

MOBILE: PAINTING AS A PRACTICE OF PEREGRINATION

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ABSTRACT

Walking is a practice which parallels and criss-crosses my painting practice. Each mutually informs the other, creating a *mobile* with which I think about and experience the world. Before seeking to elucidate the knowledge that has developed therein, I reflect on the resistance visual art places on language, and consider the difference between art theory and a theory of practice. I delineate foundational ideas pertaining to the experience of the creative process and the studio, and link these thoughts to aspects of walking.

The appendix contains a complete reproduction of the pages of a publication made to accompany my thesis exhibition. This document constitutes the crux of my work. It is a compendium of fragments; stories, questions, images and quotes pertaining to my studio practice. In both form and style, it seeks to communicate authentically the aspects of my practice that refuse straightforward written definition.

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Figure 1, Studio view



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Mobile

Mobile: Painting as a Practice of Peregrination is a montage of reflections on my own painting practice and its intersection with my other daily practice: walking. These activities mutually inform each other, and I have come to understand them to be a ‘mobile’ for me. I am using the word ‘mobile’ as it is used in French. Originating from the Latin *mobilis*, it means susceptible of being moved or moving, and relates to that which incites or creates an impulse, as well as a body in motion. The word relates to mobility, to mobilize, signifying deep changes, relating to motif /motive, motivation, motor, that which explains and justifies a judgment or decision. It is through these that I have come to see and think about space and place; particularly in a dynamic, embodied way.

1.2 Methodology

Corporeality, a contingency on place, matter and movement, shared by both painting and walking, form the basis for my work. Working in a meandering way, spontaneous exploration, attention to intuition, and the balancing of dichotomies are my primary methods. I usually begin with one clear intention, only to be interrupted by another, stronger impulse, a need to see or do this other thing. I understand these impulses to have deeper motivations that are rarely clear to me until much later.

I understand my system in this way: I follow a line of thought, circle around it, then come at it from another angle, and amidst this are frequent interruptions by the paint, a mark or mistake, an impulse or happenstance. Gradually, I am learning to attend to my intuitive impulses, even when they contradict my deliberate intention.

In this way, where reflective analysis takes place at the end of the process, I seem to create the most interesting work. Then still, it is subject to change. Thus, my reflective insight is provisional and open-ended.

I conceive of my experience of moving and being as taking place in an expanded studio, one that extends far beyond the walls of the building. This creates a rhythm that I seek to represent with paint while I also learn to be attentive to it.

1.3 Artistic Background

My relationship to paint, representation, and objects organized in space began at a young age. This formative relationship is one that is not easy to parse. Learning to paint at the age of ten, I also began to think *about* painting and to think *with* painting. It was in a context of play, exploration, and spontaneity. Analysis came after the work was done and with very little art historical, cultural, or socio-political references. My methods of doing and thinking have evolved but have not radically shifted since then.

1.4 Motifs

Place, process, and narrative are motifs that have remained constant over the last decade. Conceiving of painting as inseparable from the rest of my life, and also choosing to remain within the tradition of easel painting has lead me to experiment with ways of

extending the edge of the canvas or finding ways to connect or complete paintings with elements beyond its edge. Until recently, I was not aware of how I paid careful attention to the edges of the picture plane, to gesture, brushstroke, and that which captures the trace of movement. Those ways of thinking have been with me since childhood. Tracing back to their source influences, artistic lineage, and the ideologies that are referenced in my work has been a revelatory exercise. It is further expanded on in the appendix.

1.4 Remarks on Structure

This paper begins by addressing questions of epistemology, the nature of artistic research, and the idea of embodied knowing. I will examine the act of walking in relation to thinking, drawing on discourse from a wide range of disciplines, including geography, visual studies, sociology and phenomenology. Part 2 uses my own painting practice as a source of knowledge. The insights and questions mulled over are fragments of personal narrative; experiences, discoveries, and questions that have arisen from daily walking and painting. Therefore, part 2 is meandering and open-ended, mirroring my artistic practice. I have adopted a form inspired by Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project*¹ – a series of notebooks compiled while Benjamin wandered the city of Paris in the late 1930's. His walks prompted *Denkbilder* – 'thought-images', the genre that belongs to "marginal and speculative and aesthetic phenomena that, upon closer inspection, emerge as the secret avenue of critical insight."² In the book devoted to the subject of 'thought-images',

¹ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, translated by H. Eiland and K. McLaughlin, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999.

² Gerhard Richter, *Thought-Images; Frankfurt School Writers' Reflections from Damaged Life*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2007), 1.

Gerhard Richter begins by quoting Adorno's description of thought-images as "scribbled picture-puzzles, parabolic evocations of something that cannot be said in words. (...) They do not want to stop conceptual thought so much as to shock through their enigmatic form and thereby get thought moving."³ In this literary montage, Benjamin conveyed part of the experience of wandering through the Paris arcades to the reader. Similarly, I have chosen a form in relation to my content, with the purpose of inviting the reader into the experience of peregrination.

³ Ibid. Richter quotes from Theodor W. Adorno, "Benjamin's One-Way Street" (*Notes to Literature*) in the foreword.

2. Artistic Research: Knowledge of the Body

2.1 Art and Language

Academia requires the artist to think critically and objectively about their own work, to analyze it from the standpoint of aesthetic theories and position it in the current art context. However, this can be problematic in that it does not leave room for an essential aspect of the nature of art, as something necessarily processual, always in a state of becoming. It takes for granted the possibility of translating that which is non-verbal, often word-less, into a formal, authoritative text, disregarding that the form of a work cannot be divorced from the content. It either reinforces or contradicts it, it is not neutral. The tone, vocabulary, linear nature of the academic text does easily leave room for uncertainty, tentativeness, and open-endedness in a way that other vehicles of communication can better accommodate. These are some of the reasons I am uncomfortable writing about my own work in an academic way.

In *Aesthetic Theory*, Theodor Adorno speaks of the illusiveness of art in this way:

This is why art mocks verbal definition. That whereby art's existence is constituted is itself dynamic as an attitude toward objectivity that both withdraws from and takes up a stance toward it and in this stance maintains objectivity transformed. Artworks synthesize ununifiable, nonidentical elements that grind away at each other; they truly seek the identity of the identical and the nonidentical processually because even their unity is only an element and not the magical formula of the whole.⁴

Artistic truth is dialectical, disclosive, and nonpropositional. The pushing and pulling of form and content can energize the work of art. It is an ongoing, generative tension, rather

⁴ Theodor Adorno, "Toward a Theory of the Artwork" in *Aesthetic Theory, Theory and History of Literature, Volume 88*, (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 176.

than something that explains and analyses. Adorno describes this tension as such: “This reciprocity constitutes art’s dynamic; it is an irresolvable antithesis that is never brought to rest in the state of being.”⁵

With regard to painting in particular, some other theorists have expanded on the type of meaning present in art. Julia Kristeva considers painting as resistance, as “work on the very conditions of subjectivisation and its significance”, putting forth the idea of a signifying *process* which places aesthetic practices as the dimension of experience not mediated by reason. She writes: “Breaking out of the enclosure of the presentness of meaning, the *new* ‘interpreter’ no longer interprets: he speaks in ‘associates’, because there is no longer an object to interpret; there is instead, the setting off of semantic, logical, phantasmatic, and indeterminable sequences.”⁶

Alison Rowley and Griselda Pollock consider painting as oscillation, and this instability is what renders it an appropriate medium to use for those events or moments that are not describable or speakable.⁷ It is an in-between space, between the sign and the figure, an uncertain space where there is slippage from the visible to the readable.⁸

In a similar vein, art theorist Jan Verwoert considers painting as *adjacent to* language. It is an indirect medium; one that functions best when it is approached laterally. In this more poetic approach, he characterizes painting as a medium of action, relating to the body, movement and rhythmicity. It relates to music, to an oscillation of sound

⁵ Ibid. 176.

⁶ Julia Kristeva, “Psychoanalysis and the Polis”, *Critical Inquiry* 9 (1982) 89.

⁷ Alison Rowley and Griselda Pollock, “Painting in a Hybrid Moment” in *Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Painting; Hybridity, Hegemony, Historicism*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press and Tate, Liverpool, 2003), 53.

⁸ Ibid. 53.

waves, and to dance.⁹ For Verwoert, this rhythm connects painting with the outside world, and involves spontaneity and enjoyment, something that is alive.

Art does not adhere to the same structure as language. Words can be powerful in guiding or misleading. They can be limited by personal and socio-cultural conditions that largely dictate the focus and range of our awareness and use of language; they can either close doors that might bring new understanding of the work or open new avenues from which to experience it. For words to enrich the experience of art, however, the language used must be allowed to remain tentative, complexly layered, with an awareness that there will likely be more than what is said, existing beyond conscious thought open to new possibilities of signifying. Language must not bully the work into a box.

Examining the role of language as it is used in art criticism, art writer Stephen Horne proposes to disrupt the authoritative voice and gives some examples of how this might be done. These methods embrace indeterminacy rather than demand a fixed meaning:

Looking in the critical toolbox of the master we will see the instruments of rational analysis; detachment, distance and objectivity, and it is these that are now often set aside, in favour of intimacy, respect for the corporeality and exteriority that art implies. This brings us to a foregrounding of rules, games, and plays in language but also to Maurice Blanchot's "... Play between words and things that is also between things and things and one language and another."¹⁰

Horne suggests that it is possible to refuse the dominant potential of language. Poetry does this through nonlinearity, play, and disruptions to a text. Dialogue creates a

⁹ Jan Verwoert's opening day talk "Painting in the Present Tense" at the Walker Art Centre, Feb.2, 2013. Web: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=scYj-bDEaKI>

¹⁰ Stephen Horne, "Color Thinks.....For Itself", in *Abandon Building; Selected Writings on Art, 1992-2006*, (Montreal: 11 Press, 2007) 190.

reciprocal non-authoritative relationship with the other, where there is both speaking and listening that is involved. He proposes to speak *near* art rather than to speak about it.

2.2 Art Theory and Art Practice

Furthermore, there is a distinction to be made between art practice and the completed artwork presented to an audience. From the first arises a theory of art practice, the second generates art theory. In his article *Practical Knowledge for Art and Design*, André Jodoin elaborates on this knowledge that comes from practice. Quoting from Aristotle, he defines *phronesis* as “not simply a skill... as it does not only involve not only the ability to decide how to achieve a certain end, but also the ability to reflect upon and determine good ends consistent with the aim of living well overall.”¹¹ He draws attention to technical skill and aesthetic theory as the two dominant ways of speaking about art, particularly in academia, but for Jodoin, what is lacking is the ability to be open to the aesthetic experience, which is not as easy to articulate. He notes: “I am not suggesting that the task of observing one’s own practice and theorizing it at least to the extent of organizing talking points concerning it is easy to do. It is unlikely that such theorizations can be as attractive as the compact and often incisive theories of art works that we have had the pleasure to come across. However humble such activity is, it has the advantage of coming from actual experience and by its nature will lead to conversations

¹¹ André Jodoin, “Practical Knowledge for Art and Design,” *MenLo Park*, online journal edited by Andrew Forster, <http://menlopark.ca/>, March 2013, vol. 1, #1.

rather than demonstrations of competencies.”¹² It is the type of wisdom that is passed down from one generation of artists to the next.

