

that thing that lingers

Katherine Marzell

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts

Graduate Program in Visual Arts
York University
Toronto, Ontario

April 2019

© Katherine Marzell, 2019

abstract

Somewhere between a chronology and stream-of-consciousness text, this support paper begins to enframe research around possible worlds, provisional painting, and installation art. Personal connections are made between my artistic practice and a belief system altered in 2016. Humor is an important form of empathy and can offer refuge if/when needed. Pylons are contemplated.

Interwoven into the text are an ongoing list of imagined artworks and exhibitions, a piece of fiction, thoughts on memories, on bones and skin, and some questions that still remain with me. Like an afterimage that sits in your eye when the stimulus has ceased, I'm interested in things that are parallels, reverberations, or echoes. Within this work I see connections between the imaginary, dreams, memories, shadows, and film.

dedications

For my family whom I love deeply, Mary, Helen, Stefan, and Gabi, and my fluff-dogs Chuchi and Muttsy.

acknowledgements

First I would like to thank my supervisory committee, Shelley Adler, Marc Couroux, and Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum. Thank you for your distinct viewpoints, and for challenging, and encouraging me in the ways that I needed. I appreciate all that you do beyond measure.

Secondly a warm thank you to those that visited my studio (sometimes more than once) and provided me with kind discussions, strange statements, strong eye contact, or sound advice: Dan Adler, David Scott Armstrong, Daniel Barrow, Michel Daigneault, Julia Dault, Stephen Horne, Katherine Knight, Nina Levitt, Yvonne Singer, Alejandro Tamayo, and Zin Taylor.

Thirdly to my friends and colleagues who have offered support, questions, and laughter: Kavi Briede, Shea Chang, Derek Coulombe, Phil Delisle, Mikhail Galkin, Cindy Lemus, Miles Ingrassia, Rehaana Manek, Felicia Maroni, Lisa Marson, Ella Dawn McGeough, Nermean Metwalli, Carol Oliveira, Chantel Prashad, Naz Rahbar, Michael Santi, Macy Siu, Rolla Tahir, Dan Tapper, Ella Tetrault, Francesca Ting Ting, and Madeleine Wall.

To Patrick Legris who provided many old man/muppet-type jokes, as well as helped me find and borrow artificial grass.

And lastly to my professors from my undergrad that gave me a chance, thank you to the moon and back Christy Anderson and Ed Pien.

This project was made possible with support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and the York University Graduate Scholarship.

table of contents

abstract.....ii
dedications.....iii
acknowledgements.....iv
table of contents.....v
list of images.....vi

before.....1
past.....2
starting to work | chronology.....4
boundaries.....10
ACK.....15
of alternate worlds.....20
an ongoing list of imaginary works/exhibitions.....21
experiencing thing.....23
personal | beliefs.....24
chronology | breakthrough.....27
provisional.....28
frantically bones and skin.....32
cosmos | organized time.....33
Script for a News Report: The Bridge (working title)36
beginnings of installation | articulated time.....39
pylons.....42
last.....45
works cited.....48

January 2018.....	35
image 24: Marczell, K. Install test variation 1, Gales Gallery, detail shot, January 2019.....	35
image 25: Marczell, K. Install test variation 2, Gales Gallery, January 2019.....	41
image 26: Marczell, K. Install test variation 3, Gales Gallery, January 2019.....	42
image 27: Marczell, K. Studio test, March 3 2019.....	44
image 28: Marczell, K. Final Install, April 2019.....	46
image 29: Marczell, K. Final Install, April 2019.....	46
image 30: Marczell, K. Final Install, April 2019.....	47
image 31: Marczell, K. Final Install, April 2019.....	47

before

i. The way I think is something like multiple streams beneath an icy surface (with the surface being analogous to what presents itself for others). Streams running alongside each other, sometimes intersecting, sometimes becoming stagnant pools, sometimes circling in on themselves, or circling back, sometimes surfacing at touching points, or surfacing as single streams. Cognizant of the fact that there are many streams to be followed the attempt hereafter is to write out some of the ideas and methods around my work.

ii. My work is always in flux, my understanding of it comes from various lines of interest and, upon reflection, my work often changes its nature. I see my work as mutable, as never static, it is a product of things learned, and a point of departure for things to be learned, investigated, or followed. In a more intimate way I see my work as my offspring, as things imbued with affection and fondness. They are things that are vulnerable and imperfect, and things that I love.

iii. I am more interested in mark-making and creation that embraces mistakes and mishaps rather than trying to hide them. There is something wonderful, and freeing in works that are wonky and just ever-so off. That is not to say that I do not attempt to make things recognizable, or in some instances attempt my version of realist work. But even those works are coming from a place of naïveté, and are approached with a kind of unfamiliarity. I am constantly trying to place myself in a position of childlike learning and discovery.

past

I entered the Master's program wanting to combine abstract painting and humor. I defined "abstraction" as a work void of any figuration, and "humor" as an element that produced audible laughter. I was trying to figure out a way to hold two seeming opposites (abstract painting to be taken seriously, humor not so much) within the same sphere. The commonalities between the two that are most important to me include the ability of both to produce meaning from nonsense, and nonsense from what was once meaning; and the acknowledgement of the strange and unusual. I see them both as being comfortable in dealing with uncertainty, and as playful forms of world-exploration.

Painting a variety of lines in primary colors (inclusive of green and black) on a white surface, and then pairing those works with titles or captions that were meant to be funny wasn't producing the reaction I wanted. (image 1, image 2) I could find links between abstraction and humor, but couldn't figure out how to accomplish what I wanted in reality. If I didn't preface my work, people would be unsure of how to react to it. If I talked about what I was doing it would set expectations: people expected the work to fit their sense of humor, or to be a great one-liner, and I couldn't match that. Then beyond that, the paintings didn't quite correlate with the title/captions as the humor seemed to center around the words, and nothing was gained from the image.

