

How Can Experiences of Light be Apprehended in Painting?

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Abstract

This practice-based research investigates the relationship between making paintings and the phenomenological experience of light. Two such encounters with light- natural light as recorded on a rural residency at the Sidney Nolan Trust in September 2016, and the cinematic light presented in Krzysztof Kieslowski's *La Double Vie de Veronique* were examined and compared through a body of paintings and prints. The study of the two encounters revealed a flux in relation to the stillness of painting, leading to the adoption of using stilled imagery incorporated in a system of painting. Philosophical enquiry from Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Nigel Wentworth, and biographical information from Krzysztof Kieslowski is introduced to aid reflection of the painting process. Through construction of a variety of different painted surfaces- a group made in relation to an experience of natural light and another suite made in response to cinematic light, specific agencies of light were identified and examined. By apprehending light in particular positions in relation to painting surfaces, the practice speculated on the role of the objecthood and agency of light in a phenomenological encounter with it.

Declaration

I hereby confirm that this thesis is my own work and that it has not been submitted for a degree at any other university. Neither this thesis nor any of its component sections have been published or currently considered for publication. I presented aspects of this research at the Institute of Humanities & Creative Arts Postgraduate Research Symposium in May 2017.

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Introduction

This thesis documents as an exegesis, to a practice-based research project examining encounters with light in two scenarios and comparing these encounters through translating the language of painting. Light is considered in these encounters as metaphysical. The process of making painted surfaces is used to translate the encounter with light in order to apprehend and examine it.

Phenomenology is consulted in two considerations of the research project. Firstly, the concepts of phenomenology¹ taken from Maurice Merleau-Ponty are used to unpick the encounter with metaphysical qualities of natural light and then cinematic light. Encounters with the light is considered phenomenological in terms of personal experience, leading to perception. The impact of essences studied reveals them to be as, Merleau-Ponty refers; 'self-showing'. Secondly, phenomenology enters as an applied methodology of painting practice. Tools, materials and surfaces worked with in the making process impacted significantly on the research². Nigel Wentworth's *Phenomenology of Painting* is consulted in the making process providing aid in understanding the practice as the research unfolds. Phenomenological theory is specifically selected to aid the understanding of this practice-based research project to demonstrate discovery of new knowledge in both light and painting practice and developing new knowledge on the revealed nature of light's agency.

Chapter one details the methods applied to the painting practice methodology in the two investigations into encounters with light. It introduces two specific encounters with light and shows how creating a painterly system of observing surface, composition and materiality is used to apprehend the distinct experiences. The method tailors the project, articulating the practice-based nature of the research, concerned with discovering new knowledge by making and the outcome of such practice (Candy, 2006, pp.18-19). A key feature to the framework of research is the implementation of the 'seesaw effect' as MacLeod (2000, p.3) describes as an interchanging between the reflective exegesis and practice and the revealing of practice through the research undertaken. Included in this chapter is a detailed account of my encounter with natural light at a

¹ Another research that examines the phenomenological encounter with light is Robert Key. Key also uses the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty in his investigations into the perception of light. This project departs from Keys as his examines holistic concerns, focusing on apperception, concluding that his installation pieces paint with light, creating a design for lights vocabulary (Key, 2013, p.2), where I attempt to apprehend light's agency through painting practice.

² Other research that has examined this is Michael Kutschbach's project, observing the use of materials and surface to discover the essentials in painting and the painted object (Kutschbach, 2004).

residency at the Sidney Nolan Trust with cinematic light in *La Double Vie de Veronique*. The residency provided an encounter with naturally occurring light and *La Double Vie de Veronique* provided an encounter with light that is the product of the imagination, manifested by cinematographic filters to depict a fantastical story.

Chapters two and three detail the body of practical research, detailing the making and findings from the paintings. The chapters include transitions from the first few marks made in response to the two encounters to the implementation of the systematic method revealing key elements to translations of the painting practice.

Chapter four is a comparison between the two avenues of investigation, detailing similarities and contrasts between the two sets of outcomes. This is detailed in relation to the phenomenological philosophical perspectives of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and the perspectives of Nigel Wentworth's phenomenology of painting. The two phenomenological contexts from Merleau-Ponty and Wentworth are revisited to examine how painting practice can apprehend an encounter with a metaphysical entity. The thesis is then concluded in chapter five with an overall evaluation of what is discovered and potential progression for future research (chapter six).

My previous research examined the production of simulations of my own paintings using abstraction, with painted forms on canvas becoming a hyperreal object of the paintings that went before it (see fig. 1.). Interests in the importance of examining the non-representable through making, and focusing entirely on what the making process reveals, developed into this practice-based project. Doing so, places my interest in contributing knowledge to the synthesis of contemporary abstract painting, supported by the artist Katrina Blannin who, when discussing natural abstraction, Blannin (2016, p.2) states that simply put, currently painting is about painting. Terry Greene (2017, pp.2-3) concurs in this shared understanding, stating that "in some instances, the process of painting is itself the content- or the content might be discovered, revealed through the very act of painting".



Fig. 1. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles II* (2014). Oil on linen, 79.5 x 100cm



Fig. 2. Katrina Blannin, *Double Hexad Black-Flame* (2017). Acrylic on linen, 60 x 50cm

Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction to Method

Encounters with natural and cinematic light are regarded in a metaphysical quality, fleeting and ungraspable ephemera, proving the foundation for this phenomenological project. These observations are also understood by Linda Finlay (2009, p.6), remarking that phenomenological research is one that is concerned with returning to embodied meanings, aiming for rich descriptions of a phenomenon as it is so concretely lived. Agreement also comes from Narayan Prasad Kafle (2011, p.189), supporting Finlay in the encouragement of this supposition of a phenomenological research project, suggesting the researcher gains “essential understanding of the research approach as well as essential understandings of the particular phenomenon of interest”.

Structurally, the research project is formed by two separate avenues of investigation³; observation of natural light and observation of cinematic light. Both investigations include similar methodical frameworks of painting practice to apprehend the encounters to provide a consistency to the project.

1.2.1 Observation of natural light

In the summer of 2016, I was invited onto a residency with the Sidney Nolan Trust, to spend ten days gathering visual data on Sidney Nolan’s farm at the Rodd in Presteigne.

The residency provided an immersive experience into the natural landscape and its movement; the movement of nature drew attention to the natural light; the breeze that swept through the trees, rustling foliage also dragged dust into the air, catching the light, drawing attention to the way that the light interacted the surrounding environment. This demonstrated an unstaged quality to the light, identifying the experience with something that is real, a moment that the

³ Other research from two sources also use two encounters to respond to. John Lancaster’s project incorporates layered colour to depict the transitory and finds beauty and calm in amidst of alertness caused by the shapes that make something tangible (Lancaster, 2012, p.26). Finding the shapes, he generates opportunities for the generation of light, rhythm and kinetic energy (Lancaster, 2012, p.24). The aims of Lancaster’s layering method is similar to the aims of this research project, similarly, Elaine Whateley’s research draws comparisons in its contemplations of the metaphysical. Resoundingly, Whateley’s work produces abstractions that invite interpretation but remain connected to key elements to ensure her work invites thought on the metaphysical (Whateley, 2015, p.94). This research develops from contemplation of the metaphysical as a main concern, the phenomenological properties in the materiality of making paintings is as important as the phenomenological encounter.

natural light reveals itself as a real phenomenon. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962, p.318) suggests that mere reflections of light are phantoms and only manifest to existence if it correlates with other senses as such demonstrated with the bustling, moving quality of the surrounding environment.



Fig. 3. Field and valley, The Sidney Nolan Trust

The defining encounter was the moment light entered through a hole in the grain barn roof as I happened to gaze up at the ceiling. The light far outreached the size of the hole from which it entered, making it difficult to pinpoint and the shadows that appeared on the barn floor due to this also escaped exact placement. This moment was defining because whilst I had been observing shadow patterns on surfaces previously, the light was elusive and in contact with an object. This time however, light interacted with me personally so that the light's fleeting, flux mannerism was experienced. There was an intangibility of not being able to hold light, making the interaction a ephemeral and metaphysical one. Passing underneath the roof allowed me to witness light twinkling when I was positioned at a certain moment in line with rays passing through the roof. The edges were in constant motion. The seeming non-physicality of the un-staged ephemera in

the impossibility of grasping onto it needed to be translated into painting practice of this light and the ephemeral quality of its impossible placement became the focus of the research. I relate the immersive experience with the light to Merleau-Ponty's suggestion that perception of such a thing provides a system of experience by which my body is linked with the phenomena, not as a spectator, but involved creating finiteness of perception (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p.304); a true metaphysical encounter providing a prolific experience.



Fig. 4. Light entering the grain barn, The Sidney Nolan Trust

1.2.2 Observation of cinematic light

La Double Vie de Veronique by Krzysztof Kieslowski narrates a story of two identical women, Weronika (from Poland) and Veronique (France). The two women appear to exist in the same time as each other and at one point even cross paths, unbeknownst to one; Veronique. Weronika suffers a fatal heart attack during a singing recital half way through the film and at this point Veronique, without reason, suddenly gives up singing. The two women appear to be connected

but the director, Kieslowski, doesn't want anyone to linger on these details. Instead he states that the film "is about sensibility, presentiments and relationships which are difficult to name, which are irrational" (Kieslowski, 1995, p.172).

Kieslowski deals with elements of the metaphysical, depicted in the two women's longing for something they do not have or even know they want. The women both encounter feelings of not being alone and of love that they do not understand, and this is portrayed in the use of light, adapted using coloured filters. These metaphysical things that are portrayed are unholdable, something that cannot be apprehended. He uses light as a visual equivalent for something that we can't see, something that belongs to the figment of our imagination.

La Double Vie de Veronique is bathed in one main colour filter; a golden yellow, that inspires a feeling a warmth about the film- an entirely emotional response to the colour filters, and this is the defining encounter. It is expected of us, the observer, to feel this warmth from a combination of the acting, staging and the colour. This phenomenon of perceiving a feeling from a colour is defined by Hutchings (1997, p.55) suggesting that colour itself is a perception, that it evokes a symbolism in whatever we want to be symbolised.

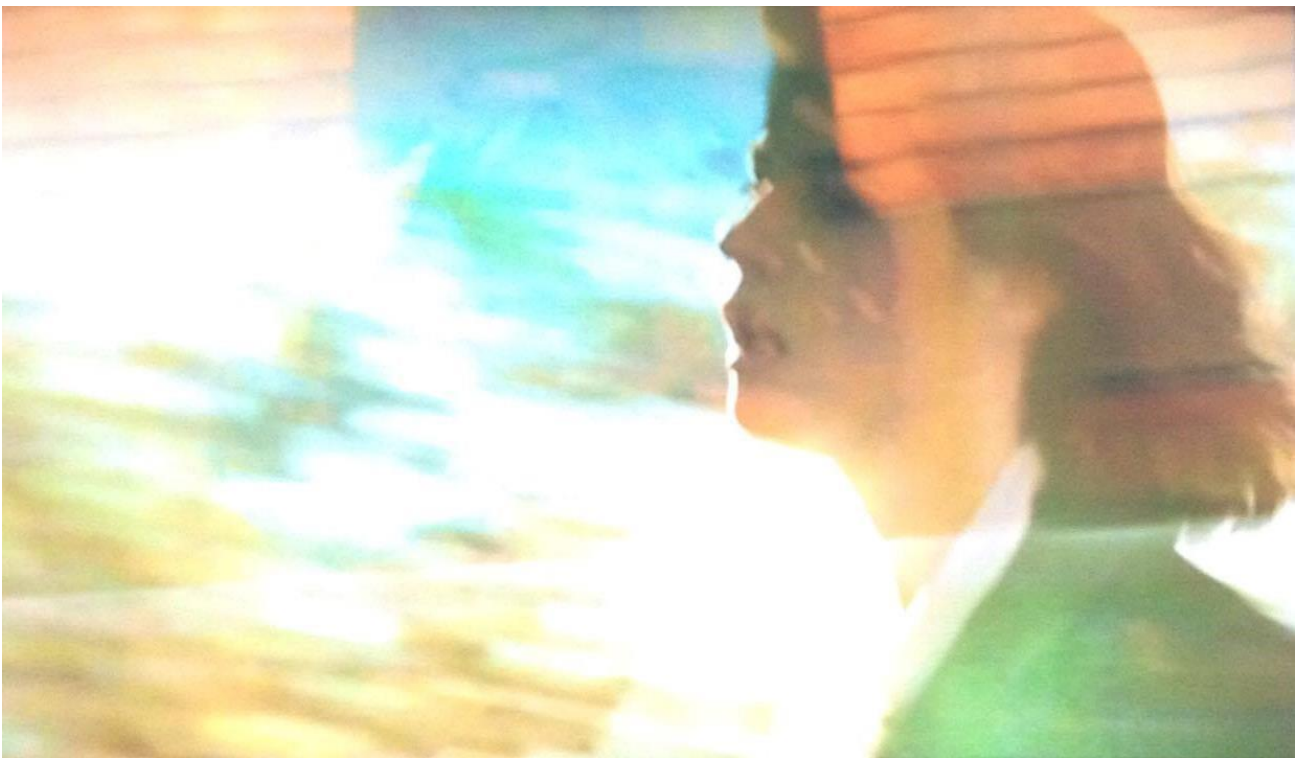


Fig. 5. Weronika (*La Double Vie de Veronique*, 1991), film still.