From my position as artist, the primary access to knowledge I have is through a daily practice. It is foremost a theory of practice.

My process does not follow one straight or definite line. It may, at first glance, seem to have no structure, and indeed, I do not initially understand the rationale behind my impulses, but over time the internal order begins to appear. The process has a logic of its own. It involves attending to my visual cravings and how these needs are driving me, and being attentive to my physical surroundings; it involves discovering connections with these psychological needs, and within the landscape itself. With the sky, ground, architecture and objects that accumulate in these spaces, slowly I begin to understand what and why I am doing. I do not fully separate my work from my experience of making it, therefore it is through this avenue I am most able to write about it.

In the following section, I outline some theories that underpin my approach to art making. Models through which I conceive of the studio and its importance to my creative process will begin this discussion.

2.3 Studio Practice

The impulse of the artist to include their own *experience* of painting as part of the finished work can be found in work that incorporates the studio.¹³ As far back as the 17th century, Vermeer portrayed himself in his home, painting. Svetlana Alpers, in her article

¹² Ibid.

¹³ *The Studio Reader: On the Space of Artists*, edited by Mary Jane Jacob and Michelle Grabner, compiles a number of texts the role of the studio in art throughout the last four hundred years.

*The View from the Studio*¹⁴, examines ways the workplace has been used by artists to frame their relationship to reality.

Among the models Alpers used to conceptualize the studio, we find the ‘experimental model’. Here, painting is understood as investigation and discovery rather than display or demonstration. It is the studio as laboratory.

From its beginning in the seventeenth century, the experience of the painter/observer was part of the experiment or experience (in the seventeenth century sense of the word) represented pictorially. The realities of the studio are not only what is observed there (how the world is put together), but the artist’s visual and, often, bodily or phenomenological experience of it (how it is experienced). What the painter in his/her painting makes of the world so experienced is central to the studio as an experimental site. What I am invoking is not a personal matter. It has to do with how every individual establishes a relationship with the world.¹⁵

One way of depicting the experience of perception is through pictorial ambiguity, which causes the viewer to notice not only the thing depicted, but the process of perceiving. This is what happens in painting – the painter gets to witness the *point of coming-into-being* of objects, and a blob of paint is seen as *potential*.¹⁶ And further on: “The studio is a place where things are introduced in the interest of being experienced by the painter.”¹⁷

Returning to ideas on language and art, Grabner also links the studio with the child’s experience of creation, to the prelinguistic phase in psychoanalysis, and as such the studio becomes “an alternative to the world as it is dealt with language.”¹⁸ It is also

¹⁴ Svetlana Alpers, “The View from the Studio,” in *The Studio Reader: On the Space of Artists*, ed. Mary Jane Jacob and Michelle Grabner. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 126-149.

¹⁵ Ibid. 128.

¹⁶ Ibid. 135.

¹⁷ Ibid. 134.

¹⁸ Ibid. 137. Grabner describes experience of time in the studio in a manner reminiscent of Merleau-Ponty. She describes that “Differentiation of ‘time-when’ is not enforced. The studio resolves experience into the present.”

the place where time is experienced as an ‘ever-present’, relating to some of Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s theories, touched upon below.

2.4 The Psychology of the Creative Process

The following ideas hint at how one might understand the creative process, and the ways in which art-making can occur simultaneously in different degrees of consciousness. The deliberate aspect of creation is perhaps not ideally the dominant one.

With a background in both Art History and Psychology, Anton Ehrenzweig’s work from the mid-20th century continues to be an influential text in understanding the psychology of the creative process from a psychoanalytic standpoint. In *The Hidden Order of Art*¹⁹, he analyses the different ways of being attentive while making or experiencing art. He contrasts the conscious, deliberate and narrow focus with a broader, more spontaneous, comprehensive mode of thought, one which is related to the unconscious. Ehrenzweig found that this second type of attentiveness, which involves subliminal vision, was able to gather and store certain types of information in a much more capable way than conscious looking. This deeper consciousness could give someone the ability to perceive patterns in structure that one could not consciously grasp, whether it be complex musical scores, visual patterns or even mathematical problems. A more mundane example would be the inability to verbally remember a P-I-N or combination lock number, yet without conscious thought be able to turn the lock or put in the code, as though the hand remembers the sequence of movements. This state of

¹⁹ Anton Ehrenzweig, *The Hidden Order of Art: A Study in the Psychology of Artistic Imagination*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 19.

thought is what enables a painter to grasp the many formal relationships in a painting all at once, noticing how one small change on a canvas will affect the whole work.

2.5 Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty

The phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty theorises vision as a mode of interaction with the world, more specifically the eye that moves and that is part of a whole body. Movement and tactility are integral parts of this experience, and this experience takes place in a world that does not exist separate from the viewer. Furthermore, he sees painting as a medium where these relationships come to light. Painting has the ability to “break the skin of things to show how things become things, how the world becomes the world”.²⁰ Also, he understands that “it is by lending his body to the world that the artist changes the world into paintings. To understand these transubstantiations we must go back to the working, actual body – not the body as a chunk of space or a bundle of functions but that body which is an intertwining of vision and movement.”²¹ Merleau-Ponty’s ideas about time and its relation to movement, and the understanding of the illusion of the autonomous subject distinct from its situatedness continue to be relevant to visual art. In his writings on painting and on art, he has been able to capture a rich, enigmatic, and multi-faceted art-making process and its relation to the world of the senses in a way that few have managed to put into words. His ideas were influential in the understanding of painting but also to artists of all disciplines.

²⁰ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Eye and Mind”, *Merleau-Ponty Reader*, (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern UP, 2007), 353.

²¹ Rowley and Pollock, 62-63, quoting from Merleau-Ponty’s *Eye and Mind*, 141 and 123-124.

In *The Sculptural Imagination*, Alex Potts highlights Merleau-Ponty's thought on Minimalism in the 1960's, crediting him for drawing attention to the body's belonging to the space in which it was situated, and to the artwork acting in the space, as distinct from the disembodied, idealized viewer and the work of art in isolation. For Potts, "this vision is a mode of being, rather than simply an instrument of visual mapping and categorising and control."²² His ideas suggest another way of understanding painting and how it might be possible to translate experienced reality onto a flat surface in a way that contrasts with the mechanical methods of photography.

Among the ideas Merleau-Ponty developed is the *point-horizon*. Instead of using the figure-ground model to understand how a particular element stands out as one's eyes focus on it, this model brings out the viewer's situatedness within that space.

The word horizon emphasises the idea that the perceptual field within which things come into focus is not an objective ground but the very condition of our seeing anything. It registers the situatedness of our act of perception. Point-horizon also suggests that whatever comes to our attention is not necessarily a substantive entity, as the word implies. It represents one's seeing something as a process of focusing on a point or nucleus that makes what is situated there stand out from what lies around it and is less clearly present to us, while figure-ground could in theory refer to a visible phenomenon being differentiated from its surroundings in a more objectivising way. When viewing sculptures, for example, focusing attention on a work with its own horizon, "we see ourselves as positioned within the horizons of the things we catch site of. (...) Our sense of horizon and ambient space are being restricted and reconfigured in ways we actively have to negotiate."²³

The horizon line is not a static line, and the point of view is never only one point. The implications of these ideas are exciting to consider for artists, just as it is interesting

²² Alex Potts, "The Phenomenological Turn", *The Sculptural Imagination; Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 207.

²³ Ibid. 217-218.

that these were ideas that were being worked with well before the time of Merleau-Ponty. This way of depicting the world is reminiscent of medieval art, where the intention was to imagine the viewpoint from the position of God, or from an all-over viewpoint, as in Buddhist art.

Temporality plays an important role in perception for Merleau-Ponty as well. He speaks of both a temporal layering of response, and the notion that our awareness is located in an ever-shifting present, but one that is related to the past and anticipates what will be perceived in the future:

There is nothing to be seen beyond our horizons but other landscapes and still other horizons, and nothing inside the thing but other smaller things. The ideal of objective thought is both based upon and ruined by temporality. The world, in the full sense of the world, is not an object, for though it has an envelope of objective and determinate attributes, it has also fissures and gaps into which subjectivities slip and lodge themselves, or rather they are those subjectivities themselves.²⁴

The painter isn't standing apart, looking on from a distance, through the viewfinder of a camera, but participates in the coming-to-being by "breaking the skin of things to show how things become things, how the world becomes the world."²⁵

²⁴ Ibid. 219. Alex Potts quotes Merleau-Ponty's *Perception*, 330.

²⁵ Merleau-Ponty "Eye and Mind", 141.

3. Walking

The relationship between walking and my painting practice is not self-evident. Unlike ‘walking artists’ such as Richard Long or Hamish Fulton, it involves walking in a more subtle and behind the scenes way. In my work, the two practices are separate yet each offers insight into and influences the other. They are distinct tracks that run side by side and frequently converge, modifying each other’s course.

Beyond simply moving from one point to the next, walking is a metaphor for our experience as corporeal, multisensorial, kinetic and emplaced beings. It is where vision, the moving body and place intersect. While it may be tempting to categorize painting as a purely visual practice, concerned with static images that are apprehended with the disembodied eye, I propose an understanding of painting which places it at this same intersection, of vision, movement and place.

I have read the work of theorists in fields that range from visual art to geography, ethnology, philosophy and visual studies who have reflected on walking and how meaning can be accessed and created through the peregrination. From this I isolated the particular insights that intersect with my painting practice, articulating aspects that I had not encountered in other readings on painting. These reflections will be looked at in relation to painting in the final section.

3.1 Walking is Connected to Thinking. It Encourages a Particular Pace for Thoughts

From the time of Aristotle, walking was connected to thinking: the peripatetic is a name for one who walks from place to place, and the peripatetic school was founded 335BC. Aristotle, as well as the Stoics taught while walking, and walking and speculating are core elements of metaphysics. Writer and cultural historian Rebecca Solnit has gained a wide audience with her books *Wanderlust* and *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*. In *Wanderlust*, she notes, walking matches the pace of thoughts:

The rhythm of walking generates a kind of rhythm of thinking, and the passage through a landscape echoes or stimulates the passage through a series of thoughts. This creates an odd consonance between internal and external passage, one that suggests that the mind is also a landscape of sorts and that walking is one way to traverse it.²⁶

Indeed, as it matches the rhythm of breath, heartbeat, arms and legs moving forward, it can also stimulate a pace of thinking,²⁷ one that is neither racing nor jarring like the speed of technology, nor is it being pulled in many directions at once. The whole body, including the mind, is in harmony. In Randy Lee Cutler's recent article on walking in *C Magazine*, she likens the effect that this rhythmic movement has on the imagination as peristaltic waves for the mind, aiding reflection/digestion.²⁸

Among the journals which have devoted entire issues to the topic of walking, the journal *Visual Studies* begins by suggesting walking as a means of accessing and also

²⁶ Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, (New York: Viking, 2000), 5-6.