I still find it to be an interesting point of investigation whether humor and abstract painting can ever be combined in a way that works, in a manner that is sustainable (the work offers nuances and new understandings when revisited).



image 1: *celebration! (it's cancer)*, acrylic on linen, 60" x40", 2016

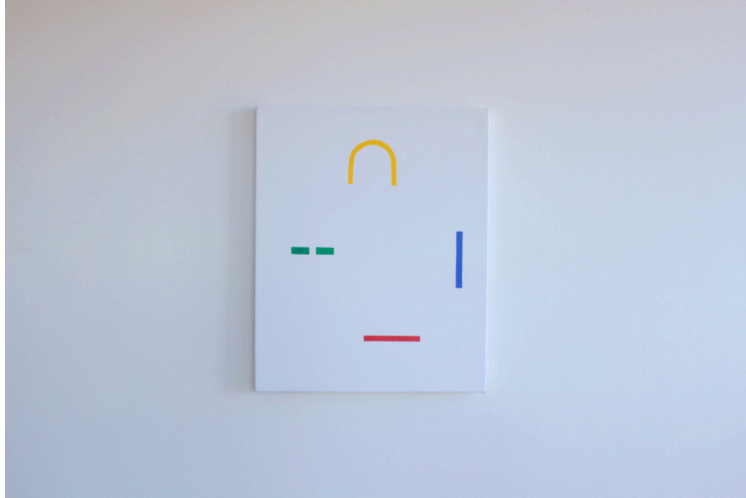


image 2: “pls bring me some choco milk”, acrylic on canvas, 22” x18”, 2016

starting to work | chronology

I became frustrated with the puzzle I had set for myself, so put that idea aside in favor of something more tangible. I reflected on my practice and found it was becoming too conceptual, relying so heavily on ideas that I was unable to match those concepts in actualization. I felt that I could either swing into:

- a. an ephemeral practice in which the work would be mostly thoughts and words, communicated through writing and performance OR
- b. a practice where ideas manifested materially, where things could be touched with the skin and the eyes, where the senses might be engaged.

I instinctively leaned toward a material-based practice because I am more versed in physical construction than performance or text-based work.

In September 2017, I had been walking a lot, taking (phone) photos of landscapes that caught my eye. Many of the photos contained objects that

emphasize their existence in their coloring, yet often remain unnoticed (pylons, traffic cones, caution tape, mop buckets, etc.). I found (and continue to find) these objects funny because they are perpetually pointing at their own existence, they are colored to highlight their own being, and yet they are often ignored or remain on the periphery of human attention. These objects seemed to me to be sad eccentrics, that I garnered a secret pleasure from acknowledging (through photos).

In December 2017, I painted a landscape in a washed-out color palette that depicted a scattering of pink trees in a green field, with a basketball court in the background, and three pylons surrounding a black/brown mass in the foreground (image 3). The pylons remained true to their highlighter-orange. Keeping the pylon color true-to-life, while toning down the landscape, mimicked my attention while looking at the digital photo. My focus was on the pylons, and the palette helped indicate how I was seeing the world. But the palette was also coming from my teenage self-portraits (image 4, image 5 – these works are moments of learning), and my internal understanding of landscapes as land-portraits, and the world as a body. These notions have been momentarily set aside in favor of other thoughts I wanted to follow.

During the creation of this December 2017 work, I became interested in how to interpret or reinterpret the photos I was taking into paintings. I enjoyed the act of inexact replication and how it accidentally led to the creation of alternative worlds/realities on canvas.



image 3: *once everyone's gone (basketball net)*, acrylic on canvas, 54" x44", 2017



image 4: *self-portrait*, acrylic on canvas, 36" x48", 2007



image 5: *self-portrait*, acrylic on canvas, 42" x55", 2006

I continued this line of thinking in my January 2018 painting (image 6). The January 2018 work is a night scene. In the background are two misshapen buildings that do not follow the logic of perspective. In the foreground are a small playhouse, a slide, and geodesic dome-type jungle gym. There are footsteps in purple snow, and tied to the jungle gym is a piece of caution tape, not fully resolved as tape, but appearing more as a yellow line with a shadow beneath it. The image was sourced from a photo. Technically speaking, I was trying to figure out how many rules of perspective I could break within the painting, with it still making sense. Herein I also began to solidify my color palette, a washed-out purple and pink-laden landscape. While the imagery was

recognizable as things we have in our world, the colors were indicating another place, another reality.



image 6: *once everyone's gone (playground)*, acrylic on canvas, 48" x44", 2018

In March 2018, another painting emerged (image 7): an interior space with tiles and a column to the right, cleaner lines, and a washed-out purple palette. I was trying to figure out style, but also wondering how many objects I could omit in a work for it to still be understood as a place.



image 7:
painting: *once everyone's gone (empty place)*, acrylic on canvas, 36" x44", 2018
object: *plant thing*, plaster, newspaper, painters tape, 20" x32" x25", 2018

boundaries

Sometimes I pretend I am a being new to the world, like the aliens in “3rd Rock from the Sun”. With an awareness that what follows could come off as arrogant, this act of pretending is done out of curiosity, and stems from moments in my own life where things were not what they seemed, or moments in which I had been abiding by rules only to discover others had not.

So now I like figuring out which rules can be broken, what minimal amounts are acceptable, where things can be pushed against, and where they cannot. I feel this way about systems – schools I have been through, offices I have worked in – systems that ask things of those contained within, but do not ask the same of everyone. What is the role of people within those systems, and how do they uphold their roles? Which rules *have to* remain in order for those systems to function, and why? These same questions will then pop into my work – what are the roles of the elements of an image, how do those elements uphold their roles? If things are omitted, does the image still function, and why? If components are omitted from an object, does the object still function, and why? I’m curious when it comes to borders, delineations, boundaries, why certain things need to be maintained, while others can be left aside. These are underlying questions that surface in my work every once in a while, and a way in which I provide challenges and sources of learning for myself.

As I sat with these three paintings, they felt as if they were missing something. They spoke to an alternative place, but felt like windows. They were separating an audience (and me) from a more tactile experience of these places. Trying to consciously figure out what a more intuitive part of me called for, my solutions were to try projecting onto the canvas figures moving in the space, or to make objects that felt like they had fallen out of the picture plane. Maybe these works were the backgrounds to the objects.