It becomes evident that we are meant to experience this film, and not just observe it. The light in the film becomes an ephemera existent in the imagination due to fantastical elements aided by this emotional preoccupation with the two protagonist's metaphysicality.

The defining encounter was a scene involving Weronika, prominent and radiantly bathed in the cast of yellow light. Weronika is opulent, and when observing the film in the darkened room, the opulence spills out onto me; the observer. Weronika is surrounded by light that bathes her in an ethereal glow. Ethereal, because being bathed in this light is unknown; it cannot be experienced personally and becomes situated in the imagination. This missed experience is evidently something Kieslowski (1995, p.194) himself troubled over when speaking about his work, highlighting that "the realm of superstitions, fortune-telling, presentiments, intuition, dreams, all this is the inner life of a human being, and all this is the hardest thing to film".

Reacting to the use of yellow filters provides a feeling of warmth, severing the control of observing the film. *La Double Vie de Veronique's* story and cinematography involved me by drawing me in not from protagonist's eyes but as if sharing the environment that the character operates in. I became involved by becoming preoccupied with the manifestation of light on the protagonist's form, causing perceived interpretations of their ungraspable nature. Merleau-Ponty (2008, p.74) refers to this impression as the cause of the time allotted in creating the cinematography and the director's decision in the selection of shots. Jeffrey Shaw (2002) speaks of the phenomena of responding to the film in observation is implicated with time, warped and augmented by the fiction that is manifested due to the frame. The frame (of the cinema screen or television casing) provides an enclosure that delineates the fictional space observed to the real-space occupied creating a magic window that the observer gazes through into an aesthetically contrived space (Shaw, 2002, p.269). Shaw's discussion is to contrast against augmented reality, which does not apply to *La Double Vie de Veronique*, however, Shaw's description of merely gazing into a fictional reality is too catalogued; it does not consider an element of immersion that is borne from an experience with something. As Merleau-Ponty (2008, p.65) suggests, self-consciousness only occurs in the meeting with other consciousnesses. I would argue that the film as an object has a consciousness, and the fictional character's behaviour emanates from this consciousness that creates a response; of becoming 'lost' in the narrative and therefore removing the barrier of a 'frame'. As an example, I am a fly on the wall observing Veronique asleep in the chair, watching

the flickers of light falling on her, whilst she lies yet unaware. I am amongst the props, even perhaps an audience member during Weronika's fatal heart attack. The strange phenomenon of getting lost in the plot provides a sensation of being involved, aided when light graduates from the screen in the darkened room, sharing Weronika's opulence. It is heightened when, parallel to this feeling of examining the staged nature of light and deliberate placing of colour filters, attention is drawn to the potential of cinematic light. An experience that evokes awareness of the unholdable metaphysical aspects of Weronika. My experience is as David MacDougall (1985, p.279) suggests, a result of cinematographic methods where actors not acknowledging the camera makes the characters awe-inspiring; the observer left in a state of rapt privilege to be witnessing the narrative unfold.



Fig. 6. Weronika (*La Double Vie de Veronique*, 1991), film still.

1.3.1 Method

The encounters with the two occurrences of light revealed that they were both metaphysical and moving, as Shaw alludes to his suggestion of time. To aid in the apprehension of these two qualities, two ways of dealing with the encounters were implemented into the making process; philosophical theory and a physical intervention (see fig.7). The first incorporated philosophical theory from Maurice Merleau-Ponty exploring his concepts of experience leading to perception (as described in the observational sections) and philosophical painter; Nigel Wentworth's concepts

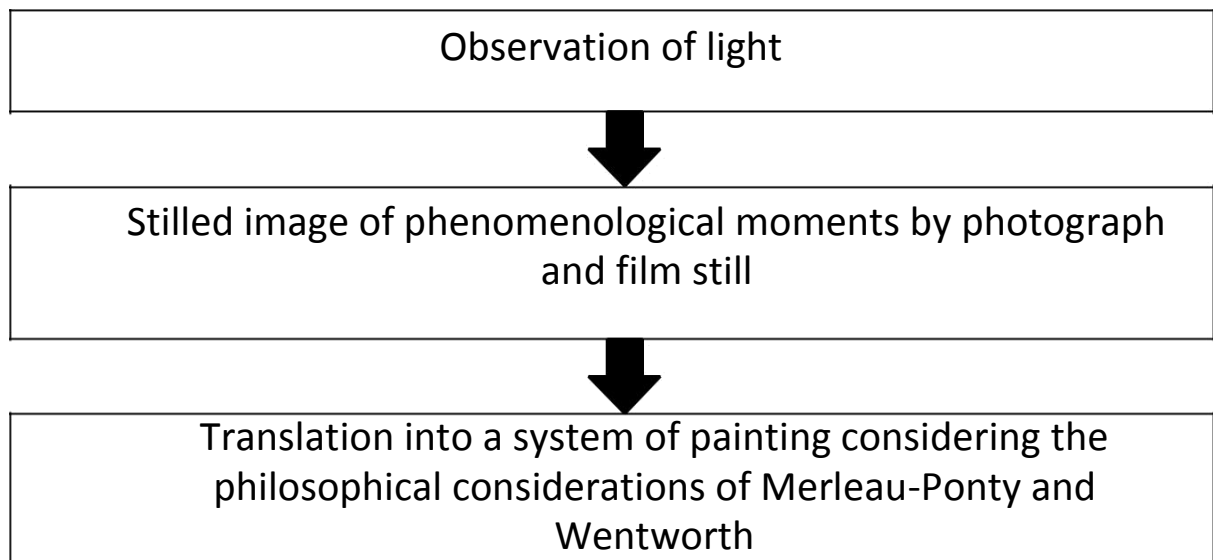


Fig. 7. Diagram of method

surrounding the phenomenological properties of painting practice. The second, a physical intervention in the encounter with light of taking a stilled image to pin down the phenomena; in the action of taking a photograph and a film still. These two ways convey why the painted translations are important in understanding the encounter with light and why the translations aids as interpretation.

The use of a camera enables an understanding of the phenomenological moment alluding to the metaphysical encounter that can be related to. These deliberations develop on Merleau-Ponty's (2008, p.12) opinion that experience should be perceived as observed elements surrounded by blackness (that must represent the objects residing outside the periphery), the elements captured in a size that relates to their engagement with the retina. Where Merleau-Ponty suggests that the field of vision will never be understood, I attempt to use the camera to deny this in aiding translation of perception and experience of the encounters⁴.

⁴ Research from Natalie LeBlanc (2008) highlights how research using a camera as a method adds new knowledge, however the research departs in LeBlanc's interest in the painting and the photograph informing each other. The use of photography in this research is more focused in using it as a purpose for gathering data.

1.3.2 Framework of examination of natural light

An encounter with natural light is experienced that unveils difficulties with making the perceived experience tangible, for example in defining the phenomena's flux and form; its edge. There is a difficulty shared with translating something intangible, leading to the need for a system to be developed to attempt an apprehension. This evaluation led to the stilling of the light phenomena encountered, photographing it. Specific painting techniques (specifically compositional, paint material and surface elements) are used to form an eventual painterly language, from both the photograph and the phenomenological encounter with the light. Compositional techniques applied include a rigorous numbering system used with the application of tape; the forms decided from a trace, ensuring a strict practice informing the multiple layering of paint, and the examination of the nature of the paint once applied to the surface. Additionally, surface as part of the system refers to the key factor of acknowledging the surface's influence on materials applied, and consequently all painterly gestures.

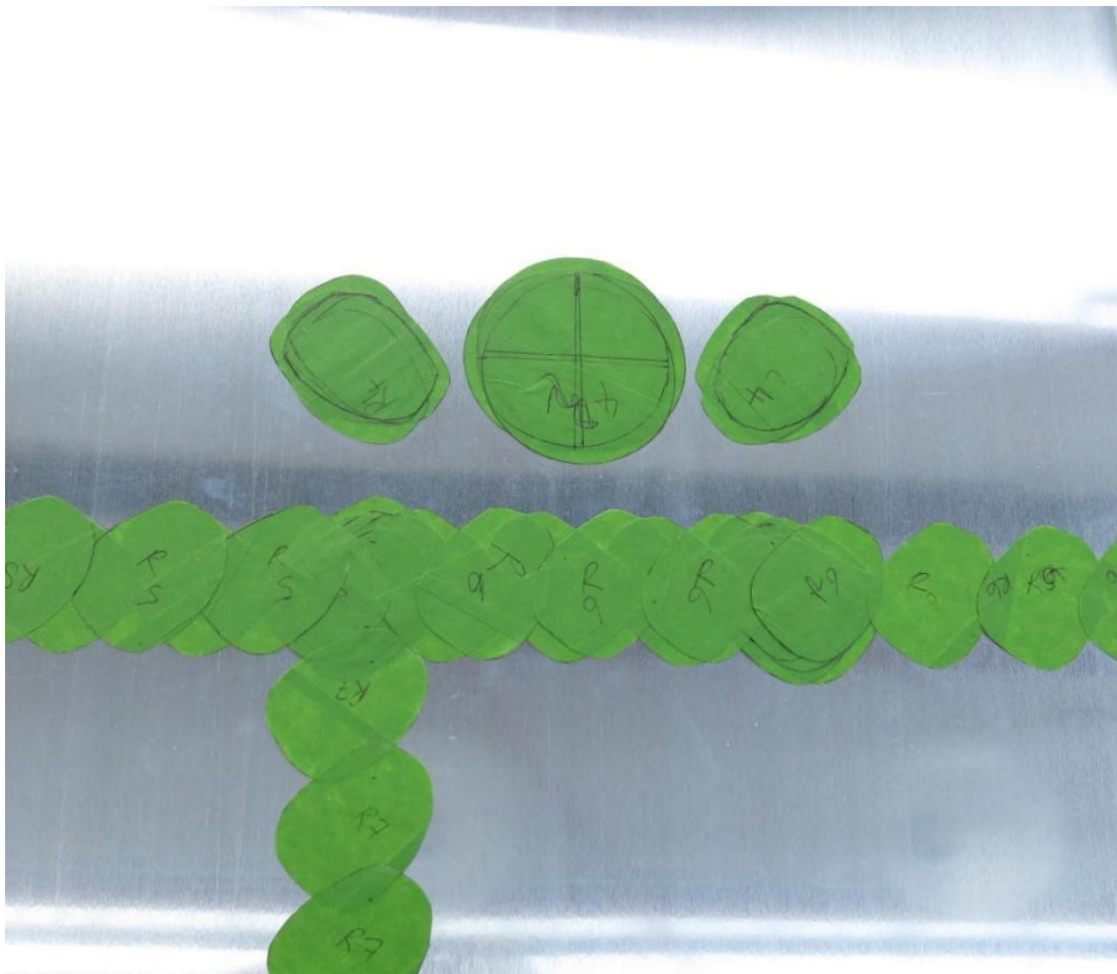


Fig. 8. 13A1.4 (2017). Unfinished. Detail.

I applied the system to the moving, metaphysical light of the defining moment the light entered the barn; the moment was captured by photograph. The moving entity was stilled in the attempt to place the elusive element, to turn it into a mark on a page; graduate it into something measurable. Using the camera lent knowledge to what I had perceived, bringing unseen periphery into focus. Images are similar to perceived experiences, but this is not what the camera captures- the camera captures everything. This attribute has a phenomenological element, the light's potential has been removed in the removal of the gaze, in the stilled image, Merleau-Ponty (1962, p.68) encapsulates the importance of this:

“I direct my gaze upon a sector of landscape, which comes to life and disclosed, while the other objects recede into the periphery and become dormant, while, however, not ceasing to be there. Now, with them, I have at my disposal their horizons, in which my eyes at present fall.”