²⁷ Rebecca Solnit, in *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, considers walking as the intentional act closest to the unwilling rhythms of the body.

²⁸ Randy Lee Cutler, "On Speculative Walking: From the Peripatetic to the Peristaltic" in *C Magazine*, no.121, spring 2014, p.12.

creating embodied ways of knowing.²⁹ The content ranges from projects of walking alongside of others in an attempt to understand that person's experience, to looking at the connections between walking and the structure of time. One central idea is to recontextualize the visual as being part of the corporeal, that is, multisensorial, mobile, everyday experience.

3.2 Walking Provides Sensory Connection to the Landscape

The psychologist and anthropologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has popularized the idea of a 'flow state',³⁰ where time and distance allow ideas to unfold or disentangle. It is the state where a person is completely absorbed in an activity, so much so that all temporal concerns fall away, as well as a sense of the ego. It is the optimal state for creative endeavours. Thus, while walking, ideas can come in an oblique manner while being distracted by a setting and the syncopated rhythm of the feet. Distraction allows for an oblique assimilation of one's surrounding landscape. This assimilation resembles Ehrenzweig's subliminal vision, where the walker can perceive and retain a sense of a place on multiple levels, in a more holistic way. With respect to painting, this type of assimilation contrasts with painting *en plein air* or working from photographs to reproduce scenery, as the mind is more open to the surroundings. In this case, rather than merely a snapshot, it is the experience of travelling through the landscape as a whole that influences the work. The seemingly unremarkable or insignificant particularities of a

²⁹ *Visual Studies*, Vol., 25, No.1, April 2010. The range of topics is from artist walks, sound walks, gathering knowledge through examining other's walks, and looking at how a landscape can affect the rhythm of walking.

³⁰ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991).

place can potentially bring about the most thoughtful or surprising insights, even though this method of working requires a longer period of time and less control over the final results than painting from photographs.

These ideas also bring to mind what Merleau-Ponty calls ‘the map of the visible’, which includes all that is in sight, potentially within reach. It is the place where “the visible world and the world of my motor projects are both part of the same Being.”³¹ While painting, something that is visible comes within reach.

3.3 Walking in Relation to Time

The notion of time is a necessary dimension of movement through space. While walking may prompt a ‘flow state’ more readily, where time seems to stand still, or where one is simply unaware of its passage, other types of time belong to the experience of walking as well. In Tim Edensor’s article “Walking in Rhythms: Place, Regulation, Style and the Flow of Experience”³², he enumerates the range of temporalities that may be experienced while walking, creating various walking patterns, various ways of relating to place; various rhythms. For example, time can be calendrical, diurnal, lunar, life-cycle, somatic, or mechanical. Walking will respond to place as well as to these cycles, and when many people walk through a place, it creates a complex polyrhythmy, unique to that particular place.³³

³¹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Eye and Mind*, 354.

³² Tim Edensor, “Walking in Rhythms: Place, Regulation, Style and the Flow of Experience”, *Visual Studies*, Vol., 25, No.1, April 2010, 32.

³³ *Ibid.* 69.

“The rhythms of walking allow for a particular experiential flow of successive moments of detachment and attachment, physical immersion and mental wandering, memory, recognition and strangeness (...).”³⁴ While being created, with these rhythms woven throughout, places are always in a state of becoming.

Finally, walking often involves interruptions, as sore muscles, blisters, inclement weather or any number of physical or social impediments. These are part of the rhythmicality that belongs to walking.

3.4 Walking is an Emplaced Activity

Walking cannot be separate from place. Space and place are relational rather than independent of ourselves, and dynamic rather than as static elements. Here are some models of how to understand these relationships.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, cultural theorist Michel de Certeau uses walking to come to his theory of space and place. He proposes the following distinction: A *place* is stable, distinct (where two elements cannot be in the same place) and delimited. Space is composed of intersections, movements within it, vectors that orient, situate, temporalize it... It is a practiced place.³⁵

Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan describes place as an organized world of meaning and sees it as a static concept in his book *Place and Space*. Place is a pause, related to home and homeland, in contrast to space, which is related to motion.³⁶

³⁴ Ibid. 71.

³⁵ Michel de Certeau, “Spatial Stories”, in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 117.

³⁶ Yi-Fun Tuan, *Space and Place; The Perspective of Experience*, (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1977), 182.

In the article mentioned above, Tim Edensor points out the way a daily commuting walk might produce a mobile sense of space, or a “dwelling in motion”.

The speed, pace and periodicity of a habitual journey produce a stretched-out, linear apprehension of place shaped by the form of a footpath or pavement. Serial features install a sense of spatial belonging, including the shops and houses passed - the street furniture – and routinized practices such as the purchase of the daily newspaper enfold social relations into the daily ritual.³⁷

Geographer Doreen Massey also understands space to be something dynamic, and relational. She phrases it in her book *For Space*, “as the product of interrelations, as a sphere of possibility, multiple trajectories and heterogeneity”.³⁸ This carries with it ideas of openness, potentiality, and any number of possible material practices that might be carried out, and of “loose ends and missing links”.³⁹

The term ‘landscape’ also calls for definition, as it can be vague or even misleading. During a panel discussion of geographers on *Landscape, Mobility, Practice*,⁴⁰ Tim Cresswell suggested that landscape brings to mind associations of a scene to be apprehended by one gaze, something at a slight distance, elevated, material. Instead he emphasizes the landscape as a topographical space that has surface and depth, not separate from human beings.⁴¹ This way of understanding the material world is similar to the theory of Merleau-Ponty, who understood phenomena as taking shape within one’s perceptual field, rather than as “a separate spectacle spread out before us.”⁴²

³⁷ Edensor, 70.

³⁸ Doreen Massey, 9.

³⁹ Ibid. 12.

⁴⁰ Peter Merriman, George Revill, Tim Cresswell, Hayden Lorimer, David Matless, Gillian Rosse, John Wylie participated in a panel at the 2006 Royal Geographical Society, which was transcribed in *Social & Cultural Geography*, Vol.9, No.2, March 2008. 191-212.

⁴¹ Ibid. 194.

⁴² Alex Potts quotes Merleau-Ponty, 214.

On the same panel, geographer John Wylie presented a paper that keeps the indeterminacy and oscillation that *landscape* connotes. The word captures the slippage of meaning, moving between subject and object, and can encompass the idea of landscape out there and also in the room here. ‘Landscape’ also holds *space* and *place* together in tension; while *space* as a term of distance, isolation, absence and interval, *place* is more circumscribed and definite, something to be appropriated, that which is already too full. Landscape is amidst and through both of these, is both presence and absence, joining and dividing. Indeed, “this irresolvable tension between presence and absence is one of the things that landscape *is*, especially visual landscape.”⁴³

Landscape *is* tension, the tension between perceiver and perceived, subject and object. Landscape isn’t something that’s kind of vaguely inside, or vaguely outside – who knows where it is. Landscape is precisely the tension through and in which there is set up and conducted different versions of the inside and the outside – self and world – distinctive topographies of inwardness and outwardness. Landscape isn’t either objective or subjective; it’s precisely an intertwining, a simultaneous gathering and unfurling, through which versions of self and world emerge as such.⁴⁴

The interest in these terms is their dynamic interconnected realities.

Yi-Fu Tuan describes this interconnection as a “unique blend of sights, sounds, and smells, a unique harmony of natural and artificial rhythms such as times of sunrise and sunset, or work and play.”⁴⁵ The ‘feel’ of a place is one that usually occurs over a span of years. It is made up of experiences, mostly fleeting and undramatic, repeated day after day, eventually being registered in one’s muscles and bones, such as the way one

⁴³ Ibid. 203.

⁴⁴ P. Merriman et al, “Landscape Mobility, Practice”, *Social & Cultural Geography*, Vol. 9, No. 2, March 2008. p. 202-203.

⁴⁵ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place; The Perspective of Experience*, (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1977), 182.

develops certain muscles when living in a hilly village or a city where cycling is the habitual method of travel, or a sailor whose style of walking has been adapted to the rocking boat. These are outward physical changes, but they can occur in more subtle ways as well, as with a person's concept of space and time.⁴⁶

Further fleshing out the term 'landscape', geographer Tim Ingold⁴⁷ brings attention to the importance of weather as one of its constituent aspects. Weather, including fluctuations of wind, seasonal changes of snow, rain, extreme heat, and the changes of light throughout day and night, are part of being 'out in the open' (or we could say 'out in nature'). It is an immersive experience rather than one to be viewed from a distance. As he says, we 'mingle' with the wind, light, and moisture. Rather than opposing the earth and sky as real versus immaterial, they are inextricably linked together. "In this mingling, as we live and breathe, the wind, light, and moisture of the sky bind with the substances of the earth in the continual forging of a way through the tangle of life-lines that comprise the land."⁴⁸ He gives the example of one's perception of clouds, either as objects, or as ever-changing mediums of light and moisture: "To observe the clouds is not to view the furniture of the sky but to catch a fleeting glimpse of a sky-information, never the same from one moment to the next."⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Tuan gives some examples of this as he gives examples of landscapes and corresponding perceptions. He notes how the Congo Pygmies, living in dense forested area, where there is no clear horizon line, the sky is not very visible, and where it is not possible to look at something at a distance. This seems to result in them not making a clear separation between sky and land, and a different conception of size in relation to distance. They perceive time, like distance, as shallow. Ibid. 120.

⁴⁷ Tim Ingold, "Earth, Sky, Wind, and Weather" in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.) S19-S38, 2007. And "The Eye of the Storm: Visual Perception and the Weather", *Visual Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 2, Oct. 2005. 97-104.

⁴⁸ Tim Ingold, "Earth, Sky, Wind, and Weather" in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*. S19.

⁴⁹ Ibid. S28.

In the context of these theorists, the idea of indoors as an enclosed, contained space separate from outdoor space is an artificial distinction. Just as there is no real separation between ground and sky, “there are no insides and outsides, only comings and goings”.⁵⁰ Dwelling places are like warm coats, sustaining its inhabitants, just as the dwellings are stained by the continual coming and going of its inhabitants. He calls dwellings “place-holders for life”.⁵¹

3.5 Walking is a Way of Travelling, Suggesting Journey and Narrative

The walk is not merely a trajectory that can be reduced to the lines on a map. The graphic trail alone cannot account for the intensity, duration, weather, and myriad of details that occur throughout.