At this point, I began to stagnate. I was unsure what these images were asking for. I was unsure if the paintings themselves were complete. I tried to move on to other paintings in the hopes of making more of the alternative world(s) in order to figure out the answer. But with each subsequent painting I began, I didn't want to "finish" it. It felt like if I finished a work I would be letting it go, unable to touch it again. My understanding of my work as my offspring was a problem in that it began creating separation anxiety. In watching a documentary on Philip Guston, the artist says about his own work that "...there's something deathlike about a painting finished, a kind of death happens, and then I'm inclined to destroy it." (Blackwood 50min) While my inclination is not to destroy work that is "finished", I do find there to be a death-like moment that is very uncomfortable to let go of.

During this rumination period, I mentally listed some of the ideas I was interested in:

- I want(ed) to make work that referenced classic animation (and the multiplane camera), with the paintings being the still backgrounds, and the things in front of them or projected on to them being the “figure”, but also wanted each element of the work be able to stand on its own, or re-arranged with other pieces and still make sense (image 8).

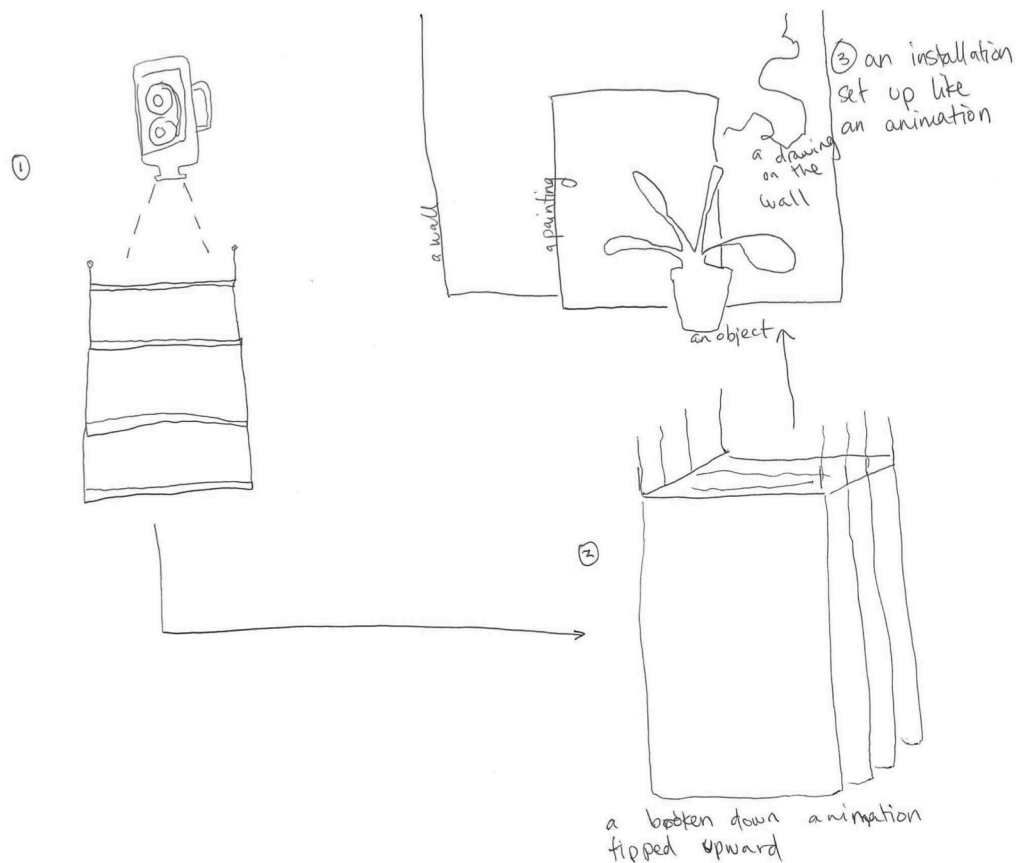


image 8: sketchbook, 2018

- I want to reference visual games, things where you have to find an image amongst a mass, books like “Where’s Waldo?” and “I Spy.”
- I want the audience to feel involved in the image making and image deciphering.
- I want the audience to feel a child-like surprise and sympathy in/with the work.
- I want to figure out how to involve an audience in more than just looking, or how to give them alternative ways of viewing (things low down, things high up, things hidden). (image 9)



image 9: sketchbook, 2018

- I was interested in alternate realities: places that might reference here, but were not here. I wanted an escape for me, and for others. (image 10, image 11)