The interception of the camera on the encounter lived is further explained by Susan Sontag (1977, p.4) who states that photographs are a product of capturing an experience, meaning the camera provides an arm of consciousness, but a consciousness of the apparatus. This is demonstrated with the photograph changing the pin prick of light into a blazing glare, the perception of its apparition enhanced and falsified by the camera's intervention.

The camera's intervention critically altered the encounter; when capturing the experience by photograph. Ambient light affected the shot that caused lens flare, creating a manifestation of patterns resembling orbs of varying shapes. Part of the method had caused a phenomenological result; whilst providing documentation of what I had perceived, there was a consequence in the apparition of lens flare. In attempting to capture the ephemera, to justify what I had perceived, the camera had distorted the act and had included this in the photograph; and as Sontag (1977, p.5) suggests, incriminating the “incontrovertible proof that a given thing happened. The picture may distort; but there is always a presumption that something exists, or did exist, which is like what's in the picture”. Referring to Sontag's collection of insightful essays into photography, though released over thirty years ago, are not outdated in correlation to the use of a camera in this research, though digital, is still relevant. Her opinions on camera's offer a correlation between outcomes of doing so that have been examined above, but also using a camera to document; to change “seeing itself, by fostering the idea of seeing for seeing's sake” (Sontag, 1977, p.93).

The photograph removed the physical experience and removes the metaphysicality of the light, turning the ephemera into a tangible object. The key thing to translate with painting became the attempt to return the light's agency and metaphysicality.

1.3.3 Framework of examination of cinematic light

To ascertain observations of Weronika in closer detail, the moving picture was stilled by pausing the film and taking a film still. The same painting techniques were adopted in this investigation to form the painterly language as the natural light investigation, with focus on compositional paint material and surface elements. The compositional technique used involved the tracing of Weronika's face that was highlighted in yellow (see fig. 9.), that was then transferred to the surface to inform the placement of paint. The paint was layered repeatedly to observe its materiality and relationship with the surface.



Fig. 9. Trace method.

The moment of film that was selected for further examination depicts the protagonist in a state of euphoria. Weronika has just been chosen to perform an audition for the impending and doomed recital, and in her excitement, flings a rubber bouncing ball to the ground. As the ball ricochets from the walls and ceilings, dust falls, and Weronika savours this with a smile and closed eyes. The moment is especially poignant for measuring the metaphysical nature of the protagonist- her excitement is infectious, her beauty and charisma radiant. The confident presentation of her facial features to the sky, defined by the fall of yellow on predominant areas, outlining her form, provides the observer with an insight into the euphoric state by bathing in the opulent yellow light. The fall of light on her features defines an edge to the woman's face that provides a graspable element to the character's physicality, inviting the observer to watch the metaphysical experience, which is key in translation into painting.

In similarity to investigations into natural light, encounters with the cinematic light resulted in experiencing an intangibility placing the composition of the theatrical light and its relation to the Weronika's imagined metaphysical essence. The difficulty in translating this required a system, devised to acquire a film still of Weronika and utilise painterly techniques of material, composition and surface elements, to aid translations of the imagination. Merleau-Ponty (1962, p.4) suggest a product of perception, are impressions that are "undiscoverable, imperceptible and so inconceivable as an instant of perception". This leads me to suggest that my impression of Weronika leads to the imagined perception of her metaphysicality, resulting in the response of using a film still to overcome the ungraspable understanding of the moving picture, enhancing my understanding.

In comparison to the findings from using the stilled image in the natural light investigation, the film still also removed the physical experience. The observation of the moving picture had departed, alongside the absorption into the narrative; the light manifesting as a metaphysical aspect of imagination. It had become a mere figment of imagination because the depicted image became something holdable and tangible.

Chapter 2

2.1 Work made in response to natural light

The principle of responding to the encounter with natural light was using surfaces to harness the actual light. Though photographing the light provided more understanding and added to my perception of the encounter, it did not aid in discovering the moving metaphysicality of the light experienced. I used the photograph to aid engagement of the painterly language whilst importantly, using my memory of the encounter with the light in the barn to engage further possibilities of how to apprehend the lights metaphysicality and flux. I had to make paintings to get as close as possible to the original encounter through a combination of the memory of the encounter and encounter with ambient light present during the making process.



Fig. 10. Light entering the grain barn, The Sidney Nolan Trust

To accomplish this, I used reflective surfaces in and beneath the painting to expose the surface's reflectivity. Painting white acrylic onto an aluminium surface resulted in a sharp contrast between the materiality of paint and the materiality of the surface.

Circular shapes are informed from a trace method, capturing the form of the orb like shapes produced by the lens flare. I traced the forms from the photograph and transferred this to tape, then making layers by overlapping the tape. I then applied white acrylic after a layer of tape was removed producing different tones of white and revealing areas completely unpainted.



Fig. 11. *13Al. 3* (2017) Unfinished. Detail.

The ambient light from within the room manifested on the reflective surface of the aluminium, stopped instantly by the painted areas; absorbing the light. The applied white acrylic removes a key characteristic of the surface- its reflectivity. It is the painterly language, working with the surface that enables the contrasting appearance of the surface. The reflected surface sympathises with the constant flux of light encountered in the barn before it was stilled in the photograph, in its ability to produce its own behaviour, reflecting the ambient light. Where the reflective surface is successful in mimicking the movement of the light that twinkled through the hole in the roof of

the grain barn, the paint is successful in mimicking the camera's actions. The faint brushstrokes that are visible in the delicate layers on the aluminium panels of *13A/1* and *13A/3*, preventing the entire panel from reflecting; this prevention of movement forms a relationship between the translated painting and the shutting of the camera's aperture, stilling the flux of light and thus the encounter. This relationship becomes more important due to the method of transferring the shapes that depict the lens flare directly with a trace transfer. Notable, because the forms are not perceived from the experience, but a direct simulation from the evidence collected during the encounter.

The application of paint is integral to the process of apprehension, with large gestural sweeping movements that layer the various density of colour, drawing attention to the surrounded reflective metallic forms. Evidence of the layering method contrasts with the smooth, untampered, reflective surface of the aluminium, providing information on the nature of the paint. Layering revealed the opaque materiality of the paint, that when thinly applied, allowed the repeated forms to appear. The paint and ambient light work together to reflect differently in producing the identical repeated forms, visible in the layering process that diffuse reflects causing flux.



Fig. 12. *13Al.1* (2017). Acrylic on aluminium, 40 x 40cm.

Taking the success of layering paint over multiple tape applications, I felt it important to conduct a study to tailor a compositional method to incorporate best the movement of light.

Acknowledging the symmetry of the lens flare in the moment the light was captured entering the barn roof was key in understanding how the orbs were important in apprehending the light's behaviour. I made a series of drawings to attempt to apprehend the embodiment of this symmetry whilst repeating just the form of the circular orb. To ensure continuity in size, I used a compass to map the multiple orbs. Reseating the forms geometrically suggests a potentiality; each form, when repeated, provides multiple possibilities of potential for further placement. The repeated pencilled orbs have overcome the problem of an inability to place an edge on the moving light ephemera. The symmetry that has emerged is responsive to the symmetrical elements of the orb dispersion in the photograph; the forms created possibility, their repetition demonstrating the potential for movement. Though the lens flare was a product of stilling the natural light and so

removed its metaphysical quality, the drawings developed a way to depict movement, that gauges with the flux of the light.

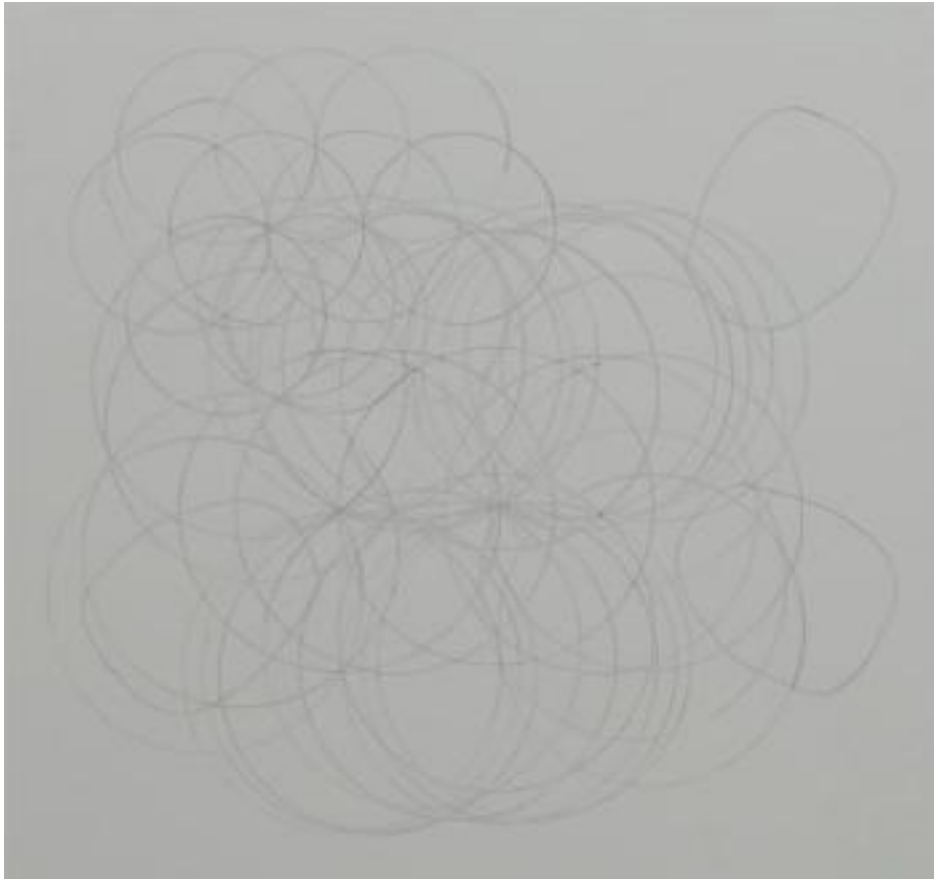


Fig. 13. *Drawing I* (2017). Pencil on paper,

I attempted to address an alternative way of incorporating a relationship between the encounter with the light in the barn and movement of painterly application. Where the brushstrokes in *13A1.1* succeeded providing a translation for these happenstances, I considered whether other gestures would be as successful. Using polish, I worked heavily into the surface, dulling the reflectivity in sweeping and circular gestures. Situated centrally, using etching fluid, I created the circular orbs aided with the compass method to mark areas, extending the orb. The gesture of removal using the etching fluid altered the appearance of the aluminium as impactfully as the application of white acrylic.

I applied pink paint to the separated orb, capturing the colour of the lens flares. With the ambient light, the colour somehow retained some reflectivity of the metallic surface that in circular gestures where the etching fluid has not operated. The pink colour, taken from the colour of the

orbs in the photograph, reflects, but ultimately not as much as the surrounding surface. The coloured orb lies separated from the cluster, its edge clearly lone, as if manifesting as one of the symmetric possibilities.



Fig. 14. *13Al.2* (2017). Oil on aluminium, 40 x 40cm.

Using chemicals altered the surface's reflectivity, impacting on how it can be observed when surrounded by ambient light, causing diffused reflections to occur due to slight oxidisation of the surface. The dullness surrounding the orbs confuses the reflective nature of the surface, highlighted with the removal of movement in the non-reflectivity of the burnished orbs. Though the layering of the orbs repeats the shapes, giving the suggestion of there being in many places at once, the movement of the ambient light is slowed. The piece then lends itself to the action of using the camera to still the encounter, a counter step from the developments with the drawings.

Having explored layering, composition, the materiality of paint and removal, I explored a different metallic surface; copper. The copper suggests a warmth with the darker hue of metal that lends itself to the encountering of the sun light. I used the same trace to tape method; applying the



Fig. 15. *29Cu.2* (2017). Detail.

same layering techniques as the pieces in the aluminium series. Compositionally, the tape placement was decided geometrically and in congruence with the orb placements in the photograph.