Following Merleau-Ponty, de Certeau distinguishes between anthropological space and geometric space. The concept of the city, and the map, are geometric, distinct from the ‘log’ which describes travels in subjective terms, emphasizing the experience of taking that journey rather than merely outlining a route.⁵² Of significance here is the subjective nature of the walk and of the space that this experience creates. To a degree it is the narrative that creates the space. Narrative is situated, story moves through time and space, situating itself. A story is a spatial trajectory, and indeed, de Certeau goes as far as to say that every story is a travel story; a temporal, spatial practice.⁵³ Without narrative - the culturally creative act of story, space disappears, formlessness occurs.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Ibid. S31.

⁵¹ Ibid. S34.

⁵² De Certeau, “Spatial Stories”, 117, 120.

⁵³ Ibid. 115.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 123.

Furthermore, de Certeau considers walking to be the ‘spatial acting out’ of a place, comparing it to the way a speech act is an acoustic acting out of language.⁵⁵ It is as “a word when it is spoken, caught in the ambiguity of an actualization”.⁵⁶ He also suggests that the relationship parallels that of the hand and the paintbrush to the finished painting.⁵⁷

De Certeau suggests walking as an offering up of “rich silences” and “wordless stories”. Through memory, walking becomes a way of opening up the space to story, or fragments of story.

3.6 Walking Impels Emotive and Affective Responses to the Landscape

There has been geographical research since the 1970’s on the relationship between human feelings and particular places or spaces, however, the focus has shifted more recently from human meanings, values, and perceptions to emotion and affect.⁵⁸ This theoretical work takes emotions and the often unnamed, unrepresentable affective states seriously, and the growing “sense that understanding the dynamics of affective life matters for how geography relates to life and living”.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ De Certeau, “Walking in the City”, 98. He highlights the further parallels between walking and speech in their relation to power structures.

⁵⁶ De Certeau, “Spatial Stories”, 117.

⁵⁷ This harmonizes nicely with Barb Bolt’s ideas the stutter and how paint creates a disjuncture – a stutter, in visual language. She is quoted in the final section of this thesis.

⁵⁸ Liz Bondi, “Making connections and thinking through emotions: between geography and psychotherapy.” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, Dec 01, 2005; Vol. 30, No. 4. 433-448.

⁵⁹ Ben Anderson, *Encountering Affect: Capacities, Apparatuses, Conditions*, 7.

There is no consensus among cultural theorists as to the definition of ‘affect’ nor how to conceptualize its relationship to emotion. Ben Anderson lists some of the ways the term has been used:

(...) background moods such as depression, moments of intense and focused involvement such as euphoria, immediate visceral responses of shame or hate, shared atmospheres of hope or panic, eruptions of passion, lifelong dedications of love, fleeting feelings of boredom, societal moods such as anxiety or fear, neurological bodily transitions such as a feeling of aliveness, waves of feeling ... amongst much else.⁶⁰

I will not attempt a precise definition of affect, nor trace the debate of how affect and emotion interrelate and are connected to layers of the conscious, unconscious, and pre-conscious.⁶¹ Suffice to note that there is a growing body of work theorizing how geography and the emotional/affective self are connected.⁶² This is significant as it shows an awareness of emotion and affect as realities that exist beyond the individualized subjective experience and belonging to the social sphere. Furthermore, this theoretical framework refuses the binary categories that separate reason on the one hand, and emotion, the body, and subjectivity on the other.

⁶⁰ Ibid. 5.

⁶¹ Liz Bondi’s article “Making connections and thinking through emotions: between geography and psychotherapy.” traces the multi-disciplinary evolution of these ideas up to 2005, and a more recent discussion can be found in the first chapter of Ben Anderson’s book *Encountering Affect: Capacities, Apparatuses, Conditions*, called “The Affective Life” (1-21).

⁶² Steve Pile, in “Emotions and Affect in Recent Human Geography” delineates the difference between emotional geography and affective geography, and their indebtedness to phenomenology and its ideas of blending the self, bodily experience and perceptual environments. Affective geography considers affect to be non-representational and essentially unknowable, and proposes a model of the self as divided into the non-cognitive (affect), the pre-cognitive, and the cognitive.

3.7 Walking in Relation to Representation

In visual art, these reflections lead to questions of walking and representation. Representation is most often conceived of as something static, radically opposed to time. We think of representation as taking a snapshot, of capturing time, removing that moment from time. In *For Space*, Doreen Massey presses for a new way of conceiving of representation as an activity, relating to being. It is an engagement with the world. Place, space and landscape are to be conceived of as dynamically relational and in constant flux.⁶³

Massey traces the Structuralist discussion of space and representation, mapping out the problems that arise from opposing time and space. She calls for a “reimagining of things as processes”, and “a reconceptualization of places in a way that might challenge exclusive localisms based on claims of some eternal authenticity. Instead of things as pre-given discrete entities, there is now a move towards recognizing the continuous becoming which is in the nature of their being.”⁶⁴ She proposes to consider representation as in a constant state of becoming.

Following Bergson, Deleuze and Guattari, she suggests that representation not be considered as a process of fixing in place, but an activity, a practice, an embedded engagement *in* the world of which it is a part. While she is thinking primarily of representation in literary or scientific terms, her ideas remain pertinent to visual art, as these are some of the challenges people have been working through for centuries, particularly since the Impressionists.

⁶³ Massey, 20.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 28.

The way of reconstructing ‘representation’ to that of a practice that is continually in state of becoming has resonances with artists who have made their process the content of their work. By emphasizing the practice, the boundaries between ‘work-in-progress’ and ‘finished’ work no longer exist. The separation between the work and everyday life is blurred, even removed.

Social anthropologist Tim Ingold ponders the difference between walking on the ground and walking through an imaginary landscape, as in a painting or while reading a book.⁶⁵ In his article “Ways of Mind-Walking: Reading, Writing, Painting”, he asks: “Can the terrains be distinguished at all?” He gives the example of Australian Aboriginals’ notions of the Dreaming, the manuscripts of medieval monks, and the writings of Chinese landscape painters, which all support the idea that the tangible landscape and the one of a person’s imagining “exist on the same ontological level, as alternative ways in which underlying ancestral order is revealed to human experience.”⁶⁶ Both worlds are ‘figmented’, one no more real than the other.

Ingold’s solution is to move away from the idea of images as representing things that exist on another plane, but rather to consider images as *place-holders* for these things, “which travellers watch out for, and from which they take their direction. Could it be that images do not stand for things, but rather help you find them?”⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Tim Ingold, “Ways of Mind-Walking: Reading, Writing, Painting”, *Visual Studies*, Vol. 25, No.1, April 2010. 15-23.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 20.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 16.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Thesis Exhibition

As of now, I am writing about work that is still incomplete. Indeed, the *spine* of the exhibition is an investigation of what a *finished* work might entail and how this can be done while preserving the work in a state of becoming and coming undone. My aim is to convey the sense of painting as a practice that is never static, but moves in circles or slowly plods on, hops, leaps, then retraces its steps, and is never truly separate from the rest of life.

I have spent the last two years gathering material to work with. I've collected an assortment of objects from my Lethbridge landscape (this includes outdoors and from the studio), many photographs taken while walking, and paintings that have been responding to these things. I have painted on traditional panels or canvases (easel-painting), and on unconventional supports such as off-cuts of wood, fragments of walls, insulation foam, or the actual walls and floor. I have been working with oil paint, acrylic paint, or latex, with paint brushes, rollers, or painting directly from the tube. The past few months I have been working in a much larger space than my usual studio, and learning how these paintings, objects and walls relate to each other, and contain information about the landscape and my experience of being here, in it.

The exhibition will be in the form of an installation assembled in the gallery during the two weeks prior to the opening. Relying on the same approach I use when I paint, I have devised a loose plan, with a hazy picture of the end result. I do not yet know how I will respond to the space nor which pieces will be included. I will determine how

to proceed once I am *in situ* and able to see how the components respond to the space and to each other.

The text reproduced in the appendix will accompany the exhibition, and indeed, is meant to be understood as something to accompany a person as they walk through the space, approximating going for an actual walk with a person and the conversation that we might have.

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APPENDIX



figure 5, cover page



Figure 6, page 1

We are so deeply entwined in the classical notion of the adequacy of reason that this silent thinking of painting sometimes gives us the impression of a virtual vortex of meanings, leaving a paralyzed or misguided language behind.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty



Figure 7, page 2

Painting as a Practice of Peregrination
by Anne-Laure Djaballah

How do I start to talk about painting?

A conversation is different than a text.

I'd rather have a conversation about painting than write about it.

2

Figure 8, page 3

Materiality produces the stutter. Deleuze argues that in order to make language stutter, mumble or whisper, the writer creates a disjunction between the sound system and the semantic system so that the sound cuts across coded meaning. In performing this disjunction, the writer ruptures meaning, heightening arbitrariness and creating a vertiginous flight.

Painting can also create a disjuncture as materiality insinuates itself and cuts across the visual language. Where materiality insists, the visual language begins to stutter, mumble and whisper.

Materiality is the insistence of the medium within the operations of the work's meaning. ... Materiality produces the stutter, which disrupts the visual language and the visual narrative. (Matter's insistence does not only include the materiality of the medium, but also includes the matter of the artist in a graphic performativity and the matter of the thing itself.)

Barb Bolt 48-49.

Figure 9, page 4



MY LINEAGE

I start where? when?

De la Rousselière community center, Pointe-aux-Trembles, 1989. Saturday mornings, classes with France Rhéaume for ages 9-12, my friend Karine and I, and both our little brothers. Karine and I were both taller than the teacher.

Figure 10, page 5

France had developed a unique teaching method that I haven't encountered elsewhere. Our first class was about the horizon: as soon as there was a horizontal line or stripe, it becomes a horizon. Wet the paper, choose any colours – it can always be a horizon. We worked on newsprint most of the time, and cardboard taken from nylon packages if we needed something sturdier. We'd make 10 or 20 paintings in one class.

Each week we had mini-crits, one on one with her. Sitting on the floor, she would analyze each one, tell us what she saw, what she found interesting or what story that she imagined from it. She put an A behind the ones we should really keep.

She rarely mentioned names of artists, or showed any pictures, but would give us small demos and let us experiment.

I have had many teachers since then, but she was the only one who taught how to play with paint. She took us seriously and it was fun.

some lessons:
- complementary colours,
- how to mix a palette with warm/cool, light/dark,
- how any colourful marks can become a face (skin colour isn't skin colour, and eyes need a sparkle of white),
- small dots (pointillism; look at how the colours mix together when you take a step back!)
- stippling with big brushes or sponges (this is fun with wet paper)
- use lots of water and let the paint run and pool
- figure painting with each other as models, noticing proportions and how a few broad strokes could be enough
One rule: don't paint from photographs

Figure 12, page 7



My method of working hasn't changed very much since those years. I start out with an idea but hold onto it loosely. I easily get sidetracked by a brushstroke or colour and forget my carefully thought-out plan. It goes back to being a game –

Figure 13, page 8

Or a test, an experiment ... what happens if I draw straight from the tube? Make a line and leave it. Acrylic or latex, styrofoam paint rollers absorb so much paint, a single stroke can be so long!