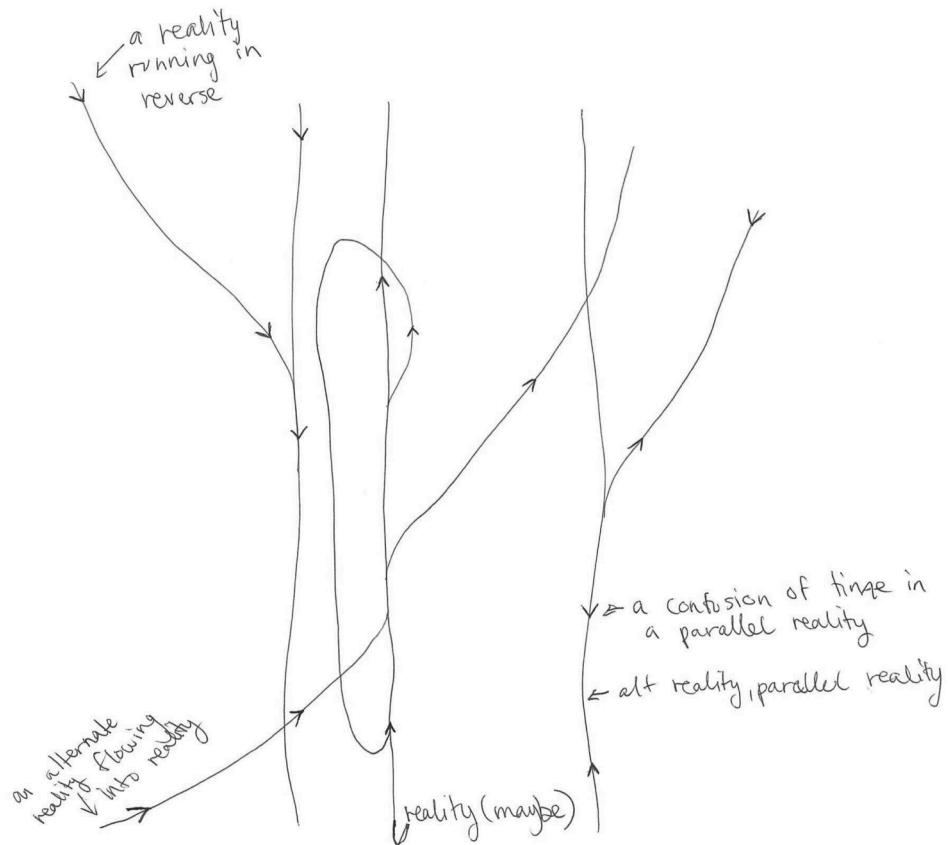


image 10: sketchbook 2018

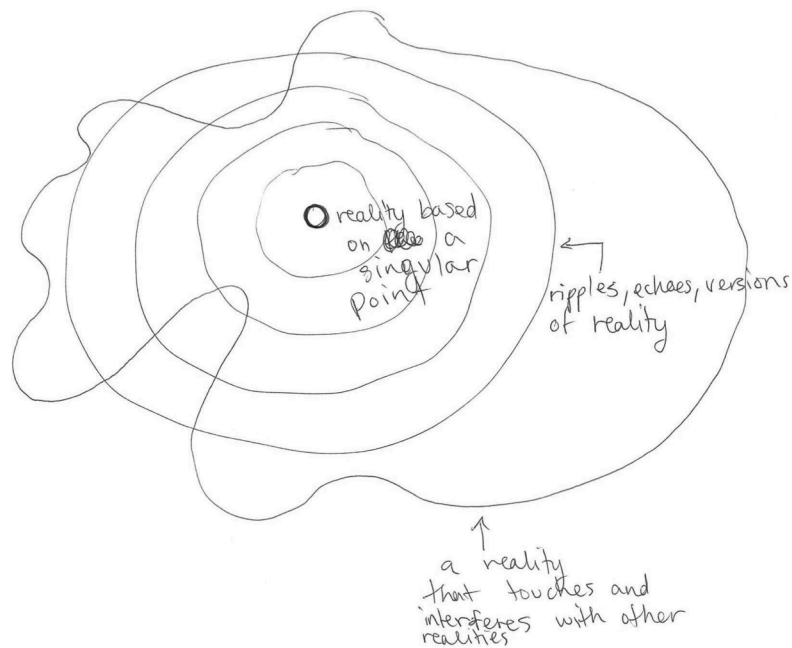


image 11: sketchbook 2018

- A lot of these things seemed to be related to children, and childhood, so I wondered: How do kids see the world, how would they make an alternative place, what do they need in order to make that place?

ACK

This last question led to the beginning of an ongoing collaboration with Ella Tetrault and Naz Rahbar called “Art Committee Kids (ACK!)” (the above question is not the only concern of ACK!). In August 2018, we collaborated with a local co-op daycare in the Special Projects Gallery at York. Using Carmen Morsch’s “At a Crossroads of Four Discourses” (Morsch) as a jumping point, it

was (and is) our belief that kids are important cultural contributors but rarely are they given access to gallery spaces. With this project we wanted to bridge the gap between institution and public/community, and highlight children's role in art and culture creation. Over the course of a week we held separate workshops for groups of preschoolers, kindergarteners, and school aged kids. The groups constructed different elements of a "world" each having a different set of materials and having to build upon the logic of the previous group. They were given some instruction based upon the premise of what they would create or include in a world of their own imagining. But beyond that, they were largely left to their own devices. At the end of the week we had the last group do a small performance with a painting/object. Then we curated the remaining work into a show containing sculpture, video, drawings, paintings, and interactive shadow-play components.

The formation and progression of ACK! is meant to be an organic one, each of us coming to it with slightly different motivations, and learning from the projects. We still have questions around how to best engage our mandate, whether we are facilitators or collaborators, and then more practically: which age range our workshops will be for, how to be inclusive of all of our practices, etc. (image 12, image 13, image 14, image 15, image 16, image 17)



image 12: ACK! world building, set up, 2018



image 13: ACK! world building, day 1, 2018



image 14: ACK! world building, day 2, 2018



image 15: ACK! *world building*, end of day 2, 2018



image 16: ACK! *world building*, opening day, 2018



image 17: ACK! *world building*, opening day, 2018

For me, this first project entitled “World Making” was also an extension of my own work with alternate realities. There was learning that came from this that informed my work: kids seemed to need boundaries in the materials they used, when they had too many options they delayed in what they wanted to make. They needed more instruction than we necessarily gave them, seeming to want to respond to specific questions or prompts, rather than “you can make anything”. They drifted towards grounding their work in things they were already familiar with – making a car, flowers, hills, a lion. It is still unclear to me if this last point is a matter of the expectations adults might have of them, or if this was a choice. It is also still unclear to me if these observations are some combination of my expectations meeting reality, or that these observations might be specific to these groups of kids, but not hold true overall.

I’m interested in how to tweak the prompts in order to get kids to create things outside of adult influence, or what the fewest prompts necessary are in order to encourage creation. Perhaps there is no area “outside of adult influence” as the expectation of creation might also be an adult anticipation. Maybe children aren’t necessarily interested in creating objects in the same way adults are, but are being taught to hone attention/energy in a way that might go against instinct. But these thoughts are untested abstractions and speculations, and thoughts that have also been set aside for research in the future.