The copper pieces feature warmer colours that both lends itself to the warmth of the sunlight experienced in the barn but also to the colour of the lens flares. As the flares were a result of the stilled image, the colours relate to the halting of the moving light with the camera, in the same way the physicality of the brushstrokes do the same; halting the reflectivity of the ambient light. In one of the copper series, *29Cu.1*, the materiality of paint becomes more prolific with rich purples contrasts with the bright pinks, that are altered to an orange colour due to the copper that holds them. The copper surface is only recognised as copper due to the reflective shine that manifests through the matte appearance of the colours; a rich metallic glow.

The paint is thin in its application, brushstrokes providing evidence of this and revealing the copper that peers through. It is because of the surface and the paints uncooperating relationship that the brushstrokes are evident, and in areas, the paint not taking to the surface at all. The making of the copper pieces highlighted the importance that both the object that receives the painterly gestures and the materiality of the paint take responsibility in the outcome than the action of mark making.



Fig. 16. *29Cu.1* (2017). Acrylic on copper

2.1 Evaluation of natural light translations

Surface

13Al.2 became a failure in comparison with the surfaces of the other pieces. Through the making of *13Al.2*, the impact of the reflective surface became notable in the attempt to apprehend the metaphysical and moving quality of the natural light. The worked into surface that caused the dull, texturised surface warps the ambient light removing its proactivity that the other pieces enable, that translated the behaviour of the natural light better. Where the removal of the surface was a failure, the exposed and untouched metallic areas in the other pieces were successful. They reflect the ambient light and act as a bridge between the fluid and moving quality

of the natural light entering the barn and the viewer. The pieces provide an immersion into the piece as the reflections invite attention, that compare with the brushstrokes that halt time by halting the flux of ambient light, incorporating the essence of using the camera to bring a stilled image into the method. Merleau-Ponty (1962, p.203) deliberates over physically moving around objects- specifically a cube as an example, to perceive them differently applies to this discovery; that “by conceiving my body itself as a mobile object that I am able to interpret perceptual appearance and construct the cube as it truly is”. The panel can be perceived as appearing different when moved closer to or further away by the observer due to the paint’s layering over the reflective metal. Out of the natural light investigation, the surfaces in the copper series proved to be the most successful as the warmth of the surface created a link between the painted object and the perceived quality of the sunlight.

Materiality of paint

The plasticity of the paint is revealed in its fossil, and its relationship with the surface that has worked with it is a phenomenological one, as Nigel Wentworth (2004, p.38) examines with paint:

“Paint, so far, then, from being a substance in the traditional sense of this word, is a continually open potentiality. Its real being is more a becoming than any particular way of being. Just as the nature of the brush is involved in the manner of its employment by a painter and the way it manifests itself in the end-product of his work, so too is that of paint.”

The paint’s translucency successfully lends itself to the delicacy and therefore intangibility of the metaphysical ephemera in the thin layering that kept the surface present but elusive under the marks, the different colours in the copper series highlighting the progress of the ambient light across the surface.

The ambient light is absorbed through these brushstrokes into the painted layers and reflected back through them, working with the surface, affecting how the piece is perceived. Wentworth (2004, p.207) comments on the expressive nature of a finished painting commenting that “for the eye is not led to attend to the individual elements that make it up and so can take in the whole, allowing that which is expressed within it to come through”. The exposed surface reflects the

ambient light brightly, twinkling as the viewer moves around the piece; a twinkling that is recollected from my encounter with the natural light entering the barn.

Another success was the choice to use thin applications of paint to reveal more. The colours in the copper pieces are transformed from the opaque appearance of the acrylic that was brushed on, to a translucency due to the glossy surface that holds it. However, a failure is exposed within the use of rich colours in *29Cu.1*, the luxurious purples contrasting with the vibrant oranges; their hue becoming too dark in comparison to the faint suggestions of a tint in the lens flare, and the intangibility of the encountered light, ultimately failing to grasp the subtlety of light.



Fig. 17. *29Cu.1* (2017). Detail.

Ruth Philo's paintings also highlight the importance of phenomenological implications of surface, colour and light but does so, not to apprehend the metaphysical, but in their ability to evoke feelings and memory (Philo, 2016). Philo (2016) states that she makes paintings to encapsulate personal experiences through her abstracted mark-makings that reflect upon time, place and walking and this is incorporated in the importance of the materiality of paint and the process of painting. An important aspect to Philo's practice is the way that she wishes to provide an intimate

scale. Her gestural work speaks of the intangible through fluid and random painterly marks suggesting a search and placement for something, the large expanse of colours invite the observer closer to experience the piece and examine the sometimes small and delicate marks. Her work also suggests experience and encounter, not just intended in depiction, but intended in observation just like the outcomes from this line of investigation.

Where Philo's paintings feature the surface peering through a thin layer of paint to invite the viewer to closer observation, *29Cu.1* and *29Cu.2* incorporate many layers of colour that invite closer examination. The concentrated exposed surface invites examination of what surrounds it; the surface provides its own gesture; its own phenomenology.



Fig. 18. Ruth Philo, *All that is countless moments* (no date). Oil & wax on canvas, 30 x 30cms.

Layering and composition

Success compositionally, was within the drawing exercise that informed the layering technique for the panels, revealing the movement of ambient light reflecting through the different layers of paint. The residue of pencil marks in *13Al.1* were a failure and informed the transformation of

using a different tape for the remaining pieces. The subtlety that was required in translating the light phenomenon was lost in the boldness of the outlined forms that was not in keeping with light's intangibility. The pencil marks pointed to a decisive action of placing an edge on a metaphysical and moving ephemera, that without the multiple layers to blur the edges provided a failed apprehension. This relates too, to the pink orb, separated from the layered mass in *13A/1.2*, that also has an edge. The failed use of the pencil in progressing the investigation positively is a phenomenon highlighted by Wentworth (2004, p.44) who comments that due to the long process that involves realisation through the making process, if the materials that are used are negative to the desired realisation, then the work can become heavily affected due to the "unmalleable" quality of the material. They are redundant, blocking the ambient light and so losing the movement that is necessary to translate and also reminisce too much of the stilled image; translating just the memorial keepsake of the encounter with light.

Chapter 3

3.1 Work made in response to cinematic light

Investigations into natural light revealed that the translucency of paint held the light in contrast to the reflective surface that they were on. This informed the principle in this line of investigation; to use the translucency of paint to translate encounters with the remembered and thus imagined light from the observing Weronika. The film still provided the same results as the photograph of the light entering the barn; an understanding of my perception of the encounter with the staged light in the film. I used the film still and memory to engage the painterly language in orchestrating ambient light into aspects of the staged and metaphysical, mirroring the behaviour of the light with Weronika. Key to this was the examination of paints materiality in conjunction with the surface, examining how the painted object is constructed.

My initial reaction was to make a wood cut from a film still, to investigate layering as a method in the creation of surface and colour.



Fig. 19. Marble (*La Double vie de Veronique*, 1991) film still.

The film still featured Weronika staring wistfully out of a train window, travelling to Kraków, playing with a marble. We are directed to look at this marble as it remains in focus, its

translucency shimmering whilst the background dissolves into a blur. We are meant to see the refracted light and image in the marble and ponder on what it means. Does the upside-down image depict the location of Veronique, portending a supernatural suggestion about the two women's connectedness?

I used printing practice to attempt to capture the translucency and moving quality of the marble in an effort to try and unpack what Kieslowski is trying to achieve (see fig. 20). Firstly, I paused the film still, then printed out five copies, each deepening the contrast. I then etched the surface of the wooden plate, following the tonal forms that manifested in the printed copies, composition decided by the reversed image traced from the printout onto the surface. Carving, and therefore removing areas of the wood⁵, I could layer colours, the final print revealing colourful, contrasting depths to the image.



Fig. 20. *On the Train to Kraków* (2017). Woodcut print.

⁵ The method in a wood-cut involves the uppermost layer of wood being carved in the desired shape that controls where the ink sits when rolled onto the surface. The areas of the surface that are removed do not house any ink as the roller was guided by the uppermost surface that remains. The wooden plate is then pressed onto damp paper where the inked uppermost layers impress the carved image on the paper. Further cuts are done with the process repeated to implement a layering technique.

The paper that holds the finished ink design is the mirrored twin of the ink-stained wooden plate that created it. The print is the reverse of the panel, and the carved panel is the reverse of the printed image. The newest carved absence of wood allows for the ink that went before to remain visible alongside the new marks, the relationship between the printed marks and the place they came from beginning to unveil what the print could be suggesting. The presence of one woman in the scene, invites us to consider that the absent woman could somehow be in the marble, that the first examines. Somewhere within the white, untouched areas of paper, surrounded by the multiple layers of thick ink.

This print did not encapsulate enough the metaphysical nature of the staged light to incorporate Weronika's metaphysicality in the marble; the moving and unclear translucency of the glass opposed with the thick inks of the print. Light rested on top of the saturated materials and nothing was permeated to reveal movement, leaving the ink static on the surface. Additionally, the encounter, though contextually appealing did not hold Weronika's metaphysicality. The image had to depict Weronika, and so I returned to the defining encounter I had, observing Weronika flinging the rubber ball and savouring the falling dust. The coloured light catching her expressive form was subsequently examined through the use of translucent painted layers in recompense of the thick, opaque ink in the wood cut.

I began with experimenting with the colour green in an attempt to apprehend the glowing green light often surrounds Weronika whilst she is highlighted with the golden yellow filter.



Fig. 21. Weronika (*La Double Vie De Veronique*, 1991) Film still.

Using layering, I traced the form of Weronika's euphoric encounter with the falling dust, repeatedly overlapping the forms so that they merged together (see fig. 22). This confused the edges of the forms, to lend to the blur of green that often surrounds Weronika in the film, giving her focus. In the search for apprehending this glow, I continued to apply green layers over the top of the forms that caused the forms to disappear and become less stated. The radiance of the light on Weronika's face became lost underneath the green layering, opposing the nature of the green filter that fails to drown Weronika in the film. Consequently, I stripped back the upper layers of the painted applications in favour of picking out Weronika's outline in an attempt to find Weronika's euphoria through clarity of form.

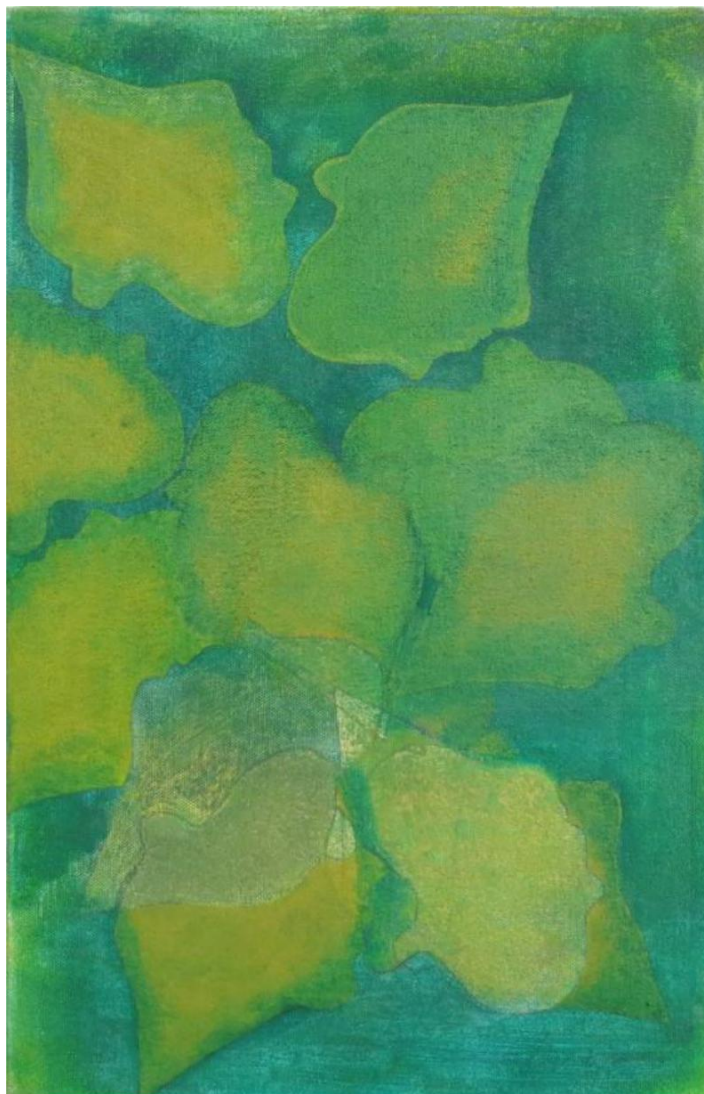


Fig. 22. *What Else Do You Want to Know About Me?* (2017). Oil on canvas.

