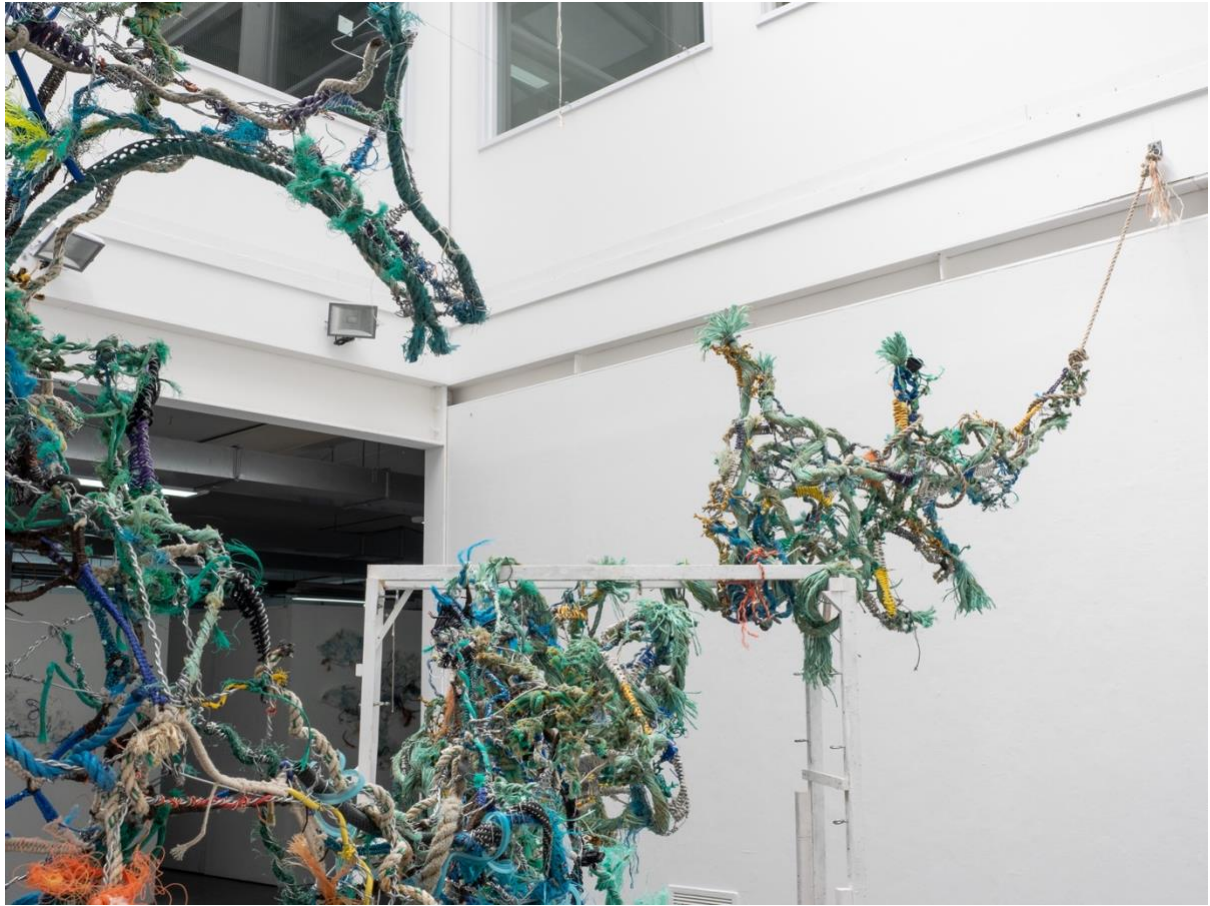


Figure 75: K J J Warren, *Patterns of Transformation*, 2023, (exhibition view). Photograph: A Moller





Figure 76: K J J Warren, *Patterns of Transformation #2 (3<sup>rd</sup> assemblage)*, 2023, (exhibition image).

Photograph: A Moller





Figure 77: K J J Warren, *Drawing Assemblage #1*, 2023, (exhibition image). Photograph: A Moller



Figure 78: K J J Warren, *Drawing Assemblage #2*, 2023, (exhibition image). Photograph: A Moller



Figure 79: K J J Warren, *Drawing Assemblage #3*, 2023, (exhibition image). Photograph: A Moller



Figure 80: K J J Warren, *Drawing Assemblage #3*, 2023, (detail). Photograph: A Moller