Need more tests: on foam boards, gypsum, or foam core, or on canvas, or masonite, maybe with oil.

So many side roads to explore...

Figure 14, page 9



10

Figure 15, page 10

France's influences were mostly the Québécois painters from the 50's onward – Borduas, Riopelle, and the Automatistes. You can also see how the Surrealists, Impressionists, Neo-Expressionists, Abstract Expressionists made an impact on her.

Some of the artists I spent a lot of time with back then:

The Group of Seven, Borduas, David Milne.

Matisse, Bonnard, Klee, Renoir (one of the first shows I saw at a museum was of his work, and the other big one was an Impressionist show), Van Gogh, Picasso's Cubist phase, Monet, Manet, Cézanne, Mondrian, Chagall.

It's a shame they are so over-reproduced.

Later: American painters, Diebenkorn and Thiebault, and Abstract Expressionists Motherwell and Rothko. I began to go to galleries on my own too (one not far from school, showing local Québec artists, whose names I no longer remember). I was drawn to gentle, lyrical paintings.

<<<<<<<

These primary influences were almost never experienced in person, but always small, personal-sized.

Figure 16, page 11

Storybooks, art books, magazines, then screens - so many
hours looking at pictures

collecting

cutting, trimming,

sorting,

arranging, and gluing them in books.

Figure 17, page 12



The paint gets in the way of my intention.
Matter is inserting itself, like the stutter,
where the body makes its presence known.

Figure 18, page 13



14

Figure 19, page 14



A lot can happen if you have plenty of floor space.

15

Figure 20, page 15



16

Figure 21, page 16



17

Figure 22, page 17

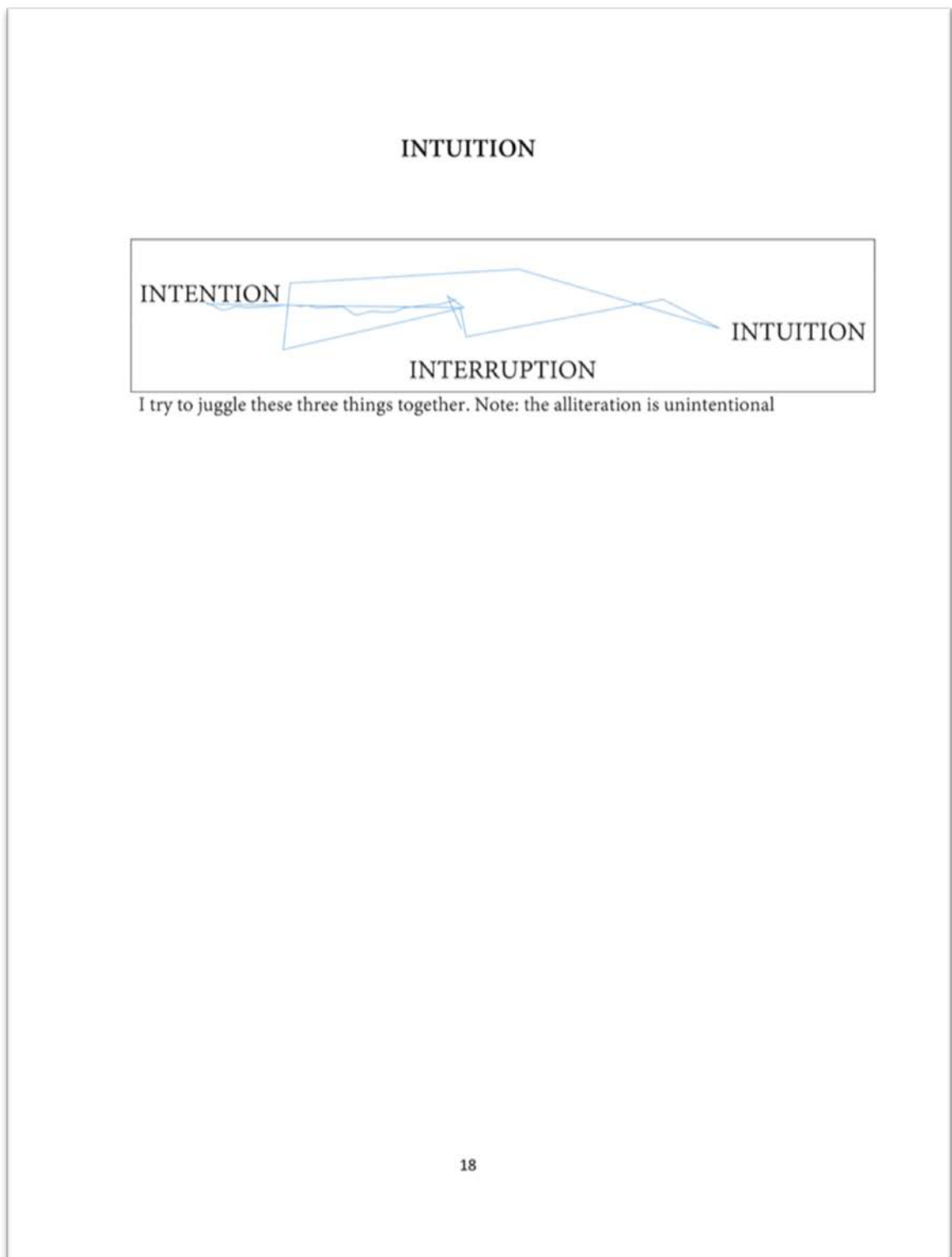


Figure 23, page 18



20

Figure 24, page 20

Although helplessness is the most important state of mind, the holiday state of mind is the most efficacious for artists: "Free and easy wandering" it is called by the Chinese sage Chuang Tzu. In free and easy wandering there is only freshness and adventure. It is really awareness of perfection within the mind. Everyone has memories of adventures within the mind, strange and pleasant memories, but not everyone is aware of adventures within the mind when they happen.

I want to recommend the exploration of mind and the adventure within the mind. It takes so much time; that is the difficulty. It is so hard to slow down to the pace where it is possible to explore one's mind. And then of course one must go absolutely alone with not one thought about others intruding because then one would be off in relative thinking.

Agnes Martin

Figure 25, page 21



Figure 26, page 22

I'm an old-fashioned painter.



Figure 27, page 23



Figure 28, page 24



Figure 29, page 25



26

Figure 30, page 26

I flatten what I see

- not an intentional thing

I need to cut it into bite-sized pieces.

I take photos so that I can cut out shapes.

Figure 31, page 27



28

Figure 32, page 28

Squares and rectangles will make sense to me as long as I live
in a house with flat walls, right-angled windows and doors and
balconies, and surrounded by fences, bridges and roads
and more buildings.

Figure 33, page 29



30

Figure 34, page 30



31

Figure 35, page 31

Often with sculptures I have the impulse is to paint them, or at least wish to have somebody paint them.

It's a way of translating them into my own language.

If I saw Jessica Stockholder's work in person would I feel that way? If when I was young I had spent more time with installations like hers, or Sarah Sze, or Judy Pfaff, would I have become a sculptor instead of a painter?

I still am drawn to the rectangle or square – an empty swimming pool that I have all to myself.