What Else Do You Want to Know About Me demonstrates the clarity in form becoming possible with the use of just yellow oil paint, demonstrated in picking out the colour from the green wash.

The connection of acquiring the perceived euphoria of Weronika with the yellow colour was made in the discovery through layering. The repeated forms physically moved the form around the surface, mirroring the experience of observing the encountered moving image. Though the yellow paint had brought clarity to form suggesting something towards Weronika's metaphysicality, the translucency of the paint was lost to the canvas surface. The paint remained static still, the light sitting on top of the surface, only revealing an overworked and unclear surface (see fig. 23.).

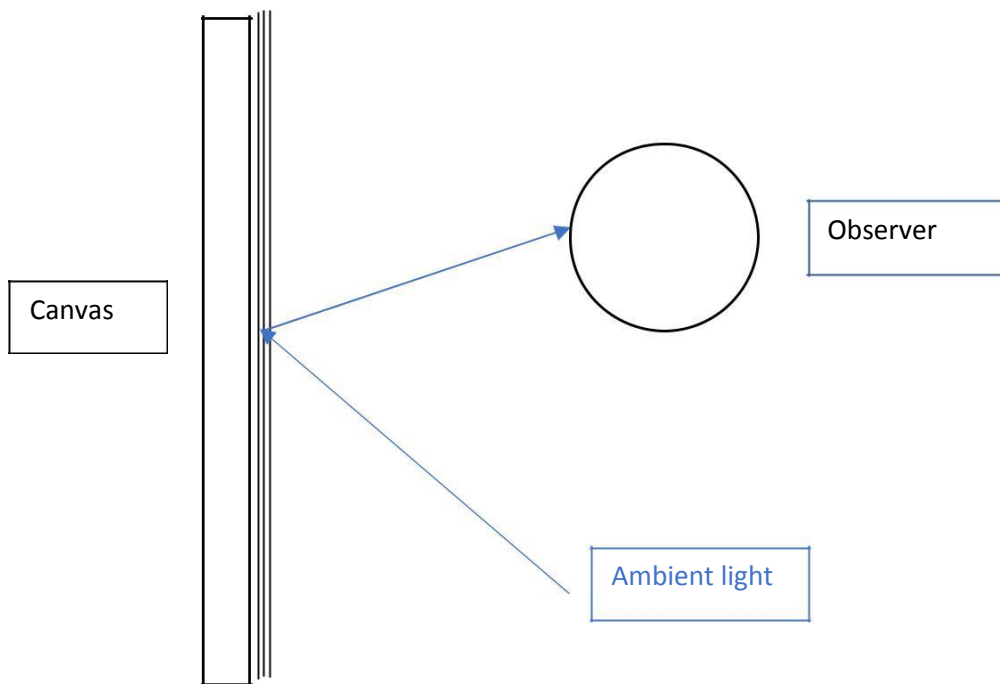


Fig. 23. Diagram demonstrating the ambient light hitting the upper layer of paint.

Because of the static nature the surface had provided, the investigation moved to working with a wooden surface. The different surface- a grained plywood panel, reinforced the translucency of the painted layers with the visible grain, a discovery that acknowledged surface more in the phenomenological method. I placed the same traced form of Weronika onto the panel, but at each point the grains changed, followed a different grain with a darkened hue of yellow oil paint that, with its translucency with a glaze medium, I had chosen to apprehend the protagonist's golden yellow glow. The yellow hue was selected in translation of the golden yellow filters used by Kieslowski to apply a metaphysical quality to Weronika. Consequently, the plywood surface revealed key information about the translucency of the yellow paint and began to unpack how I remembered the use of cinematic filters to depict this metaphysicality.



Fig. 24. *All My Life I Have Felt I Was in Two Places* (2017). Detail.

The grain patterns display time passed and the movement of the wood's growth that mirrors the phenomenological development of the painting; each form carefully placed where the next line of grain lies (see fig. 24). Though these placements suggest a time of making, the translucency of colours on the patterned wood do not admit to gesture with brushstrokes. As Wentworth (2004, p.3) suggests with no brush marks visible, the brush doesn't become invisible but is noted for its absence;

“The painter has striven to use the brush in such a way that it can pass by on the canvas and leave a mark without it being visible as the mark of a brush. It is intended to drop out of the picture and so is experienced as such. The paintbrush becomes not an active player in the activity of painting but instead a mere cypher for the happening of the work which seemingly passes directly from the hand to the canvas.”

The translucency of the layered colours leaves the brushstrokes invisible, in agreement with Wentworth that the application of the paint is less important; the focus in this investigation on the constitution of the paint. The subtlety of invisible brush marks contrasts with the presence of the pencil marks that surround the yellow forms, leaving evidence of the trace by which they came to be. This encourages the notion of deliberate placement, focus that has been placed on the precise

positioning of the abstracted form, colour spreading done so delicately as to ensure the colour does not escape from the desired shape, and in so happening, exiting against the grain's pivotal positioning.



Fig. 25. *All My Life I Have Felt I Was in Two Places* (2017). Oil on plywood, 69 x 50cm.

The plywood reinforces the translucency of the paint with its visible grain and because of this, I further examined whether the pencil outlines, left by the trace method, was critical in the apprehension of her metaphysicality.

I continued with the method of following the dictation of the grain to place the form. This time, I repeated the forms along the entire grain line, made feasible due to the unique quality of the panel. The forms were placed along the curvature of the grain, marrying the curve of Weronika's ear or chin along the lines, utilising the unique circular pattern that already existed in the surface.

The surface dictated much of the process in revealing the nature of the translucent paint but in addition the size of the surface (revealing more grain) invited more opportunities for applying more layers. Consequently, a link was made with time; firstly, time in the movements along the grain and with the encounter with the moving cinematic light. Secondly, the heavily layered surface suggesting a link with the time that had passed since my encounter with *La Double Vie de Veronique*, the application of more forms mirroring the number of times the encounter had been imagined. The new shapes that had manifested from the repeated layered forms, leave the euphoric feature of Weronika unrecognisable. The form becomes less graspable as the protagonist, especially with the lack of pencil marks to accentuate the outline. This intangibility reflecting the unknown metaphysical element of Weronika.



Fig. 26. *Here and Somewhere Else* (2017). Oil on plywood, 85 x 53cm.

It becomes clear especially from *All My Life I Have Felt Like I Was in Two Places* and *Here and Somewhere Else* that the golden yellow filter best translated the yellow light of Weronika's skin, the rich tones accumulated with the layering the product of collaboration with the grain pattern defining the placement of forms. The change and move to different hues of yellow and the movement to different areas of grain informed the making process and lend itself to the way the cinematic light filters move with Weronika.

To correspond with the translucent paints cooperation with the grain to evoke the movements of Weronika on screen, I altered the focus from one defining encounter to a greater one. Weronika's metaphysical form, encouraged by the moving light manifests during her most euphoric moments. Weronika's most epitomic moment features when she is singing at the doomed recital. The cinematic light enhances her facial features as she struggles to perform her solo performance; her heart starting to fail; her stubborn nature refusing the distress call from her heart in preference to singing. This moment of ecstasy is not understood as the observer can see what is impending, a phenomenon that cannot be reached to the character, who awaits her fate.



Fig. 27. Weronika (*La Double vie de Veronique*, 1991) film stills.

I used six film stills (see fig. 27) to inform the shapes taken to place onto plywood using the same techniques of using different colour hues informed by the grains of wood. The hues run fluidly together, seeming to seep along the grains of wood that define their placement. The indiscernible forms are of Weronika, lost to the layered surface speaks of movement and something that is not understood as Weronika; something metaphysical. The methodical use of the grains of wood have caused the blur of Weronika's altering form in conjunction with the enlargement of each still, the largest taken seconds before she collapses. *I Feel That I Am Not Alone in The World* is unfinished. Its unfinished state allows observation of how the method progresses, this exegesis capturing elements that would be rendered invisible in a few layers time.

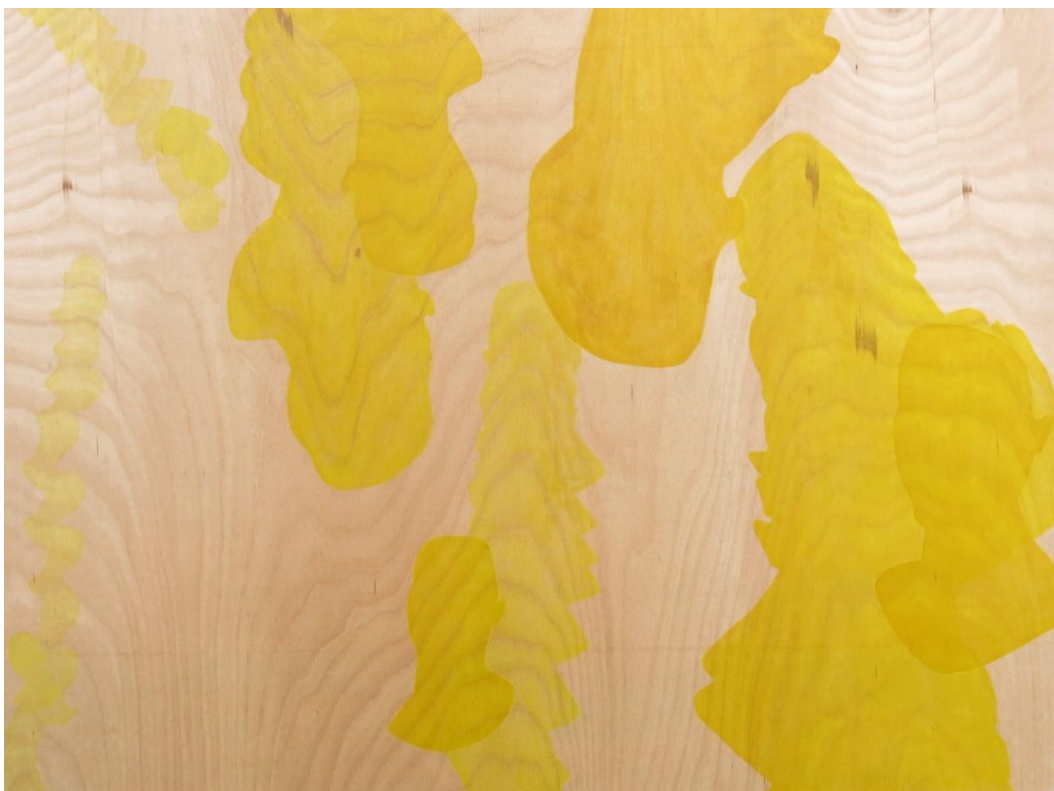


Fig. 28. *I Feel That I Am Not Alone in the World* (2017) Unfinished.

3.2 Evaluation of cinematic light investigation

Surface

The pattern of the grain makes the light shimmer within the surface of the paints, overcoming the problem of light sitting on top of opaque ink and the static paint due to the canvas ground. Therefore, the work made in response to cinematic light found success in using the surface to

guide the placement of the paint as it aided understanding of the impact of the materiality of paint. Where the surface was muted in *What Else Do You Want to Know About Me?* it became a failure. In contrast, the pieces *All My Life I Have I Was in Two Places* and *Here and Somewhere Else*, and *I Feel That I Am Not Alone in The World* depicted the plywood grains informing the placement of painted forms. This phenomenological aspect of the surface drawing out a way to apprehend the metaphysicality and movement of the cinematic light provided me with a method that was successful and agrees with Wentworth's suggestions that a fully successful painting is guided by the paints, and the painter must not have a pre-set decision on what must go in (Wentworth, 2004, p.205). The age of the wood became as impactful as the application of painted layers, the panel asserting its condition into the phenomenological process. The surface provides a constant, clearly seen through the paint suggesting that the marks made could only be temporary in comparison to a permanent characteristic. The surface revealed through the paints acts like a stage, where movements made upon it are fleeting to its apparent unchangeable nature- accentuated by the ambient light's correspondence with the object. The ambient light hits the paintings and moves through the paint that absorbs and reflects the light back depending on the hue and amount of paint that resides on it. The light travels to the surface underneath the paint and then reflects back through the paint to the observer, in consequence the surface providing a crucial base for the paint to interact with the ambient light. Ralph Mayer (1991, p.160) discusses the impactful quality of grounds and surface in painting that concurs with this finding commenting that the ground always has an effect of the piece. Though the plywood pieces didn't have a painted ground, the lightness of the wooden surface enabled the light to reflect from within it and return to the observer (see fig. 33). Mayer's diagram as shown below, also demonstrates the reason for the canvas piece's failure, the opaque colours altering the ambient light to prevent the surface from being fully reflected back at the observer.