What “World Making” reminded me to do in my own work was to minimize the materials I was using, and to perhaps leave indicators of our own world in order for people to relate to alternates.

of alternate worlds

In chapter 8 of Takashi Yagisawa’s “Worlds and Individuals, Possible and Otherwise,” he explores what makes an alternate world impossible by referencing other philosophers and logicians. According to Yagisawa, an impossible world is “...a world in which a proposition that is impossible to be true is true.” (Yagisawa 176) For Yagisawa there are different types of “possible” that can have correspondingly “impossible” creations. There are metaphysically possible, logically possible, and conceptually possible worlds. Yagisawa goes on to say, “Conceptual possibility outruns metaphysical possibility, hence it includes impossible worlds...we will do well to remember that conceptual and logical possibilities are no less legitimate notions of possibility.” (Yagisawa 178) He goes on to define a couple other forms of possibility, as well as additional claims that are plausible in the logic he’s creating. For the purposes of this paper I stop there.

What I take away from Yagisawa’s work is that in order for people to comprehend the impossible, they need a corresponding thing, they need a “possible” to ground their understanding in. Not necessarily an exact opposite, but a concept that shares characteristics with the “impossible” thing at hand,

so that one might build the new (the impossible) from the already-known (the possible). In addition, by acknowledging that conceptual possibility can surpass metaphysical possibility, and by reminding his reader that conceptual possibility is just as valid as any other type of possibility, Yagisawa puts different worlds on equal footing. Impossible and alternate worlds are of equal relevance as our own.

These thoughts are reflected in my own work in which the shapes are generally the same as in our metaphysical world, but with colour shifts. The paintings and objects do not alienate an audience, as there is always a piece of visual information that is understandable. Just as importantly, I see what Yagisawa calls “conceptual possibility” as being linked to imagination, or the imaginary. To conceptualize is to form an idea, to imagine is to form a mental image of a thing. These are just two identified manifestations of thought, or thinking. They are two-sides of a many sided die. This means that the conceptually possible, the impossible, and the imaginary, are just as important as any other facet of our metaphysical world.

an ongoing list of imaginary works/exhibitions:

- a work: a giant glass (or plexiglass) sealed vitrine entitled, “oh shit, there’s a hair in there”
- a work: 3 syringes on a plinth entitled: “inoculations against 3 different strains of cooties”

- a work: a computer virus as art (to send or download an artists work)
- a series: in “Pretending and Imagination in Children and Animals” there is a section titled “A taxonomy of imaginary companions” in which they categorize some of the different types of invisible companions children might have. Of note is “ ‘Baintor’: A very small invisible boy who is completely white and lives in the white light of a lamp.” (Mitchell 172)
a series of paintings based on this imaginary companion which are just landscapes with the slightest variations of white, and perhaps some reflective paint, so that one is unable to see the work standing at a certain angle, but must walk back and forth to see it. (in a similar vein to holographic images, but it would not be 3D.)
- an exhibition: “dog hair”, an exhibition of works spanning hundreds of years with the artists’ dogs hair in the paintings. (I’m sure there’s many.)
- an exhibition: “the unfortunate death of gregory evans” (inspired by the work of Mark Lombardi and Angela Strassheim), the gallery contains an ongoing investigation into the death of Gregory Evans who died from complications of hypothermia, after he spent 5 days in freezing temperatures attempting to prove he could control his body temperature (OR was it all part

of someone's horrible plan?). Part performance (though the "investigator" is never actually seen), clues about his death, and his rather comedic life will pop up throughout the duration of the exhibition. Strange items, lists of suspected murderers, etc.

experiencing thing

Donna Haraway, quoting anthropologist Marilyn Strathern, says: "It matters which ideas you think ideas with." (Haraway 18min) Strathern is saying we are only able to think in ideas that we've encountered before, that our ideas are amalgamations or families or descendants of previous ideas. To me, what you build your ideas up from, who or what informs your ideas, are just as important as the resulting ideas. These things are woven together. In relating this quote to my own work, I'm thinking not only about which artists I use to build up my work, but also which thinkers, which writers, which film makers, which friends or colleagues (bringing with them their own subsequent ideas), and even which life experiences. I think that my work is always an output of my mind/body as an experiencing vessel.

Herein I set a boundary. I can build on things I have encountered, but cannot think outside those limits. It benefits me to attempt to encounter as many ideas and experiences as possible in order to grow those boundaries. But as a creature of time, as an absorber of experience, I am forever stuck within what

my vessel accumulates. Even a concept of something “new” may just be an interesting rearrangement of things already known.

personal | beliefs

In 2016, my mom was diagnosed with two different cancers, kidney and cervical. The kidney one was quickly removed, and while check ups are still ongoing, it is not of concern. The cervical cancer was significantly more aggressive and painful, with chemo/radiation unable to get rid of it. She eventually graduated to round the clock painkillers, and was unable to sleep for more than a few hours at a time because the painkillers could only do so much. As a last resort her oncologist proposed a pelvic exenteration (in her case: removal of the uterus, bladder, and rectum), saying the surgery would be very aggressive so as to get wide margins around an equally aggressive growth. During this time I watched as my mom shrunk to an almost skeletal weight, and tried to hide pain that clearly never let her rest. In March 2017 she underwent the pelvic exenteration and while it resulted in her having a very different bodily configuration, it was also the first time in about 11 months that she didn't feel pain from the tumor.

This time period (inclusive of several months that followed) was very shadowed and focused. If I wasn't working, I was at her place, or the hospital. I saw friends once in a while, but it was hard to connect with anyone. There was no relief in this building up of tension. Time changed, when before it had been

regulated and somewhat predictable (with events both good and bad occurring on occasion). It began to bounce between finite and expansive. Between a vast overview of human-time (an existential view, perhaps) and a more immediate getting through moment by moment. But this bouncing happened on a daily basis for a year or two. Of course, I could think abstractly about time before, but generally I could choose to do so, I could let my mind wander. Time became an accordion, compressing and expanding against my will: where my mind was caught between predictive and pragmatic, or perhaps caught between past, future, and present. It became very strange to not have the same sense of time that I did.

These events reconfigured what was important and unimportant in my own belief system (a system still reverberating with changes). Important things became defined as those that offered refuge, relief, or empathy. This is when humor became important to me: things that were funny were like tiny breaks in an otherwise grim reality. Even if it was just temporary, escape from reality became important. While I hope this is not a common experience (as it was wholly unpleasant), I feel it to be a relatable one. For me, to offer others this pause from reality is a form of caring. It is an acknowledgement that perhaps the world-as-it-is is not always manageable, that one is allowed to get lost in an alternate world if only momentarily. That the alternate world is just as legitimate as any other.