Figure 36, page 32

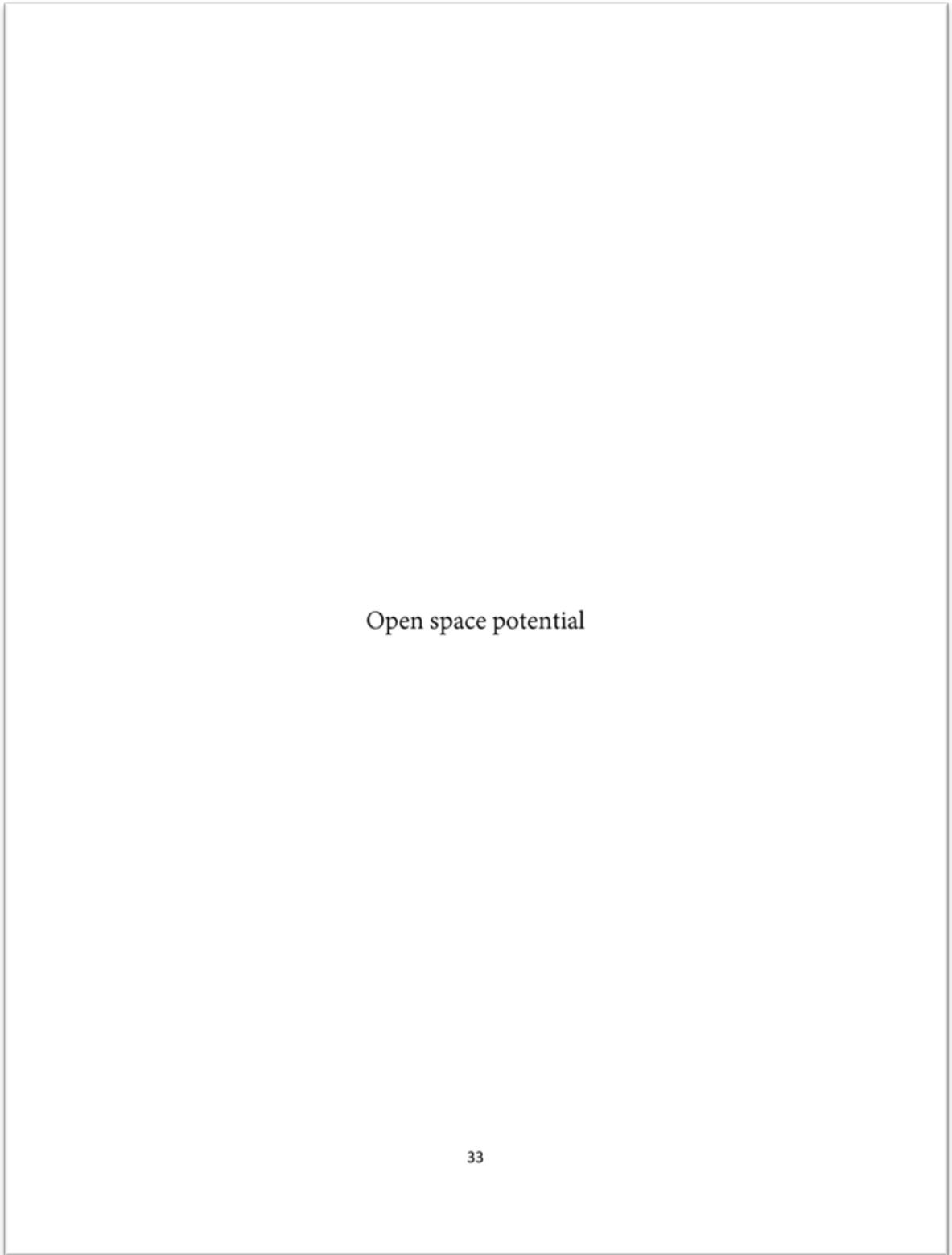


Figure 37, page 33



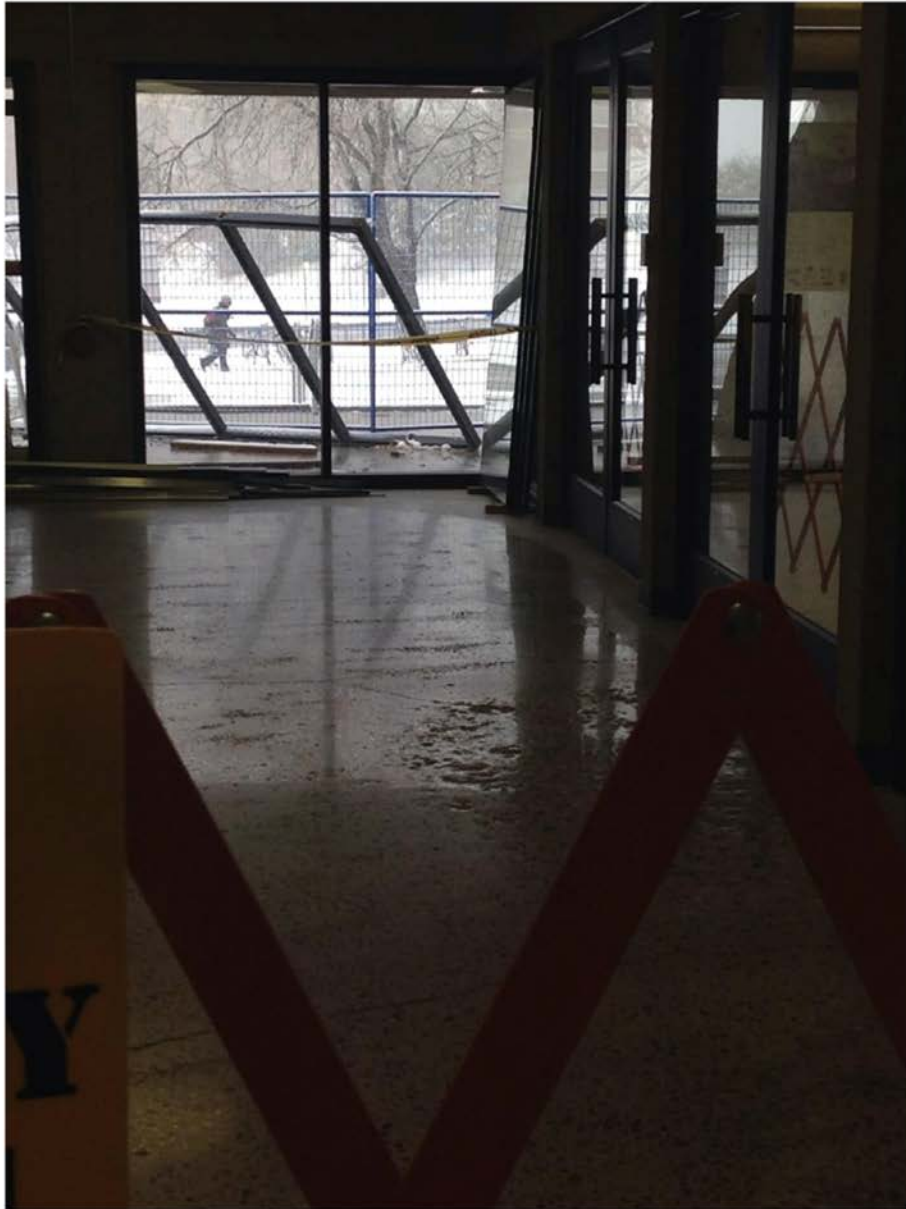
34

Figure 38, page 34

PHOTO OF WHITE SQUARE PAINTED ON FLOOR

35

Figure 39, page 35



36

Figure 40, page 36



37

Figure 41, page 37



Figure 42, page 38



39

Figure 43, page 39

At times I find I'm either in a rut, or reaching for a solution I already know. I try to catch myself. What tricks can I find to see this flat surface in a new way? To enter it from another angle, or find a different side road? I'm looking for a simpler way of doing things.

Maybe:

only make 2 marks

only work on it for one day

stop before it seems finished

give it a hat to wear

How do I satisfy the painting?

I'm trying to fix the painting?

Or make it happy?

Or make it fit in?

Or make myself happy?

Or waiting for a surprise?

Figure 44, page 40



41

Figure 45, page 41

The edges can be elastic, porous - the rectilinear frame is always there, but sometimes just implied as an invisible presence.

The wall, ceiling, floor... these all have edges that the frame of the painting.

But what if the painting moves outdoors?

I like to play with edges.

without edges I would be lost

EDGES

Figure 46, page 42



43

Figure 47, page 43

How can these edges be reconciled with the vast openness of the prairies?

44

Figure 48, page 44



Figure 49, page 45

The sky feels round, bowl-like.

So present, full. It flattens the ground.

46

Figure 50, page 46



Figure 51, page 47

SPACE

From the start, painting has been an open space for me – a physical place. This was long before I had a studio.

most of the games we would get lost in
as kids - places of some kind –



imagination lets you go
somewhere

Figure 53, page 49



50

Figure 54, page 50

Painting is a practiced space.

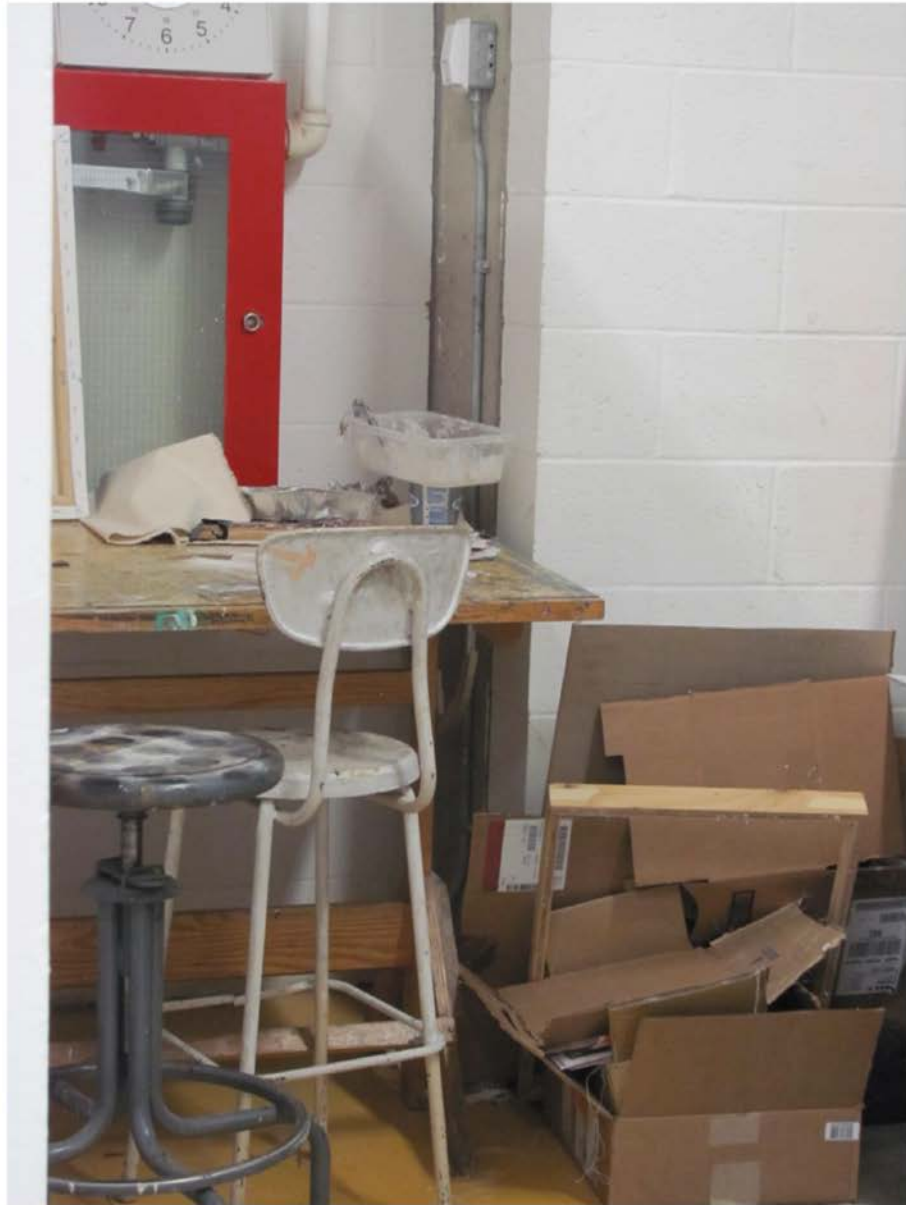
Bridget Riley calls painting 'place-making'. Her work functions as a place in which another painter can work, or rather how another painter makes it habitable for her own situation.

Griselda Pollock and Alison Rowley 60.



52

Figure 56, page 52



53

Figure 57, page 53

Other painters open up a space for us to enter into and paint – instead of closing off or breaking with the past, the line is welcoming and generative.

54

Figure 58, page 54



painting home



56

Figure 60, page 56

Both painting and walking exist on the same ontological level.

What is the difference between walking on the ground, in the landscapes of 'real life', and walking in the imagination, as in reading, writing, painting, or listening to music?

Tim Ingold 15.

Figure 61, page 57

PATHS AND PLACES

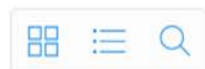
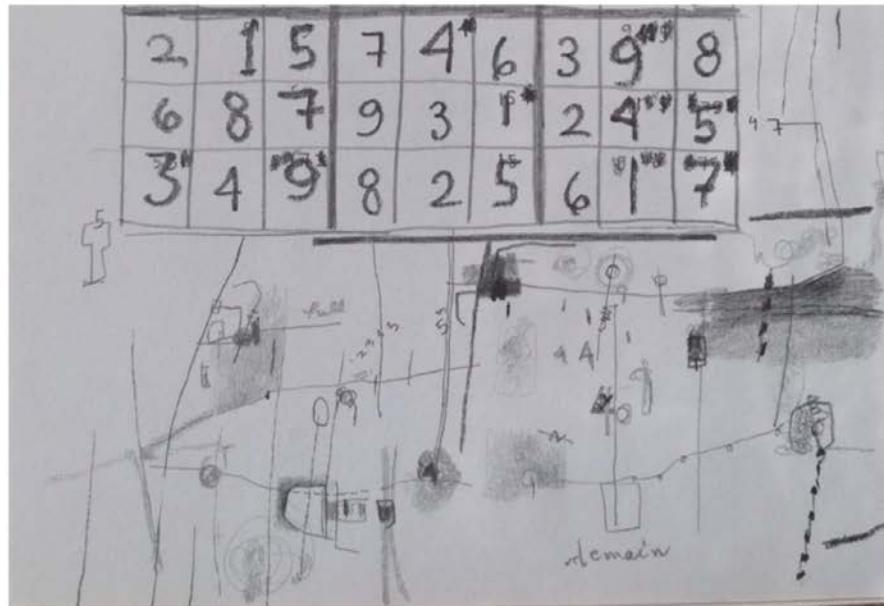


Figure 62, page 58



Painting and walking are contiguous.