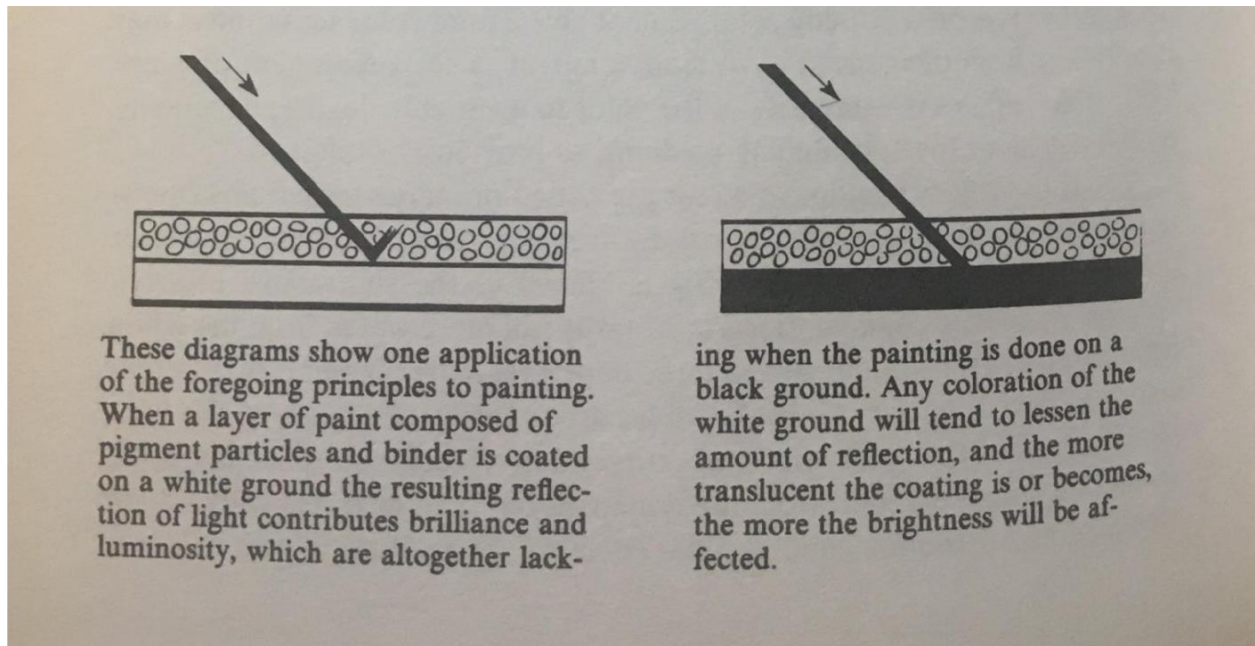


Fig. 29. Mayer, 1991, p.162.

Materiality of paint

A success of the paint's materiality, was in the use of a glaze medium to mix the oils, aiding its translucency. The glaze provided more reflectivity of the light due to the dispersion of the paint pigments. Mayer (1991, p.158) provides support for this observation by commenting that the eye determines the colour of the pigment due to the circumstances of the pigment substance. In comparison to the influence of the grains on the translucent paint, the grains of wood become more evident due to the transparency of the yellow forms, the shine moves playfully along the faults in the surface, filtered by the refractive indices (Mayer, 1991, p.159) of the combined paints and separated by the glaze to become more translucent. Darkened hues of yellow that were manifested from mixing two different colours together, were the result of the ambient light having to travel through more particles (Mayer, 1991, p.160) that refract more than a thinly applied unified colour. Reduced translucency in heavily layered areas of the surface reduced the reflected ambient light. This outcome related empathetically to the alternating intensity of the golden yellow filter that is cast upon Weronika. The intensity of the coloured light depends on Weronika's skin and so this flux in appearance with Weronika is mirrored in the ambient light's interaction with the different hues of yellow. Reduced translucency in the plywood panels was a result of repeated layering; a product of the time in relation to the surface and the making, the translucency diminishing when

the forms were heavily congested. The result a literal and metaphorical build-up of the imagined metaphysical euphoria of Weronika.



Fig. 30. *Here and Somewhere Else*. (2017). Detail.

The success of the translucent colour in the plywood pieces is contrasted in the failure of the colour in the canvas piece. The yellow hues in *Here and Somewhere Else* when layered repeatedly engulfed the panel, providing a wealth of colour that intensifies the colours to cite Weronika's opulent glow. This is intensified in *I Feel That I Am Not Alone in The World*, the extravagance of colour on the panel reflecting the light brightly, brighter than before as Weronika is on the verge of death. The intensification concludes at the point of Weronika's death, her light extinguished at the point of Veronique's 'la petite mort' where the metaphysical appears to transfer over to the other woman, manifested in the lighting of the bulb in her hand. The painting encapsulates the moments leading up to her death through the increased intensity and darkening hue of the colour suggestive of the manifestation of death. This leaves the use of the green, a distant failure but necessary to the understanding of the phenomenological importance of the surface.

The phenomenological quality of paint *All My Life I Have Felt I Was in Two Places, Here and Somewhere Else* and *I Feel That I Am Not Alone in The World*, was successful during the drying process; the oils took time to dry, which altered the eventual colour that affected the next mark, aiming to be a slight change in hue from the previous one. This phenomenon mirrors the long process of producing moving images in films, resulting in the process of applying the oil paint to the surface in sympathy to what was required to make the light filters in *La Double Vie de Veronique* encapsulate Kieslowski's vision. These deliberations are supported in Merleau-Ponty's (2008, p.73) remarks on this aspect of cinematography:

“Beauty, when it manifests itself in cinematography, lies not in the story itself, which could quite easily be recounted in prose and still less in the ideas which this story may evoke; nor indeed does it lie in the tics, mannerisms and devices that serve to identify a director, for their influence is no more decisive than that of a writer's favourite words. What matters is the selection of episodes to be represented and, in each one, the choice of shots that will be featured in the film, the length of time allotted to these elements, the order in which they are to be presented, the sound or words with which they are not to be accompanied.”

Layering and composition

Layering and composition were instrumentally, the successful result of the surface dictating the paint. Weronika's ungraspable nature was encountered once again by the layering of her form onto the grains of wood; following the grains, causing overlapping that deemed the shapes unrecognisable as Weronika. *I Feel That I am Not Alone in The World* was particularly successful in this way, the ungraspable metaphysicality of Weronika's movement with the cinematic light, made tangible in her drawn outline, rendered ungraspable once again in the intimacy of tracing the curved outline, moments before her life ends; a phenomenon that is completely intangible. It is because of the success of the unrecognisable yellow forms that result from the repeated layering that result in the failure of the pencil residue that is found in *All My Life I Have Felt in Two Places*. The gesture of the pencil is unnecessary in consideration of the presence of the grains of wood dictating where the forms must go, and how the grains and paint work together in apprehending a translation of Weronika's metaphysical glow. The success is in the very act of abstraction; in the removal of the facial features, but this does not neglect to include the expression of euphoria, which is construed in the yellow filters, representing her feelings through light, just as the yellow

paint does through painting. It does in fact lend itself to Kieslowski's own admitted difficulty in attempting to apprehend the metaphysical in a moving image; a reminder of the importance the cinematic light has in portraying the unspoken metaphysicality of Weronika. This is translated in the filtered yellow hues, the light falling on Weronika providing an outline, found in the painted forms from a direct trace. The trace alone does not translate her euphoria, the repeated layering and collaboration with the surface multiplies and moves Weronika's form around the surface, grasping every possible way of observing her final moments, immersing the observer in the same way the paint immerses the panel. As the forms alter, especially in *I Feel That I Am Not Alone in the World*, traced from the final stills where Weronika's breathing visibly struggles, cringing in pain we are also shown, prolifically her own pinnacle reached in apprehending her metaphysical relationship with the music she sings. The painting apprehends this fluid moment of struggle in the eventual stillness of painting, the coloured layers demonstrating the lead up to the eventual stillness of death.



Fig. 31. *I Feel That I Am Not Alone in The World* (2017) Detail. Unfinished.

Kaye Donachie's work is also concerned with a female protagonist, responding to Marguerite Duras's *The Malady of Death*, Donachie provides an insight into her encounter with the film and her understanding of the narrative. Where the methods that I have employed in reaching the point of grasping the cinematic use of light to portray Weronika's metaphysicality, Donachie (2015, p.146) highlights similar encounters and interpretations from observing film:

“The materiality of light – a tenuous volatile materiality – liberates us from the heavier kind that inheres in bodies and objects. It is in this imaging [within Duras's films, plays and novels] where light becomes tangible and where we are enabled to experience seeing as a kind of performing, where in turn, art can illuminate us”



Fig. 32. Kaye Donachie, *Together Inseparable* (2013). Oil on canvas, 60 x 50cm

Chapter 6

Comparison of the two bodies of work

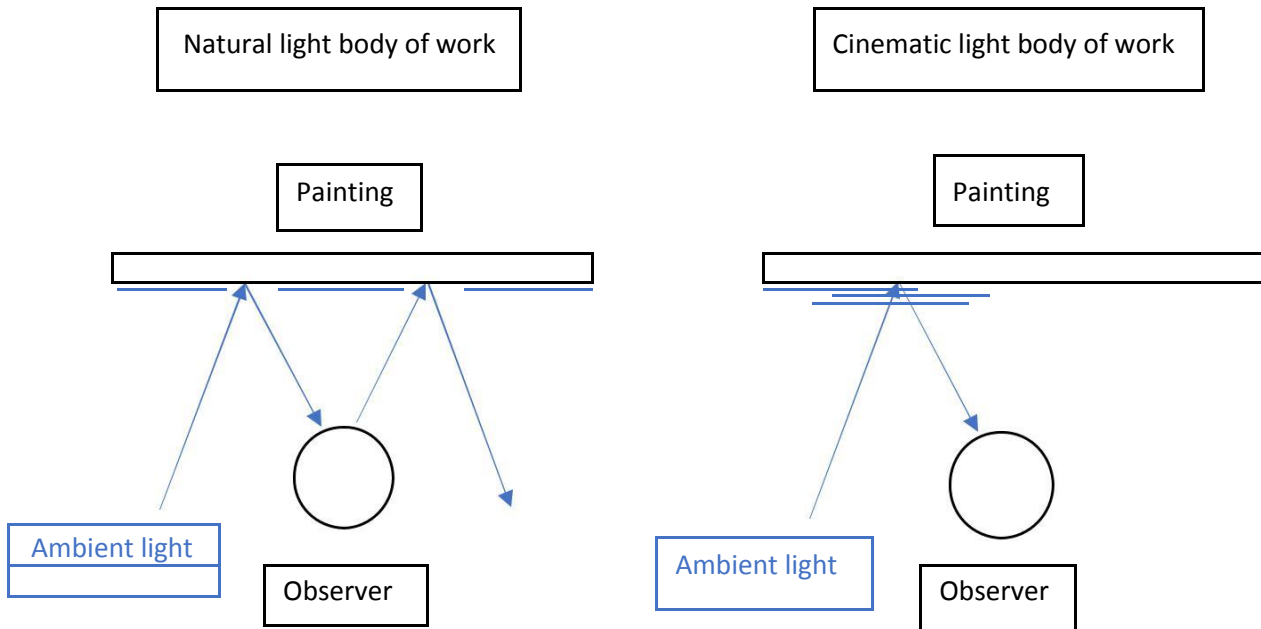


Fig. 33. Comparative diagram

Both investigations demonstrate the influence of light's agency in the construction of surfaces. The apprehension of the two encounters with light was a problematic journey, one of poetic speculation in dealing with the metaphysical. The very first decisive action in the method of stilling the phenomena using photography and pausing the film, changed the mode of enquiry. Simply translating the encounters with light into painting using the stilled artefacts of memory simply fulfilled a success in replicating the past experiences. As Merleau-Ponty (1993, p.185) suggests:

“The identity of the thing through perceptual experience is only another aspect of the identity of one’s own body throughout exploratory movements; thus they are the same in kind as each other”

The true encounters with light would not have been apprehended, the experience needed to be encountered in a similar way. The only way to really translate a perception of an encounter with the metaphysical is to use the metaphysical in perceiving the painting practice. Therefore, both lines of investigation used the current phenomena of light to aid in the translation of the past

encountered light. Metaphysical essences challenge our reality and way of thinking, and John Berger (1980, p.64) colloquially supports the difficulty in examining such a metaphysical occurrence in his concurrence with Magritte on the Impossible; “to conceive of the impossible is difficult”.