There are different types of memories and they are kept in different ways.

There are those that are kept in the mind at different distances, and there are those that are kept in the body, resting closer to the surface.

Memories can change as they're turned over and over in my mind. They become blurred, shadowy, dreamlike.

Like a bottle cap caught in a wave. Top up, belly up. Was the bottle cap red, or green? Was its belly white, or yellow?

Sometimes far away memories are nicer at a distance, or that's how the saying goes. Time makes things blur. Distance makes things blur. Only things close and immediate are clear.

But then there's also that saying that things are clearer in time. Time akin to glasses, an assistant in sight.

Then maybe memories are sights, things that are seen, and then seen again. And then again.

To understand is to see. Which is why people say, "I see, I see," as proof of understanding.

So then maybe understanding is also memories.

Maybe we need time to understand.

chronology | breakthrough

By September and October 2018 I was, to my mind, at a continued stand still. Thankfully there were some things that happened in quick succession that did help bring me back to productivity. Shelley Adler suggested working through ideas on small canvasses in timed succession to get the ideas out. Watching the previously mentioned Philip Guston documentary, and finally being able to put a named feeling to my inability to “finish” the work (the fear of death). A studio visit with Daniel Barrow in which I told him my predicament, then asked what the best piece of advice he’d ever received was. He said (and I am most definitely paraphrasing at this point) that he had, at one point, become obsessed with fixing or editing or reworking a video piece he was doing. A friend finally said to him that he should just move on, because he was likely going to be dealing with similar, if not the same, ideas in subsequent pieces so he could refine the ideas as he went. This anecdote was incredibly freeing for me, as it was from someone whose work I liked, and who had also dealt with a similar conundrum.

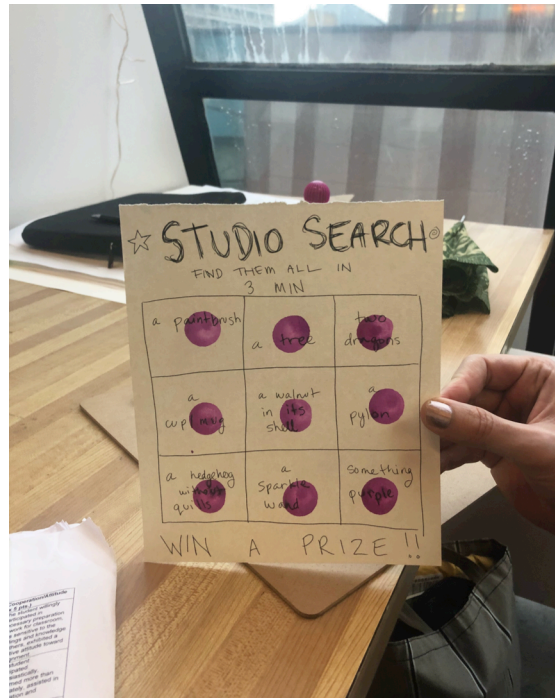


image 18: A game played with Daniel Barrow in my studio. October 2, 2018. Studio Search done in 27 seconds.

provisional

Raphael Rubinstein’s essay on “Provisional Painting” also helped me rethink my work. For artists to paint provisionally, according to Rubinstein, is for them to make “...works that look casual, dashed-off, tentative, unfinished or self-cancelling. In different ways, they all deliberately turn away from ‘strong’ painting for something that seems to constantly risk inconsequence or collapse.” (Rubinstein 1) For Rubinstein, painters that work provisionally are in one respect in the midst of a struggle with a medium “...that can seem too invested in permanence and virtuosity, in carefully planned-out compositions and layered meanings, in artistic authority and creative strength, in all the qualities that make fine arts ‘fine’.” (Rubinstein 2) The works Rubinstein categorizes as provisional are generally abstract, from artists such as Raoul De

Keyser, Albert Oehlen, Mary Heilmann, and Richard Aldrich to name a few. These are artists that sidestep, or cast-off the historical discourse around painting by rejecting the idea of a finished work.

To think on provisionality, it is the precursor to a thing, it is the step before a final, it is an unfinished thing, a draft. I do not use provisionality in the same sense as Rubinstein does. But it is from his article that I began to think about ideas around unfinished work, and unfinished bodies of work. To address work that looks provisional is to think about the temporal (things like duration, cessation) and fixed meaning (when a thing is final, it can become stuck in what it is). It is this that I am interested in, because I equate something “unfinished” with something that always holds the potential for change. I am interested in a work, or works that are to encounter different circumstances and let those circumstances alter, or inform the work. I continue to make paintings/objects, physical *things* but these things can be paired differently, can be lit in varied ways, hung or leaned, can continue out on to the wall or floor.

Provisionality is, in part, a strategy to circumvent the finality, the death of my paintings/objects. There need no longer be fear of an unresolved work, because by understanding these as provisional works they become touch-points in a line (though perhaps more like a vine – with offshoots) of creation. In the consideration of a single work, something might appear tentative, but

perhaps what is being witnessed is the end of an idea that then becomes picked up more successfully in a subsequent work, which then deals with that idea and builds a new one, and so on. Though Rubinstein's essay is addressing provisionality in painting, I think of all my work as provisional: each work as a step toward the next, and each work changing as I look back on them. They do not exist in a fixed state, they are all preliminaries for the next thing, or iterations of the thing(s) before them. (This last point reminiscent of what Daniel Barrow said to me, and someone before had said to him.)



image 19: all works to be titled, acrylic on canvas, 14" x11", provisional works from Oct 1, 2018



image 20: both works to be titled, acrylic on canvas, 14" x11", provisional works from Nov 13, 2018



image 21: to be titled, acrylic on canvas, 14" x11", provisional work from Oct 1, 2018

frantically bones and skin

everything is bones and skin

borders are the skin of a country, its tenuous edge

a house has bones, skin made of mud, bricks, or stucco

a ship has bones, skin of wood, metal, or other

lines are like bones, providing structure, sitting on top of things like skin

canvas is skin atop a stretcher skeleton

plaster is like skin placed on skin to heal bones,

but plaster hardens like an exoskeleton, so plaster is also like bone

tree branches are bones, spindly and stiff

but trees also have skin, layers of skin that become bone

memories are like skin that layers upon itself, but never become hard enough

to become bone

dreams are like skin, easily pierced

shadows are like skin, supported by whatever they land on, lying atop the

bones of the world

cosmos | organized time

Operating under the premise that these paintings/objects are provisional, and always in flux, I sometimes think of this body of work as a game, with the paintings/objects as the individual pieces. If I continue on long enough they will be able to be ordered and re-ordered, and made into new games, and played by different people (curators, other artists, the public as curator, or players). This thing I am embarking on is not a single exhibition, but the start (or maybe mid-point) of an ongoing body of work that can (if I think it out correctly) combine works from different points in my life.