59

Figure 63, page 59

10th century landscape painter Ching Hao saw how the terrains of the imagination and the physical environment, far from existing on distinct ontological levels, run into one another to the extent of being barely distinguishable. Both, however, are inhabited by forms that give outward, sensible shape to an inner generative impulse that is life itself.

Tim Ingold15.



61

Figure 65, page 61

Facts and events are readily told: we have no problem saying that we went to Crater Lake on Sunday, with the children and two dogs, in a station wagon, and that it was a cold day. We know what to admire: the lake. We can point to it and take a picture so that it stays with us as a permanent and public record of what has happened. But the quality of the place and of our particular encounter are not thus captured: that must include what we see out of the corner of our eye and the sensation of the almost frigid sunlight behind us.

Intimate experiences are difficult but not impossible to express.

Yi-Fu Tuan –

Figure 66, page 62



63

Figure 67, page 63

How will I find this new landscape in my work? So much sky, do you start to take it for granted I wonder.

Not the coulees.

Neither the black hole on a moonless night, my late-night studio view looking out into a wide empty space. Never in Montréal.

Figure 68, page 64



65

Figure 69, page 65

And that mound by the university sits there so solidly. I don't have the words for this, but these last months, I have to stop each time I walk past, stand in front of this mass. It feeds my craving. Craving for what? I don't know yet.

I understand my craving for big skies, or for straight lines to walk on,

It is much less tiring to walk in a straight line, following an actual line, seeing the path far ahead. Diagonal lines cutting across parks, or windy ones, or open fields aren't for when I'm tired. I know that it is not necessarily shorter, but it still requires less energy.

also for pitch blackness. But what is it about this hill that is fascinating me??

When I finally find what I was craving,
Relief.
Like fresh air after too much tv.

I have tried to take photos of that hill,
it never works. I can't make it big enough,
and I don't want to cut out shapes from it.

67

Figure 71, page 67



68



Figure 72, page 68



69

Figure 73, page 69



70

Figure 74, page 70

Anecdote of the Jar

*I placed a jar in Tennessee,
And round it was, upon a hill.
It made the slovenly wilderness
Surround that hill.*

*The wilderness rose up to it,
And sprawled around, no longer wild.
The jar was round upon the ground
And tall and of a port in air.*

*It took dominion every where.
The jar was gray and bare.
It did not give of bird or bush,
Like nothing else in Tennessee.*

Wallace Stevens

I'm not yet tired of this painting
space –
land, sky, and all this world of stuff.

72

Figure 76, page 72



73

Figure 77, page 73

A collection of Joseph Cornell's boxes made a big impression on me. It was like seeing into his private magic boxes. What made the scraps and odds and ends seem so precious? Is it only because he cared about them?

Then Richard Tuttle. More unconventional - the grid is barely there. Careful attention to the most unassuming or awkward odds and ends drew me in.

He still challenges my ideas about beauty and craft.



75

Figure 79, page 75



76

Figure 80, page 76



77

Figure 81, page 77



78

Figure 82, page 78

Painting is quiet.

But not still.



79

Figure 83, page 79



80

Figure 84, page 80



Figure 85, page 81

Mastery?

To work at something over time, with care and attentiveness in order to gain skill or technique.

It can also mean to have authority, superiority, or to have the upper hand.

Two things that seem at odds – on the one hand skill, careful technique, craft, and on the other hand, chance, refuse, the mistake, the off-cut... high Art or found scrap - choose one or the other?

Is there a way to hold them both together?

A painting isn't necessarily better, higher or lower, more or less special than the piece of wood that caught my eye from the recycling bin, with the edges just so, yet disregarded by the person who made the cut. I can make another painting, I'll never find that same piece of wood...

Long before Modernism, back to the Middle Ages, easel painting and panel painting belonged to the guild economy, to craft.

Painters didn't used to sign their works.

Mira Schor speaks up for modest painting:

Rhopography: from *rhopos*, trivial objects, small wares, trifles. It is the depiction of those things that lack importance, the unassuming material base of life that 'importance' constantly overlooks. In contrast to megalography: the depiction of those things in the world which are great)

Modesty may emerge from an artist's emphasis on rigor and ambition for painting itself rather than for his or her career. The modest painter may submit the painting to a ruthless criticality that precludes virtuosity for its own sake and, in doing so, risks getting less attention than the painter with fewer scruples about the meaning and integrity of each stroke.

(Enormous size certainly intends to call attention to itself, but modest paintings are not necessarily small and small paintings are not necessarily modest.)

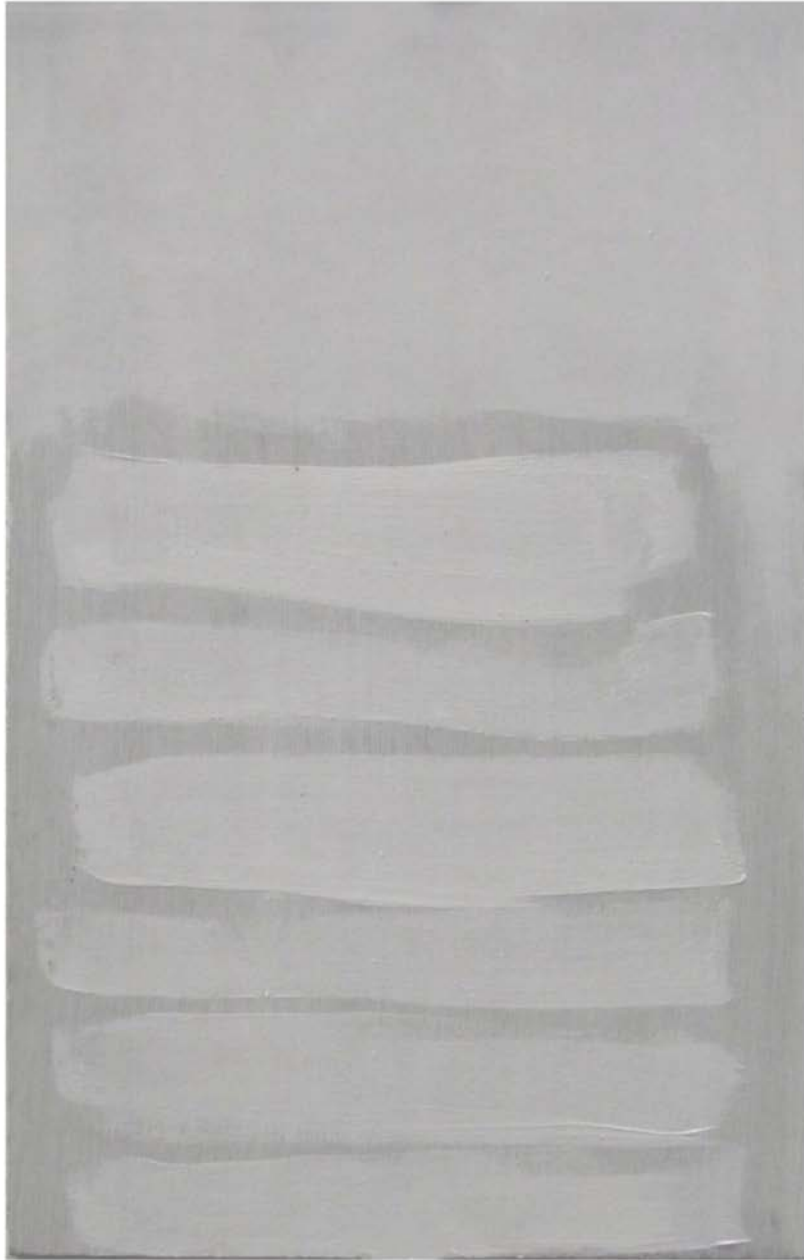


84

Figure 88, page 84

The small, the 'unimportant,' the anonymous, the private and personal, that which has fallen by the wayside of 'progress' at the service of another cause more pressing to the individual artist, all of these qualities cast a camouflaging shadow over the work. You have to slow down to see unlit driveways, and the slower I drive, the more I am compelled to swerve into autobiographic narratives when those are imbricated with art histories.

Mira Schor



86

Figure 90, page 86



Figure 91, page 87



88

Figure 92, page 88

Some people live by what they see with their eyes – light, darkness, color, form. Painters are compelled to express this continuous act of seeing and looking through the application of a liquid or viscous matter on a two-dimensional surface. Despite a barrage of criticism of painting and of representation, even painters who are cognizant or complicit with this critique continue their preoccupation. I am one of these retinal individuals.

...

Mira Schor

Incidents of paint linger in the working mind of the painter as continuous thrills, as possibilities, like words you may soon use in a sentence, and – in a manner which seems to exist outside of spoken language – as beacons of hope to any human being for whom visuality is the site of questions and answers about existence.

Mira Schor

Visuality is the site of questions about existence.

91

Figure 95, page 91



92

Figure 96, page 92

AN INSTALLATION OF WORK IN PROGRESS
IS THE STUDIO SPACE THE SUBJECT?

ABOUT PAINTING

Who has used the studio as subject? Painters, photographers, sculptors, installation artists... Vermeer painting himself at work, Rembrandt before that? (he was painting, but we could not read the space perhaps?)

(make list from *The Studio Reader*)

On Kurt Schwitters' Merzbau of 1923-1943:

"It grows about the way a big city does," wrote Schwitters, "when a new building goes up, the Housing Bureau checks to see that the whole appearance of the city is not going to be ruined. In my case, I run across something or other that looks to me as though it would be right for the KdeE, so I pick it up, take it home, and attach it and paint it, always keeping in mind the rhythm of the whole. Then a day comes

Figure 97, page 93

when I realize I have a corpse on my hands – relics of a movement in art that is now passé. So what happens is that I leave them alone, only I cover them up either wholly or partly with other things, making clear that they are being downgraded. As the structure grows bigger and bigger, valleys, hollows, caves appear, and thee lead a life of their own within the overall structure. (...)

His organizing principle was the mythos of the city. “The city provided materials, models of process, and a primitive esthetic of juxtaposition – congruity forced by mixed needs and intentions. The city is the indispensable context of collage and of the gallery space. Modern art needs the sound of traffic outside to authenticate it.”

Brian O’Doherty 42, 44.

Figure 98, page 94

His was an irrational space.

95

Figure 99, page 95

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-
- not site-specific, but site-responsive? (Stephen Horne's term)
- material-responsive
- landscape-responsive (this includes weather)
- mood-responsive

Figure 100, page 96



Figure 101, page 97

And? It is work that involves the interruption of matter, the matter of paint, the matter of my body, and the painting as a painting. In some ways it is about the studio, but with an expanded idea of that space to include inside, outside, studio, home, and all the places in between that, all of it as home.