Susan Sontag’s thoughts on the pragmatic use of a camera supports my decision to use the device to aid my perceptions of the difficulty in grasping the encounters; she comments that “there is a sense in which the camera does indeed capture reality, not just interpret it, photographs are as much an interpretation of the world as paintings and drawings are” (Sontag, 1997, p.7). I apply the same contemplations to the use of creating a film still in the cinematic investigations, as the video cameras that recorded the film captured an essence of Weronika’s reality that encouraged my imagination. The single selected moment of the film still mirroring the method and outcome of choosing to photograph the natural light when I did, my encounter systemised or as Sontag (1977, p.7) suggests that (photography) “democratize[s] all experiences by translating them into images”. Additionally, my focus on the results of using this method are once again supported in Sontag’s suggestion that “A photograph is not just the result of an encounter between an event and a photographer; picture-taking is an event in itself, and one with ever more peremptory rights, to interfere with, to invade, or to ignore whatever is going on” (Sontag, 1997, p.11). In this research, the act of including the effects of taking the stills of the encounters ‘interfere’ with the encounter in the way that they inform my memory of the perceived encounter. As suggested before the stills were merely an artefact collected, of memory. The reason that taking a still of the encounters is part of the method and not the entire practice is termed perfectly by Sontag (1977, p.95); “For it is in the nature of a photograph that it can never entirely transcend its subject as painting can.”. It is only through the painting practice that the translations have been able to apprehend the encounters, working with ambient light whilst observing the finished work to provide the observer an encounter with the translation in understanding my own experiences.

The two avenues of investigation drew similarities (see fig. 34) in the how the two encounters constituted a similar method as an approach for two different perceived encounters. Consequently, the language of painting revealed the same three components in the successful bodies of work: surface, materiality of paint and layering and composition.

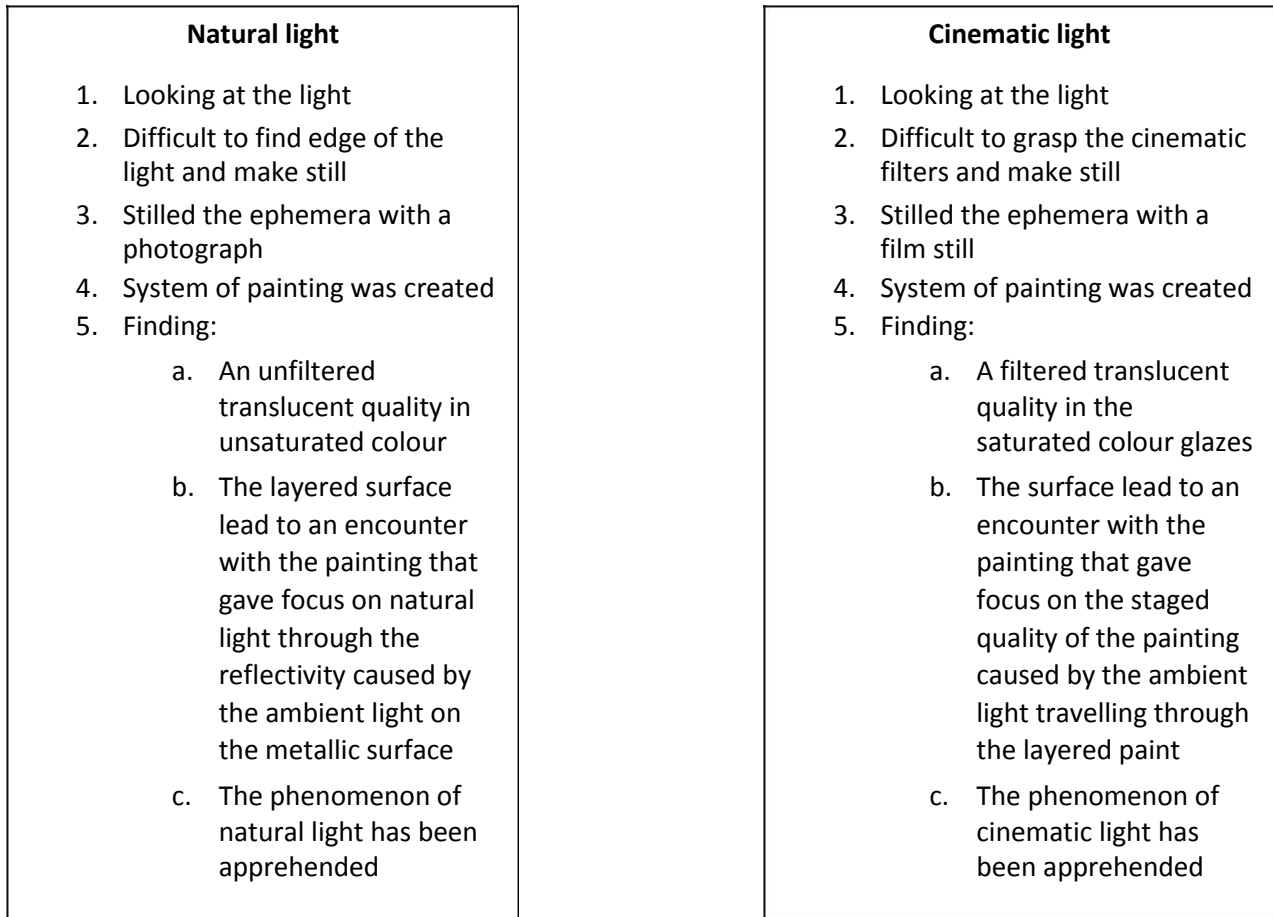


Fig. 34. Diagram depicting the two systematic methods.

The three components of the painting language that were found in both investigations reveal a cyclical sequence, establishing the phenomenological structure of the painting practice. The surface provided knowledge on the materiality of paint, the translucency of the paint informed on the progression in layering and composition and the layering and composition informed on the visibility of the surface. Following this cycle constructed new knowledge into the phenomenological properties of both the surface and material that was successful in the investigation of the moving and metaphysicality of the phenomena of light. In Kieslowski's cinematic moving image, light is examined as a fictional tool that helps reveal the theatrical and responses of the imagination in comparison to encounters with un-staged and natural metaphysical elements of experiences taken from the barn at The Sidney Nolan Trust.

Similarities were revealed in the two lines of investigation. The mechanical layering of the taped orbs onto aluminium and copper panels in the body of work examining natural light compares to the methodical placement of layered forms along the grain in the body of work examining

cinematic light. Another similarity lies within the response to the stilled image in both bodies of work. The photograph and film still were referred to once at the start of the method to evoke the memories of the encounters, traces taken to repeat aspects pictured used as one facet of translating the experience with light.

Differences between the two bodies of work were situated within the three components mentioned previously, that examined the phenomenological elements, becoming instrumental to discovering light's current agency and its relevance to the project. The paint's materiality and surface reacted differently. In the natural light investigations, the metallic surface rejected the paint, causing paint to merge with the next layer of paint and causing light to sit on top of the painted surface (see fig.35).



Fig. 35. *13Al.4* (2017) Acrylic on aluminium 40 x 40cm

Conversely, the cinematic light investigations demonstrated evidence of the surface marrying with the paint and accepting the ambient light through the surface's many layers (see fig.36).



Fig. 36. *I Feel That I Am Not Alone in the World*. (2017) Detail. Unfinished.

The biggest difference between the two bodies of work lies in the aspect of surface. As previously stated at the start of this chapter, the constructed surfaces demonstrate light's agency. The observer is made aware of this but in different ways according to the two contrasting surfaces. Referring to Fig. 33, the metallic pieces from the natural light investigation demonstrates natural movement, with the ambient light sits on and reflects from the un-painted areas of the ground and straight back at the observer. This movement brings light into the space around the observer, deflecting off at all angles that makes the observer aware that it is in the room with them, at the moment they look at the painting. The agency of light is next to them, behind them, surrounding them and most importantly, it is happening currently, providing a comparison to the immersion of sun light I experienced in the barn at The Sidney Nolan Trust. The observer is shown areas of untampered colour in the metallic surfaces, in the coolness of the aluminium and contrastingly in

the warmth of the copper. In contrast, the ambient light moves through the translucency of the painted layers, embedding itself into the painting. What the observer is shown is the layers of paint dictated by the panel, in a staged and theatrical way, made obvious by the ambient light, the agency hidden by moving through the painted layers and reflecting off the grains of wood, drawing the observer's attention to the layered forms. The two essences have come together to stage a surface with warm hues that make the observer aware of the fabrication of the surface, that places it in the past. The observer is provided an encounter with a theatrical surface that relates to the imagination; imagination needed to unpick the metaphysical and moving quality of Weronika.

Both investigations reveal a control-chance balance that is the product of the phenomenological painted applications onto surfaces using the method shown above, and the influence of ambient light on the surface. I relate this successful collaboration in both Gary Hume and Susan Gunn's work.



Fig. 37. Gary Hume *04 (from Sister Troop)* (2009) Screenprint, 81.6 x 61.6 cm. Printed at Paragon Press



Fig. 38. Susan Gunn *SELVEDGE I* (2016) beeswax, natural earth pigment & gesso on fine linen & board, 61 x 45.5 cm

The eye-catching nature of the metallic surface in Gary Hume's 2009 print *04 (from Sister Troop)* outweighs the understated colour of the blue that runs a shape centrally down the print. The surface is as important in the print as the colour and shape chosen to accompany it, with the

edges of the shape stopping the reflectivity of the metallic surface instantly, drawing similarities with the findings in the natural light body of work.

Where Hume's print draws parallels with this research in the material effectiveness of using a metallic surface and paint, Susan Gunn's *Ground* paintings demonstrate construction of surface within the repeated applications of acrylic onto a canvas. In similarity to this research, Gunn is interested in phenomenological ideas of painting and the method of layering. Working specifically with mineral pigments and base substances like chalk, Gunn evocatively tests the strength of grounds in her repeated painterly gestures, and what we are left with demonstrates fragility and tacit strength (Gunn, 2016). Gunn (2016) is also aware of the ambient light's potential, as her practice is also concerned with an awareness of light source and the affects it has on the surface of her paintings that produces examinations into the ephemeral and sublime.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

The two avenues of investigation have both demonstrated that the language of painting can apprehend encounters with natural and cinematic light, through the synthesis of painting and ambient light's agency. Fittingly the language revealed in the practice has succeeded in Berger's commentary that painterly language developed since Van Eyck represents the truth and is able to express a spiritual experience through a static materiality, through an illusion of tangibility (Berger 1980, p.162). The stillness of the painted layers is given movement through the travel of light's agency to and in the surfaces, making the metaphysical encounter I experienced, a tangible encounter with the metaphysical. It is with the presence of ambient light that the painting process reveals fully what has accomplished in the two most recent pieces. The metallic surface in *29Cu.2* makes the observer aware of the ambient light that they occupy a space with because of its reflectivity, implementing thoughts on the behaviour of light that marries with my intention to translate an encounter with the behaviour of natural light. With the cinematic avenue of investigation, in *I Feel That I Am Not Alone in The World*, the ambient light travels through the translucent layers, making the observer aware of the staged quality of the piece, inviting thoughts on a staged encounter with forms created from an imagined perception.

Using the phenomenology of painting practice to translate the encounters has generated its own theories about object and light agency with the aid of referring to Wentworth's knowledge in painting and philosophy and Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. The combination of the two aided in providing revelations in understanding of the perceived encounters, and the more contemporary reflections on objects having phenomenological qualities, providing key philosophical enquiry into the physicality of the making process. Referring to other artists and thinkers has been useful in further placing the research into contemporary critical context, for example, Berger highlights my reasons to get a still image of the two encounters suggesting that the "photographer's way of seeing is reflected in his choice of subject" (Berger, 1972, p.10). The still allowed me to revisit my memory of the encounters, as part of a data collection. A still chosen for trace and measurement of a memory that proves vital in composition making the metaphysical tangible through painting, or as Berger (1972, p.10) suggests, "the painter's way of seeing is reconstituted by the marks he makes on the canvas or paper".