Other times I think of my paintings/objects as set pieces or props, with the potential for organizing and re-organizing, and being brought out in order that they might create narratives for and with an audience. In Jennifer Fay's book, "inhospitable world: cinema in the time of the anthropocene" she briefly touches on props and says that "When it comes time to shoot the film, these elements are taken out of storage and assembled on the set, 'where things human unfold.' In the process, the scattered world becomes the foundation of a total fictional cosmos." (Fay 6) I like elements of this thought. That I might take individual works to be scattered worlds (each referencing its own history) and that these scattered worlds can come together to create a new fictional cosmos.

In the same book, Fay also quotes Maxim Gorky and his reflection on a program of Lumière brothers films exhibited in 1896. Gorky writes, “Yesterday I was in the Kingdom of Shadows... Everything there – the earth, the trees, the people, the water and the air – is tinted in a grey monotone: in a grey sky are grey rays of sunlight; in grey faces, grey eyes, and the leaves of the trees are grey like ashes. This is not life but the shadow of life and this is not movement but the soundless shadow of movement.” (Fay 3) In this observation, Gorky connects shadows and film, they both have a quality of the real/unreal, they are echoes of an *other*. This is how I see my work, as things existing in the world, but also as things that are parallel to the world as we know it. They are things that reference other things but not quite exactly. They are like removals, time slivers, or memories.



image 22: Install test variation 1, Gales Gallery, January 2019

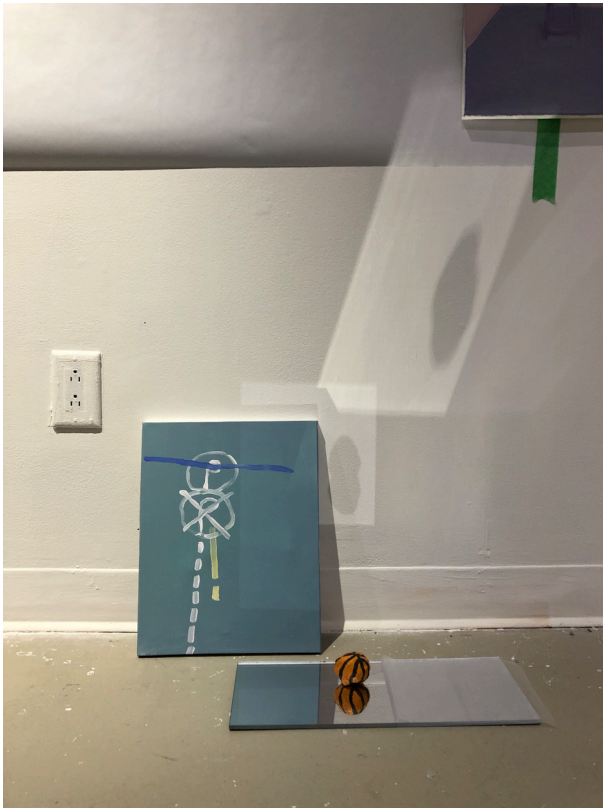


image 23: Install test variation 1, Gales Gallery, detail shot, January 2019



image 24: Install test variation 1, Gales Gallery, detail shot, January 2019

Script for a News Report: The Bridge (working title)

Here we see the pink and purple-hued landscape of alt#43, one of a series of worlds newly discovered in 2018.

This is the first time a news team has been allowed onto the site of “The Bridge”.

In December 2017, a flicker began to materialize in the Laurentian mountains, and soon a veil appeared. It was described by residents in the area as a thin flattened layer of mist, or light, that was never quite the same color as the surrounding foliage. When looking at it face on, some have described it appearing as TV noise, static.

The camera crew was informed by a local that a curious hiker ventured through the bridge and has still not been found. These reports are still unverified.

In January 2018, a convoy of Canadian explorers, theoretical physicists, and scientists were dispatched to the site to further investigate.

It appeared the flicker was cycling through a series of worlds, all uninhabited, but containing objects and natural phenomena we, on earth, were familiar with.

Trees and grass still grew, but without use of photo- or chemo-synthesis. It is still unclear how this vegetation is sustaining its own existence. Whether it is converting energy in a different synthesis process, or metabolizing other “organic” matter on their home planets.

Aerial sensors were sent in to assess air and gravity conditions. Sensors sent to alt#3, alt#56, and alt#245 failed to relay any information and did not return.

All other alternate worlds seemed to support gravity conditions close enough to Earth’s that it was plausible for people to be sent in. Air conditions varied, so anyone sent through the bridge was required to wear astronaut suits.

Explorers were tethered to our own world, and brought things back. Sediment, vegetation, and even small objects. The curiosity of the things the explorers returned with was that while they resembled things in our own reality, they were made of different matter, and of alternate scale.

There is speculation that, just as there are frequencies of color and sound that are out of range of human comprehension, that perhaps this is where the inhabitants of these alternate realities reside.

In a controversial move by the Canadian government, an AV team was dispatched to the bridge to see if they could pick up any signals from the other side. So far no alternate audio or visual spectrums have yielded any answers, only echoes.

Soon after the AV team arrived, things began to drop out of the realities.

One sentimentalist onsite said it was as if the alternate worlds were giving us offerings, invitations for connection.