Figure 102, page 98

To suggest rather than to describe

It's a balance I'm trying to find – how straightforwardly do I suggest
something?

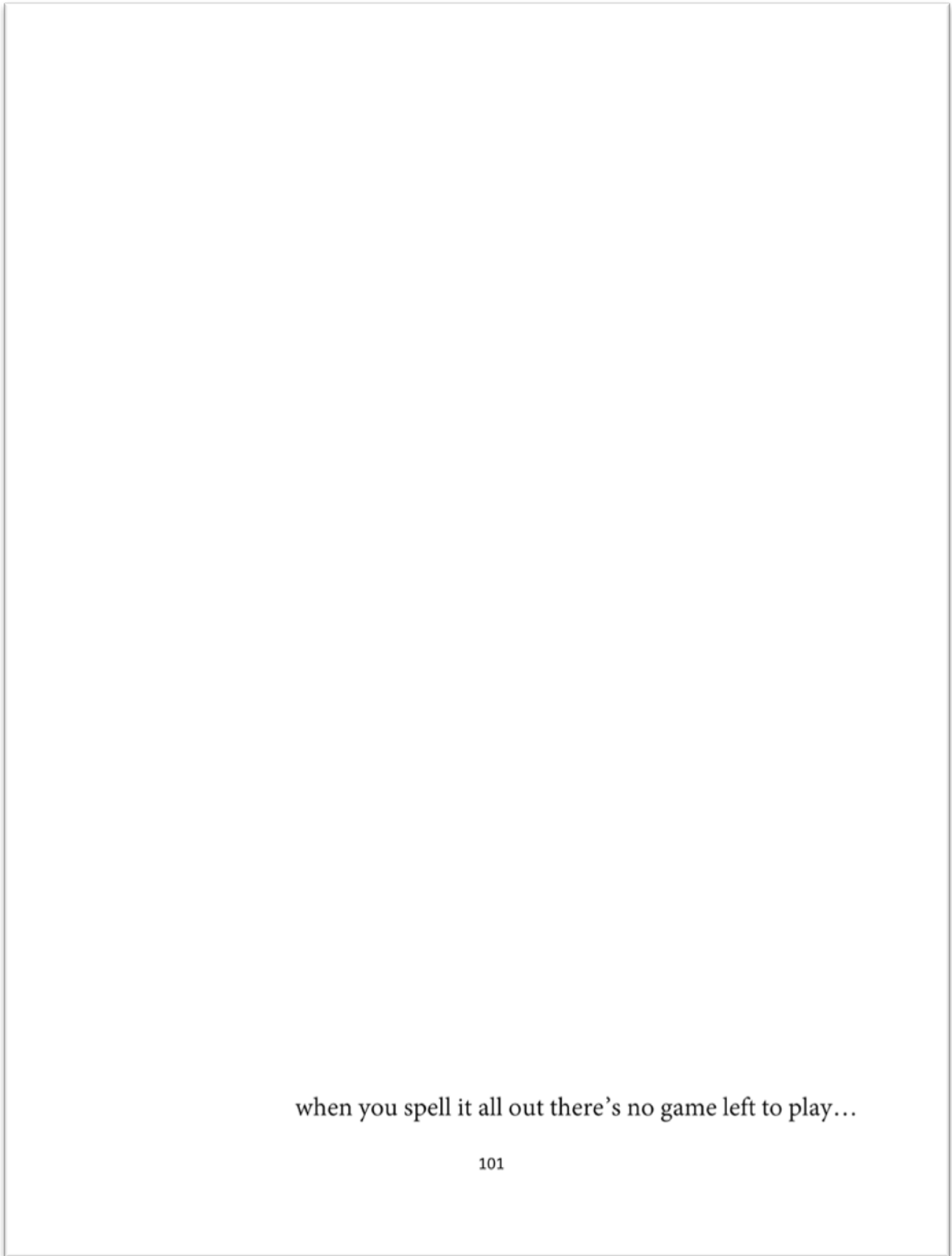
99

Figure 103, page 99



100

Figure 104, page 100



when you spell it all out there's no game left to play...

101

Figure 105, page 101

Is it our imagination that completes the painting, or do we accept it as never complete?

102

Figure 106, page 102

The sketch captures potential, a capacity for arising and obtaining, for diversity of phenomena and for processes ... the sketch captures plenitude before it has been broken up and dispersed – barely emerging, “all the possible ‘so’s’ have not yet excluded one another. It is at the point of “there is still more yet to do”.

The incompleteness of the sketch is justified because perception is never complete. This incompleteness is rooted in the very structure of our being-in-the-world.

François Jullien 65, 67.

place of thresholds, tensions, blends and blurs

immanence of potential

in-between/bloom intervals this is where intensities are divulged.

*The what often gives way to the how, not a matter of essence
but of manner, not what something is, but how it is – or, more
precisely, how it affects, and how it is affected by other things.*

François Jullien 14.

Figure 108, page 104



105

Figure 109, page 105

Line

*Surface engraved with a narrow stroke, path
imagined between two points. Of singular thickness,
a glib remark, a fragment, an unfinished phrase.
It is any one edge of a shape and its contours
in entirety. Melody arranged, a recitation,
the ways horizons are formed. Think of leveling,
snaring, the body's disposition (both in movement
& repose). It has to do with palms and creases,
with rope wound tight on someone's hand, things
resembling drawn marks: a suture or a mountain ridge,
an incision, this width of light. A razor blade
at a mirror, tapping out a dose, or the churn of conveyor belts, the
scoured, idling machines.
A conduit, a boundary, an exacting
course of thought. And here, the tautness
of tent stakes, earth shoveled, the depth*

Mark Donovan 2003:333



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Figure 111, page 107

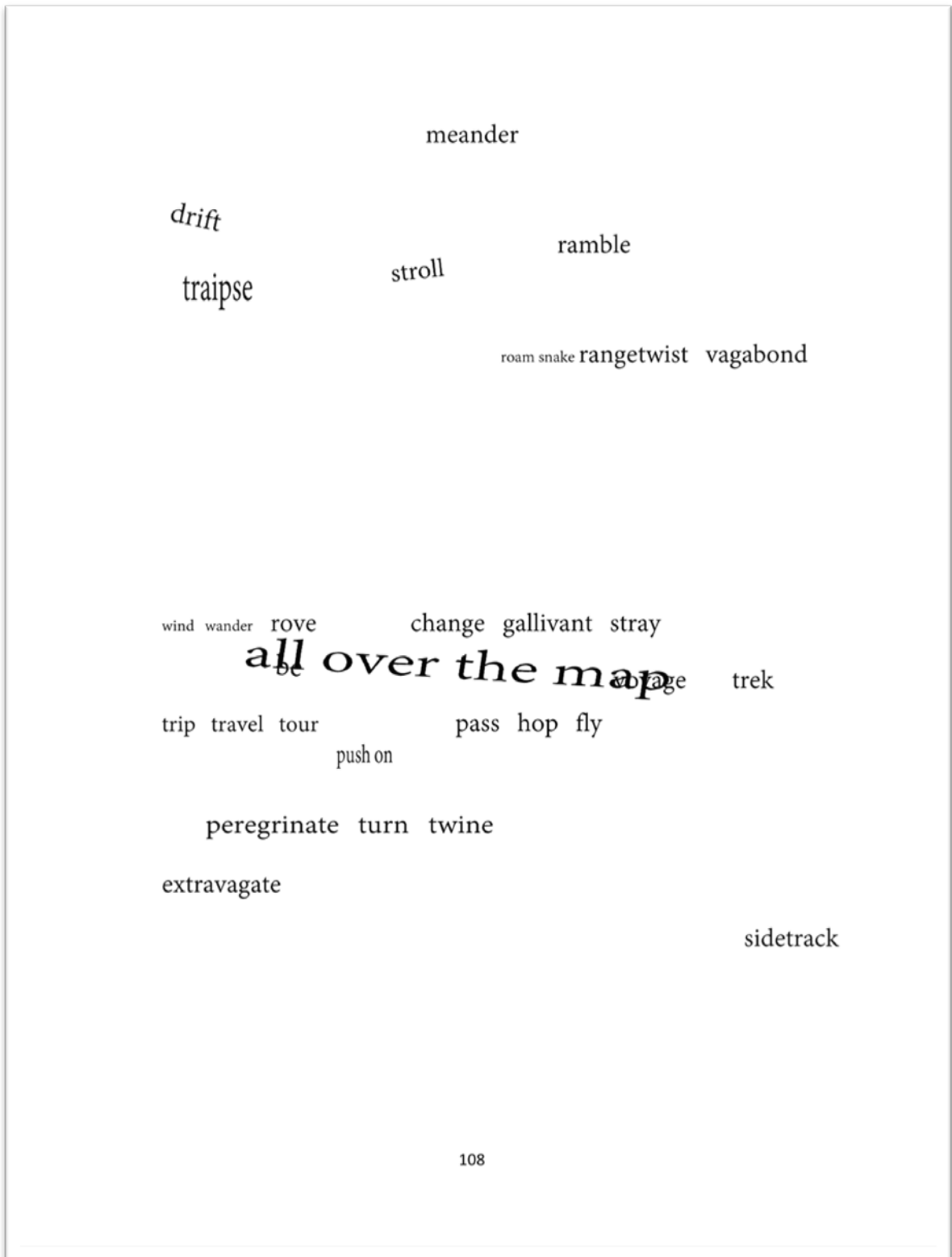


Figure 112, page 108



109

Figure 113, page 109



110

Figure 114, page 110



111

Figure 115, page 111

Place can be time made visible.

Place is a pause in movement.

Home is a place of recovery.

How long does it take to know a place?

112

Figure 116, page 112

TIME



113

Figure 117, page 113

Barb Bolt, "Painting Is Not a Representational Practice." *Unframed: Practices and Politics of Women's Contemporary Painting*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2004. 41-61.

Tim Ingold, "Ways of Mind-Walking: Reading, Writing, Painting", in *Visual Studies*, Vol.25, No.1, April 2010, p. 15.

François Jullien, *The Great Image Has No Form, or On the Nonobject through Painting*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 2009.

Agnes Martin, lecture notes "On the Perfection Underlying Life"

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind." *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 2007.

Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*. Berkeley: U of California, 1999.

Alison Rowley and Griselda Pollock, "Painting in a Hybrid Moment", in *Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Painting: Hybridity, Hegemony, Historicism*. Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2003.

Mira Schor, "Figure/Ground", in *M-E-A-N-I-N-G*, 1989.

Yi-Fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 1977.

Figure 118, page 114

In the home, pieces of furniture such as a desk, an armchair, the kitchen sink, and the swing on the porch are points along a complex path of movement that is followed day after day. These points are places, centers for organizing worlds. As a result of habitual use the path itself acquires a density of meaning and a stability that are characteristic traits of place. The path and the pauses along it together constitute a larger place – the home.

The nomad's world consists of places connected by a path.

Yi-Fu Tuan 180-182.

Figure 119, back cover