Merleau-Ponty and Wentworth both refer to objects as having an agency⁶, when referring to Merleau-Ponty's idea of entities self-showing, and its relation to the essence of light, it has become clear that the essences such as layering, colour and surface in the painting practice 'self-show', with the ambient light that in turn, reveals light's agency. As this research has suggested, the components of the painted language revealed knowledge on movement and the metaphysical through collaboration with each other. Wentworth (2004, p.61) concurs with this discovery suggesting that plastic elements such as colour is part of an ensemble and not, "in itself", receiving its description from the surrounding elements that lie within the composition. In turn, the painted surface has been given agency, a conclusion that James Elkins also makes with objects suggesting that when looking at an object, you send part of yourself out and the object sends back the sight (Elkins, 1996, p.71). Elkins moves a step further suggesting that seeing and being seen leaves the air "thick with this weightless skein of vision, just as a physicist would say it is thick with photons, dashing silently here and there" (Elkins, 1996, p.73). Light's agency is further agreed upon as a product of the surface by Wentworth (2004, p.185) who lends to the metaphysical:

"painting is a physical object and ultimately must be understandable in physical terms, is that the nonphysical aspects of paintings must be grounded in this physical nature, the actual marks of paint on the canvas".

Direct perceptual experience was key in the making of the surfaces, lends itself once again during the observation of the surfaces, bringing the observer into direct correlation with the manifestation of light's agency. The surface is observed as phenomenological object, not imitating the world, but a world of its own (Merleau-Ponty, 2008, p.71), and in this case, the agency of light. It is with the experience of light's agency that the reflective ideal of positing thought will have its basis (Merleau-Ponty, 2008, p.242). Merleau-Ponty (1993, p.127) pinpoints the perception of experience and translation into painting.

⁶ James Elkins speaks of looking at objects as objects staring back (46), and this is engenders the embodiment of the ambient light.

“Painting awakens and carries to its highest pitch a delirium which is vision itself, for to see is *to have at a distance*; painting extends this strange possession to all aspects of Being, which must somehow become visible in order to enter into the work of art”.

A key success in this practice-based research has been within the discoveries made by adopting Katy MacLeod’s see-saw method; interchanging the practical elements with this reflective exegesis and having the two inform each other. *I Feel That I Am Not Alone in The World* demonstrates an unfinished but realised exploration and as such, successful evidence of this method. This is true, also, with *What Else Do You Want to Know About Me?* that remains more of a transitory study, its main purpose and success, its failures that guided the practical decisions of the following pieces. MacLeod (2000, p.3) states that in her experience, the written text was critical in the conception of art projects but the projects themselves “exacted a radical rethinking of what had been constructed in written form because the process of realising or making artwork altered what had been defined in written form.”

This body of practice-based research contributes to the dialogue of contemporary painting in the way it utilises synthesis in translating a metaphysical phenomenon, a suggestion that is supported by Lyotard (1993, p.332) who states that “Today’s art consists in exploring things unsayable and things invisible”. The practice adds to the eclecticism of the painterly language that exists today (Blannin 2016, p.2) with interests solely on the act of painting, best described by Greene (2017, p.3), as a state of practice of if choosing to make a surface, the painting refers mainly to that surface.

Chapter 8

Proposal for further research

I intend to continue investigations into the metaphysical using the phenomenology of painting practice. In place of examining light, I propose to examine music and sound- both key metaphysical entities that can be encountered and experienced. Explicitly, my intention is to undertake an investigation into apprehending the metaphysical characteristics of birdsong through painting.

The consistency of investigating two specific sources to examine in comparison to another demonstrates a successful method of investigation; one that I propose to use again. Specifically, I intend to examine my experiences with performed music from Olivier Messiaen's '*Le Merle Noir*' and natural birdsong from the blackbird from Witherby's 1970 '*Guide to British Birds*' and transpose these phenomenological experiences through painting practice. My framework is based on Pierre-Laurent Aimard's interpretations of Olivier Messiaen's '*Le Catalogue d'Oiseaux*' at his dawn, afternoon, dusk and night performances at Snape Maltings in Suffolk (Snape Maltings, 2016). I will examine painting as a methodology by which to respond to in two bodies of work. Using Aimard's performance in Suffolk as a framework draws out aspects of the practical and phenomenological as responses to lead my own research.

Painting practice will act as a phenomenological thinking tool to progress my knowledge in painting practice and in attempts to capture a tangibility from a metaphysical investigation, translating the ephemeral quality of sounds in flux into a tangible practice. This is inspired from Aimard's phenomenological action of playing the piano, translating the language of the notes on paper into sound through physical response.

There are a number research questions that lend themselves to the project:

1. How can the processes of painting reflect the phenomena of birdsong?
 - a. Element of time, the painting practice sympathetic to the movement of the metaphysical quality of birdsong. the ephemeral quality of the birdsong in comparison to the gestural movements with painting.

2. How can the experience of birdsong be translated onto a painted surface?
 - a. Intangible, metaphysical, non-physicality of the movement of birdsong transposed into the stillness, silence and physicality of painted surfaces.
3. How can painting examine the distinction between encounters of actual birdsong and musical interpretation of birdsong?
 - a. Phenomenological occurrences of personal experiences of playing the flute combined with digital transpositions aiding painterly language to respond

Key Terms

Four terms that are key to the project are: metaphysical⁷, phenomenology⁸, transposition⁹ and birdsong¹⁰.

The purpose of this research project is to find new approaches for contemporary painters accompanied by a text that operates as a kind of handbook for potential use. Thus, the written thesis together with a portfolio of paintings, drawings and prints will be considered as a body of new knowledge in relation to making paintings in relation to the experience of birdsong.

The project objective is to reveal something new about the distinctions between experiences of birdsong and work made in response that is the product of imagination. I aim to use sonograms whilst also examining components in the musical score and performing the work myself¹¹.

⁷ The ephemeral quality of birdcalls and music provides an experience of hearing that forms an intangibility that I intend to measure into a tangible quality via process-based methodology of painting practice.

⁸ The situation of experience and encounter is key in providing the personal experiential aspect of the project, in contrast to the more methodological procedures of comparing technical elements of *Le Merle Noir* and birdsong.

⁹ This approach will be used due to its multiple applications in relation to mathematical and musical characteristics, both subjects that will feature in some degree of application in the method. The significance of using transposition is its importance in translating something into a different entity by which, usually, to better understand. This method will be used because of this in responding to music and birdsong through painting practice.

¹⁰ I propose that this is a musical phenomenon, where my idea of what birdsong is, is informed by interpretation from Deleuze's (2007, p.29) suggestion that birds are artists. Following on from discussions of the metaphysical above, what we understand about birdcalls is only limited to a certain point, and the personal experience we have when we come across these calls or songs is a metaphysical event. There is possibility for experiences with birdsong to determine the painting-process.

¹¹ Stephen Preston (2004) has demonstrated previous research exploring birdsong to develop methodologies and Rupert C Marshall (no date) has even used a Sonogram as a way of visualising sound objectively.

Context and literature review

Gilbert's (2013: p.11) publication highlights Kandinsky's representation of his synaesthesia, noting that Kandinsky saw painting practice as the same activity as composing music. My research echoes Kandinsky's work in as much as the intention was not to represent music in paintings (Gilbert 2013: p.11) but instead to identify links between the two- a process I associate with translation. Where Kandinsky experimented with purely personal encounters with music, contemporary practice-based researcher Kevin Laycock investigated the effects of music in painting, using systems to foster objectivity¹². Laycock examines technical elements in work by composer Michael Berkeley and conductors Peter Manning. Laycock attempts to translate characteristics that comprise music such as time signatures or "bliss meters" into painting (Laycock 2012: p36).

Other research that examines music to inform painting practice is James Fisher's practice-based doctoral thesis (2009)¹³ which used two sources to compare through the making of drawings and prints; Schubert's *'Winterreise'* and John Clare's journal *Reollections &c Of Journey Out Of Essex* (1841). Where Laycock approaches only music, Fisher's examinations of poetry to form alternative narratives lend context to the musical aspects of his research.

Considering methods of transposition, composer Jim Aitchison (2014) demonstrated layering and "mechanical copying" mirroring Gerhard Richter's methods in *Portraits for a Study* (Fal AMATA, 2014). Conversely, Gerhard Richter himself incorporated layering in his 2006 *Cage 1-6*. Richter's work seems to be a less direct phenomenological response; he listened to John Cage's music whilst painting but stated that his work is not influenced by Cage, simply that he listens to his music while painting and the work is consequently arbitrarily titled (Tate, no date).

¹²Thesis titled: *'The translation and interpretation of the structural elements of musical compositions through painting and digital media'*.

¹³Thesis titled: *'I came here a stranger, as a stranger I depart': an investigation into the relationship between drawing and narrative of place'*.

Method

I intend to undertake practice-based research, due to both its success with my previous independent studies and to add to knowledge within the practice-based practitioner field.

There will be two strands of investigation, (see fig. 39) the first interpreting '*Le Merle Noir*' in the examination of four recordings of performances of the piece¹⁴. Each performance is different due to the individuality of each flautist, so all play the piece with different characteristics, just as Kirsten Smith (2008) found in her critical analysis of three performances of '*Le Merle Noir*'. Specifically, the method will incorporate the examination of technical elements¹⁵ of the performances and transposition into aspects of painting¹⁶ that hold elements of calculation that can be translated from such elements.

The other strand of investigation will examine the birdsong from Witherby's guide transposed to sonogram format alongside personal involvement by playing a musical transposition on the flute.

The methodology will be developed determining whether the technical elements work better mathematically or symbolically. I anticipate an eventual comparison of two bodies of work to draw a conclusion from my research questions.

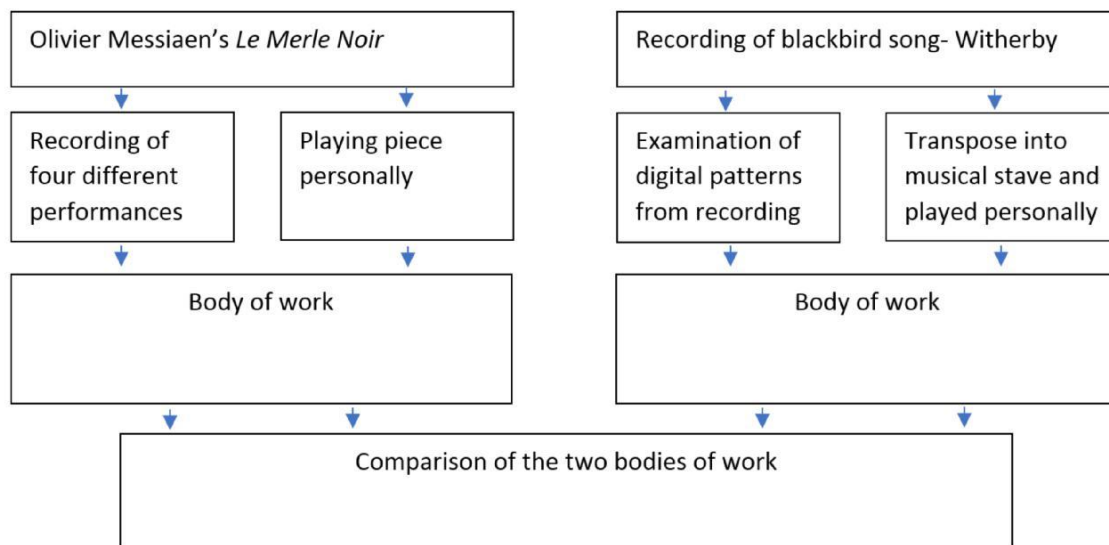


Fig. 39. Method

¹⁴ Played by flautists Denis Bouriakov, Ivana Iva Ugrcic, John McMurtery and Alexandre Tharaud.

¹⁵ Technical elements will include tempo, volume, note placement, rhythm, pitch and annotations.

¹⁶ Examples of these painterly transactions that I consider viable in contrast to the technical aspects of the music are colour, tonality, surface, material and layering.

Originality and contribution to knowledge

Where Fisher uses narrative to inform his research, I intend to generate new knowledge by using investigations into the phenomenological qualities of my own experiences. I propose to incorporate elements of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's suggestions on perception, especially when he notes the influence of The Cogito in his book *'The Phenomenology of Perception'*.

The importance of time in consideration to painting is also key in contributing to new knowledge. Contrasting to Laycock's (2012: p.34) theory that "painting is a static form, while music unfolds through time", I intend to demonstrate the plasticity that painting practice has that is characterised in my work, when apprehending the flux of listening to music and sound.

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