The objects coming through the bridge started out small, but soon they began to increase in size.

Scientists would move the larger objects out of the way, in case more were coming. Some things took teams of 10 people to drag out of the way. Other objects were so light they could be carried off by a small child.

There was no discernible time interval between the offerings. If these things were being timed, it was not at a pace or speed practiced by humans.

This new series of dropped objects still contained shapes and forms familiar to humans, but now too contained morphed, or mutated forms, and what could only be described as solid squiggles. Lines that curved in space and seemed to have a sheen similar to the mist veil.

These abstracted lines, these squiggles, have been hypothesized to be solidified space/time matter.

Scientists have continued to move all dropped objects aside, and a few have been transported to offsite labs for further investigation and testing.

And now back to you in the newsroom.

beginnings of installation | articulated time

It was in December 2018 (midway through this paper), after having read Anne Ring Petersen's "Installation Art: Between Image and Stage," that I realized what I have been working towards is installation. According to Petersen, the parameters of installations include the activation of space and context, the stretching of the work in time, and the "phenomenological focus on the viewer's bodily and subjective experience, and on the temporal aspects of reception." (Petersen 41) She goes on to provide additional categorizations of installations in later chapters, however this quick overview suffices for now.

In reflecting on this definition, my work considers, uses, and needs time. On an individual level, each piece understands time differently. Pictorially, paintings may depict movement, or the lack thereof, relating the work to the passing of time. Materially, paintings and sculptures come into being, and decay at varied rates. Theoretically, when isolated, each work holds the viewer's attention in a one-on-one relationship. When the works are together, a viewer creates connections between them. Shifting the experience from a singular moment with a singular work, to a tangled temporal experience of works in relation to each other. There are links between this experience and the way I think in time. I do not think just one thing at a time, but think in webs or loops of thoughts.

Petersen connects installation and narrative as mediums that must be read in succession, though the order in which installation is read is less clearly dictated. (Petersen 199) She cites philosopher Paul Ricoeur who suggested that "we need literature and storytelling as mediators of the experience of time which we would otherwise have such difficulty in organizing, understanding and articulating." (Petersen 200) This connection between the experience of time and organization/understanding of it is entwined in my work. If each work is its own world, connoting its own sliver of time, then by organizing and reorganizing these worlds, perhaps I am playing with time, or time fragments. Creating new time accumulations from the slivers.

Installation as a genre is the closest art form to mimicking the experience of reality, without quite being reality. It blurs the boundaries between the understanding of self and art object, and becomes part of an experience for an audience. If my artwork is about alternate realities, narrative, and time then it makes sense to use installation. Installation becomes a means of reinforcing subject matter.



image 25: Install test variation 2, Gales Gallery, January 2019



image 26: Install test variation 3, Gales Gallery, January 2019

pylons

To revisit pylons again, I see them as objects with a certain inherent temporality, and objects of humorous authority. They are essentially small orange cones that by their placement in space create rules around the use of that space. They produce short-term borders, demarcating small plots of land as ground to go around (holes in the sidewalk, perhaps), or ground to be saved (as a parking spot). They create provisional sites, and signal places where a change has occurred, or will occur. Because of this, they are objects linked to the passage of time. Their impermanence is part of their function, their *being*.

A reminder of what was once there, a reminder to go around what might still be there, an indication of something to come.

Part of the humor for me is that they are easily purchased at a hardware store (or elsewhere) by anyone. But, without the context of a human near by, more “unofficial” placement can be construed as “official” and respected. In this instance I’m thinking of people who save parking spots in busy residential areas for themselves.

Another humorous part was when I first began taking photos of pylons, I also saw them – with my eyes shifted in such a way – as ground hats. As if the ground were one giant head, and pylons were tiny decorative hats. Or sometimes even anthropomorphizing them as if they had their own personalities: some more playful, some sad, or lonely. These visual tricks come back on occasion.

I have also understood pylons as markers, or signs in the literal sense – as in construction signage – but also in a kind of fated sense. It is kismet when I see them, it is a *sign* that something around them, or they themselves should be depicted. Pylons become beacons.

A way I think about my work –

overall architecture/landscape: installation art

material/medium: paintings/objects/drawings/lighting

subject matter/references: alternate realities/nature/play/games/ways of

seeing/film/narrative/real/unreal/accumulations/dreams/shadows/memori

es/bones/skin



image 27: Studio test, March 3 2019

last

I am beginning to make connections between installation, the imaginary, dreams, memories, film, and shadows. These are all concepts that are fluid, inconcrete, and changeable. They take place in time, are altered over time, are ways of organizing, understanding and articulating time. They are generally considered abstractions of, or removals from “reality”. Signaled by pylons, my work interweaves these concepts, everything turning over, collapsing, folding into itself, and then out again.

how does the body accumulate so many things (time, matter, space, knowledge, dreams, memories)?

how does experience sort and store itself in a body that dies?

are there memories in bones?



image 28: Final Install, April 13, 2019



image 29: Final Install, April 13, 2019



image 30: Final Install, April 13, 2019



image 31: Final Install, detail shot, April 13, 2019

works cited

Blackwood, Michael, director. *Philip Guston: A Life Lived*. Kanopy/ *Philip Guston: A Life Lived*, 2005, yorku.kanopy.com/video/philip-guston-life-lived.

Fay, Jennifer. *Inhospitable World: Cinema in the Time of the Anthropocene*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Haraway, Donna. "2016 Anthropocene Consortium: Donna Haraway." Sept. 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=fWQ2JYFwJWU&t=537s.

Mitchell, Robert W., ed. *Pretending and Imagination in Animals and Children*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2002.

Morsch, Carmen. "At a Crossroads of Four Discourses." *Documenta 12 Gallery Education*, 2009, www.diaphanes.net/titel/at-a-crossroads-of-four-discourses-1032.

Petersen, Anne Ring, et al. *Installation Art: between Image and Stage*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2015.

Rubinstein, Raphael. "Provisional Painting." *Art in America*, 2009, www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/magazines/provisional-painting-raphael-rubinstein/.

Yagisawa, Takashi. *Worlds and Individuals, Possible and Otherwise*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.